

A SPECIAL SECTION PREPARED BY THE EDITORS OF  
**whatzup**

# WELCOME TO THE **WABASH** CULTURAL DISTRICT



*What you need to know on all things arts,  
culture & community in Downtown Wabash*

Downtown Wabash, Inc. • [DowntownWabash.org](http://DowntownWabash.org) •   

## WHAT IS A CULTURAL DISTRICT?



Cultural Districts are well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use areas with unique, authentic art and cultural identity.

In Indiana, they are designated through a process called the “Creative Community Pathway” by the Indiana Arts Commission.

# 5 major impacts of cultural districts

## — No 1 —

### **CULTURAL DISTRICTS ARE PROVEN ECONOMIC GENERATORS WHICH LEAD TO INCREASED EMPLOYMENT, SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, AND ENHANCED COMMERCE.**

Each Indiana Cultural District is a statewide leader in cultural development. The Indiana Arts Commission provides project funding for designated Indiana Cultural Districts, facilitates statewide collaboration through the Indiana Cultural District Consortium, and provides other capacity-building opportunities for cultural district leadership.

## — No 2 —

### **CULTURAL DISTRICTS ARE RICH COMMUNITY CENTERS FOR ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE.**

Districts are enduring community centers for gatherings, activities, events, and shared experiences. Their rich cultural activity and commerce are a focal point for their community and surrounding counties. The cooperation of major cultural, civic, and commerce institutions at the heart of every district enhances community involvement and access, thus attracting and retaining population. They also allure relocating businesses looking for quality of life options for their employees.

## — No 3 —

### **ARTS AND CULTURE THRIVE IN RURAL OR URBAN SETTINGS.**

Cultural districts can and do work in the smallest of settings (Nashville, Ind.) or in a large, urban setting (Carmel). Since cultural districts are based on a uniqueness of place in conjunction with distinct local arts and culture, it is a totally scalable concept. It can be rural and crafty, urban and upscale, two square blocks or twenty square blocks. The appeal for visitors and residents is the same: a place where the arts make things happen and define the look, feel, and vibe of a vibrant place to eat, shop and explore.

## — No 4 —

### **ARTS AND CULTURE HIGHLIGHT LOCAL IDENTITY AND HISTORY.**

Whether it is a Victorian river town like Madison or a modern architectural destination like Columbus, Ind., cultural districts embrace local identity and history while emphasizing a sense of uniqueness of place.

## — No 5 —

### **CULTURAL DISTRICTS BRING MONEY INTO A COMMUNITY.**

Cultural districts are magnets for commerce. They bring money into a community through tourism and its associated revenues, thus opening up new revenue streams for local businesses and municipalities.



## THE NUMBERS

### **MORE THAN \$600 MILLION**

Earnings generated by Indiana Cultural Districts for the creative industry in 2019.

### **MORE THAN \$68 MILLION**

Revenue generated by creative nonprofit organizations in the zip codes surrounding the Indiana Cultural Districts.

### **MORE THAN 160,000**

Citizens employed in the creative industries in the state of Indiana

### **NEARLY 60 PERCENT**

Number of the above who are entrepreneurs running small businesses.

## THE 12 INDIANA CULTURAL DISTRICTS

Bloomington Entertainment and Arts District  
Carmel Arts and Design District  
Columbus Arts and Entertainment District  
Fishers: Nickel Plate District  
Fort Wayne: Arts Campus Fort Wayne  
Jeffersonville: NoCo Arts and Cultural District  
Lafayette: Tippecanoe Arts and Cultural District  
Madison Arts and Cultural District  
Nashville: Arts Village Brown County  
Noblesville Cultural Arts District  
Terre Haute: 41/40 Arts and Cultural District  
Wabash Cultural District



## Tell me more about the Wabash Cultural District!

*Oh, the moonlight's fair tonight along the Wabash,  
From the fields there comes the breath of new-mown hay  
Through the sycamores, the candle lights are gleaming,  
On the banks of the Wabash, far away.*

You can practically hear the serenade of our state song while reading the lyrics by The Mill Brothers. The ballad is a reminder that our unique community has an important name you simply cannot miss--Wabash--from the lyrics of Indiana's state song, to the namesake of the state river, as well as a mighty town making its way into the record books of rural America. We know we're small, with a city of just over 10,000 residents, but it doesn't mean we act that way. Small but mighty is our way of life and being "small but mighty" signifies the Wabash Cultural District.

