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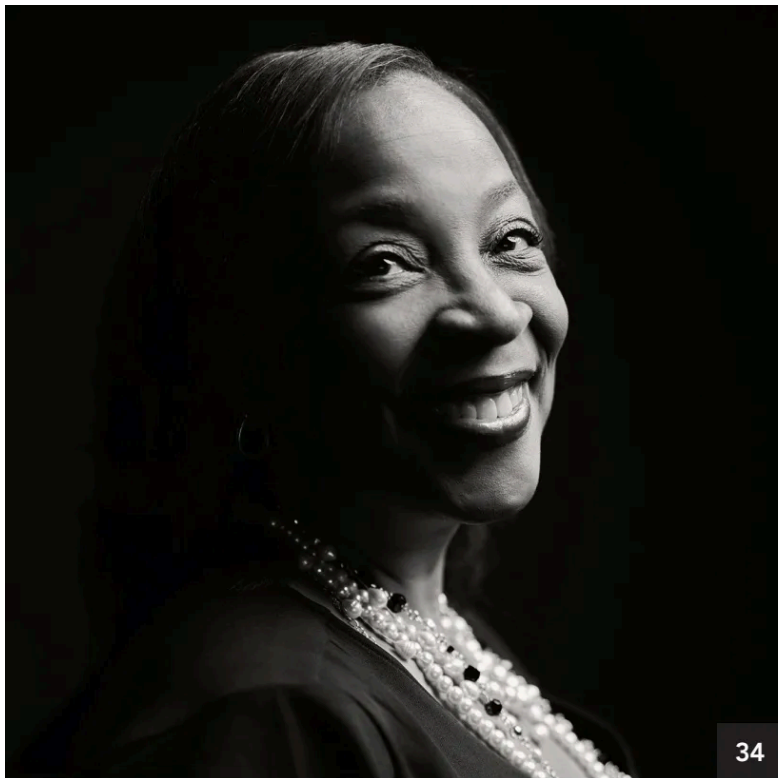
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SHARON TUCKER

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## LEADERSHIP

*"When a life is lost, we mourn."*

These were the words of Mayor Sharon Tucker following the death of Linzell Parhm who died in an officer involved shooting during a traffic stop.

*"Public safety is a vital and difficult service."*

These were also words of Mayor Sharon Tucker following the passing of Linzell Parhm.

Two months to the day after Sharon Tucker became mayor of the second largest city in Indiana, Fort Wayne experienced a devastating reality that is all too frequent around the country. Fort Wayne is not immune to the problems of the world. Welcome to reality, Mayor Tucker. Yet this defining moment gives us every indication for the type of leadership she provides.

She did not jump to conclusions one way or the other.

She did not vilify the young man or the police officer.

She acknowledged the pain of loss as well as the risk and stress of policing.

She was immediately transparent—to the family first, and then the community.

She allowed time for a thorough investigation.

She focused on the long view—however the investigation lands, how can we build trust, increase communication, and develop training to assist in avoiding future violent confrontations.

It is much easier to focus our attention on downtown development or bask in our status on a dozen "best of" lists than it is to focus on issues of life and death, or race, or lack of jobs, or mental health or poverty. But it doesn't mean those things don't exist if we don't talk about them. And it doesn't mean any one of these topics couldn't derail any or all of our growth and development success.

The beauty of Mayor Tucker is that she is never afraid of conversation. And only from conversations can collaboration, trust and understanding be born.

No doubt the resulting conversations around the death of Linzell Parhm will be messy. There is also little hope everyone will be equally satisfied with whatever conclusion comes to be. But at least we know everyone will be heard. Can we realistically ask for more than this?

Life would be much easier if everything had a right or wrong answer—instead we live in grey space with ideas and opinions that are diametrically opposed. The bridge between the two can only be conversations and listening. This is who Mayor Tucker is. This is her superpower. We are in good hands.

*"It's critical that we come together as residents of our great community and support one another."*

These were also the words of Mayor Sharon Tucker.

**John Christensen,**  
jchristensen@fortwayne.com

# FORT WAYNE

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### President and CEO

Lori Fritz  
lfritz@fortwayne.com

### Publisher

John Christensen  
jchristensen@fortwayne.com

### Senior Art Director

Caroline Markley

### Managing Editor

Steve Penhollow

### Associate Art Director

Tory Boroff

### Contributing Writers

Quinton Dixie, Tom Freistoffer,  
Sarah Giaquinta, Melissa Glaze,  
Beth Goldsmith, Paul Helmke,  
Dena Jacquay, Sarah Lance,  
Fred McKissack, Marilyn Moran Townsend,  
Graham Richard, Dawn Rosemond,  
John Ryan, Matt Sexton,  
Diane Shaw, Matt Smith,  
Chuck Surack, Nancy Townsend,  
Mayor Sharon Tucker,  
John Urbahns, Larry Weigand

### Contributing Photographers

Jared Christiansen, DJ E-Clyps,  
Matthew Owen

### On The Cover

Mayor Sharon Tucker

### Cover Photography

DJ E-Clyps

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Mayor Tucker, your university is so proud of the strong leader you have become! We wish you many years of success in guiding our great city.

*Sharon Tucker is an Indiana Tech alumna, Class of 2013.*

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# MARK THE DATE

WHAT TO KNOW WHERE TO GO

**AUGUST 1–AUGUST 10:** Before too long, we'll see jukebox musicals showcasing the oeuvre of Barry Salder, Napoleon XIV, Bo Donaldson and the Heywoods, Terry Jacks, Taco, Klymaxx, Sisqo, Lou Bega and Baha Men, and even the most ardent fan of this genre will be forced to conclude that it has run its course. Well, here is a jukebox musical that was worth doing and is well worth seeing: **"Beautiful: The Carole King Musical."** King was the writer of such classics as "Natural Woman," "I Feel the Earth Move," "You've Got a Friend," and "Will You Love Me Tomorrow." The show can be enjoyed at the Wagon Wheel Theatre. \$21–\$51, 2515 E. Center Street, Warsaw, 574.267.8041, [wagonwheelcenter.org](http://wagonwheelcenter.org)

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## MARK THE DATE



JARED CHRISTIANSEN

**AUGUST 25:** It is shaping up to be Fort Wayne's version of Woodstock. With better sanitation and a lower tolerance for mud, of course. It's **Concert on the Farm**, which happens every August at Salomon Farm. It always features some of the best local acts. This year, it's Sunny Taylor, Rosalind and the Way, the Debutants and the Hubie Ashcraft Band. Shigs In Pit will provide the comestibles and there will be a booze vendor. For you die-hard flower children, fresh flowers will be available for purchase \$5, 1:30 pm, 817 W. Dupont Road, 260.427.6790



**AUGUST 18:** Every August, 20 blocks of downtown are cordoned off with every cord the city owns. It all happens for **Open Streets**, an enormous block party. "Callin' out around the world. Are you ready for a brand-new beat? Summer's here and the time is right for dancing in the street," the city seems to be saying to us although it always changes the words slightly so there is no copyright infringement. There will be food, games and live music on this asphalt, and a lot of angry drivers on the outskirts of the party who forgot what day it was. Noon–4 pm on Calhoun Street.

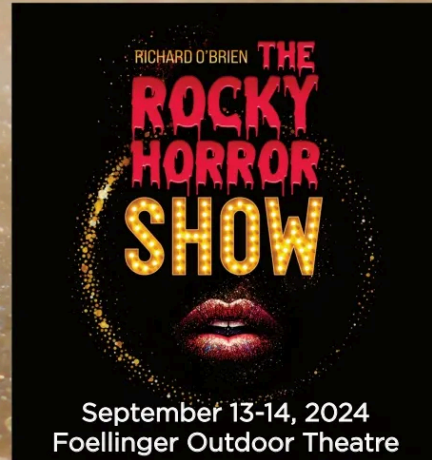
**AUGUST 11:** The Embassy Theatre Black & White Film Series involves screenings of silent films with live organ accompaniment. In August, a film will be shown that has not only been called one of the greatest of the silent era but one of the greatest of all time: Erich von Stroheim's "**Greed**." Stroheim's original version was eight hours long. MGM and Irving Thalberg had the film cut down to two-and-a-half hours, against Stroheim's wishes. Any opportunity to see this film on the big screen, even in its truncated 180-minute version, is a rare treat. Dennis Scott is the featured organist. 3 pm, \$10, 125 W. Jefferson Boulevard, [fwembassytheatre.org](http://fwembassytheatre.org)



**AUGUST 9–11:** Perusing the internet, I discovered that Hometown is a more interesting place than I knew. A Hometown farmer named Rapin Andrews started keeping a weather diary in the early 19th century that is now in possession of the National Weather Service. There is a building in Hometown that is not now a bank but was a bank when John Dillinger put a bullet hole in it. You can celebrate these and other notable events at the **Hometown Heritage Days Festival**. 15330 Lima Road, Hometown



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HOOSIER SWAGGER

Growing up in the heat and humidity of Indiana summers, I could be found at many of the local basketball camps. Some weeks were in the steamy, un-air-conditioned gym at Concordia High School, and other weeks were on the hot, outdoor pavement for McCracken Basketball Camp. I had great coaches who taught me how to box out and claim my space as a post player and be ready to rebound or receive the pass inside. Those coaches taught me to stand tall, pay attention to my posture on and off the court, walk with pride and be a team player with both humility and confidence. It was hot, hard, demanding and absolutely fantastic.

