"When all these things come together, Crawfordsville will look a lot different."

— Mayor Todd Barton '00

The College and the City Planning Department had pitched the idea of applying for Stellar Communities designation several years ago, but the city was not ready to make the commitment. Mayor Todd Barton '00 was impressed with the idea and agreed to support the application process.

"I'm superstitious," he admits. "And the city had applied for the Stellar Communities designation, the award that could bring the city $17 million in grants and access to state funds. Now, we're seeing the results of that decision."}

The city of Crawfordsville was awarded the Stellar Communities designation in 2008, and the city has made significant progress in improving the quality of life for its residents. The designation has brought in millions of dollars in federal and state grants, which have been used to improve public spaces, increase safety, and enhance the overall quality of life in the city.

"The College was really engaged and a full partner in this process," Mayor Barton notes. "They have been a valuable resource for us as we work to improve our community."
The Gamechanger: FUSION 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

Everyone can talk about putting a park here and trail there, but when you really are willing to change how you do business, that set us apart.

—Mayor Todd Barton ’00

The Centerpiece: BEN HUR 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).
**RING THAT BELL—AGAIN**

MENTION "THE BELL" AT WABASH and we know what you mean. The Monroe 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 Monroe 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-room after her father died. Kirtley could hear the courthouse clock tower's resident bell chiming off the hours from his house.

He could hear the resonating 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 1,700-pound bell of his youth had been melted for the war effort.

"He was absolutely sick," says Sandy Lofland-Brown, president of the nonprofit group Kirtley founded in 1994 to rebuild the structure—"the Clock Tower Restoration Project." 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 tune—'Hymn on the piano and say, 'That's it!'"

Lofland-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 $350,000 raised, the restored tower, clock, and bell are within $50,000 of becoming reality. The Indiana Bicentennial Commission has endowed 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.'"

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**PAYING HIS CIVIC DUES**

Todd Barton is one of several Wabash men to serve their alma mater’s hometown as mayor. Will Hays Jr. ’37 served as mayor from 1986 to 1992. He brought a distinctly personal touch to the office, writing letters that encouraged and inspired, and mentoring young people, including the state’s first female Secretary of State Sue Ann Gilroy. She says his political philosophy of "bring in so many people as you can to the table" stemmed from her days working with Hays.

Dave Gerard ’71 took the municipal reins in 1972 at the same time his Citizen Smith syndicated comic was appearing in more than 100 newspapers across the country. His experiences as mayor often found their way into the strip.

An article in Kiplinger’s Changing Times magazine wondered aloud why Gerard took the mayor’s job.

"This is 64 now, successful in his life’s work, and it might be a time for the slower pace...a season for leaving trouble to others. Yet there he is in the middle of a busy, wide life replete with puzzles, problems, and unanswered questions."

The motivation wasn’t the money – Gerard made $12,000 as mayor. He already had some fame as a cartoonist. And a craving for power! Others had to push him into running for the office.

One of his Citizen Smith cartoons featured the here awaking one morning and deducing, "I had a nightmare last night, I dreamt I was the mayor!"

The only answer the writer could come up with: “He believes he owes something to others and that he can pay his civic dues by serving.”

**A Life of Place**

“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 tells Crawfordsville and the College in a Wabash on My Mind podcast at WM Online.