The Wabash Cultural District is a 2.5 mile perimeter of walkable terrain. The boundaries are Hill Street along the influential railway tracks on the north, Carroll Street on the west, Paradise Spring Park on the east and the Wabash River on the south. A unique characteristic is our hilly topography. Standing at the District's entrance, you can see the entire District unfolding before your eyes.

The District is filled with cultural assets such as a world-class performing arts center, miles of community bike trails, numerous public art pieces, new housing developments and boutiques. The preservation of the buildings in the District is extraordinary, too. The National Register of Historic Places designated Downtown Wabash in 1986 because of its architectural significance.

The historical thread that stitches our District together is the vaudeville era. The District came to life in the early 1900s, around the same timeframe when vaudeville emerged. Vaudeville represents diversity and inclusion and comes from the French phrase "voix de ville," which means voice of the city. Vaudeville brought all walks of life together, similar to



the culture of the circus. A vaudeville show could start with a local act and end with an internationally-famous artist. The vaudeville movement resulted in the development of Eagles Theatre in 1906 in Downtown Wabash, as well as two other theaters. Chicago's Miss Bertha Gallant was the first act in the new theater. While vaudeville is no longer the country's premier form of entertainment, Wabash still nods to this era with performers that travel on a circuit much like original vaudeville performers. Today we refer to the "Vaudeville Vibe" in the District as the modern-day approach to arts and culture.

As with most large-scale projects, the Wabash Cultural District didn't emerge overnight. It is an effort that has been underway for years. Wabash City Council passed a resolution in 2016 to begin the process. Wabash applied in 2016, 2018 and 2020. Wabash received the Spotlight Community designation from Indiana Arts Commission in December 2020. More than a dozen communities applied and only four were selected. The committee decided to apply for the full Cultural District designation with an 86-page application in March 2021. Four communities were vying for the title: Wabash, Goshen, Kokomo and Fort Wayne. In June 2021, Wabash received news

the application was successful alongside Arts Campus Fort Wayne.

The District has seen an incredible transformation in the last decade. Institutions like Honeywell Center and Wabash County Museum were original anchors. Each year a new project created more momentum: the construction of a brand-new YMCA, restoration of Charley Creek Inn, installation of district-wide public art, facade improvements, new skate park, Riverfront Plaza, re-development of landmark buildings and an all-inclusive playground. Since 2010, more than \$70 million has been invested in Downtown Wabash.

For Wabash, becoming a Cultural District is a key component for future growth. Despite the challenges of combating population decline and surmounting stereotypes of "sleepy rural communities," Wabash views downtown revitalization as a talent attraction initiative.

More and more, young professionals and families are prioritizing where they live over where they work. This continued focus on quality of place in the downtown district is one of many strategies to reverse population decline.

The Wabash Cultural District in the heart of downtown is alive and radiates with arts and culture opportunities for all ages, abilities and income levels. The focus on revitalization of core communities has spanned the globe and proven successful for many communities to increase population and quality of life for residents. Our leaders are making our Downtown and Cultural District a priority as vibrant downtowns appeal to people of all ages, especially when mixed uses to live, work and play all in the same walkable area are incorporated.

The Cultural District designation enables us to continue to be a "small but mighty" community, but with a profound statewide impact. The "Vaudeville Vibe" will continue to drive arts and culture opportunities.

Stay dialed into the Wabash Cultural District online at [DowntownWabash.org](http://DowntownWabash.org).

