



## MKSK

### INNOVATION

The development of the Lawrenceburg Civic Park is a response to the city's 2014 Downtown Action Agenda. The plan recommended the development of a "Riverfront Cultural and Entertainment District" connecting the Hollywood Casino, the Lawrenceburg Event Center, and local businesses on High and Walnut Streets into a cohesive walkable district. The focus on investment in this dog-leg-shaped area provides an attraction for local residents and workers and a destination that is easily accessible via I-275 by a 75,000 person trade area and downtown Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Lawrenceburg Civic Park responds to the Downtown Action Agenda through upgrades in infrastructure. The park includes a first-class performance stage with an integrated sound system and a rear projection screen. A green room and public family restroom are located adjacent to the stage. The park includes free public Wi-Fi and new site lighting that extends the daily use of the park. Opposite the stage, the park is terminated by a splash pad, and a variety of seating is provided throughout the public space, making it a destination for all ages. Two event lawns, lush landscaping, and over 60 new trees provides one-half-acre of permeable surface where there was previously paved asphalt parking lots.

The park demonstrates a high development standard set by the City of Lawrenceburg of "quality in all things." According to Bryan Messmore, the City's Redevelopment Director, the biggest challenge of the project was evaluating alternatives to meet budget goals while maintaining the desired experience for the community and visitors.

### OUTCOME

Lawrenceburg Civic Park has already been a catalyst for growth and development. Since the park's opening in June of 2019, attendance at Music on the River has soared, and the park is regularly programmed with community activities including a farmer's market, mobile library, Shakespeare performances, movies and fitness classes. In 2020, over 88 of 100 community events and programs were able to continue with combined support from the City of Lawrenceburg and Main Street, Inc. – with the majority of events taking place in Lawrenceburg Civic Park. Within the "entertainment district," several new businesses have opened including Proof 124 Restaurant, Funny Farm Coffee Company, and a wine lounge and bakery. The 150-unit Whiskey River apartment development will open in summer 2022. The park successfully draws the community of Lawrenceburg toward the Ohio River and celebrates the city's rich "river town" history.

### EXECUTION

The Lawrenceburg Civic Park project is a direct response to the city's 2014 Downtown Action Agenda. Planning for the park began in early 2017 and included a multidisciplinary design and engineering team including Strand Associates Engineering, MSA Architects, and MKSK as planners and landscape architects. After a community-led design process, construction was able to begin in the fall of 2018. Led by Maxwell as construction manager, the consultant team worked extremely well together throughout the construction process. There were very few delays, which included the discovery of an underground fuel tank which was cleared by the EPA. The Lawrenceburg Civic Park project was completed on schedule and the grand opening ceremony was held on June 1st, 2019.

### REPRESENTATION

The design was shaped by a community-led process involving several public meetings and workshops with city leadership and steering committee representatives of downtown businesses and local organizations. Initial planning and urban design studies looked beyond the edges of the site and explored potential impacts and recommendations for future development within the emerging "entertainment district." How would this new landscape interface with surrounding development and architecture? What type of development would this urban civic space promote?

A key new development supported by the park is the Proof 124 restaurant, which opened in Summer 2020. Located in the historic firehouse building that is directly connected to the north end of the park, the restaurant patio spills out into the public space and

is within 30 feet of the new splash pad fountain. The restaurant is a true public-private partnership with the city contributing 50% of the project costs and will transfer the property deed to the business at the end of a five-year term. The development agreement ensured that the city's investment in Proof 124 would be a benefit to the Lawrenceburg Civic Park and the park would inversely support the restaurant. Proof 124 now has 21 employees on staff.

## **REPLICATION**

Much of the design of the Lawrenceburg Civic Park was centered around the well-attended Music on the River concert series. Thanks to strong leaders with a community-minded mentality, the park was planned for the benefit of the community – bringing people together for the already well-loved concert series and enhancing and growing interactions with new infrastructure and park programming. City officials were focused on maintaining the small-town feel of Lawrenceburg, but with amenities typically enjoyed by a much larger city. The Lawrenceburg Civic Park was developed with the “if you build it, they will come” mentality and it has demonstrated tremendous success.

## **COMPLEXITY/SIMPLICITY**

The Downtown Action Agenda articulated the priorities for Lawrenceburg: 1.) To maintain the historic architecture and urban fabric of the City; 2.) To support existing “mom-and-pop” type businesses; 3.) To promote a walkable, livelier downtown through public art, signage, and business operations; 4.) To attract homeowners and small businesses; and 5.) To become an attraction for the tri-state area. The Lawrenceburg Civic Park is a development that responds to all of these objectives, so in that respect it was a simple solution that provides public amenity and promotes economic growth in downtown Lawrenceburg.