

Riverfront Fort Wayne: The Challenges

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Since childhood, my favorite public place in Fort Wayne has been the small, green suspension bridge that connects the northwest edge of Foster Park with Bluffton Road. I grew up playing Pooh Sticks (a surprisingly enthralling game invented by Winnie the Pooh in which players each drop a stick on the upstream side of a bridge and the first stick to cross under the bridge wins) on that same bridge, as well as the pedestrian bridge at West Foster Park and the small pedestrian bridge over Spy Run Creek at Lawton Park. The small Lawton Park bridge is especially good for Pooh Sticks, with the added thrill and competitive layer of the small dam just downstream. One of my favorite books was called *The Little River*; it tells the story of a river growing from tiny mountain headwaters to a force of nature flowing into the ocean. It also taught me the word culvert, which was the river's least favorite part of its course and probably contributed to how much I enjoy small bridges – they just seem more respectful. My brother and I would look for interesting artifacts – cool old glass bottles – along the Maumee near our babysitter's house. During a summer in high school I filled sandbags in the Woodhurst neighborhood as rising water crept closer and closer to the Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse on Old Mill Road. In my brief extracurricular career as a golfer, I lost more than a couple of balls in the St. Joseph River at Riverbend Golf Course, inadvertently leaving treasures for future generations to find. I've been enjoying, exploring, and sometimes negotiating with our three rivers of Fort Wayne for as long as I can remember.

All of this is to say, I really should have been more prepared when a log became my short-term professional nemesis. I had just hung up the phone in my cubicle after

finding out that, of all things, a log might derail two weeks or more of my carefully organized river tours for regional leaders in Northeast Indiana. By lodging itself in the Hosey Dam on the Maumee River, the log in question was allowing water to drain through faster than expected, and with no rain on the horizon it risked dropping the water levels lower than the Captain Black's Tours pontoon boat could handle. I needed these tours to happen. The most crucial part of my organization's riverfront development advocacy was creating more advocates, especially among leaders in the region, and the way to do that was to get them on the rivers! Thankfully, rain did come and the water levels rose enough for the scheduled tours, and we helped more people find their enthusiasm for the rivers we had collectively ignored for so many years. Thus making this more of a fun footnote of near defeat by a fallen tree than cautionary tale about tangling with nature. Not long after the stressful tour preparation, investments were made by the City to make it easier to fish logs out of places they don't belong and keep our rivers navigable and accessible.

Preparation Prevents Poor Performance, Otherwise Known as Methodology

When I started to plot out my paper, I obviously had a fair amount of personal experiences to draw on, but I knew I would need to go beyond misplaced logs and sandbags to create a more holistic picture of Riverfront Fort Wayne and the challenges facing our community. I knew I would need to talk to Dan Wire. Several years ago Dan Wire was the source of my formal river education, so it was only fitting that he would be my first stop for information and inspiration as I tackled this project. If you aren't familiar with Dan Wire, you should be. He's been recognized as The Journal Gazette's Citizen

of the Year (1) for his river related work and captured on film as Lynchpin Creative's Citizen River (2), and has held too many volunteer and official titles related to our rivers and their watersheds to count. I'm almost certain that the waters of the St. Mary's, St. Joseph, and Maumee are flowing through his veins. He is momentum personified and has the watershed mindset I needed for broad vision. To get a clear picture of the public perspective and outreach expectations, I sought out Megan Butler, program and events manager for riverfront Fort Wayne. Butler's role tasks her with educating the community about Riverfront Fort Wayne, introducing people to the rivers, and inspiring them to be a part of the work being done. Rounding out my panel of experts was Kim Bowman, executive director of the Allen County Department of Planning Services, to get a better picture of how riverfront development fits into downtown and surrounding areas and how past and present regulations can help or hinder us.

This person-to-person work honed my areas of concern, and then I sought additional expertise from placemaking pros, from the Indiana Geological Survey, and even from my own mother, which you can do when your mother is a professional writer with published works that are relevant to the task at hand. I also ventured into the social media accounts of local news channels to review public coverage of riverfront progress. I dared to read the viewer and reader comments to get a pulse on the most vocal parts of the public and any concerns or positive reactions they had. Like any good riverfront project, I tried to balance being broad and specific, I listened to professionals and the public, I sought feedback through the planning process, and I made sure to have fun. The results of my methods are as follows:

How did I get here?

