



COLUMBIA CITY  
**CONNECT**



# 2025 Small Business Development Resource Guide



# ABOUT COLUMBIA CITY CONNECT

Columbia City Connect is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and revitalizing Columbia City's historic downtown. Designated by Indiana Main Street and affiliated with the National Main Street Center, we are part of a nationwide network of over 1,200 Main Street communities working to keep America's historic downtowns vibrant and economically thriving.

Our mission is to enhance the quality of life in Columbia City by beautifying public spaces, creating engaging community events, and supporting local businesses. Through initiatives like First Fridays, Cabin Fever, Walk of Trees, and Ladies Night Out, we bring people together to celebrate our unique downtown.

Beyond hosting events, Columbia City Connect also works to strengthen our community by offering workshops for business owners, administering the City's Façade Grant program, organizing Downtown Cleanup Day, and recently launching a Downtown Historic Walking Tour to celebrate our city's rich history.

At Columbia City Connect, we are proud to help make our downtown a dynamic, welcoming space for residents and visitors alike, ensuring it remains a heart of commerce, culture, and connection for years to come.

Sign up for our business e-newsletter here: <https://columbiacityconnect.us18.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=f99b3d31cc7850e3f393be55e&id=1bc9d32873>

## COLUMBIA CITY CONNECT STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Niki Keister

[niki@columbiacityconnect.com](mailto:niki@columbiacityconnect.com)

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Abby Carter

[abby@columbiacityconnect.com](mailto:abby@columbiacityconnect.com)

# FINANCIAL RESOURCES

COLUMBIA CITY REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (RDC)

## REVOLVING LOAN FUND

The initiative aims to enhance the physical and economic vitality of the downtown Columbia City TIF District by offering financial incentives for building improvements. It seeks to encourage private investment in the area and address key factors that contribute to the district's overall economic success.

- The minimum loan amount is \$10,000. / The maximum loan amount is \$50,000.

Meetings on the second Tuesday at noon in City Hall. Program scheduled for June 2025.

WHITLEY COUNTY EDC

## MICROLOAN FUND

The Microloan Fund provides working capital for businesses in Whitley County. Recipients must be either currently or formerly engaged with the Whitley County EDC's Small Business Entrepreneurship Initiative (SBEI) program.

- The maximum loan amount is \$10,000

Dale Buuk, President of the Whitley County EDC, [dbuuk@whitleyedc.com](mailto:dbuuk@whitleyedc.com) or 260-244-5506

[Micro Loan Fund Link](#)

WHITLEY COUNTY EDC

## COMMUNITY AND SMALL BUSINESS LOAN FUND

The Community and Small Business Fund provides loans for working capital, equipment, building improvements (if no other RLF program is available), and matching funds for façade grant improvements.

- The maximum loan amount is \$25,000

Dale Buuk, President of the Whitley County EDC, [dbuuk@whitleyedc.com](mailto:dbuuk@whitleyedc.com) or 260-244-5506

[Small Business Loan Fund Link](#)

WHITLEY COUNTY EDC

## GROWTH VENTURE LOAN FUND

The Growth Venture Fund is primarily designed as a business incentive program and can be used for any growth or start-up related expense excluding payroll/salaries.

- The maximum loan amount is \$100,000

Dale Buuk, President of the Whitley County EDC, [dbuuk@whitleyedc.com](mailto:dbuuk@whitleyedc.com) or 260-244-5506

[Growth Venture Loan Fund Link](#)

BDF / BRIGHTPOINT

## SMALL BUSINESS LOAN

The Brightpoint Development Fund (BDF) provides affordable financing for small-business owners looking to grow their business and entrepreneurs who are just starting their business. BDF provide alternative financing for customers who are unable to borrow from traditional lenders due to past credit problems or are needing only a small amount of capital. Business development services are also provided to assist with business plan writing, registration, marketing, bookkeeping, and other essential activities.

Brightpoint Development Fund: [Small Business Loan Link](#) or 260-399-4108

# GRANTS & TAX INCENTIVES

COLUMBIA CITY REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (RDC)

## FACADE IMPROVEMENT MATCHING GRANT

Facade Improvement Matching Grant Program stimulates efforts to improve the street appearance of Columbia City's commercial and business facades. All grants awarded require a matching dollar-for-dollar expenditure by the owner or tenant. Open May 31-August 31

- The maximum grant amount is \$3,000.