Recent milestones in our community reminded me of the lessons learned from those basketball-filled summers. Because none of this would have happened without the same sweat equity and productive disagreements. It did not happen without the collaborative teamwork that we see on the basketball court happening among the public officials, private businesses and nonprofit agencies. And now is the time to stand tall with confidence and continued team effort to keep the momentum going.

The residents of Allen County have much to celebrate, and we can walk with a little swagger and gratitude for the abundant lifestyle enjoyed here. A thriving, diverse local economy has enhanced our local art and music scene, it has sustained our award-winning parks and literally paved the way for our trail system. I am a longtime local realtor, and it has been a joy to witness the increased number of estate homes over \$1.5 million populate all

quadrants of the county. The increase in neighborhood pride is also a testament to community engagement and people-first policy. Fifteen years ago, there were no mugs, t-shirts or bars with the local zip code as a proudly branded logo.

The appointment of Mayor Sharon Tucker exemplified collaborative team effort in the midst of incredible economic momentum and growth. Tucker's extensive career in insurance and wealth management coupled with her leadership in the nonprofit sector within our local community aids her new point guard position as mayor of the second largest city in Indiana.

Continued momentum of economic growth is not a guarantee any more than winning a close basketball game, even if you have five talented starters. However, adherence to the established Allen County Together (ACT) economic development action plan will keep our community winning. Mayor Tucker is uniquely suited to perpetuate the economic momentum as long as the teamwork among all community partners continues with the mayor's office.

Hoosier pride is about accepting that we ARE a nationally recognized community, and we have the opportunity and responsibility to make meaningful impact for the next generation. We can walk with swagger and confidence in our commitment to excellence in innovation, inclusivity, belonging and people-first policies that continue to attract and retain top talent. Now is the time to get off the bench and follow the ACT game plan in support of the new point guard, Mayor Sharon Tucker.


—Beth Goldsmith

Welcome, Mayor Tucker!

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Confidence

Character



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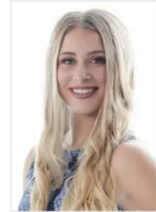
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Mayor Sharon Tucker and the City of Fort Wayne are working together to provide an enhanced quality of life for all residents, neighborhoods, and businesses.

Fort Wayne's growth and momentum are leading to new economic development opportunities, strong and vibrant neighborhoods, investments in local infrastructure projects, enhancements to our parks, and the continued revitalization of downtown.



FORTWAYNE.COM 13



## CELEBRATING **LEADERSHIP**

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## LESSONS **LEARNED**

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As someone who served as mayor from 1988–2000, I'd like to offer a few suggestions for Mayor Sharon Tucker, and the citizens of Fort Wayne, to consider as she deals with the challenges in taking over that position:

**Hire Good People, But Ask Tough Questions.** City government is responsible for many diverse and different functions and has many people employed who help see that these city services are provided successfully. There is no way that a single individual can

understand all the complexities involved in city government.

Mayor Tucker, you inherited a team that worked well together under Mayor Henry. Hopefully these are people you trust and can rely on and who aren't afraid to express differing opinions





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## CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP

when major decisions are being considered. When openings occur, hire the best available talent. You may be pressured to select political supporters for openings—and there is nothing wrong with that if they will do a good job—but it is important to remember that the best politics is doing the best possible job in providing citizens the services they expect.

One of the best ways to make sure your staff is performing well is to ask tough questions—know enough to spot possible weaknesses and see what alternatives the staff has considered. If they seem uncertain, more attention may be required. Remember, though, that it is not the mayor's job to be the police chief or the planning director or any other position—get good people, ask good questions and let them do their job.

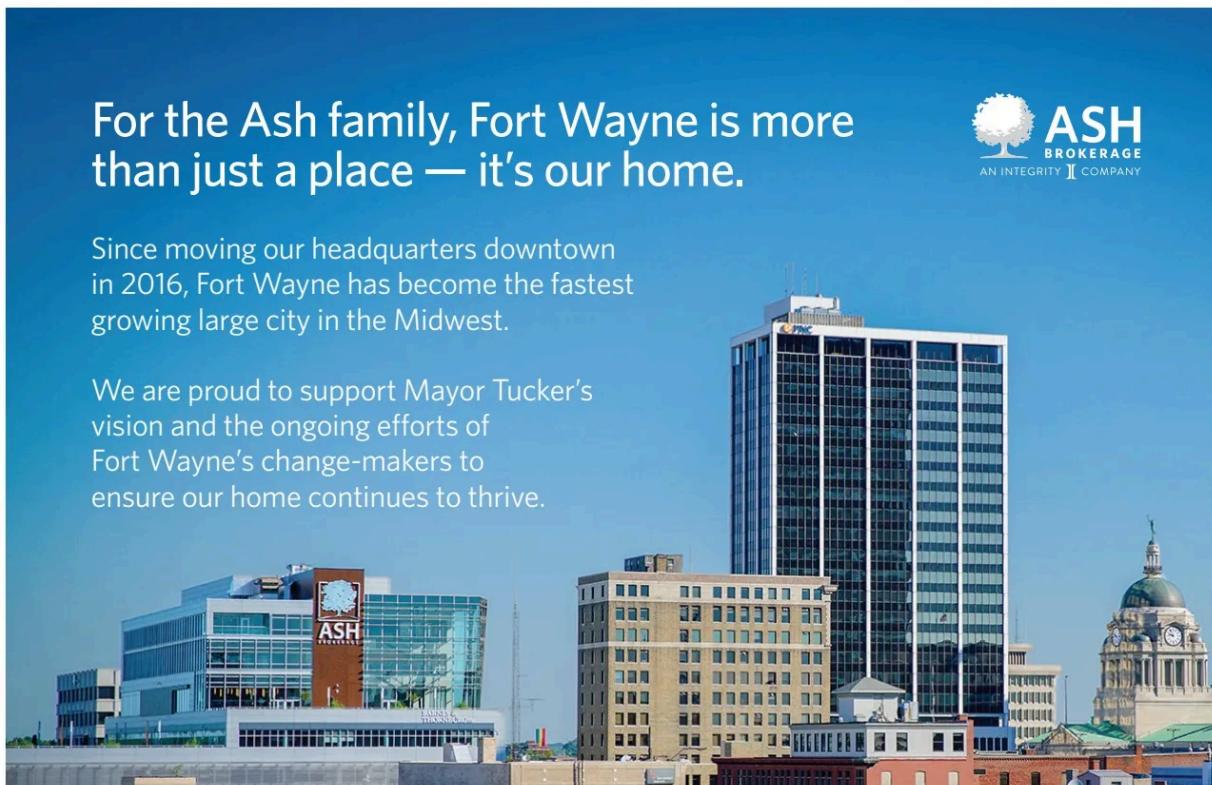
**Be Prepared for Bad News, But Don't Let it Get You Down.** Even with the best plans and people, something

is bound to go wrong sometime. I've often pointed out that good things (like economic development projects and other major initiatives) take a long time to bring to fruition, but bad things (like shootings, business closures, severe weather events) can happen overnight. One of my standard directives to staff was "no surprises"—I wanted to know what might go wrong, and how we were preparing for it, before it happened. How we judge those in authority should be based on how they respond to those crises. Be transparent and direct with the community about what happened, why it happened and what the plans are going forward. Leadership relies on educating and informing our "bosses"—the citizens who elect our officials and provide the revenues and public support for local government.

**Push for a Better Community—and Have Fun!** Set some big, attainable goals—as mayor, you have a unique position that can really make a positive

difference. Change is inevitable, but sometimes scary to people. Paint a picture of what you want our city to look like in the future, and then do what you can to get people to buy into that vision with you. Work with everyone who has a stake in the community and share credit with all who help. I always enjoyed meeting new people, visiting their neighborhoods and businesses and hearing their stories. They're the ones that will help you and the city get through tough times. Being mayor was a great job—the highs were high, the lows were low, but it was always exciting. Fort Wayne has been blessed with good leadership over the years. Have fun, Mayor Tucker, and do well—we all want to see you and the city succeed! 🍷

— Paul Helmke, professor of practice at Indiana University's O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs (Bloomington), and director of the IU Civic Leaders Center



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## CELEBRATING **LEADERSHIP**

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## MAKING A **TRANSFORMATION**

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Congratulations Mayor Tucker!  
You have a great leadership journey  
ahead and many people ready to  
help you.