We can blame everything here on the glaciers. The last of the glaciers started covering Allen County and surrounding areas about 22,000 years ago during the Wisconsin Stage, which, per the Indiana Geological and Water Survey at Indiana University is the “most recent period of major glacial activity during the ongoing ice age from about 75,000 to 10,000 years ago.” (3) True to development form Allen County came in a bit late, 53,000 years behind, to the game but we caught up in earnest. Beginning with the Hudson-Erie Lobe glacial formation and ending with the Erie Lobe, Allen County was buried in ice, preparing to transform into the land we know today. During the Erie Lobe’s final resurgence, its Lagro formation covered Allen County and is largely responsible for our modern land formations and soil and rock deposits. As the glaciers retreated to the north they formed our rivers, decided the direction of their flow, and left behind our fertile soil. They arranged the land in a way that made it a perfect place to settle, to portage from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi, to connect a canal, to build a promenade. Truly, Riverfront Fort Wayne is 22,000 years in the making.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans in the 1600s, the area that would one day be called Fort Wayne had “become the heart of the Myaamionki homeland, known as Kiihkayonki, in pre-history that is known to us and the Myaamia people through their stories.” (4) As the settlement became more established, the population of the Myaamionki people grew and acres of corn fields surrounded their village. Eventually the village at the three rivers could not support all the people, and at least five additional villages were established, reaching further down the Wabash River.

The arrival of Europeans meant the building of trading posts and forts, an increase in population, and an infusion of disease and war on a larger and more vicious scale. The Myaamionki village had been set on the path to colonization and modernization, and in 1794, after over 100 years of conflicts and leadership changing hands through battle, Fort Wayne was built near the confluence of the three rivers, establishing the center of the community for 224 years and counting.

The rivers were Fort Wayne's first transportation corridors, and with the arrival of the Wabash and Erie Canal and later the Pennsylvania Railroad, industry sprang up along their banks downtown as residents relaxed, swam, boated, and explored up and downstream. During the 1800s the rivers were the center of bustling activity and the surrounding areas hosted fairs and the first night baseball game, played in 1883 in what is now Headwaters Park. In 1884 the Wells Street Bridge was built to replace an older bridge over the St. Marys and stands proudly today in the center of current development work.

The 1930s saw the construction of the Collegiate Gothic Three Rivers Filtration Plant at the confluence of our three rivers, but our relationship was changing. As development had sprawled through the city, all our rivers were seeing was the backside of businesses that faced the streets above, and residents largely ignored the rivers' presence.

In the mid 1970's a "fledgling trail system" (5) known as the Rivergreenway began to follow the three rivers. The 1980's kicked off with the flood of 1982, when we became the City that Saved Itself, a reality check from the rivers that brought us here. In

the 1990s, we found out that flood control can be beautiful, and useful, and engaging as Eric Kuhne's plans (6) for Headwaters Park became reality, transforming 30 acres of flood-prone industrial area into a hub of our now extensive trail network, and a bustling festival venue as Kuhne himself said, "designed to be the 'Lungs' of the downtown" (7)

Where are we now and where are we headed?

Our current era of riverfront development is much more precise than our start in the Wisconsin Stage, but I would argue it holds the same power for transforming our landscape. In the early 2000s residents started to turn back toward the rivers. The Deck at The Gas House opened on the St. Marys River in 2004 and has grown into a riverfront powerhouse, packed to the gills with residents of all ages dining and drinking outside, waving at the increasing numbers of boats cruising past. The Deck has been such a success that just this winter, Halls Restaurants has purchased a historic building (8) on Harrison Street and is moving it out of the St. Marys floodplain, south to Harrison and Superior Streets for restoration and development into another river-adjacent establishment. The establishment of Fort Wayne Outfitters and Bike Depot in the historic Cass Street Depot in 2007 brought kayaks and bikes downtown to serve Fort Wayne residents who wanted to be on and around the rivers as much as possible. As demand for access to the rivers increased, Captain Black's River Tours was created to offer chartered pontoon boat tours, managed by and leaving from the Fort Wayne Outfitters and catered by Halls Restaurants. The Halls family has certainly been a driving force in private investment in the riverfront.

Community interest continued to increase as new groups were created and existing groups focused on riverfront work. The momentum gained during this time would not have been possible without key advocates and activists, including groups like the Tri-State Watershed Alliance, which spans agricultural and urban environments and collaborates across state lines and created the River Summit events, Friends of the Parks, which organized Revealing our Rivers cleanup events, Save Maumee which focuses its efforts on the river that speeds out of the downtown confluence, the Wells Corridor Business Association, which started the William Wells celebration and brought focus to the old Wells Street Bridge. During this time community advocates from many of these groups and more created Riverfest which found a home along the St. Joseph River on IPFW's campus. Riverfest encompassed all parts of the watershed, agricultural and urban, built and natural, and invited people in Northeast Indiana to interact directly with the rivers, an activity that hadn't been celebrated in many years.