Meetings on the second Tuesday at noon in City Hall.

Chip Hill, [chill@columbiacity.net](mailto:chill@columbiacity.net) or 260-248-5114

[Facade Grant Application](#)

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## FEDERAL REHABILITATION INVESTMENT TAX CREDIT (RITC)

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program encourages private sector investment in the rehabilitation and re-use of historic buildings. The RITC is a program administered by the National Park Service and provides a 20% credit on qualified expenses toward the owners federal income taxes.

- The minimum project amount \$10,000
- The maximum project amount is \$250,000

Ashley Thomas, [asthomas@dnr.in.gov](mailto:asthomas@dnr.in.gov) or 317-234-7034

# MARKETING

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Submit your event: <https://www.columbiacityconnect.com/events/community/submission/>

## THE UPDATE

Submit your news to Abby Carter [abby@columbiacityconnect.com](mailto:abby@columbiacityconnect.com)

## GOOGLE

Claim your business listing and reach more customers by visiting [www.google.com/places](http://www.google.com/places)

The process is free and takes about 30 minutes.

## JOIN IN LOCAL EVENTS

Columbia City Connect hosts events throughout the year. Join in!

For more information, check out the website:

<https://www.columbiacityconnect.com/downtown-events/>

## 2025 LOCAL EVENTS HOSTED BY COLUMBIA CITY CONNECT

Cabin Fever - March

Flower Crawl - May

First Fridays - May-October

Wheels of Whitley County - August

Ladies Night Out - October

Holiday Open House - November

Shop Small Saturday - November

Walk of Trees - Nov. & Dec.

# BUSINESS RESOURCES

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\*Listed in Alphabetical Order

## COLUMBIA CITY CONNECT

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Elevates and energizes downtown Columbia City through events like First Fridays, the Walk of Trees, and Ladies Night Out; offers no cost business seminars; builds a stronger community through preservation-based economic development.

Website: [columbiacityconnect.com](http://columbiacityconnect.com)

Email: [niki@columbiacityconnect.com](mailto:niki@columbiacityconnect.com)

## INDIANA SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Offers no-cost business advising, training, referrals, and a library of cultivated tools and resources to help businesses, from startup through sale or retirement, succeed.

Website: [isbdc.org](http://isbdc.org)

Phone: 260-481-0500

## SCORE NORTHEAST INDIANA

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Provides free and confidential one-on-one business counseling by phone, email, and in-person in Northeastern Indiana. We also conduct workshops for both start-up entrepreneurs and seasoned small business owners.

Website: <https://www.score.org/northeastindiana>

Phone: 260-422-2601

## STATE OF INDIANA

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The state of Indiana is dedicated to making your business experience easier than ever. INBiz is your one-stop resource for registering your business and ensuring it complies with state laws and regulations

Website: <https://inbiz.in.gov/about>

Phone: (855) 773-4647

## WHITLEY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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A paid membership organization that provides networking events and marketing opportunities that will help you grow your business.

Website: [whitleychamber.org](http://whitleychamber.org)

Phone: 260-723-7131

## WHITLEY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (EDC)

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Offers free resources, guidance, and incentives to help Whitley County businesses achieve success and growth.

Website: [whitleyedc.com](http://whitleyedc.com)

Phone: 260-244-5506

## WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER (WEOC)

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Offers no-cost business advising, training, referrals, and a library of cultivated tools and resources to help businesses, from startup through sale or retirement, succeed.

Website: <https://niic.net/wbc/>

Phone: 260-407-6442

# CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY

## LEADERSHIP

### MAYOR

Ryan Daniel

### BOARD OF WORKS

Mayor Ryan Daniel

Lisa Smith

Dan Weigold

Clerk-Treasurer Rosie Coyle

\*Meetings: 2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month at 5pm in Council Chambers

### CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Ryan Daniel

President, Dan Weigold

Jennifer Middleton

Jennifer Romano

Tad Varga

Leslie Robinson

Clerk-Treasurer Rosie Coyle

\*Meetings: 2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month at 6pm in Council Chambers



## DOING BUSINESS & RETAIL DATA

Retail Market Profile: <https://www.columbiacityconnect.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Retail-Market-Profile-Columbia-City.pdf>

ESRI & Main Street America Market Overview: <https://www.columbiacityconnect.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Columbia-City-IN-Esri-data-2.pdf>

Columbia City Connect Transformation Strategy: <https://www.columbiacityconnect.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Columbia-City-IN-Transformation-Strategy-Report-October-4-5-2023-1.pdf>

Columbia City Downtown Revitalization Plan: <https://www.columbiacityconnect.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Columbia-City-IN-Transformation-Strategy-Report-October-4-5-2023-1.pdf>

## CITY SERVICES

### CITY UTILITIES

As a business within city limits, you have access to a variety of utility services, including electricity, water, sewage, and stormwater. Businesses are billed monthly for these services. For any utility-related questions, you can contact the Utilities Department at 260.248.5100.

