

Francesville, Indiana

2022

Francesville is one of Indiana's best-kept secrets! This rural, close-knit community is nestled in Salem Township on the west side of Pulaski County on HWY 421, approximately 40 miles north of Lafayette and 40 miles south of Interstate 80/90. The town of Francesville was laid out by James Brooks, president of the Louisville, New Albany, and Chicago Railroad in 1853. It was named in honor of his daughter, Frances. Not only was the railroad instrumental in bringing settlers to this area by providing employment opportunities, but many of the early immigrants from Germany found the land in this area to be inexpensive, fertile, and conducive to cultivation. Therefore, farming and many ag-related businesses helped to increase Francesville's population and support its economic growth.

As of the 2020 census, Francesville's population was 846. Other census information indicated the racial make-up of the town was 96.0% white, 2.89% other race, and 0.12% two or more races. The median age in the town was 43 years and the median household income was \$57,314 with a poverty rate of 15.91%. The median rental costs in recent years are approximately \$553 per month, and the median house value is \$95,300.

Francesville is a faith-based community with six churches within its city limits and several other churches within its zip code area. In July 2021, construction began on a property across the county road adjacent to the West Central School Corporation to house LifeWise Academy West Central, a Bible-based, character education program. Initially, this Released Time Religious Instruction would be offered to elementary students with parental permission. During its first year of operation, over one-half of the elementary school population participated in this program. Because of the overwhelming support this community has given to this endeavor, Released Time Religious Instruction has now expanded to include middle school students during the 2022-23 school year.

Another unique first for Francesville is the recent opening of a community-owned grocery store/gas station/deli/pharmacy. This cooperative, The Francesville Market, is located on HWY 421 and addresses the void created when two local downtown businesses, a grocery store and pharmacy, closed their doors in 2015 and 2016 respectively. In 2017, the

vacated downtown pharmacy building was remodeled and now houses 15 mini shops and a restaurant. The empty grocery store building is presently being remodeled and is destined to house a textile business. In addition, Francesville is home to a 2.5-acre advanced hydroponics greenhouse facility that provides customers with a year-round, local supply of premium quality, pesticide-free leaf lettuces, spring mixes, and herbs. This facility opened for business in 2021. Other noteworthy businesses include Gutwein Popcorn, FRATCO Tile Inc, US Aggregates, Indiana Small Plots, Schlatter's Inc, and Meadow Springs Events Center. In addition, Francesville has been able to maintain a post office and a local bank, two necessities that seem to be vanishing from smaller communities. Furthermore, approximately 70 other local businesses help to bolster Francesville's thriving economy.

Other Francesville amenities include an Andrew Carnegie library, Parkview Haven Retirement Community, a Dance Development Academy, and a beautiful town park that includes a walking trail, ball diamonds, and a dog park. The West Central School Corporation, which serves the western half of Pulaski County and Gilliam Township in adjacent Jasper County, also houses a nursery school, Head Start program, and has a swimming pool that is accessible to all.

Several non-profit organizations serving within this community include the Francesville-Salem Twp. Volunteer Fire Department; the Lion's Club, and the Francesville Fall Festival organization. In addition, the Humanitarian Distribution Center supplies food staples to approximately 30 food pantries in Northwest Indiana, and the UPTOWN Project, Inc. is a local Main Street organization created to enrich Francesville's business community, embrace its heritage and culture, encourage artistic expression, and promote quality activities and events that instill a "sense of place" in this community.

For many, Francesville, Indiana may be but a small dot on Indiana's map, but to those of us living here, it's one of the best places in the world in which to live, work, and play! Francesville is truly one of Indiana's best-kept secrets. It is a "small town with a big heart!"