As mayor of Fort Wayne from  
2000 to 2008, I was given too much

personal credit for the creation of  
the Harrison Square revitalization  
project and subsequent opening of  
Parkview Field in 2009, and possibly  
not enough credit for navigating the  
tornado, three floods, ice storms

knocking out power and the fallout  
and fear of 9/11 where immediate  
leadership and highly visible action  
was needed.

Either way, the reality is the office  
of mayor requires different leadership




The University of Saint Francis is excited about Fort Wayne's future under the leadership of Mayor Sharon Tucker. Together, we strive to make our city the best that it can be.



UNIVERSITY OF  
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## Congratulations, Mayor Tucker!

The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne proudly welcomes our first Black woman mayor! With a legacy of leadership and community service, Mayor Tucker has made history and inspired us all. From her experience with for-profit and nonprofit businesses to City Council and initiatives like PASE and the Women in Politics Forum, her impact is profound.

***Here's to a bright and inclusive future  
under Mayor Tucker's leadership!***



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## CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP

skills for different situations from community emergencies to long-term transformational opportunities and nobody does it alone.


Mayors have the power to "bring people to the table." They can use their leverage and influence to convene, connect and collaborate for action. They can call on the experience of those from outside government who have had business turnaround experience.

Our administration frequently found the talent for transformational change right in the community at local companies, colleges and not-for-profit organizations. For example, when Fort Wayne needed to create rapid-cycle business improvement (waste reduction) teams, we brought in seasoned business problem solvers from companies like ITT, GE, Rea Wire, BAE, Parkview Health and Raytheon to work with city employees who were learning to use Lean Six Sigma tools


to improve services and eliminate waste. We created more than 130 BEST teams (Building Excellent Services Team) that were crucial in achieving the \$30 million in savings and cash safety net. Workdays lost to accidents decreased by 95%. Potholes were fixed in four hours vs four days. Permitting and inspections process time was streamlined to encourage business investment. At the same time, city employees gained new skills for leading teams and now had many more tools in their toolbox for solving problems.

Outside advisors cannot work effectively, though, if traditional thinking about what's possible blocks their innovation. Success came when local government leaders were willing to put everything on the table and establish teams to think and plan differently. Examples for this type of exploration today could include creating rapid action plans for intergovernmental pooled purchasing,

business process improvement, technology innovation, asset sales or leases, competitive outsourcing, energy cost reduction, fee for services and many other practices. Of course, metrics, timetables and leadership accountability must be part of the high performance action led by the convening power of the mayor.

The results of this cross pollination between government, business, education and social services over the last two decades play no small part in Fort Wayne's current ranking as the eighth best run city in the country. And for those where much is given, much is to be expected. Transformative and collaborative leadership is the key to retain and gain jobs, improve public safety, revitalize neighborhoods and improve basic services. 

—Graham Richard, Clean Energy Advisor; Co-Founder Orchard Collaborative.



# CULTURE

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### Shoulder Pain Treatment

Shoulder pain can be debilitating, making everything from throwing and lifting to dressing and sleeping an ordeal. Even giving or receiving a warm hug can be excruciating. Finding the right shoulder pain treatment can mean the difference between continuous suffering and improving quality of life. At QC Kinetix, we focus on regenerative medicine for shoulder pain, providing non-surgical, drug-free solutions that target your pain's source.

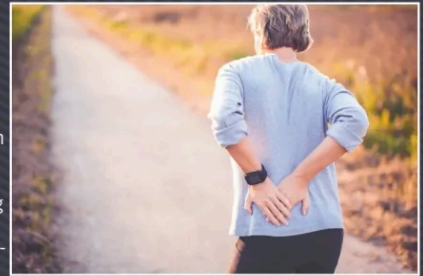
Discover how our treatments have helped others. Instead of "pain management," we seek to resolve your pain at its source.



### Hip Pain and Hip Replacement Alternatives

The hip is a powerful, hard-working joint supported by a complex network of ligaments, tendons, and muscles. Together, they stabilize the pelvis and legs through all our motions. Whether through injury, overuse, or aging, severe hip pain can make walking, standing, or sitting unbearable. Hip pain can make dressing and bathing a chore and activities like golf or tennis impossible.

Fortunately, regenerative medicine offers a valuable hip replacement alternative. QC Kinetix's drug-free treatments stimulate your body's inherent healing mechanisms and train them to provide genuine relief for hip pain. We target the source of your pain, guiding your body to natural. Learn how our patients have benefited from our regenerative treatments for painful joints.



### Regenerative Treatments for Ankle Pain

Ankle pain can strike at any age and can be severely limiting; it can constrain your ability to walk, stand, and pursue the activities you love. Ankle pain not only interferes with work and hobbies but can also make basic tasks like bathing and dressing a challenge.

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## CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP

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## ADAPTIVE APPROACH

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Successful growth requires sustained and adaptive leadership, as leaders often find themselves stepping into new roles that demand they grow and adjust their approaches along the way. Leaders must sometimes look through a different lens and reinvent themselves as their roles change.

When I became president and CEO of Greater Fort Wayne Inc. almost six

years ago, I maintained my leadership approach but adjusted my perspective, recognizing my new role as the organization's face.

We are at a similar inflection point with new leadership at the City of Fort Wayne. Mayor Sharon Tucker is ready to lead with a fresh perspective. Having served on both the Fort Wayne City Council and Allen County Council,

Mayor Tucker brings a wealth of experience from the business and non-profit sectors. She embodies the traits of trusted relationships, servant leadership and accountability. It is crucial for the community to rally around Mayor Tucker, supporting her as she guides us forward.

Mayor Tucker's leadership marks a new chapter for Fort Wayne. Her diverse background and commitment



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## CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP

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to servant leadership position her well to address the challenges and opportunities ahead. By supporting her vision and collaborating with her administration, we can ensure that Fort Wayne continues to thrive and evolve as a dynamic, inclusive community.

This type of leadership transition is not new to our community. New Haven and Woodburn have seen tremendous growth under new mayors elected four and eight years ago, respectively. Mayor McMichael and Mayor Kelsey brought different leadership styles and new energy, building on the successes of their predecessors. Their leadership has ignited significant industrial and residential growth, demonstrating the positive impact of fresh perspectives and innovative approaches.

Leadership transitions often offer opportunities for renewal and growth. They bring fresh ideas and new energy, which can drive progress and inspire further development. By embracing change and supporting new leaders, we can continue to build on our successes and create a vibrant future for all our communities.

Over my 18 years at the City of Fort Wayne before I came to Greater Fort Wayne Inc, I worked with several great leaders and three remarkable mayors, each with their own unique leadership style. Despite their differences, they were all successful because they prioritized the community's needs above their own agendas. This adaptability and willingness to evolve are essential traits for effective leadership.

The beauty of leadership is that each leader is different in how they approach the role. I have learned from every leader I've worked with, shaping my own leadership style based on trusted relationships, servant leadership and accountability. This approach fosters an environment where tough questions can be asked, and challenges can be addressed constructively, all for the community's benefit. It is through this collaborative and inclusive approach that we can achieve the best outcomes for our community.

Think back to 17 years ago when Harrison Square (Parkview Field) was

proposed. The project, born from extensive future planning through the Downtown BluePrint and BluePrintPlus, faced considerable opposition. A poll at the time indicated that 75-80% of the public was against the project. Despite this, leaders from various sectors worked tirelessly, both openly and in the background, to ensure its success. Their efforts paid off, as Parkview Field became a catalyst for further investment, domestic migration and population growth. The leaders who championed this project displayed remarkable vision and tenacity, understanding that the long-term benefits would far outweigh the initial resistance. The same lesson learned played out with the Electric Works project. I often wonder, as future opportunities arise, will we continue this openness to the hard work and collaboration that is required for bold initiatives?

Today, the community is in a much better place. A recent survey commissioned by Greater Fort Wayne Inc. found that 95% of businesses in Allen County believe the local economy is "on the right track." This positive sentiment underscores the need to continue our forward momentum, not just in Fort Wayne, but in all our thriving communities in Allen County. From New Haven to Hometown, Monroeville to Leo-Cedarville and Woodburn to Hoagland, our communities are actively planning and implementing changes that will impact those communities for years to come. This widespread optimism reflects the effectiveness of our collaborative efforts and the shared vision that drives our progress.

The survey results are a testament to the hard work and dedication of leaders at all levels. They have created an environment conducive to growth and innovation, fostering a sense of confidence and optimism among businesses and residents alike. This momentum requires us to remain aligned with the evolving needs of our communities. By continuing to work together to support each other, we can build on our successes and create an even brighter future for Allen County.