The most galvanizing and legitimizing moment in our current era of development came in 2015, when a conceptual plan funded by the City of Fort Wayne and others was released to the public. After months of public presentations and input sessions, intense study, and strategic work by community member-filled committees, the Riverfront Fort Wayne Conceptual Plan (9) was revealed and our modern era gained a name. With City backing and a comprehensive plan, things quickly sped up.

Many of the community advocates instrumental in earlier riverfront progress banded together to form Friends of the Rivers, a grassroots 501c3 non profit dedicated to enhancing the community's appreciation, experience, and use of the rivers. In March

2017, Friends of the Rivers announced its new 1840s-style canal boat (10) which would eventually be named Sweet Breeze by the community and debut on the rivers in summer 2017. Sweet Breeze was made possible by private and foundation donations, along with increased public interest in our history and our river resources.

On June 29, 2017, Riverfront Fort Wayne hit another milestone and broke ground (11) on Phase 1 of development: Promenade Park. Promenade Park (12) will span the north and south banks of the St. Marys River, bounded by Harrison street, Superior Street, and the old Wells Street Bridge. It's a shining example of a public-private partnership, with funds coming from a range of sources including the Fort Wayne Legacy Fund, the Regional Development Authority, and corporate and private funders.

Momentum was made more secure on July 11, 2017 when Fort Wayne City Council approved a local income tax increase of .13%. (13) Fort Wayne will net just less than \$8.4 million from the countywide increase, two thirds of which will be dedicated to ongoing support for riverfront development and maintenance. This show of support and investment from local government officials and the public who elected them will help ensure the success of future phases of development.

Rose Colored Glasses Come Off

All of this progress is fantastic, isn't it? And it seems like we've sailed through the last 20-odd years chipping away at the Riverfront to-do list steadily, starting projects and moving along, and passing tax increases to boot! It's been pretty fluid and easy, right? We're just going to put on development cruise control and knock this whole thing out, right? Absolutely not. These rivers started with glaciers, and this paper is titled

Riverfront Fort Wayne: The Challenges. Of course, it isn't actually easy. I just needed you to feel hopeful before we move on. It has been grueling to get to where we are today, and the hard work isn't going to stop any time soon. So, what hard work are we facing?

I've boiled our challenges down to three categories: cultural, capital, and natural. Everything fits into one of those buckets. Cultural challenges are the public-facing problems and opportunities. Perception shifts, education, accessibility and accepting the fact that our rivers will never be blue fall into this category. Capital challenges are financial. What do we have in our community wallet? Will the tax increase be enough? Can we afford this? Is this the right community asset to invest in? Natural challenges are a bit obvious; we are talking about rivers. Are we balancing natural needs with our urban plans? What about all of the non-human but very important creatures who already call the riverfront, and rivers themselves, home? It's a lot, but the first step of solving a problem is naming the problem, and that is our next task.

Cultural

When you look at the pricetag for riverfront development, or hear the phrase "algae bloom" or "combined sewer overflow," it's easy to overlook cultural challenges for the hard math and science-based challenges of capital and natural areas. But our cultural hang-ups touch every part of Riverfront Fort Wayne and will make us sink or let success flow. It's no secret that people in Fort Wayne are a bit change-averse, but really most humans are so I don't believe that the deck is stacked against progress in our area any more than others. The social and developmental changes that led to our

current cultural challenges didn't take long to disrupt the status quo, but the impact has been lasting. All of my interviewees independently stated that the past action that contributed most to our current challenges is the suburbanization and development sprawl of the 1960s and 1970s. (14) This surge in spread-out development impacted cities across the United States. Interstates cut through urban neighborhoods, often disproportionately affecting lower-income areas, speeding people away from downtowns to the strip malls and office parks of the suburbs, ensconced in the comfort of their cars. Luckily, Fort Wayne doesn't have an interstate cutting through downtown and our beloved historic neighborhoods, casting concrete shadows over our rivers, but the culture shift that resulted caused comfort with the rivers to dry up. As people left the urban core and riverfront areas, their experiences with the rivers stopped, their knowledge and familiarity died, and apathy was able to set in. (15) Negativity quickly followed that apathy as disinvestment in downtown led to stores closing, businesses leaving, and the liveability of downtown Fort Wayne crashed. An entire generation of Fort Wayne residents grew up with nothing nice to say about the rivers, and they will take some convincing. Butler and Wire both commented that this layer of distrust in the rivers can be seen in our public. Residents over about 70 years old love the rivers and have fond memories of activity along their banks. Residents under 35 or 30 are also quickly becoming riverfront advocates. The Fort Wayne they've known has the Rivergreenway trails and Headwaters Park. The rivers have meant possibility and adventure to them. That group in the middle is where most of the skepticism lies – and interestingly much of our tax base and voter turnout. Though community stakeholders

