

# *City of New Castle, Indiana*

Greg York, Mayor

---

February 28, 2013

Mike Thissen  
Office of Community and Rural Affairs  
Stellar Communities Pilot Program  
One North Capitol, Suite 600  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2288

Please accept this letter of interest in the State of Indiana's Stellar Community Pilot Program from the City of New Castle, Indiana. We Are Ready – Shovel Ready – Stellar Ready!

In 2010, the “Stellar” ball was kicked when the City of New Castle applied during the first round of the Stellar Pilot Program. Although we were not chosen as a Stellar recipient, the process has led to a change of attitude and spirit throughout the community. No more “just dreaming” of how things can be; it's all hands on deck to literally transform our city into a more vibrant, inviting, liveable community. In these economically difficult days, community participation has been a key to much of our success through teamwork, volunteer labor, and benevolent financial contribution. The City of New Castle has begun a whole-hearted revitalization effort to bring about changes throughout our community. All stakeholders are dead serious in their commitment to monitor this program to ensure quality results.

Some of our 2010 Stellar objectives have progressed. For example, Ivy Tech will open a new post-secondary educational facility here in the fall of 2013; the City of New Castle partnered with Historic Landmarks of Indiana and has contributed over \$500,000 in TIF funds to complete the stabilization of the historic Jennings Building downtown, and renovation for occupancy is the next phase; the City has secured unsafe properties in the city's center and will replace those with a much needed landscaped parking lot, construction to begin this spring; unsafe homes that are beyond rehabilitation are being demolished and turned into green spaces; and a \$275,000 city-wide information street sign project is nearly complete. The \$2.7M NSP1 has provided construction of three neighborhood homes which have been sold to low income families, stabilization of four dilapidated structures in our downtown historical district, allowing construction of four condominiums, and returning four marketable retail spaces to the State Road 38 downtown corridor. Dangerous trees have been removed along downtown sidewalks in preparation for new streetscapes. Our proposed butterfly park is now a partner project with high school students and the city working together to create an outdoor science lab for local schools.

For 2013-2028, the vision for New Castle is that “our citizens and visitors are safe, are welcome, and know there is solid strategic planning to ensure a good today and better tomorrow.” This is a broad vision that takes us into every nook and cranny of the community. Many community forums have been held over the past year to facilitate the updating of New Castle's City-Wide Strategic Plan for Development. Through open invitation, the forums brought together community leaders, young entrepreneurs, housewives, students, doctors, plumbers, day laborers, educators... a wide



range of citizenry... to examine our community's current status and set realistic goals to accomplish in the coming years in areas of safety, recreation, infrastructure, beautification, technology, housing, and education. We looked at the good, the bad, and the ugly. Not everything in our vision is "Stellar-appropriate," and we have our work cut out for us; but for those things that are Stellar-appropriate, we look forward to your assistance in getting them accomplished.

New Castle is still "Green and Growing!" Efforts to build and rebuild will focus on making a positively healthy community for the generations to follow us. Projects the Stellar Community Pilot Program could help make happen include:

OCRA Eligible:

- **Downtown Redevelopment** – Our plan includes a vintage theatre/playhouse, retail/commercial property development, a pedestrian plaza development, a community/senior center, and a parking lot.

New Castle plans to partner with Riley Children's Hospital, owner of New Castle's only cinema. This theatre single-screen theatre has struggled to survive in the face of modern multi-screen theatres in nearby communities; nonetheless this theatre is dear to the hearts of New Castle citizens. Converting to a vintage theatre/playhouse will preserve the history of the Castle Theatre, provide a home for our local thespians, as well as open possibilities of new modern theatre construction for first-run movies.

The historic Jennings Building is shovel-ready for the next stage of development. Plans include up to four retail/commercial/restaurant spaces, residential apartments, and a community center for our seniors, childcare, and local events.

After a 2011 fire in our downtown and the resulting condemnation of nearly a block of buildings directly across the street from our NSP1 revitalization project, the City of New Castle aggressively pursued and purchased these properties which allows for creating convenient parking and a totally accessible pedestrian plaza, desperately needed in our revitalization efforts.

Last, but not least, we will continue the efforts to enhance the beauty and vitality of our Court House square, located in the heart of New Castle; this will include creating cohesive façades to the north and west, marketable retail (small business) spaces to the east, and assist property owners in improvement projects.  
Estimated needed: \$5.2 million

INDOT Eligible:

- **Downtown Redevelopment** – Plans include rehabilitating an historic one-block brick street in the target area and rehabilitating one parking lot adjacent to our Court House square. We intend to create a pedestrian plaza, requiring partial street closure, redirecting on-street parking, creating streetscapes, building bio-retention spaces, and completing two accessible parking lots. We intend to update lighting, sidewalks, and crosswalks in the target area.