Like the early days of downtown development, such a plan to continue to take our community to the next level already exists. The Allen County Together (ACT) economic development strategy, now in its third year, focuses on high-growth and innovative and inclusive strategies. The ACT plan is a comprehensive roadmap for our future, outlining key priorities and initiatives designed to drive economic growth, foster innovation and promote inclusivity. Significant progress has already been made, and we will continue to build on this momentum to establish a nationally recognized economy in Allen County. By working together to implement this strategy, we can create a dynamic and prosperous community that attracts investment, talent and opportunities.

As Harry Truman once said, "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit." This quote is a reminder that leadership requires collective effort. Growing and sustaining a vibrant community requires more than just a single leader. It requires the combined efforts of many individuals across the private, public and non-profit sectors, as well as committed citizens. These leaders, both visible and behind the scenes, have driven Fort Wayne's growth, united by a common goal: to do what is right for the community. Leadership is not limited to a title or position. It is an action, an influence and a commitment to making a difference.

Our community's journey is far from over. Every new project, every leadership transition and every collaborative effort brings us closer to our goal of a vibrant, prosperous and growing community. As we welcome Mayor Tucker into office while continuing to face new challenges and opportunities, it is imperative that we maintain our commitment to working together, fostering trusted relationships and embracing the diverse leadership styles that have brought us this far. With strong collaborative leadership, we can ensure that our community continues to thrive, building a legacy of growth and prosperity for future generations. 

—John Urbahns

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## CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP

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On behalf of the Allen County Public Library, we extend our most sincere congratulations as you embark upon your new role as the mayor of Fort Wayne. Your historic appointment marks a significant milestone for our community, and we cannot wait to see the positive impacts you will undoubtedly make.



As a longtime member of the ACPL Board of Trustees, you proved yourself an advocate for our lifelong patrons, and those we had not yet engaged. Your leadership was instrumental in creating a library where everyone belongs, and we are certain at Fort Wayne's helm, you'll lead with the same integrity, compassion and a commitment for us all!

Thank you for your service, Mayor Tucker!



## BUILDING MOMENTUM


As I sat in the public section of the mayoral caucus in mid-April, it was satisfying to see how the precinct committee persons connected with Sharon Tucker's inspirational and inclusive plans for Fort Wayne's future. This commitment to include everyone is who she is. Her servant leadership is why she was elected to County Council and then to City Council. The people she serves know that her service is genuine. They respond in kind with genuine love and support.

Mayor Tucker's commitment to collaborative leadership is not new. It is why she was invited to be a faculty member for the inaugural year of the AVOW (Advancing Voices of Women) Campaign Institute in 2017 and why she is one of the most popular faculty of the Institute every year since. At this year's eighth Institute, she will be featured with former Kendallville Mayor Suzanne Handshoe on August third at an event for regional leaders to address "How Women Become Mayors."

The non-profit AVOW Women's Campaign Institute trains women of all political ideologies to run for office, serve in political campaigns or seek appointment to public boards and commissions. Importantly, the Institute only works with women who believe that government is best when leaders work across the aisle to get good things done. Mayor Tucker believes this to her core, and it is why she is the vice chair of the Institute, alongside her Republican colleague, Allen County Recorder Nicole Keesling. These two powerhouse women are leading the effort to prepare the next generation of collaborative leaders. This is how we build momentum.

When Sharon Tucker made her impromptu acceptance speech to become our mayor at the caucus, she didn't have to wait long to see the momentum her victory sparked:

AVOW alumna Rohli Booker succeeded Sharon Tucker as 6<sup>th</sup> District City Councilwoman. Then AVOW-supported Antonette Payne succeeded Rohli Booker as the District 4 Trustee for the Fort Wayne Community School Board. Fort Wayne City Councilwoman Michelle Chambers and Fort Wayne Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Stephanie Crandall did an awesome job in the mayoral caucus. Both are alumnae of the AVOW Women's Campaign Institute and both are now faculty of the Institute. In last November's general election, every woman on the local ballot and several women on regional ballots had a connection with the Institute. This is how we build momentum.

Mayor Sharon Tucker is so much more than her 5'3" frame would indicate. She is the face of momentum for women, for people of color, for other new leaders, for the next generation and for people who thought they had no voice. She is the momentum-builder for the strong government that her predecessors began, for the collaborative leadership that has defined Fort Wayne and for the GOOD that will continue to benefit our region for an even better future. When Sharon Tucker says that she is FOR the people, she is the real deal. 

— Marilyn Moran-Townsend, Co-Founder, AVOW Advancing Voices of Women and Chair, AVOW Women's Campaign Institute



**Sharon Tucker**  
Mayor of Fort Wayne

As Mayor Tucker succeeds Mayor Henry, we're excited for her fresh perspective on continuing the catalytic growth of Downtown Fort Wayne. Mayor Henry's vision for Downtown as the economic driver for all of Fort Wayne and northeast Indiana has had amazing success over the last 15+ years. This is an exciting and optimistic time to envision the future of Downtown Fort Wayne and, indeed, all of Fort Wayne. The unprecedented renaissance of our city is leading to new residents, businesses, and opportunities choosing to call Fort Wayne their home. Mayor Henry was an unabashed champion for Downtown, and we know that Mayor Tucker remains committed to continued Downtown growth as a part of her vision for Fort Wayne. As a proponent and supporter of small businesses and entrepreneurs, we look forward to collaborating with her on the retail environment for Downtown and the adjacent business corridors extending into all four city quadrants. Similarly, we look forward to working with her on advancing neighborhood and residential development in the historic "collar" neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown. We also look to her leadership as we address the increasing issues of the unhoused in Downtown.

While we mourn the sudden passing of Mayor Henry, we're delighted to welcome Mayor Tucker as his successor. Mayor Tucker inherits a city and Downtown that is undeniably on the rise. We can't wait to partner with her to continue to "advance Downtown Fort Wayne as the vibrant, urban core of northeast Indiana."

*Michael Galbraith*  
President & CEO  
Downtown Fort Wayne

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DJ E-CLYPS

*Mayon*

SHARON TUCKER



*April 20, 2024*

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A llen County Democratic Party precinct chairs voted to elect Sharon Tucker to fill the mayoral vacancy left in the wake of Mayor Tom Henry's passing. While many people know of Sharon Tucker, fewer people know about Sharon Tucker. The community deserves to know more about who is serving their needs from the office of Mayor in the second largest city in Indiana. The following is not an endorsement or a critique of what will happen over the next three years in office. It is simply an introduction from those who know her, work with her, compete with her and serve with her so everyone else can effectively do the same moving forward. We're all in this together.

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When Mayor Sharon Tucker and husband Tim Barbour designed their smart dream home, they chose to leave the basement unfinished. Most people would not think of going through all the headaches of building new and leave anything undone. Mayor Tucker, however, approached it from a different angle: "Why pay someone when you can save by doing the work yourself?" That's exactly what she did. She pulled all the wiring, mudded drywall, laid flooring, painted and installed bathroom fixtures. "At the end of the day," she believes, "the best way to make sure work is done the way you want it is to do it yourself." In many ways, this sums up all you need to know about Tucker. Whether in life or politics, she may suffer loss or experience setbacks, but not because she was outworked. For her, initial defeats only pave the way for ultimate victory.

**This attitude does not stem from a place of arrogance, for she assumes anyone can be just as effective as a leader or has the same potential to be out front on community matters.**

Rather, it comes from a strong work ethic that is a central part of her personal and political values. If you see Mayor Tucker around town or on television and she looks a little tired, it is probably because she is. It is not uncommon for Tucker to put in 10 to 12 hours in the office and in meetings on any given day, then an additional 3 or 4 hours crafting. Yes, that's right,

crafting. "It's a lot," she says, "and sometimes can be overwhelming, but I enjoy it. I find arts and crafts projects relaxing." One can think of a hundred other ways to relax after a long day at work instead of assembling swag bags for wedding receptions or making table centerpieces for high school graduation parties. Yet, like working on her house, Tucker says crafting requires an attention to detail that is personally rewarding and transferable to her life in politics. "I'm sure you've heard people say, 'The devil is in the details.' Well, my experience has been that the solution is in the details, too."

**Not only does Tucker believe the devil and solutions are in the details, but specifically in the details of the budget.**

She doesn't consider herself to be cheap, but she is proud of being labeled fiscally conservative. The traditional caricature of a tax-and-spend Democrat who never saw a social program she didn't fund doesn't match her political philosophy. Spending must be justified and necessary to get her support. And she is not afraid to say "no," even to the pet projects of friends and supporters if those programs don't demonstrate self-sustainability long-term. According to her, "Government should not be in the business of spending for the sake of it but spending to make our community a better place for all residents." Doing more with less is an important lesson Tucker learned in the aftermath of divorce. Her

spouse left but the bills stayed, so she had to figure out how to make a dollar out of fifteen cents. She got through those tough times in part because she continued to put in the work, always pressing forward toward her goals. In addition to the support of family, Tucker relied on government programs meant to temporarily help people until they are able to steady the ship on their own. "I know first-hand how government can be a blessing to people ... that just need some help, particularly those who help themselves. After my divorce, programs designed temporarily to help people stay on track, stay in school and stay in their homes, really made a big difference in my life. I'm a living witness of the good government can do."

