

ADVERTISEMENT

## INDIANA'S BOOMING I-74 CORRIDOR

As the economy recovers, many companies are looking to strengthen their supply chains. Sites with strong infrastructure and a way to get product to market quickly and efficiently are winning out in today's post-pandemic economy.

In central Indiana, business development activity is at an all-time high along the I-74 corridor in Shelby County, just southeast of the I-65 and I-70 crossroads that connect Indianapolis to the rest of the nation.

As companies continue to seek regionalization of the supply chain, interest in the area has skyrocketed, says Brian Asher, Shelby County Development Corp. executive director. In the last four years, the county has attracted more than \$1 billion in investment, with additional prospects in the pipeline, he adds.

Asher credits the surge in interest to county officials' foresight in investing in road, water sewer and electric infrastructure improvements over the last decade to attract a more diversified economic base to the area's already ideal location.

Those efforts are paying off.

In 2018, biofuel company POET announced it was constructing a \$160 million facility in Shelbyville, the county seat, adding 45 jobs and \$110

million in corn purchases for farmers. Production of E15, a higher octane, cleaner burning and lower cost blend of 15 percent biofuel, began in May 2020.

No sooner had POET announced its project, when development began on a 100-acre site at the Pleasant View exit a few miles up the road. In May, Philadelphia-based discount retailer Five Below broke ground on its planned \$100 million Midwest distribution and e-commerce center, the county's first distribution center.

"The county has been working diligently to invest in infrastructure improvements to move the area from a strictly auto supply manufacturing base to one that is highly attractive to a range of industries," says Asher. "When POET came in, it opened the door to a lot of interest in the I-74 area."

Access to interstate highways, two rail lines, Indianapolis International Airport, a FedEx hub as well as close proximity to global air cargo hubs in Cincinnati and Louisville make the area highly attractive for advanced manufacturing and logistics. "We also have a strong workforce development program that is turning out highly skilled employees," Asher notes, adding to the area's desirability.

# HOOSIER ENERGY

"The Five Below announcement attracted interest from other big box companies. Up and down the I-74 corridor, site selectors are seeing the advantage of our location, lower tax rate, access to skilled labor and built-out infrastructure," says Asher.

The uptick in activity reflects a growing trend in corporate location decisions. According to a recent survey by the Site Selectors Guild, manufacturing location decisions continue to be especially active post pandemic due to high demand for consumer goods and industrial durables.

The recent announcements are welcome news. RushShelby Energy, a distribution electric cooperative that is

one of Hoosier's Energy's 18 member cooperatives that serve central and southern Indiana and southeastern Illinois, expects to see at least a 20 percent increase in commercial electric growth over the next few years.

"That's significant," says David Toll, vice president of administration for the cooperative. "Obviously, for the community, it means jobs, taxes and revenue. For the co-op, bringing in new load and new revenues helps us serve our members better at a lower cost. We've had a flat load curve for several years. Now, our growth prospects are changing for the better. That's a win-win for everyone," says Toll.

Asher agrees. "County officials look at any business that comes to Shelby County as a true partnership. We want business to succeed just as much as they want to succeed. Economic incentives are just part of the picture. It's the ongoing conversations with industry leaders in the community that keep them here," he says.

Those conversations are often the key differentiator in the decision-making process. For example, Hoosier Energy, RushShelby's energy supplier, was planning a new substation near the industrial park where POET wanted to come in. "During negotiations, we worked with Hoosier Energy to locate it closer to POET. In the end, we not only helped operations, but also facilitated commercial load growth in the area," says Toll.