We will identify and visibly mark bicycle trails throughout the community, connecting both to our parks and to the new downtown pedestrian plaza.

All efforts are geared to making the primary access routes to downtown inviting, accessible, safe, and walkable, yet with plenty of available parking. These projects are planned to precede the proposed INDOT curb-to-curb rehab of State Road 38, tentatively scheduled for 2014-2015. State Road 38/Broad Street is the main thoroughfare through our downtown target area.

Estimated needed: \$4.2 million

IHCDA Eligible:

- **Demolition / Redevelopment of Abandoned Residential Properties Program** -

The City of New Castle has identified over 102 hazardous homes which are vacant and have been deteriorating for as much as eight years. These homes have been offered through tax sales, no less than three times, and are not fit for rehabilitation. Starting in 2012, the City of New Castle has and will continue to set aside 70,000 city dollars annually for demolition of 20 homes per year; homes that have been declared as unsafe. After demolition each property is cleared, the land leveled, and green space established. It is the goal of the City for these properties to reenter the tax base through either Habitat for Humanity housing efforts or neighbor to neighbor acquisition.

A dollar for dollar match of the City's efforts by the Stellar Program would allow us to kick into high gear on this project and have it completed in just three years time.

Estimated Need: \$210,000 (\$70,000 per year for 3 years)

- **Homeowner Refresh-It Program** - Continuing on the path of neighborhood stabilization, The City of New Castle will create a program to assist homeowners with low to moderate income levels whose homes have a need for minor exterior improvements. The program would work with homeowners, local vendors, an active local task force, volunteers, and other not-for-profit agencies to provide qualifying candidates proportionate funding, labor, and equipment to clean-up and fix-up exterior areas of their homes. Projects might include siding, gutters, landscaping, and debris removal. Estimated Need: \$750,000 (\$250,000 per year for 3 years)

- **Homeowner Repair-It Program** - A step beyond the "Refresh-It Program," the City of New Castle would like to create a program to assist homeowners with low to moderate income levels who have need for more substantial home repairs and/or more costly energy efficiency upgrades. Again, the program would work with homeowners, local vendors, an active local task force, volunteers, and other not-for-profit agencies, providing qualifying candidates with proportionate funding, labor, and equipment to repair essential problems with their homes, such as repair/replacement of sidewalks, roofs, gutters, siding, windows, etc. Estimated Need: \$1.5M (\$500,000 per year for 3 years)

Above are the plans, hopes, and dreams for Stellar funds. Beyond Stellar, the City of New Castle is actively working through other grants and revenue sources on New Castle's Airport Runway Extension and Rehabilitation (started in 2008), is creating gardens and orchards on city owned



property, is building a spec building for future industry, is engaging in storm water separation, is improving water and wastewater infrastructure, and is expanding our parks.

**Why New Castle?** Although we are a small community, we have significance in the big picture. New Castle is the County Seat; any improvements to our city enhances the lives of so many people who live in neighboring communities around us: We are home to the county hospital, county library, county jail, county court house: County offices in general. We are caretakers of our own citizens and those of other communities, as evident by our water project which extended much needed water to our southern neighbor, Spiceland. New Castle is also blessed to have three State highways (3, 38 and 103) which run through our community as well as Interstate 70 just two miles to our south. With the assistance of our local EDC, RDC, and obtainable grants, there is currently a healthy development effort being put forth. Even so, our vision is bigger than our dollars. We need Stellar.

New Castle's economy flourished in the industrial years, having been home to a large factory for over a half a century. We fell on hard times when the industry left. Our city and surrounding area entertained a spirit of defeat! That is over.

We have conscientiously chosen to put our hand to the plow and not look back, other than to learn from it.

We have hope for our families and for our future. Through strategic planning, personal investment of time, energy, and money, and through collaboration among elected officials, civic groups, churches, businesses, schools, we know our dreams will become realities.

Being chosen as a recipient in 2013 will put us in a position to complete many of our strategically planned projects quicker and will give New Castle residents the boost that comes with the Stellar Committee's endorsement of their vision. The Stellar provides a shot of much needed Hope.