**A roll-up-your-sleeves type of leader, Tucker deems no job beneath her.**

She doesn't believe in asking staff to do something she would be unwilling to do. In fact, in many cases, she just does it herself. While this style may work well in a small nonprofit or in one's own business, it is easy to see the challenges in applying such hands-on leadership to city government. But don't tell her it can't be done. Better yet, telling her it can't will make her even more determined to try it—just to see if the impossible is possible. Tucker is accustomed to people pointing out perceived limitations and underestimating her. Whether because of her race, gender or both,

she often has been told by others that she is not enough; not thin enough to satisfy the aesthetic desires of the male gaze, not proper enough to assuage the racial discomforts of whites and not pro-black enough to meet the political expectations of African Americans. When asked about how these assessments make her feel, Tucker replied, "I'm not going to say it doesn't hurt to have people misread or misjudge me. But it doesn't prevent me from moving forward with whatever the goal may be. I know who I am and what I am capable of, and I will bet on myself every time."

### **Tucker credits her Pentecostal upbringing for her resolve and strong sense of self.**

She describes her early development as "sheltered" within a social world that revolved around school classmates, a close-knit neighborhood and church folk. "And not just any old church folk," she added, "OUR church folk." Growing up in this manner has both blessings and curses. On the one hand, with weekend hangouts limited to Friday evening church programs, her cultural exposure and broader engagement with people who didn't share her background or worldview was limited and came much later in life. On the other hand, her family and church community built a foundation of love, security and self-confidence that protected her from the negativity that would come her way as an adult. Her self-confidence and loving spirit result from the

love and support she received as a youngster. "My family was like many others in my community, but nobody ever taught me that I couldn't go beyond what I saw in front of me. Even when they didn't understand why I wanted to do things like run for office, they never wavered in their support for me and my dreams."

### **These days, Tucker gives back by making sure she pours into the dreams of others, especially young people.**

As a parent of a twenty-something who's been raised by Netflix and social media as much as she has by her parents, Tiana has the outsized dreams of a generation unaccustomed to limits or being told "no," and that may not be a bad thing. "My child heard her fair share of 'no's' growing up, but it wasn't because I didn't think she could achieve her goals or aspirations." Tucker chuckled as she continued, "I told her no usually because she expected me to finance her dreams. Nobody owes you anything. If you want it, work for it."

When Tiana was a 12-year-old middle schooler, she fell in love with Japanese anime. Tucker didn't understand her daughter's fascination with it and assumed it would pass until a year later she discovered Tiana trying to teach herself Japanese. This display of seriousness and commitment led Tucker to seek support and mentoring for her child. She found an African American student at

Emory University who was fluent in Japanese and from Fort Wayne, and she paid her for Tiana's language tutoring via Skype.

Learning to draw anime characters and speaking Japanese wasn't an everyday goal for Black kids, but Tucker knew it was important to encourage Tiana to follow her own path.

However, if you thought the kid would be satisfied with speaking the language, then you're sorely mistaken. She is her mother's child, so one dream led to another, each seeming a bit bigger than the last. Within a couple of years, Tiana was clamoring to go to Japan. She wanted to be immersed in the culture, eat the food, know the people and experience the land. Tucker's familiar initial answer of "no" did not mean never. She wanted Tiana to prove how badly she wanted it by putting in the work to make it happen. If Tiana wanted to go, she would have to apply for a passport, do research on overseas study programs and seek out scholarship opportunities. She did all of this and, at the age of 15, she was off to Japan for a year. "I believe the major disservice we did to my daughter's generation is we made things too easy for them. So now, as young adults, they don't know how to handle it when life gets hard, and for most of us, it will get hard at some point. If I could teach any lesson to people, I will always try to impress upon them, especially young people, that on the path to success you don't get to skip hard work." Tucker certainly didn't.

—Quinton Dixie





# See Her


My bio reads that I was the first Black female to advance from associate to equity partner at my firm and reportedly in the state of Indiana. It is an amazing sounding stat, and I am quite proud of the accomplishment (and of my firm for leading from the front, then and now). Experientially, though, it was quite a heavy lift. As I express often (and this is a technical term), the practice of law 'ain't for punks." But not being able to wear my hair braided or in its natural curly state for years out of fear of being labeled unprofessional, or the consummate pressure I felt to temper, soften, quiet, lest I confirm the tales of the "angry Black woman," added a unique kind of weight. Oh, how I longed back then for someone to see me.

I was reminded of that longing when asked to share some thoughts around the topic of race in light of our new mayor. She's Black, by the way. I can already feel the energy. Race!? Don't make this about race, Dawn. Mayor Sharon Tucker is smart, qualified and beyond capable. Race is irrelevant. OR—Yes, talk about race because the fact that she is "historic" is the only reason she got the job. Neither are sound takes. Regardless, we do not have the luxury to engage in such useless and arrogant banter. Instead, the facts: Prior to Mayor Tucker, there have been 36 mayors of Fort Wayne since 1840. All but one have been men. And all have been white. Like the practice of law, the seat Mayor Tucker now occupies was not built with her in mind. The difficult topic of race thus

cannot be ignored. But let me be clear: I have no interest in devolving us into the discourse on the topic that populates today's headlines. I just want you to see her. Regardless of your political affiliation and/or personal leanings, that is my audacious call to action.

Again, that is all I wanted. Or rather, that is what I needed—to be seen, that is (i.e., to be counted, processed in the equation, for my uniqueness to matter over the comfort of sameness). I remember once during a social gathering being ridiculed for missing a "Seinfeld" episode. They joked that I was not American. In reality, though, I'm a proud Fort Wayne native, born and bred. Further, "Seinfeld" aired on Thursday nights during the "Martin," "Living Single" and "New York Undercover" lineup (which, at the time, was an unprecedented trilogy of primetime shows depicting Black people in a positive light). While I dare not attempt to speak for all Black people, I am confident that most Black folks were watching these shows to see themselves, just like me. Indeed, I never saw "Seinfeld" in its original run. I was not un-American. I was just Black in the 90's. And I have lost count of the number of events I have attended over the years where I looked for (and found comfort in) the service staff (and they in me) simply because for me, they were often people of color and thus helped me navigate feeling so out of place, and for them (because I was a person of color in a space they did not expect), I served to fill them with a sense of pride.

I know there are so many things more pressing than hairstyles, and small talk, or being comfortable at receptions. Further, I must acknowledge that I played a key role in the heaviness of my journey at times. Just because something was not designed with you in mind does not mean you do not belong there. I did not know this as a young professional and thus acted accordingly. I know it now though. This version of me is clear that I belong in every room that I enter. In fact, convincing others of the same powers me because I have experienced first-hand that an elevated consciousness in this regard shifts atmospheres. But I digress. My musings about my experiences with the common were by design because in this quirky discussion about race, such musings, I think, typify the point. Plainly, for the underrepresented (especially in the context of race), it is the unique barriers in the mundane that are oftentimes most debilitating.

So, in an effort to be what I needed, I just want you to see her. Not like her, agree with her, give her a pass—just see her. Recognize that she, like no mayor of Fort Wayne before her, will have to contend with the realities of hue. The very act of seeing someone for real (and not the version of them we have been fed or otherwise constructed in our mind), humanizes them, humanizes us, increases empathy and leads to a stronger community. No matter what side you're on, we all want that right? 

—Dawn Rosemond, Firm Diversity Partner, Barnes & Thornburg LLP



# In Her Words

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# FORT WAYNE IS NOT IMMUNE TO REAL CHALLENGES, BUT HERE IS WHY **I HAVE HOPE.**

Fort Wayne is not immune to real challenges. Recent tragedies in our community highlight how fragile life can be, how families can be torn apart and how division can try to overtake us. If we're not careful, apathy and distrust can creep in and limit our city's ability to be a point of destination and a place where individuals and families matter and are cared for. Unfortunately, we know that racial tensions are not going to go away, either. My hope is that one day we can move beyond how a person looks or what they believe and instead examine an individual's heart and assist in meeting real needs.

I'm a people-focused mayor committed to providing an enhanced quality of life for all. We strive for this goal by diving into what challenges people are facing, having difficult conversations and being uncomfortable, by getting more people involved and by working to help educate the public on how institutions, like local government, work. Addressing mental health, creating a young adult council, growing our neighborhoods and providing opportunities for people of all ages to learn about civic engagement will enrich our community and set us on a path to accomplishments and fulfillment. These represent several goals and objectives of my administration.