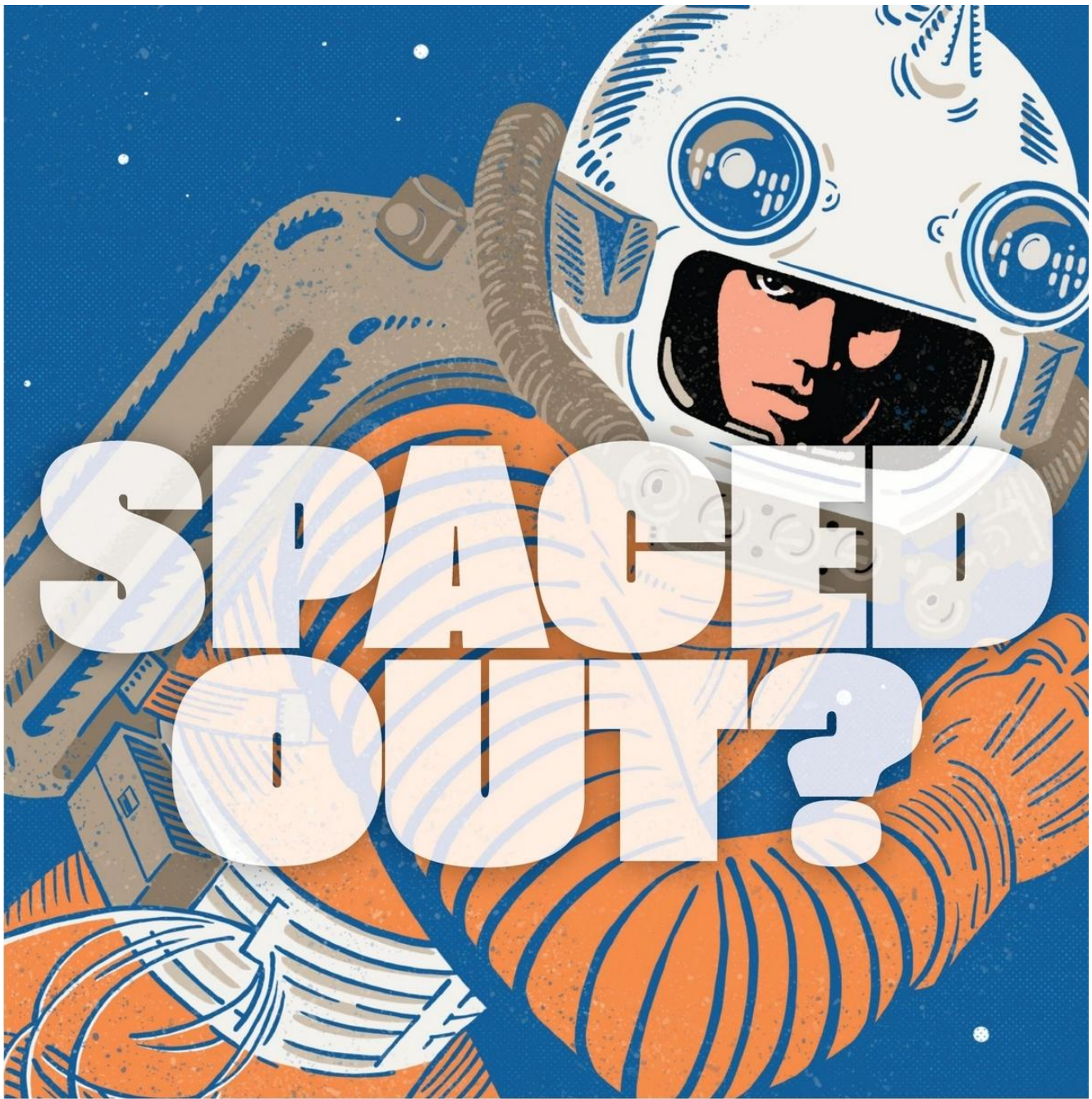
RushShelby Energy also worked with Five Below to offer a favorable rate structure and to build a new electric line to the e-commerce center.

"What's nice is that we all work together as a community," says Toll.

"Utilities, the city and county governments, economic development leaders — we all have the same mission. When companies come, they don't have to talk to the city, then go to the county and have a different conversation, then decide if those visions are different. We work together. We make decisions together. It helps things go smoother and faster. And in the long run, everyone benefits."



In May, Philadelphia-based discount retailer Five Below broke ground on its planned \$100 million Midwest distribution and e-commerce center, the county's first distribution center.



**PRIME INDUSTRIAL LOCATIONS  
WITH POWER, ACCESS AND INCENTIVES.**

If you're looking for outstanding space, check out [HoosierSites.com](https://www.hoosiersites.com). Hoosier Energy will become your secret source for finding the perfect existing facility or shovel-ready site. Great locations with access to highways, runways, rail and ports. But the best part is our flexibility in creating competitive rates for new and expanding businesses. For many decision-makers, when space starts feeling like the final frontier, Hoosier Energy becomes their first thought.

HOOSIER ENERGY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER.

**HOOSIER  
ENERGY**

[HoosierSites.com](https://www.hoosiersites.com) 812.876.0294