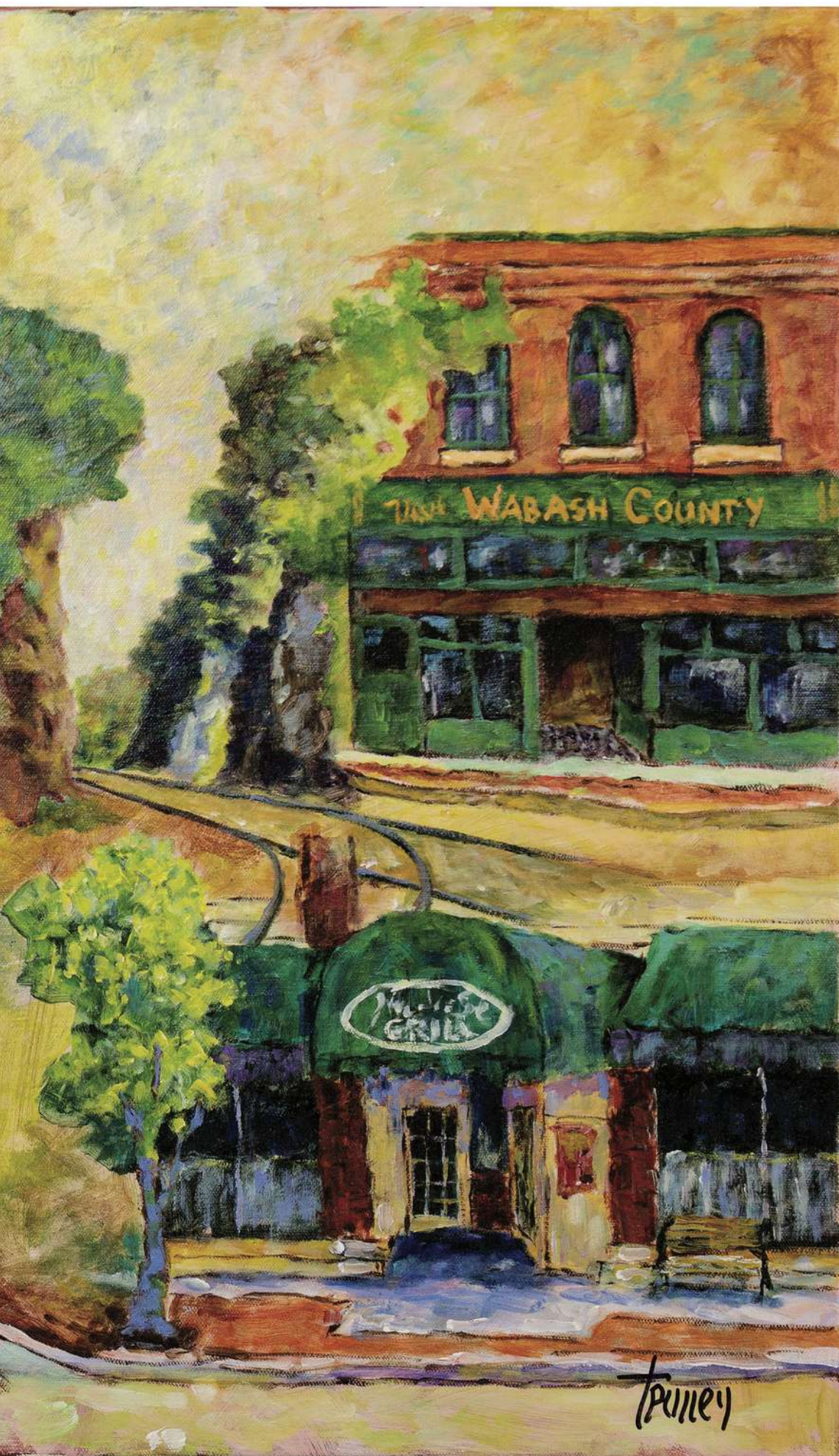
*"Instead of Wabash being a hidden gem, we hope the Cultural District will make people even more proactively interested in visiting or starting a business here. It helps us shine that light just that much more to let people know we have a whole ecosystem of opportunity."*

*"It gives us a commonality in that we're on the same team. It creates this connection that what's good for Fort Wayne is good for Wabash, and what's good for Wabash is good for Fort Wayne."*

*"I think what we found during the pandemic and the absence of a lot of arts and culture is this: Art does serve a vital need in our community, and its absence can negatively impact people's relationships and their overall mental wellness. Having a Cultural District is one more way we can demonstrate that art isn't just a luxury or leisurely pastime. It's a need, and it has real economic development advantages."*

Cathy Gatchel,  
Honeywell Arts  
and member of the  
Wabash Cultural  
District Committee