My faith guides me each day. It gives me meaning, purpose and hope. Having lived in Fort Wayne for my entire life, I've experienced hope and opportunity, but I've also seen and experienced many challenges that at the time seemed painful, insurmountable and hurtful.

I truly believe that Fort Wayne's best days are ahead of us. We're a thoughtful and giving community filled with wonderful people and causes. We won't shy away from challenges. Instead, we'll meet them head on with a sense of purpose and determination toward unity and caring for one another like never before.

—Mayor Sharon Tucker



## What are your top priorities and why?

The first thing that's extremely important to me is to bring together a commission on mental health. I want to get the experts and practitioners in a room to make an impactful change in our unhoused population that's been caused by mental health—and what role government could play in that, whether it is a role of being supportive financially or space making for mental health challenges. Homelessness is important to me.

The second thing that I would like to make a top priority for my administration is including the voices of young adults, from the ages of 17 to 26. My heart goes out to that age group, because many feel like they have been left out of our economic development discussions. I want to be able to bring them to the table so that we can better understand what they would like to see in future development. It could be something as simple as remembering that at the end of a project completion, we have space in places where young people can access WiFi cafes, internet portal holes, eGaming, etc.—things that a 52-year-old Mayor Tucker wouldn't necessarily think to do. I would also like to see that we, as a city, include more opportunity for internships, whether paid or volunteer, in all our departments. This is so that more young folks can actually understand how government works.

Last but not least, we continue to talk about the growth in our city. But I would like to specifically focus my attention on growth inside of

neighborhoods. At one point in time, the city had four liaisons that operated in each quadrant. They were the eyes and ears on the streets for activities or improvements or changes that communities and community neighborhood associations wanted to have done. We've already moved the needle on this one with Dan Baisden serving as the administrator of neighborhood planning and activation, which we expanded to be a department head position. We're looking at adding some additional staff under his leadership. Dan and his team also created a website called Engage, and the Engage website will expand communication transparency with the community. One of the things that Mayor Tom Henry always said is that downtown is the heart of the community, but the neighborhoods are the backbones. And while we have a very strong and thriving downtown, we also want to have strong and thriving neighborhoods, recognizing that not every community wants the same thing. So, having Dan's department be out on the ground hearing what neighbors want for their square or their block or their neighborhood is important to me.

## Explain the thought process behind your phrase, "Expectations are the mother of all disappointments."

I believe that if you set the right expectations for individuals, they will not be disappointed in the outcome. When we fail to set the right expectations, people will set their own expectation, and that leads to

disappointments. Communication is critical, as is asking for clarification and understanding—before anyone leaves the room after a decision is made.

## You are not new to having hard conversations. How important is this to you as mayor?

Every day brings a hard conversation! But I am not afraid of having hard conversations. I believe that we can talk about anything, especially when we talk about those things with respect for the person you are talking to—which is why relationships are so important and expectations mean a lot. I know that when I've had conversations with people internally, just because of the sheer differences between myself and Mayor Tom Henry, it can be hard. People aren't sure what to expect and are not sure where I'm coming from. But I know at the end of that hard conversation, we should be able to walk away understanding each other better, respecting each other more and growing our relationship deeper.

## Have you always taken a position of fiscal responsibility in politics and in your profession?

My husband would say that I use all of my fiscal conservativeness at work and all my spendthriftiness at home! But, seriously, the answer is yes. I've always been fiscally conservative when it comes to investing tax dollars. I am truly, truly a believer in being a good steward

of someone else's property. I was like that when I rented an apartment because I knew it didn't belong to me. I take that same mindset when making decisions with tax dollars. I know sometimes that it will drive people crazy, because I listen to all the information. And then I have to think about it. I'm not going to just quickly walk into a decision. But once I make that decision, I'm firm. And it's hard for me to change my mind. So, I would say yes, I've always been fiscally conservative when it comes to spending, no matter whether it's donated dollars, earned dollars or tax dollars.

### **How would you describe the phenomenon that Fort Wayne has had as a Democrat for mayor for 32 of the last 44 years in an overwhelmingly Republican state?**

Politics are all local. I believe the success all comes from the ability of our past leaders to see our constituency. And when I say see them, it is not just the numbers, not just the dollars, but the actual people. People want to be seen and heard, and they want to see themselves in the community. I think that Mayor Henry was successful in doing that. I pray that I'm successful in doing that as well.

I believe it also helps to be a middle-of-the road person. I don't think we would have had the great success that we've had if our collective leaders were too far left or too far right. It's also been very helpful in

our community that we've moved forward with common sense. People are tired of the national divide. We've been great in our city about bringing people together.

But we always have room to improve. It can be hard to explain to some people why every person matters. And I think that I've always been really good at going into any meeting that I've had to help address that very fact—whether someone is impoverished or affluent, Black or white, English-speaking or non-English speaking, has a disability or not—they all count and should be recognized as a part of our community and the decisions that we make.

I have done a good job, maybe not a perfect job, but a good job of navigating those conversations when I've been in spaces to make sure that everyone's been respected and recognized.

### **How would you describe your legacy as sixth district council woman? And what does that say about your approach to serving as mayor?**

I hope that the constituency that I served will say that I made a positive impact and a visual change in our community. We created access to food with the opening of the Pontiac Street Market grocery store by helping to foster the conversation. We answered the cry of needing new housing stock by standing in the gap and fighting almost toe to toe

with departments so that we could get Jerry Starks the help he needed to start building the 110 market-rate houses at Roosevelt Reserves. We were instrumental in bringing investment into McKinney Street where there are mixed-use housing units. And now they're working on a commercial piece which would include childcare services. We created some new pocket parks like McKinney Commons and Powell Park on Pontiac Street, not to mention the whole new Pontiac Street landscape design.

I would like to take all the credit for it, but I can't because it was collaboration with department heads, with the community and with people in southeast-area partnerships. I hope that at the end of the day, with just those few projects out of so many more I could mention, that people would say that, as councilwoman, I listened to what they wanted and I figured out a way to help bridge the gap between the city and the community to get what was needed.

I believe that my leadership will be the same way as mayor, listening to what the community says it desires, listening to what my staff desires and being brave enough to take risks and supportive enough to say, maybe we need to try something different. That's my leadership style. I'm not afraid to try things differently, and to give people the encouragement and support to be bold enough to try something new. Sometimes, that's all people want—for somebody to believe in them and take a risk on the things that they think could work.



*My Team*

**T**eamwork, trust and respect mean a great deal to me, particularly as the new mayor of Indiana's second largest city. I'm fortunate that I inherited a dedicated team of professionals who had worked under Mayor Tom Henry for many years to help guide and direct our community. The division and department heads have welcomed me with open arms as we've come together quickly with a shared commitment to moving Fort Wayne forward together.

The major divisions of police, fire, community development, parks, City Utilities and public works have critical functions that must work well for our residents, neighborhoods, businesses and visitors. It's these respective areas of focus that will help drive my mission and vision to provide an enhanced quality of life for all in Fort Wayne. As I've learned since becoming mayor just a few short months ago, there are examples after examples of City of Fort Wayne employees who are all-stars, unsung heroes and who represent what's best about local government. Here are just a few of the too-many-to-count outstanding individuals who don't typically get a lot of praise and attention, but who make the city run as smoothly as it does:

**Victoria Edwards**  
**Program Manager, Public Works**  
**Division/Solid Waste Department**

Victoria has a heart for people. Working directly with residents on garbage and recycling collection, she's on the front lines each day providing superior customer service.

**Dan Baisden**  
**Community Development**  
**Administrator, Neighborhood**  
**Planning and Activation**

Dan is a caring and thoughtful leader who puts others first. Neighborhoods are the backbone of Fort Wayne, and Dan and his team take that truth to heart and are implementing programs and initiatives that will solidify and empower our neighborhoods to do great things.

**Nick Jarrell**  
**Right of Way Manager,**  
**Public Works Division**

Nick is a genuine person with a unique ability to bring out the best in people and get results. From fixing sidewalks to installing public art to attending neighborhood meetings to helping meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, he's always there for people.

**Megan Flohr**  
**Administrator, City Council**

Megan has a no-nonsense approach that works very well. I admire her work ethic and tenacity to assist the members of City Council and prioritize the concerns of constituents and find solutions.

**Angie Erpelding**  
**Deputy Director,**  
**Public Works Division**

Angie has a quiet yet effective sense to problem solving. Her attention to detail with budgeting, contracts

and staff makes a meaningful and positive difference.

I value every employee of the City of Fort Wayne. It takes special qualities to work in the public sector. It's hard work. There are days when we struggle, but we never lose sight of the important duties that we're carrying out to assist Fort Wayne's growth and success.

The accolades that we've received in recent months and years are a direct result of people-focused work in local government in collaboration and partnership with the private sector.