### RECYCLING & SPECIAL TRASH

Whitley County Solid Waste, located at 701 S Line Street, accepts a variety of waste items, including hazardous materials, which cannot be placed in your regular trash bin. They also offer recycling services to all of Whitley County. For more information, you can contact them at 260.248.3132.

### SNOW REMOVAL

Businesses are required by ordinance to remove snow and ice from sidewalks within 24 hours of each weather event. It is recommended that businesses wait for snowplows to pass before clearing sidewalks and driveways, as they may become covered again. Additionally, businesses are prohibited from throwing or plowing snow back into the street.

# CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY



## PLANNING, BUILDING, UTILITIES, & ORDINANCES

These agencies and officials are available to help navigate through the various processes and rules regarding land use, building, development, public safety, utilities, and local ordinances.

### PLANNING & BUILDING

The Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department provides planning, zoning, and building services for all of Whitley County. Department staff members guide and assist residents and businesses through regulatory processes for new construction and building renovation projects, proposed land use changes, new signs and other structures, and a variety of other matters related to current conditions and future plans for the community.

- Nathan Bilger, Planning Director, 260-248-3112
- Craig Wagner, Chief Building Inspector, 260-248-3112

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Community Development Director serves as a liaison between businesses, residents, nonprofits, community groups, utilities, and government departments for the betterment of the community.

- Chip Hill, Community Development Director, 260-248-5114

### WHITLEY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Whitley County Health Department ensures food safety through various permits, including those for retail food stores, food service establishments, mobile food units, and temporary food services.

- Traci Little, Environmental Health Food Specialist, 260-248-3121 [tlittle@whitleygov.com](mailto:tlittle@whitleygov.com)

### COLUMBIA CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT - PREVENTION & SAFETY

The fire department assists property owners and performs inspections during construction and on regular intervals to ensure compliance with fire safety rules and best practices.

- Chris LaRue, Fire Marshal, 260-248-5160 Code

### ENFORCEMENT COORDINATOR

A new position in the City Police Department starting in spring 2025, the code enforcement coordinator will facilitate consistent application of city codes and rules as well as providing education outreach.

- Position scheduled to begin spring 2025

### COLUMBIA CITY CLERK-TREASURER'S OFFICE

The Clerk-Treasurer manages both the administrative and financial operations of local government, overseeing tasks such as utility billing, City finances, meeting scheduling, issuing permits, maintaining city records, managing budgets, and administering taxes.

- Rosie Coyle, Clerk-Treasurer, 260-248-5100



# DIRECTORY



## CITY CONTACT NUMBERS

Police Department	248-5121
Utility Office	248-5100
Water/Stormwater Dept.	248-5118
Mayor	248-5111
City Clerk-Treasurer	248-5112
Community Development	248-5114
Dispatch	248-5123
Parks Department	248-5180
Fire Department	248-5160

## COUNTY CONTACT NUMBERS

Whitley County Sheriff	244-6410
Whitley County Auditor	248-3100
Whitley County Assessor	248-3901
Whitley County Clerk	248-3102
Whitley County Treasurer	248-3105
Whitley County Recorder	248-3106
Whitley County Engineer	248-3107
Whitley County Drainage	248-3108
Whitley County Planning/ Building	248-3112
Whitley County Health Dept	248-2131
Columbia Township Trustee	248-0045

## MISCELLANEOUS NUMBERS

Columbia City Connect	264-8062
Century Link New Service	800-788-3500
CenturyLink Repair	800-788-3600
Mediacom	800-874-2924
Surf Broadband	888-274-6381
NIPSCO	800-464-7726
Recycling Center	248-3132
Whitley Environmental	248-8300
Post Office	244-5962
Post & Mail Newspaper	244-5153



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