## BUSINESSES IN THE DISTRICT

4 Partners in Crime	14 W. Canal St.
Bellazo Revived Style	35 W. Market St.
Bluebird Boutique	26 W. Market St.
Birdie J's	79 W. Market St.
Borders & Beyond Gallery	24 W. Canal St.
Birimso's Antiques	116 S. Wabash St.
Brooch Boutique	49 W. Market St.
C & J Raxx	209 S. Miami St.
Charley Creek Inn	111 W. Market St.
Downtown Nutrition	70 W. Market St.
Downtown Wabash, Inc.	189 S. Miami St.
Dr. James Ford Historic Home	177 W. Hill St.
Eagles Theatre	106 W. Market St.
Eclectic Shoppe	42 W. Canal St.
Ellen's Bridal & Dress Boutique	45 W. Market St.
Eugenia's Restaurant	275 W. Market St.
Filament Tattoo	36 E. Canal St.
Friendship Hill Inclusive Playground & Skatepark	410 S. Carroll St.
Gallery 64	64 W. Canal St.
Habanero Grill & Cantina	700 S. Cass St.
Helping Hands Thrift Store	20 E. Canal St.
Honeywell Center	275 W. Market St.
Ice Cream & Candy Shoppe	111 W. Market St.
JoJo's Olfactory & Co.	36 W. Canal St.
Kaleigh M Photography	168 S. Wabash St.
Kelli Winer Design	80 W. Canal St.
Lighthouse Mission	123 W. Canal St.
Make It Your Own Art Studio	24 W. Canal St.
Market Street Grill	90 W. Market St.
Mini Cafe	445 S. Wabash St.
Modoc's Market	205 S. Miami St.
Moon Dog	233 S. Miami St.
Nicole A. Howard Photography	74 W. Market St.
No Fakies Skate Shop	59 S. Wabash St.
Ohh My! Cakes	2 W. Market St.
Paradise Spring Historical Park	351 W. Market St.
Reading Room Books	264 S. Wabash St.
Schlemmer's Fire & Outdoor	108 W. Canal St.
Story Walk	514 S. Huntington St.
The Francis Shoppe	65 W. Market St.
Thriftalicious	75 W. Market St.
Tiny Threads Children's Boutique	47 W. Market St.
Twenty Restaurant	111 W. Market St.
Visit Wabash County	221 S. Miami St.
Wabash Carnegie Public Library	188 W. Hill St.
Wabash County Museum	36 E. Market St.
Wabash County YMCA	500 S. Cass St.
Wabash Crossfit & Fitness	120 W. Canal St.
Wabash Pizza King	46 W. Canal St.
Wabash Valley Dance Theater	58 W. Canal St.
Wabash Woollen Works Fiber Center	14 S. Miami St.
White Rock Recreation	800 S. Wabash St.
Wine and Cheese Bar	111 W. Market St.
Wooden Ivy Boutique & Floral	12 W. Market St.

## WABASH RIVERFRONT DISTRICT

You can't come to Wabash and not visit the Wabash River! Start at White Rock Recreation to enjoy the Wabash Riverfront. Buy a hand-dipped ice cream (and don't forget the homemade waffle cone) and walk on the Wabash River Trail to burn off the calories. Or take the leisurely approach and sit around the fire pit. Or take the active route and play ping pong and tetherball. Or the adventurous route and schedule a kayak trip! No matter how to explore, the Wabash River will be alongside your adventure. Pro tip: check out the custom water fountain and oversized light bulb installations!

## RECREATION AMENITIES

Picture a national river that serves as a vital conduit for trade, travel and settlement in the Midwest for more than two centuries. That's the Wabash River and that's where most of Downtown Wabash's outdoor recreation takes place. Start at the Wabash Riverfront Trail Head and hop on the Wabash River Trail for a breezy bike ride or a scenic jog. Get a full-body, outdoor workout at the Riverfront's Fitness Court and take the family to Paradise Spring Park complete with grasslands, paved trails and river overlook. Enjoy all there is to offer at the Friendship Hill Inclusive Playground and shred some gnar at the John Drook Memorial Skate Park. Admire public art installations like the murals at Veterans Plaza and Mammoth Park and snap a candid photo under the colorful shade sails of the Market/Canal Walkway. There's plenty to do outdoors in Downtown Wabash.



