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**Muncie Redevelopment Propelled Forward by READI Grant**

 Muncie was recently awarded a grant agreement securing Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) funding for the McKinley-Whitely Live Learn Neighborhood and infrastructure around Muncie Central. Launched by Gov. Holcomb and led by the IEDC, READI builds on the framework and successes of the Indiana Regional Cities Initiative and the 21st Century Talent Initiative, encouraging regional collaboration and data-driven, long-term planning that, when implemented, will attract and retain talent in Indiana. The $500 million READI fund, passed by legislation during the 2021 session, utilizes federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies. The East Central Indiana Regional Partnership, which includes Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Jay, Henry, Randolph and Wayne counties, was awarded $15 million in READI funding at the end of 2021. The award, along with the public and private match dollars required through the READI program, will help support regional improvements across the eight-county area.

The project will fund intersection and infrastructure improvements in the McKinley-Whitely Live Learn Neighborhood and around Muncie Central. When completed, Muncie Central High School will have better connectivity to the Cardinal Greenway, and the neighborhood will benefit from increased walkability and pedestrian safety. A traffic study has already been ordered, and sidewalk work has begun near Elm Street.

The project is the result of several years of collaboration between the Mayor, Community Development, Muncie Central, the Community Foundation, Minnetrista, the Chamber of Commerce, the Neighborhood, and MRC. The committee has met monthly since 2020 to discuss ways to improve the neighborhood. The READI grant will cover the first phase of redevelopment in the McKinley-Whitely Live Learn Neighborhood, with other developments to come. Mayor Ridenour is enthusiastic about the grant, stating, “These projects, that enhance safety and quality of life, are so important for our City. It has been a long, collaborative process, and we are grateful to IEDC and ECIRP for their support.”