

# West Lafayette, Indiana government fast-tracks SK Hynix memory chip factory construction

George Kirby, Kevin Reed  
24 May 2026

As residents of West Lafayette, Indiana continue their fight to stop the construction of the SK Hynix microchip factory and reverse the rezoning of their neighborhood, local politicians are moving swiftly to assist the South Korean-based semiconductor corporation and its Purdue Research Foundation (PRF) partners to move forward with their building site plan.

In April, both the Tippecanoe County Commission and the West Lafayette City Council approved a series of road construction projects connected to the \$4 billion SK Hynix advanced packaging memory chip facility. The roadwork, which is scheduled to be completed in two phases, includes new traffic lights at three intersections, two new roundabouts and bridge work in the vicinity of the planned microchip plant.

Additionally, in January, the city issued three building permits worth \$98 million to an SK Hynix contractor to begin construction of the foundations for the office building, manufacturing facility and utility building on the 133-acre site. In February, additional permits were issued for fencing and grading of the site which has a 2028 target completion date.

Local officials have claimed the chip factory will be a “transformative economic catalyst” that will benefit the community by promoting job growth and will bring prosperity to the area. However, community members point to the backroom nature of the arrangements between SK Hynix, PRF and government officials.

The residents have noted that any purported “benefits” to the community are window dressing for a project that serves the interests of real estate developers and tech industry billionaires. As one resident told the WSWs:

These plans are rumored to include the construction of apartments for the workers of this plant. The biggest player in the development is the firm Shook Real Estate, which is working with SK Hynix and the government here, claiming they are starting programs with the schools to promote the chip production.

The resident questioned the claim that between 800 and 1,000 jobs will be created by the chip factory project. The massive complex also has support from the federal government, including \$485 million from the federal CHIPS Act. To this is added almost \$700 million in tax incentives from the state-run Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC). These incentives were secured with promises that the funds will be paid back by the company once the plant is operational.

## SK Hynix and the residents’ lawsuit

SK Hynix, the world’s second largest memory chip manufacturer behind Samsung, is being fast-tracked for a factory in West Lafayette that will make high-bandwidth memory (HBM) chips. HBM chips can process 1.18 terabytes of data per second and are designed for the data transfer needs of artificial intelligence (AI) and high-performance computing systems.

The new factory is part of a plan to boost US-made HBM supplies that support cutting-edge AI accelerators and graphics cards manufactured by American tech giants like Nvidia and AMD. The urgency behind the construction project is also driven by US national security interests related to competition with China over who will dominate the global tech industry and artificial intelligence revolution.

The West Lafayette resident explained how government funds are being used while the rights of residents are being trampled on:

They [SK Hynix] received \$2 billion from the CHIPS Act to meet their deadlines. They have rapid building benchmarks, and the approval by the city and county of the connector road from Soldiers Home Road helps this. They are extending the width of the road by 30 feet and residents will lose frontage on their property.

In June 2025, a group of West Lafayette residents filed a lawsuit demanding reversal of the rezoning of the area for industrial purposes. In April of this year, they filed a motion for a temporary restraining order to stop the earth-moving and other work already underway because the increased traffic, dust and loss of the residential character of their neighborhoods were causing property values to fall.

In response, SK Hynix, PRF and local officials have moved for summary judgment in the case on the grounds that plaintiffs do not live close enough to the construction site to challenge the rezoning decision. Attorneys for the residents argue that SK Hynix and PRF have stalled the legal process by blocking their ability to take sufficient discovery.

The resident told the WSWs that the court’s Special Master, “who was supposed to oversee the contentious discovery process, found a conflict of interest while reviewing the documents.” As a result, Judge Sean M. Persin of the Tippecanoe County Circuit Court “will now be reviewing all discovery documents.”

Meanwhile, in a recent hearing before Judge Persin, evidence of “information starvation” and deliberate concealment of the SK Hynix chip

plant plans were revealed. The attorney for the plaintiffs showed that no end use details for the site were disclosed during public hearings of the county planning commission or the City Council in 2025 when rezoning for “heavy industry” was approved.

A major issue is the known record of illnesses suffered by chip factory workers and people living in neighborhoods surrounding chip manufacturing plants. This record includes elevated risk of cancer such as leukemia and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, reproductive harm and respiratory illnesses. These health concerns are linked to decades-long, low-level exposure to toxic solvents, photoresists, heavy metals and acid gases.