## DESIGN YOUR OWN CREATIONS



### MAKE IT YOUR OWN ART STUDIO

You will feel like you found a hidden gem when you step inside Make It Your Own! This art studio is located on the second floor and the entrance is off the alley. Once you ascend the wooden staircase, you open the door to find a room full of color and happiness! Every art project you could ever imagine is waiting for you. Design a custom canvas, paint pottery, take a private lesson on the pottery wheel, and more. If you need to unleash your creativity, this is the place for you.



### JOJO'S OLFACTORY & CO.

This local candle and fragrance bar is a fan-favorite location in our micropolitan downtown. Interactive elements of creating a custom scented candle or other room fragrance are attractive for someone wanting to create something meaningful and JoJo's Olfactory & Co. certainly specializes in the true, personal touch. Customize the perfect scent for your home or recreate an olfactory memory in the form of a candle. Choose your top-three favorite scents, like hazelnut, coffee and caramel, blend them together and create a delightful candle, reed diffuser, car diffuser or wax tart to take home.

## BEST PHOTO-OP

### MARKET/CANAL WALKWAY

And it's the most colorful!



#### Artist feature: Julie Dickey

"Since a young age, art was the easiest way for me to express happiness, fear, anger, sadness, or merely for the sake of sharing creativity," Artist Julie Dickey said. Julie started drawing and painting at a young age and now she puts her heart and soul toward glass as a mosaic artist. When her passion to open a creative space met their plans to relocate to the country, Julie and her husband, Randy, now call Wabash, Indiana

home following their cross-country journey from southern California. Julie was drawn into Wabash for its historic architecture and energy in the community, making it a picture-perfect location for her creative space, 4 Partners in Crime. The space features a two-story art gallery, creative studio and upscale lounge on Canal Street in Downtown Wabash. On the first floor of the space, guests can enjoy craft cocktails and small

plate meals. On the second floor, a creative art space for art classes will be open for artists of all skill levels. Throughout the space, select artwork will be for sale but she won't take commission from the sales, as most gallery owners do. Instead, Julie will ask featured artists to donate a portion of sales to local art programs to maintain creative funding in the community.



## DOWNTOWN WABASH FARMERS MARKET

Handmade. Homemade. Homegrown. When visiting the Downtown Wabash Farmers Market, you'll find a wide variety of local vendors. Whether it's farm fresh eggs and homegrown herbs to carved wood sculptures to hand poured soy wax candles, the market brings it all. Nosh on delicious baked goods from local bakeries or take a tractor ride by one of the local farmers. Let your furry friends tag along while you enjoy the live music and food trucks on the midway. Enter this veggie-riffic, family friendly environment of the farmers market every Saturday morning from May - September.

## WABASH FIRST FRIDAY

For 11 months out of the year, Wabash First Fridays run on the first Friday of February - December with unique themes. This monthly street festival activates the district at nighttime from 5-8 p.m. Take a free ride on Trolley No.85 or walk through Downtown Wabash for late night shopping from locally owned boutiques, delicious food options from local restaurants and food trucks, live music almost everywhere you turn, and family-friendly events throughout the district. Wabash First Friday transforms Downtown Wabash into a bustling micropolitan cultural hub.

### Artist feature: Mary Hettmansperger



Mary Hettmansperger is an internationally recognized visual artist. She travels the world teaching her jewelry and sculptural basketry workshops. She has written four books available at Barnes & Noble: "Mixed Metal Jewelry Workshop," "Heat, Color, Set & Fire," "Fabulous Woven Jewelry" and "Wrap, Stitch, Fold & Rivet" and several other publications, DVDs, and numerous gallery exhibits.

When she isn't jetsetting, she is working at one of her two locations in Downtown Wabash. Mary owns Gallery 64 on Canal Street and Moon Dog on Miami Street. Gallery 64 is a creative space available for catering rentals and workshops and Moon Dog is a full-service bar and restaurant in partnership with her son, Logan.

### EDITOR'S PICK

## MODOC'S MARKET

You must order the Cuban Latte with a biscotti.



