

A Plan for Richmond, Indiana

Chris Hardie, Candidate for City Council



Version 1.0 - October 13, 2011
ChrisOnCouncil.com/plan

About This Plan



Forge at the Wayne County Historical Museum

This is a plan for Richmond. It's a specific plan for how I will approach some of the issues facing our community today and in the future, if I'm elected to City Council. Some of the proposals here are not new, some of them are already in progress, and some will change over time. But all of these plans are important, and will require collaboration, creativity and patience to see realized.

As I've talked with residents and community leaders in my campaign, one thing remains clear: we're not short on good ideas, strong vision or great possibilities to pursue (and this document barely begins to cover them). We just need to act boldly.

I'm ready to get started.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Chris Hardie', with a stylized arrow pointing to the right.

Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| My First Six Tasks | 4 |
| Council Operations | 5 |
| Economic Development | 7 |
| Partnerships | 9 |
| Self-Reliance | 10 |
| A Final Note | 12 |



Swimmers survey the triathlon course at Middlefork Reservoir

My First Six Tasks

Here are the first six tasks I would take on as a new member of Richmond's Common Council:

1. **Personally visit each and every City department and location.**

Time period: January 2012

2. **Review the City budget as presented to Common Council.** I've already started to review each function, department and operational area for possible changes or adjustments.

Time period: January-March 2012

3. **Meet as a City Council along with the Mayor of Richmond** to establish priorities and strategic initiatives for the coming year.

Time period: January 2012

4. **Establish an efficiency/savings reward program**, where a fund will be set up to reward city employees for suggestions that improve city operations. The fund will be created with no additional burden to taxpayers, and the results will pay for its cost.

Time period: February 2012

5. **Initiate a series of public meetings with citizens** to ask, "What Does a Successful Richmond Look Like?" Record and post all suggestions for broader public discussion.

Time period: February-May 2012

6. **Establish a consistent method Council can use for engaging Richmond citizens** using electronic tools, allowing regular feedback on a wide variety of legislative issues.

Time period: February-March 2012

For each task, I'll report back to the community on what I've found and how progress on each one is coming.



Council Operations

The way Council itself operates should be up for scrutiny. Are we observing relevant laws and procedures that maximize our efficiency and transparency? Are we making the best use of available tools and technologies?

1. **Clarify the impact of the Open Door Law, the Access to Public Records Act and the Public Notice Advertising Law on Council operations.** Council members and all citizens should know clearly what is required when it comes to advance notice of public meetings, documentation about proceedings, and related processes.

Timeline: January-February 2012

2. **Ensure that all Council members can be reached via electronic mail.** Through a great partnership with RP&L's Parallax Systems, I'm sure we can help any Council members not currently online so they can receive e-mail sent by their constituents and by other members of government. This will also help with the timely delivery of Council member packets prior to meetings.

Timeline: by March 2012

3. **Update the A/V and display technology in Council chambers.** Council and its guests should be able to quickly and smoothly make use of computing and projection tools in the course of conducting its business. Audio/video systems



should be modern and easily connected to WCTV's systems for broadcast and recording. State and federal grants exist to help improve the tech, and I'll pursue these opportunities to minimize any use of city budget. Some cities are reporting projected savings of thousands of dollars per year through reduction in paper usage for Councils.

Timeline: mid-2012

- 4. Improve communication with the public about Council meetings.** In addition to complying with relevant laws (see above), Council can do a better job of publicizing on the City website upcoming meeting agendas, the potential impact of any substantive items on the agenda, what opportunities will exist for public input, and how citizens can learn more about those issues.

Timeline: by mid-2012

- 5. Ask fellow Council members to voluntarily fill out conflict of interest disclosures.** As a key legislative body that impacts financial transactions affecting local businesses and organizations in a small city, it's essential that the public be aware of what affiliations, financial interests and potential biases a Council member might have. In some cases, this information will help clarify when a member of Council should abstain from voting on a given issue, or even recuse themselves from the conversation altogether. I'll lead the effort to get full disclosure statements from all members of Council.

Timeline: January 2012

Economic Development

In tight economic times, Richmond City Government needs to know that every dollar it spends on economic development is leveraged to maximum benefit for all parts of our community.

1. Ask City government to **itemize and publicize information about each of the economic development tools it has at its disposal**, what criteria it uses to decide when to use them, and what long-term costs they incur. This includes tax abatements and deferrals, TIF district creation, exceptions in permitting and inspections, and others. If a tool cannot be demonstrated to be effective, I'll lead efforts to reduce or remove our use of that tool.

Time period: Mid and late 2012



2. **Re-evaluate the City's contract with the Economic Development Corporation.** I've met directly with EDC leadership, but I support calls for the EDC to make its case to the whole community that the EDIT payroll tax dollars it uses are the best and highest use of those funds on our behalf. If it can make the case to our satisfaction, great; if it can't, we should direct those funds elsewhere.

Time period: First half of 2012

3. **Streamline bureaucratic processes for new businesses.**

Sometimes the process of opening a new restaurant or bookstore can be months of red tape as business owners navigate permits, inspections, city codes, zoning issues and related matters. I'll work with City staff to make sure the pieces of the puzzle are as efficient as they can be, and then make sure the City produces a clear guide to help those new business efforts go smoothly.