and leaders believe in the importance of Riverfront Fort Wayne, this group in the middle shows us how much we have to improve in public familiarity with the rivers.

Even if the entirety of Fort Wayne was reasonably familiar with the rivers and interested in their fate, including the full diversity of thought and experience in the planning and execution of the development is a challenge. A recent article from Input Fort Wayne titled *Ensuring downtown revitalization benefits everyone* (16) specifically discussed inclusion of residents from the Southeast area of Fort Wayne. After realizing that a bus journey from just south of Pettit to downtown would take 45 minutes, Réna Bradley of Bridge of Grace Compassionate Ministries noted that as an obvious barrier to residents who may not have access to a car. The article frames this as a side issue to larger problems of inclusivity and representation in greater city projects, stating “the aspect of Downtown development that often concerns Southeast residents isn’t that they won’t be able to make it Downtown to enjoy the new spaces. It’s that they won’t have a say in the discussions and planning for any of the projects.” With 45% of Southeast Fort Wayne residents under 25 years old, Riverfront Fort Wayne is being created for their futures, but will they see themselves in that future? Megan Butler certainly hopes so and is pushing community outreach past the riverbanks and boundaries of downtown. Inclusivity is a high priority for her work in every phase of development and every meaning of the word. Butler actively seeks out people who usually aren’t included in planning processes and groups she isn’t a part of. She strives to make as many events as possible free or extremely low cost, noting that

socioeconomic diversity isn't always considered in downtown development projects, a sentiment that Input Fort Wayne echoed.

As Riverfront Fort Wayne gets into future phases, we will likely also see our neighborhoods change. I'm talking about the down side of "up and coming" neighborhoods, gentrification. It's an established economic development fact that parks and other people-friendly developments raise home values, (17) which is great, but what if residents don't own their home? Renters can get pushed out of neighborhoods they've lived in for years as landlords with an eye on the bottom line raise rents to reflect growing values. As nice as that is for landlords, I have a hard time watching someone get pushed out of a neighborhood they love just because they pay rent instead of a mortgage. According to an article published for the YLNI My City Summit titled "The Power of Place" by Quester Zach Benedict and Ellen Cutter, "competitive housing options and services need to exist to attract and retain a diverse resident mix." (18) So, maintaining a mix of housing and amenities that are appropriate for a wide range of incomes is in our favor. Thankfully, city leaders have demonstrated a commitment to affordable downtown housing through recent projects like Randall and Superior Lofts, both of which are a very short walk from the site of Promenade Park. We can only hope that landlords in our urban core will follow their leadership as fortunes change.

Once people are familiar with the rivers and are included in the process and outcomes, they need to be able to access them. Ironically, access is curtailed by the development itself. Both the Promenade Park and deep rock tunnel projects are

blocking access to riverbanks, and the events along the banks can prevent people from getting to boat ramps and piers. Once development dust settles, opening up more space for boat infrastructure will be crucial. Another key piece is education about access. After being kept away from the rivers for decades, maybe river-adjacent neighbors and businesses don't actually know how to get to the water or the rules of the road once they're there. Increasing access is critical, and it works. During the second year of free-to-the-public and financed-by-Steel-Dynamics pontoon tours at Three Rivers Festival, 4,700 people took a ride on the rivers in a span of only 28 hours. (14) I remember volunteering at the first shift for tours. People waited well over an hour for their 15-minute tour, and they beamed when they got off the boats. Access creates advocates, but we have to open up first.