Since 2010 the City of New Castle and our partners have set a precedent for those who follow, by establishing a living strategic document that we pursue with diligence. We have picked up the Stellar ball that was first kicked in 2010, and we are steadily making points toward winning the game. **OUR TEAM IS IN PLACE** – Mom and Pop, city government, local businesses, community leaders, not-for-profits, our citizens, and our county friends: We've got a lot going on and our team is Stellar Ready to kick it through the goal posts.

We are rebuilding New Castle to be awesome, beautiful, cracker-jack, dynamite, jim-dandy, marvelous, out-of-sight, primo, quality, slick, sensational, top-notch, and wonderful. In another word: **Stellar**.

Thank you for your consideration of the City of New Castle's interest in the Stellar Community Program. The City of New Castle will not disappoint. **Let's Kick It.**

Sincerely,



Greg York,  
Mayor, City of New Castle



**Attachment: Letter of Interest  
Information Sheet**

**Applicant Name and Address:**

City of New Castle, 221 N Main Street, New Castle, IN 47362

**Applicant CEO Name, Phone and Email:**

Greg York, Mayor 765.529.7605 greg-york@cityofnewcastle.net

**Lead Agency Name and Address: (The lead agency does not need to be the applicant).**

above

**Estimated Amount of Request:**

\$12M over 3 years

**Estimated Amount of Combined Local Public and Private Investment:**

\$3M

**General Project Activity Description:**

OCRA funding will be used to further redevelop the downtown, the addition of a downtown plaza; creation of a vintage theatre/playhouse, retail/commercial/restaurant spaces, cohesive fascades, and an adequate community center for both our seniors and residents.

INDOT funds will be used to restructure parking and close a street (section) in the downtown, preserve a historic block street, and assist in completing our transportation infrastructure through the target area improving regional access to vital resources provided as the County Seat.

IHCDA funding will be largely used to bring about new affordable housing in our historic Jennings Building, fastracking demolition of unsafe housing, and assist homeowners with repairs.

**Does the Community have a Comprehensive Plan?**

YES: X      NO: \_\_\_\_\_

**What Year was Comprehensive plan adopted?**

Year: 2013 (revised)

For each category below, identify and provide contact information for members of the Development Team. The Development Team is responsible for the daily implementation of projects and in project coordination.

***Project Coordinator Role: Greg York - Project Management***

**Entity Name  
and Address:**

City of New Castle  
227 N Main Street, New Castle, IN 47362

**Contact**

**Person:**

Greg York, Mayor

**Phone and**

**Email:**

765.529-7605; greg-york@cityofnewcastle.net

***Development Team/Partner Role: Project Oversight, Management Assistance***

**Entity Name  
and Address:**

City of New Castle  
227 N Main Street, New Castle, IN 47362

**Contact**

**Person:**

Deborah Thornhill, Grant Administration

**Phone and**

**Email:**

765.529.7605 ext 3112; debbie-thornhill@cityofnewcastle.net



**Development Team/Partner Role: Economic Development**

Entity Name and Address: New Castle Henry County Economic Development Commission  
100 S Main Street, Suite 203; New Castle, IN 47362  
Contact Person: Corey Murphy, President/CEO  
Phone and Email: 765.521-7402 cmurphy@nchcedc.org

**Development Team/Partner Role: Community and Business Involvement Coordination**

Entity Name and Address: Hope Initiative (Community Issues Task Force)  
1415 Alabama Street, New Castle, IN 47362  
Contact Person: Dr. Cathy Hamilton  
Cathy Hamilton and Associates, LLC  
Phone and Email: 513.295.5360; cathy@cathyhamiltonassociates.com

**Development Team/Partner Role: Housing Coordination**

Entity Name and Address: New Castle Housing Authority  
247 S 14th Street, New Castle, IN 47362  
Contact Person: Jerry Cash  
Phone and Email: 765.529.1517; jerry@newcastleha.org

**Fiduciary Agent/Clerk-Treasurer: Coordination of funding sources and payouts**

Entity Name and Address: City of New Castle, 227 N Main Street, New Castle, IN 47362  
Contact Person: Christy York, Clerk Treasurer  
Phone and Email: 765.521.6803; nccityclerk@gmail.com

**Development Team/Partner Role: Administrative Services**

Entity Name and Address: Interviews currently being conducted  
Contact Person:  
Phone and Email:

**Development Team/Partner Role: Architectural Services**

Entity Name and Address: Interviews to be conducted  
Contact Person:  
Phone and Email:







*Malcolm*  
*Thom*  
*Pat*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED BY ME THIS 19<sup>th</sup> DAY OF February, 2013.

*Greg York*  
Greg York, Mayor  
City of New Castle, Indiana



# CITY OF NEW CASTLE