Residents have pointed to the chemicals used in the chip production process such as ammonia, sodium hydroxide and phosphoric acid that have serious health impacts, as well as “forever chemicals” like fluorinated synthetics, which are known to resist breaking down in human metabolic pathways and can cause life-threatening illnesses.

The residents are also objecting to plans by SK Hynix to purchase treated water from the local aquifers through Indiana American Water, the largest investor-owned water utility in the state. The HBM chip manufacturing process—stacking multiple layers of memory, bonding of individual wafers, and cooling—requires nearly 4 million gallons of water per day, which is one-and-a-half times the current water consumption in the West Lafayette area.

### **What is the Purdue Research Foundation?**

PRF is a private, nonprofit corporation established in 1930 connected to Purdue University, a public university founded in 1869. PRF functions as the university’s nexus between private technology firms and entrepreneurial startups and Purdue’s endowment of more than \$4 billion.

A primary function of PRF is to coordinate industrial land use with its corporate partners. In the case of the SK Hynix chip factory, PRF owned the land on which the facility is being built, previously known as Site B of Purdue Research Park. As the production phase approaches for SK Hynix, PRF will lease adjacent parcels and coordinate utility expansion for future supply-chain vendors and industry partners.

“There is a close relationship between PRF and the city. PRF sold farmland for housing,” the resident said, adding, “That is why this entire area is residential. It is also right near Heritage Healthcare for those in poor physical health. There are also EMTs who regularly go to the local nursing home.”

Over recent years, PRF has deepened its ties with the tech and semiconductor industries, defense and intelligence contractors and agricultural firms. Among PRF’s 300 corporate partners is Saab, the Swedish multinational aerospace and defense corporation. Saab Aeronautics has a flagship production plant in West Lafayette where fuselages for the US Air Force T-7A Red Hawk are made. Through the efforts of PRF, Saab received over \$5 million in tax credits from the IEDC.

### **Chad Pittman and the US military**

Chad Pittman, a twenty-year veteran of the Indiana Army National Guard, was named president and CEO of PRF in February 2025. He joined PRF in 2014 as president for the Office of Technology Commercialization, “where he managed the development and

implementation of strategies to commercialize Purdue technologies,” according to his official Purdue University biography.

By 2020, Pittman had become PRF’s chief executive of economic development, based on his prior experience as both chief of staff and vice president of the IEDC. During his tenure with Indiana’s economic development programs, Pittman recruited more than 1,000 companies to the state.

In February 2024, Pittman toured Taiwan, met with Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te and cultivated strategic global partnerships in semiconductor education and national security. Shortly after Pittman was promoted to the post of CEO of PRF, the foundation announced a strategic technological partnership with the Taiwan Leadership Institute.

As the WSWS previously reported, the SK Hynix-PRF partnership is more than a regional development initiative. It is part of the restructuring of industry in the US that is bringing corporations, universities and the state together in worldwide competition and a race to dominate the next generation of technology.

This is part of a new phase in the development of the military-industrial-academic complex. The US Department of Defense (DoD) has increased funding for Purdue University, providing \$100 million for its Scalable Asymmetric Lifecycle Engagement (SCALE) workforce development program.

Purdue is one of four major DoD-linked semiconductor universities. The others with similar integrated defense-tech manufacturing and research programs are Arizona State University, Georgia Institute of Technology and University of Texas at Austin. The “workforce development” initiatives have as their primary goal the reshoring of semiconductor production, which will be subordinated to the military aims of US imperialism.

The manufacturing of memory chips that support the AI revolution brings the possibility of enormous benefits to society, including the elimination of drudgery and significant improvements in productivity that can reduce the working day while accelerating the potential for human learning.

However, private ownership of the technology for profit by the capitalist oligarchy means the primary purpose of the tools is to destroy jobs, increase Wall Street investment portfolios and advance sophisticated war-making machines for the US military, not to improve the lives of the public.

Similarly, the planning and construction of the high-tech SK Hynix manufacturing facility in West Lafayette is being carried out behind the backs of local community members and running roughshod over their concerns, with the support of government at every level. The health and safety of residents, as well as that of the workers who will be hired to work in the factory, are being subordinated to the profit interests of the owners and investors in SK Hynix.

To take forward the fight against the attack by SK Hynix on their rights, community members must recognize that this is a political struggle against the powerful military-industrial-academic complex. The only force capable of defending the right to a healthy and livable community and safe jobs and working conditions is the working class itself.

The means establishing an independent rank and file committee in West Lafayette that will coordinate the struggle of residents with other sections of the working class that are fighting against the corporations and the government as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**