The final cultural catch I see in our future is defining the role of government in this development process. Riverfront Fort Wayne is part our our city government and parks department, but we need to get another group of public servants involved, and they're from a department most people don't think about until it's too late: the Allen County Department of Planning Services. I'm talking about zoning. Did you know that Bloomingdale Park, the entirety of the North River property, the Lawton skatepark and Traders Point area are all zoned industrial? These regulations are relics of our rivers' past as transportation corridors and the mere background to business. Our zoning hasn't always progressed with the city. Thankfully, this land is all publically owned, which keeps it protected, but it illustrates the danger of zoning that doesn't match up with development goals. Areas south of the rivers are zoned Downtown Core, a mixed

use designation that keeps development in line with best practices for downtown areas. This situation might not seem like a big deal, but mismatched zoning could lead to mismatched development on either side of the banks and undermine cohesive development efforts. (19) We need to tackle our land use before an inappropriate project shows us it's too late. Government can serve as the stabilizing force and continued catalyst for Riverfront Fort Wayne, if residents advocate for it.

Capital

When Promenade Park was originally announced it had a \$20 million price tag, not including land acquisition or design work. (20) Given that Promenade Park is Phase 1 of a very long-term development project, we know Riverfront Fort Wayne will cost significantly more in the long run, funding which will at least partially come from public sources, which presents different challenges, namely what the public thinks about it. To make this kind of investment in downtown Fort Wayne, we want to make sure it's on par with past development and private projects. So, what has our community invested? From 2004 to 2014 alone over \$450 million went into downtown-based projects including the public library, Grand Wayne Center and Marriott Hotel, Auer Arts Center, Parkview Field, The Harrison, Anthony Wayne Condos, and University of Saint Francis's downtown expansion. (18) From 2014 on we've seen the over \$7 million Randall Lofts project, the \$9.8 million Superior Lofts, two hotel announcements totaling over \$40 million, The Landing redevelopment coming in at \$35 million, the Ash building for \$70 million, Electric Works with a \$213 million price tag for phase 1, and a \$61.7 million multi use development planned to go right next to Promenade Park. That's a

long list and several hundred million dollars, and I've definitely missed a thing or two and am completely skipping over the impact on tourism and convention visitor dollars, which would take an entire additional paper. Suffice to say, a lot of people and companies have skin in the game when it comes to investing in downtown.

Many of these projects have been or will be funded similarly to Riverfront Fort Wayne via public-private partnerships. Public-private partnerships have gained in popularity and seem to work well in Fort Wayne's political climate. (15) They provide a middle ground, accommodate diverse viewpoints, mitigate risk for all parties involved and establish shared goals for the public and private sectors to rally around. While there is some opposition to government inserting itself into private business or businesses exerting too much influence over the use of government funds, depending on your viewpoint, I believe this collaborative funding approach is worth sticking to, and public perception is a challenge we need to rise to.

Perception of and actual opportunity cost is also a challenge Riverfront Fort Wayne is currently navigating and will have to handle into the future. Could this investment and specifically the public spending be better used elsewhere? Much of the public, or at least the section of the public who leaves their thoughts on the Facebook posts of local news outlets, seem to think so. Potholes, streetlights, school buses, potholes, helping the homeless, helping veterans, potholes, and of course crime are the core concerns. Really, Fort Wayne doesn't sound like a great place to live in much of the comments section. Knowing that some complaints will exist no matter what, it's easy to ignore the pothole-preoccupied crowd, but they might have a point. According to

Input Fort Wayne, downtown revitalisation in other cities like Oklahoma City and Indianapolis saw big economic gains while poverty in the city actually worsened. As development (and even a Super Bowl) happened in Indianapolis, the poverty rate nearly doubled from 11.8% in 2000 to 21.3% in 2015. (16) Yes, we were hit by the Great Recession during that time, but it begs the question: could the city have done more to help their most vulnerable residents? Should they have done more, or different? Is it irresponsible to pump funding into development projects when people are hurting and potholes plague your streets? Most people say no, because of the economic gains and return on investment from development projects that can later be put back into the community and potentially grow jobs and wages – while we also work on alleviating and ending poverty.

If it is prudent to invest in community development projects like Riverfront Fort Wayne, then we must consider protecting our assets, the rivers, and our investments, the developments near them. Thankfully, flood regulations largely prevent inappropriate development in flood prone areas, but that doesn't mitigate all of the risks and irresponsible building can lead to increased spending on remediation in the future. Take the example I was given by Kim Bowman of a \$80 thousand home in a flood-prone area (not in the state of Indiana) that has received over \$1 million in remediation from FEMA for 12 destructive floods. (19) If the house hadn't been built in the flood zone, or if it had been moved (like the historic Cambray building on our riverfront), how much money could have been saved? How can Fort Wayne push development forward and protect our investments at the same time?