## LIGHT IT UP! EXHIBIT: WABASH COUNTY MUSEUM

For more than 140 years, people couldn't help but wonder what the inside of the Wabash County Courthouse looked like inside. Why 140 years? On March 31, 1880, Wabash, Indiana became the first electrically lighted city in the world through the Wabash County Courthouse cupola. The museum's "Light It Up!" exhibit celebrates this miraculous milestone with an interactive virtual tour. While on the tour, you can ascend the stairs of the Courthouse to view the clock rooms, bell tower and the timing chamber. Plan to spend a few hours to enjoy all of the exhibits at the Wabash County Museum.



## BORDERS & BEYOND GALLERY



Borders & Beyond Gallery is one of the OGs (ya know, "originals") of the Wabash Cultural District. Women-owned by Amy Ford and Diane Morris, they specialize in custom framing. Their work is pristine! Plus, this is also the best place to find a greeting card and gift item. Featuring hand blown glass, fused glass, handmade jewelry, and Harvey's handbags.

## WABASH WOOLLEN WORKS

Wabash Woollen Works is a fiber arts center and event space. This is the only fiber manufacturing mill in Indiana producing luxury yarn, roving and felted wool batting. In addition to buying gorgeous yarn, you can learn about natural dye techniques, spinning, weaving, knitting, and acid dye. And if you're really lucky, you can get a tour of the mill to watch raw fiber become an artisan product. Plus, there is an outdoor garden to test your skills in plant identification. Trust us, you are going to want to schedule an appointment.



## WABASH VALLEY DANCE THEATER

Celebrating more than 70 years in Downtown Wabash, Wabash Valley Dance Theater has raised generations of classical dancers since 1951. Classes begin at age two with Mommy & Me and advance to tap, jazz, lyrical, modern, hip hop, ballet, and pointe. Once a student has at least five years of dance experience, they can join the Company Dancers. This elite group focuses on technique, including proper body alignment and posture.





## FORD THEATER

You don't expect to find a world-class theater in a small, rural community like Wabash. Come to the Ford Theater inside the Honeywell Center to see your favorite artists in the midst of the Wabash Cultural District. Free parking and onsite dining make this 1,500-seat venue a top choice. Performance genres include classic rock, comedy, Broadway, country, and family. Enjoy the outdoor fountains and Art Deco architecture while you're here!



## EAGLES THEATRE

Originally constructed in 1906, the building recently underwent a complete renovation. Eagles Theatre is reimagined as the newest arts center in the Cultural District, thanks to Honeywell Arts & Entertainment. The five-story building houses a nostalgic theater for movies and live entertainment, an additional movie theater, music lesson rooms, recording studios, and a fully-restored grand ballroom. Performers like Wabash's own Crystal Gayle, Sammy Hagar and Fort Wayne's Addison Agen have all performed on the Eagles Theatre stage since its renovation. The lower level 49-seat Ferguson Theatre is designed for movie showings and sensory-friendly experiences, private events and educational opportunities. Residing on the top floor, the Parkview Ballroom was carefully restored to its former glory with hand-painted ceilings and original woodwork. And let's not forget about the magnificent marquee—you will be mesmerized by the lights on Market Street.

## WHERE TO STAY

### CHARLEY CREEK INN

Once you discover the enchantment of the Wabash Cultural District, you will want to return. And when you do be sure to book a night at Charley Creek Inn. This boutique hotel is in the heart of downtown. Featuring Georgian-Revival architecture, the property highlights old-world glamor, fine art, and antiques alongside modern luxury. Once you've unpacked your bags, visit the on-site shoppes. Enjoy sweet nostalgia in the Ice Cream & Candy Shoppe. Meet for wine tasting at the Wine & Cheese Bar. Then enjoy a roaring 1920s-themed dinner at the aptly named Twenty restaurant.



## THANKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the Wabash Cultural District Committee for its leadership throughout the process and into the future.

City of Wabash  
Downtown Wabash, Inc.  
Grow Wabash County

The Honeywell Foundation  
Visit Wabash County  
Wabash County Museum



VISIT [WHATZUP.COM](http://WHATZUP.COM) FOR EVEN MORE THINGS TO DO IN WABASH AND BEYOND