It's not by accident that we've been named the following:

**2024:** Eighth best run city in the country by WalletHub

**2024:** Fastest growing large Midwest city in the country—Most recent U.S. Census report

**2024:** Fourth lowest cost of living city in the country by Niche

**2024:** 20<sup>th</sup> best place to live in the country by U.S. News & World Report

**2023:** Fifth most affordable city in the country by U.S. News & World Report

Listening, delivering and serving drives me each day. Respect for people and positive relationships with them can make all the difference. Working side by side with City of Fort Wayne all-stars will make me a better person and mayor. And Fort Wayne will continue to be the best it can possibly be thanks to their efforts.

—Mayor Sharon Tucker



# *Observations & Experiences*





If it comes to dollars,  
it better make "cents."  
When it comes to honesty,  
you'd better be. When  
it comes to respect: If  
you give it, you will  
get it. If you want her  
consideration and support  
for something, you will need  
to explain who will benefit,  
at what cost and for  
what outcome... in detail

—Nancy Townsend

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Mayor Sharon Tucker has been a great leader for Fort Wayne, serving on county council and then city council, while leading Vincent Village, a non-profit organization devoted to helping homeless families. I found her to be very fair and reasonable. She could easily cross the aisle as needed to always "do the right thing." My wife Lisa and I have known and supported Sharon and her projects for a long time, and we have the utmost respect for her. Her experience has been marked by a commitment to economic growth, community development and social equity, all of which are crucial for the continued prosperity of our city and improving the quality of life for all residents. Mayor Tucker will work tirelessly to ensure that everyone in Fort Wayne has access to opportunities and resources, regardless of their background. Her efforts to promote diversity and inclusion will make our city even more welcoming and cohesive. In supporting Mayor Sharon Tucker, I see a leader whose values align with my own vision for Fort Wayne. Her dedication, vision, and ability to bring people together are qualities that make her an outstanding mayor and an invaluable asset to our community. Together, we can continue to build a brighter future for Fort Wayne.

—Chuck Surack

I first met Sharon in a meeting room in the basement of Vincent Village when she bounded into the room with a big smile and loads of enthusiasm about her position of helping others better their and their families' lives. But it became apparent during the tour of Vincent Village that she led and encouraged others with tough compassion. She grieved and prayed when she had to make tough choices for the betterment of the Vincent Village community and she rejoiced when program participants graduated from the transitional shelter to single-family housing. She was not afraid to ask for donations to complete Vincent Village's mission. She was also open to others' suggestions and recognized the wisdom that others can bring to a project.

—Melissa Glaze, Director, Glaze Foundation

In the construction industry, there is no such thing as "close enough." Every detail matters, which is why my interactions with Mayor Tucker across numerous projects, both large and small, have been so successful. In every interaction with Sharon, she has been transparent, open, and honest. She is willing to make the hard decisions or the right decisions—which may not always be the most popular—but always after thoughtful consideration. Sharon is insightful, quickly assessing situations with accuracy. Her infectious smile draws you in, yet she possesses a tenacious, determined mentality to accomplish impactful tasks. She is a visionary and consistently optimistic.

—Larry Weigand, CEO, Weigand Construction

Since day one, Mayor Tucker has been an exceptional partner and supporter of Google's growth in the Fort Wayne area. In our engagements with Mayor Tucker, we have witnessed firsthand her passion for the city and her deep understanding that investments in infrastructure and economic development can pay rich dividends to the community as a whole. Mayor Tucker brings a strong work ethic and a methodical attention to detail when she evaluates the best options for the city and its residents. We're looking forward to a continued and lasting relationship with Mayor Tucker, and all of Fort Wayne's city leadership, for many years to come.

—Matt Sexton, Google



Ms. Sharon was one of the three "church ladies" that acted as the Greek chorus of the Fort Wayne Civic Theatre's performance of the musical, "The Color Purple." Sharon always arrived punctually, and she was consistently prepared and ready to work. She was collaborative and supportive of her castmates, and Sharon had the wonderful ability to enhance any direction that was given to her. She typically made it unique, and even better! Ms. Tucker brought joy and enthusiasm to each rehearsal. Community theater asks a great deal of our actors: Talent, flexibility, grace and the dedication to honor their commitment to the task at hand. I experienced all these qualities and more in Fort Wayne's mayor, Sharon Tucker, and was fortunate to work with her.

—Dianne Shaw, Director, The Color Purple, Fort Wayne Civic Theatre.

Mayor Tucker's greatest strengths may be her incredible energy, enthusiasm and love of people. She is wise, kind, thoughtful, balanced and hard-working. She loves analyzing details and data as part of her decision-making process. She intently listens to the perspectives of others when discussing ideas. She is fully engaged and asks great questions. Mayor Tucker fully understands the current expectations and embraces the moment. She is grateful for the opportunity to serve and eager to lead our city in the years ahead. I am confident that she and her talented staff will do everything possible to help Fort Wayne achieve its fullest potential.

—John E. Ryan, Partner, The DeHayes Group

In addition to our interaction in the social service sphere, Mayor Tucker and I also share a much different sphere—Quest Club. Quest Club, founded in 1911, provides "a forum for club members to prepare, present and discuss research papers on social, economic, scientific, cultural, political and historical topics." Serendipitously, Mayor Tucker gave a paper on Ella Fitzgerald on the same day that she performed in the Civic Theatre's production of "The Color Purple." This cemented the fact for me that Mayor Tucker deserves the moniker "Renaissance Woman." She can adroitly present a well-researched paper to a group of civic leaders (that included her singing) and give a strong performance in a musical later that evening while effectively running a nonprofit all in the same day. My admiration for Mayor Tucker as the right person at the right time has only grown over time.

—Matt Smith PhD, Chief Development Officer, Catholic Charities

Sharon is a dynamic connector with an infectious energy and a deep passion for her community. She has a unique ability to connect with a diverse range of people, which is evident in her ease at engaging with people of influence and sitting in the hard spaces with those experiencing life-altering crises. Her dedication dives beyond the surface interactions—she is deeply committed to helping others thrive, particularly those who are often unseen, unheard and who are struggling to find their feet. She has invested herself wholeheartedly in uplifting individuals in our community who are struggling to regain their footing and has been a tireless advocate for the unhoused. She was willing to get in the trenches with her team, but she also created robust support systems that fostered lasting, positive transformations. With her heartfelt investment in others, Sharon works to ensure that everyone she encounters has the opportunity to thrive.

—Sarah Lance, Executive Director, Mustard Seed Furniture Bank

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—Matt Smith

Because of my former role in economic development for the city, I would regularly brief council members on items for which the administration is seeking approval. Enter then-Councilwoman Sharon Tucker, aka CWT. I remember thinking that she was asking a lot of questions—and they were really good questions, the right questions. It was impressive because the learning curve to understanding local government financing, processes, structure, laws and myriad other things is very steep and long. It is difficult to even know what to ask. That gave me a very clear signal that this was a person who wanted to really understand how our local government works and how it actually functions. For real. It also became clear then, and is still the case now, that she wants to know who she is sitting across the table from. This is a summary of what I learned in working with her: If it comes to dollars, it better make “cents.” When it comes to honesty, you’d better be. When it comes to respect: If you give it, you will get it. If you want her consideration and support for something, you will need to explain who will benefit, at what cost and for what outcome... in detail. If she believes and supports an initiative, a project or an action, she will go to the mat for it. She likes to have fun and is a great storyteller—she enjoys laughing. She loves Jesus, her family and our community.

—Nancy Townsend, Surack Enterprises

**Mayor Tucker started on city council in January 2020—immediately before COVID changed our world, with its unexpected consequences. During that time of maximum unknowns, Sharon Tucker—while still learning the ropes of council-life—was a strong and calming force, lending leadership perspectives and guidance as we all moved into the post-COVID world. With Sharon’s unique sense of intuition, it became clear that she would find solutions to problems, while making sure to understand all of the factors surrounding each item. On council, Sharon was an advocate for her district, but also had vision for a more global perspective for the city as a whole. I learned early on that Sharon Tucker is fiscally responsible, making sure that city money is spent appropriately. She advocated for employee retention and development, while ensuring that infrastructure was invested in at historic levels, for example. The ability to deconstruct complex topics and understand the intricacies in the details while working towards collaborative relationships is difficult but is why Sharon Tucker was an excellent colleague on city council.**

—Tom Freistroffer, Councilman

We had the privilege of working with Mayor Tucker in her role as 6<sup>th</sup> District councilwoman as we worked to advocate for, plan and open the Pontiac Street Market, along with her previous work as executive director of Vincent Village. She always kept the needs of the SE community front of mind. She exemplified the saying, “Nothing about us, without us,” and was consistently a fierce advocate for the community she both lives in and served. As a leader, she set high expectations but also reinforced that she is not going to ask others to do something that she herself wouldn’t be willing to do. Her passion is infectious and it’s that passion that also helps encourage others to aim higher to explore what’s possible. Finally, her strong leadership courage in the face of difficulty can help break through barriers or speed bumps to ultimately help accomplish a goal.