Natural

Water quality and quantity are the biggest natural challenges we face with Riverfront Fort Wayne. A large part of our current predicament stems from us harnessing this natural resource for economic gain, and then promptly moving on and turning our backs as soon as we had alternatives. We took our rivers from an economic and recreation driver to a place to dump things in the span of just a few decades. Water quality has improved drastically, but without a real-time way to monitor and report water quality to the public, perceptions from before the Clean Water Act of 1972 remain. We also need to recognize the shared responsibilities of water quality. Between the St. Marys and St. Joseph rivers there are over 800 stream miles that ultimately pass under the Columbia Street bridge and create the Maumee. Riverfront Fort Wayne will cover about 8 of those miles, the rest flows through some urban and suburban areas, but mostly rural farmland. (14) Urbanites can help advocate for rural water quality by supporting farmers who adopt water friendly land management practices by acting as advocates and partners and not putting blame directly on them. Urbanites can also advocate for better regulations and laws that support preserving our streams and rivers at the local, state, and federal levels. Water quality is a complicated challenge where everyone in the watershed is a contributor, and the challenge will persist as long as the water flows.

Even with dams and levees and well-laid plans, our rivers are still ultimately controlled by nature and 100-year floods can come at any time. Even smaller floods can

cost thousands to clean up, to remove river debris from trails, parks, and other property and to remove street debris and dangerous tree limbs from the rivers. Working within flood regulations and building flood- and people-friendly parks like Promenade Park and Headwaters Park is our best bet to prepare for the realities of both nature and festivals.

The three rivers are home to a diverse and vibrant ecosystem that exists largely unknown to the city around it. Twenty-three species of fish have been found, 60% of which are game fish, along with deer, foxes, river otters, beavers, muskrats, coyotes, many turtle species, blue and green herons, egrets and bald eagles. (14) While river otters and beavers likely won't join us at Promenade Park, they do make their homes nearby, and we need to honor and protect that. The city is already safeguarding our riparian environment by removing invasive species and planting native species, protecting the trees that fend off riverbank erosion from the prying teeth of beavers. Another part of protecting the riparian environment is nature education and advocacy. Most people don't realize how quiet and lush the riverbanks are until they're on a kayak or jogging down a trail, so programming like bird watching events, science-themed boat tours, and school presentations play a key role in bringing urban dwellers into the natural environment next door. Familiarity breeds acceptance and advocacy, and advocacy will keep our water clean and our otters happy.

Can we fix it? Yes, we can!

Here's the trick about all of the challenges I just laid out: we've seen all of them before. Our rivers are tens of thousands of years old and humans have been in the area for nearly that long. Fort Wayne has weathered a lot, and we've managed pretty well.

We have decided over and over, for hundreds of years, that these challenges are worth navigating to move Fort Wayne forward. There are already experts working on all of these things, and I'm pretty confident in their abilities. So, the real challenge of Riverfront Fort Wayne, the one that the community creates or crashes into the one that you can impact right now, is momentum. Keeping a city thriving and growing and adding first-class developments that include everyone and balance urban and natural environments is exhausting and expensive, but many hands lighten the load. Follow along with the progress, vote in elected officials who believe in the vision of a brighter, bolder Fort Wayne, donate if you're able, rent a kayak for the afternoon, host your birthday party on Sweet Breeze, use fewer chemicals on your lawn, and spend time in Promenade Park. Keep going. Every day. We make the momentum, and the momentum makes Riverfront Fort Wayne. Riverfront Fort Wayne exists because of forces of nature: glaciers, erosion, floods, and rain. Turn yourself into a force of nature and move the next era of riverfront development forward. We need to have long memories and high standards. We need to remember where we were before we rallied around the headwaters of our community. We need to remember that if we lose track of the future, the long future, not just phases 2 and 3, not just new residents and retaining our current ones, not just kayaks and trails, we could slip back into our past. Megan Butler wisely said that so much of government is a leap of faith, and Riverfront Fort Wayne can still feel like that, but firmly believe, along with many others, that this leap is worth it. (15) By engaging with Riverfront Fort Wayne and investing our time and energy in its success, we're showing the world that Fort Wayne is a city of inclusivity and

opportunity. We're showing that history matters and progress is to be celebrated. To quote Megan Butler once again, "Great cities become great cities because people stay there and invest in them." (15) This group seems set on staying in Fort Wayne, so I personally hope you decide to invest here as well. Momentum is hard to build and easy to lose, and the best thing any of us can do to tackle the biggest challenge for Riverfront Fort Wayne is keep going.

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