Time period: First half of 2012

4. **Explore opportunities for payment in lieu of taxes.** As our economy has changed and old models of taxation to pay for services have stayed the same, we need to explore what it would mean for significant users of the City's services that are also tax-exempt to help cover some of the costs involved. I would work with local and state officials along with representatives from potentially affected organizations to see what opportunities are feasible.

Timeline: 2012

5. Propose a **new set of queries the City should use when embarking on new economic development ventures**, including questions like:

- Will the new opportunity contribute positively to Richmond's image?
- Will the new business or opportunity contribute to strong local business districts and the improved identity of Richmond's neighborhoods?
- Will the new business or opportunity minimize its impact on the harm to physical resources of Richmond's landscape - re-using existing structures where possible, avoiding environmental degradation, etc?
- Will the new business or opportunity proactively consider quality of life issues in Richmond? Will its decision-makers treat our people with concern and respect for their rights, wants and needs?

The resulting document could be referenced in future decision-making conversations.

Timeline: January 2012

Partnerships

City government doesn't operate in a vacuum; its services interact daily with the operations of County, regional and state entities, as well as various local business, non-profits and other organizations. How can we do better with the resources we already have? First steps:

1. **Renew efforts to hold substantive conversations between City and County officials about collaboration.** How can we make government more friendly and accessible to community members? How can we reduce fragmentation and overlap without taking away the unique functions that City and County bodies each serve? These conversations will require setting aside precedents and egos and having open minds to new ways of operating. With a competent facilitator and dedicated participants, I think these conversations could be immediately fruitful, and I'll pursue making them happen.

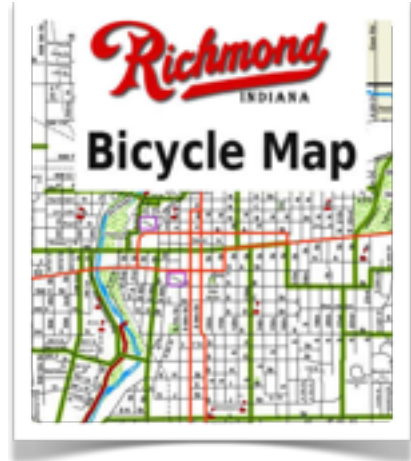
Timeline: throughout 2012

2. **Inventory what services the City is providing that could be enhanced or made more cost effective** through partnership with local residents, businesses and non-profits. How can neighborhood watch programs enhance RPD's limited staff time? How can the Parks Department benefit from additional collaboration with outdoor education groups like Cope Environmental Center? Is there money to be saved by having local experts perform studies or evaluations that we currently outsource to national consultants? I'll make sure that these conversations and connections are happening to the benefit of local residents.

Timeline: throughout 2012

Self-Reliance

Unprecedented global shifts have changed the landscape in towns like Richmond: we can no longer depend on a steady stream of new jobs or resources coming in to our community, and we can't continue to structure our city on the assumption of low shipping and transportation costs. At the same time, we have great opportunities to be a regional economic hub with a renewed focus on quality of life. It's time for a transition; here are a few first steps:



1. **Implement our recently developed transportation plan that incorporates the notion of “complete streets.”** Let's

make it so that pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across streets all around the city. When we have complete streets, we can reduce our use of fossil fuels and encouraging healthy, active lifestyles. As a member of Council, I'll work to ensure these efforts have adequate funding and prioritization within the city administration.

Time period: beginning early 2012

2. **Ensure RP&L's solid waste to energy program is sustainable and benefits the community.** The RP&L Board has already decided to proceed with the solid waste to energy facility in Richmond, but there are many pieces of this process that are new to our community and to the country. As an RP&L Board member, I'll help ensure the facility being built protects residents from any harmful chemicals created in its operation, and I'll work with

RP&L staff to ensure the transition to this new form of power generation goes smoothly.

Time period: throughout my term

- 3. Update the City's "buy local" purchasing guidelines.** We know that a dollar spent in our local economy is often turned around and spent again locally seven times over. Supporting locally owned businesses and organizations is one of the best things we can do to encourage a strong, self-reliant local economy. As a member of Council, I'll work to make sure the products and services the City itself consumes are obtained from local businesses whenever it's reasonable to do so, even if it comes at a slightly higher cost than a non-local vendor offers. I'll work with the Mayor and department heads to develop an updated "buy local" guideline for City purchasing.

Time period: update guidelines in early 2012

A Final Note

As I noted in the introduction, this plan only covers SOME of the issues facing Richmond today, but I think it's a good start for some concrete items we can take action on as soon as the new City Council shows up for work. It also builds on existing documents and recommendations already in place (such as Richmond's Comprehensive Plan), so that we don't duplicate strategic planning efforts conducted (and paid for) in the past. And as soon as we start working on these items and having these conversations, I'm sure other great possibilities will emerge.

I've been collecting a lot of other great ideas about how to make Richmond a better place to live, work and play. You can see many of them at this community improvement brainstorming website which anyone can add to:



<http://www.RichmondBrainstorm.com/>

I ask for your vote on November 8th so that I can get to work making these ideas and plans a reality. Thanks!

Chris Hardie
ChrisOnCouncil.com