—Dr. Sarah GiaQuinta, Senior Vice President, Community Health and Equity  
Dena Jacquay, Chief Administrative Officer Parkview Health



# The Future

As Fort Wayne kicks off a new era with Mayor Sharon Tucker at the helm, she's gearing up to tackle big issues that will define the city's future.

Replacing Tom Henry was never going to be easy. Henry, a blend of the affable and fierce, particularly in negotiations, left his mark, especially downtown. His narrow victory over Tom Didier, with 52% of the vote, was a tepid endorsement of his policies. Tucker, who had been the councilperson from the city's 6<sup>th</sup> district, is supported by the city council and, at least anecdotally, by the area's corporate elite. Still, she wasn't elected by a public mandate but through a caucus, thus tying her to Henry's legacy so that an electoral win would have cut.

Tucker's deft handling of the death of 22-year-old Linzell Parham during a traffic stop with a Fort Wayne Police officer already set her apart. She demonstrated transparency by releasing body camera footage after the family viewed it. This move won plaudits from African American leaders and activists. Tucker made it clear that this was not a new precedent—releases would be handled on a case-by-case basis.

As of July 18, Tucker finds herself in a pressure cooker situation regarding the future of the Three Rivers Ambulance Authority. Councilmen Russ Jehl, Nathan Hartman and Scott Myers criticized the Allen County Commissioners for undermining TRAA. They proposed a nine-member task force to tackle a problem that has been a long time coming.

For years, the authority outsourced management to an out-of-state contractor. Morale was low, as wages were closer to a fast-food worker. While moving the operation in-house two years ago has been beneficial, creating four new fire districts in the county has impacted TRAA's ability to attract and retain staff. Despite a \$3 million infusion from the city council and excellent management by the authority's executive director, Joel Benz, TRAA faces operational deficits. Without county cooperation, public safety remains at risk.

Success in this endeavor could define her going into 2027, showcasing her commitment to public safety, effective governance and working with the county. Conversely, failure to secure county participation could exacerbate existing tensions that have been there for decades.

Fort Wayne is grappling with a significant housing crisis with rising rental costs and increased evictions. Over the past year, Indiana has seen nearly 74,000 eviction filings, with Allen County alone contributing a substantial portion. The end of the COVID-19 eviction moratorium has exacerbated these issues, leading to a surge in housing instability. Many low-income families need help finding affordable housing, and the high cost of rent makes it difficult to secure stable living conditions. Mayor Tucker will need to address this crisis through comprehensive policies that increase the availability of affordable

housing, provide support for renters facing eviction and collaborate with local organizations to create sustainable solutions.

Over the past decade, downtown Fort Wayne has invested over \$1 billion in various development projects. These investments have transformed the city's landscape, bringing new businesses, residential options and entertainment venues to the area. The development of Parkview Field in 2009 was a significant catalyst for this growth, infusing the downtown area with new energy and attracting numerous businesses and visitors. Another considerable project contributing to downtown Fort Wayne's revitalization is Electric Works.

Tucker announced that David Rubin Land Collective was selected to develop the next phases of the riverfront master plan. She's now gone from being a councilperson endorsing Henry's vision to shepherding the process.

Tucker looks committed to downtown and to continuing the Henry administration's efforts in southeast Fort Wayne, which has been neglected and maligned for decades. However, Didier's most effective talking point was suggesting that the rest of the city isn't receiving as much attention.

Tucker is affable in person and a consensus builder on the City Council. Will that attract voters from the southwest, northwest and northeast to her side?

— Fredrick McKissack  
Editorial Page Editor,  
The Journal Gazette







Black Chamber  
Fort Wayne

# Congratulations Mayor Sharon Tucker

We proudly congratulate Mayor Sharon Tucker on becoming Fort Wayne's first Black woman mayor! Black Chamber Fort Wayne is filled with excitement and gratitude as we celebrate this groundbreaking achievement. Cheers to a bright future together.

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# BITES

FLAVORS OF THE CITY

**SUPER FOOD:** When chef Sean Richardson opened **Rune** on Broadway, Indianapolis TV station WISH covered it. You may be wondering why. Because Richardson is a James Beard nominee whose reputation extends far beyond the confines of our fair city. Travel 100 miles in most directions and you will find a foodie who is familiar with Richardson's work. You don't have to travel 100 miles to become familiar with Richardson's work. You just have to drive downtown. The crispy pork belly pictured is just one of the many culinary delights that Richardson offers up nightly. 2725 Broadway, 260.278.0674, [runerestaurant.com](http://runerestaurant.com)

MATTHEW OWEN



## BITES



**SOUP TO NUTS:** Peanut soup originated in Africa. If you haven't had it, you may wonder whether it tastes like other peanut-based things you've had. My definitive answer is yes and no. It is both reassuring and surprising. It is both familiar and exotic. I could spend all day writing words and the opposite of those words. And you'd love me to do it. But I will, instead, sum up by saying that **Loving Cafe** offers a splendid pistachio and mushroom soup that is rich and aromatic and warms you like a long hug. 7605 Coldwater Road, 260.489.8686, [lovingcafevw.com](http://lovingcafevw.com)



**NUT CASE:** The first pies may have been made in ancient Greece, but the pecan pie is doubtless an American invention. Pecans are native to the southern United States. Perhaps the ancient Greeks somehow got a message to the Mound Builders of the Americas, asking them for pecans. But the pecans, as far as we know, stayed inside the mounds. I really get out into the weeds when I talk about history. I am on firmer (not to mention, weedless) ground when I talk about eating pecan pie. Pecan pie is timeless. They make a great one at **Lunch Box Cafe**. 8814 Coldwater Road, 260.490.5722, [lunchboxcafevw.com](http://lunchboxcafevw.com)

**THAT'S AMORE:** It is not known who invented the first dessert pizza, but I suspect it was a person who tasted non-dessert pizza and said, "This is delicious. Shall we turn it into a dessert?" No doubt someone is asking that very question right now about sea urchin ceviche and lutefisk. **Acme By Full Circle** offers a unique pizza that can be eaten as a dessert or a meal (or, if you order two, a meal and a dessert). It is the PB&J Pizza with a base of creamy peanut butter and swirled grape jelly. 1105 E. State Boulevard, 260.480.2263, [acmebyfullcircle.com](http://acmebyfullcircle.com)



**HOT CAKE:** I am about to blow your mind, probably. German chocolate cake isn't German at all. It was originally called German's Chocolate Cake and was named after German's Sweet Chocolate, a baker's chocolate that was introduced in 1852 and is still available today. German chefs were quick to claim ownership of German chocolate cake because of the prevalence of coconut trees in tropical Germany. I'll shut up now. **Hall's Commissary** offers an awesome German chocolate cake. 216 IN-930, New Haven, 260.493.6622, [donhalls.com/halls-commissary](http://donhalls.com/halls-commissary)



BARBARA TAYLOR / ADOBESTOCK.COM

## FLOAT YOUR **BOAT**

The ice cream float was invented in 1874 by a druggist named Robert M. Green. I guess we should feel lucky that he didn't insist that his invention be called, from that day forward, the Robert M. Green. The best sort of ice cream float is, of course, the root beer float. And what better root beer float than one that is made from artisan root beer? One of the best root beer floats in northeast Indiana can be found at **Anthology** in Huntington, where they make their own root beer. 401 N. Jefferson Street, Huntington, 260.200.1065, [antiqology.com](http://antiqology.com)

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VIEWPOINT

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**EYES WIDE OPEN:** A few years back, **DJ E-CLYPS**, the brilliant local musician and producer, realized that music had shifted from hobby to vocation and that something may have been lost in the transition. "I needed another creative outlet because music was... it was doing it but it wasn't doing it at the level I needed." So, E-Clyps took up photography, working at the late-and-lamented camera shop, Sunny Schick, during the day and shooting photos at night. The owner of the shop wanted him to turn pro, but he was reluctant to give up the giddy artistic freedoms of being a photographic hobbyist. Then, *TIME* magazine contacted him for permission to reprint some protest photos. Other national publications followed suit. Now, E-Clyps is preparing to open Blacklight Factory, a gallery and photo studio on Wells Street. He plans to use the gallery to help Black artists. E-Clyps said photography has the power to change people and be a voice for people. "You do a photo of somebody, and you see him cry because they've never looked at themselves from that perspective; it becomes way deeper than just snapping photos." [instagram.com/bydjeclyps](https://www.instagram.com/bydjeclyps)

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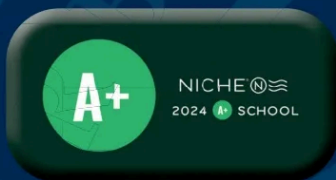


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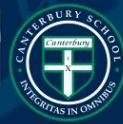






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