Hometown Collaboration Initiative

Began in 2015

Partnership at State Level
- Ball State University
- Office of Rural and Community Affairs
- Purdue Extension
- Purdue Center for Regional Development

Communities with less than 25,000 people
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Commitment to building on their existing assets (19)

Focus on one of three areas

• Leadership
• Economy
• Placemaking

Mix of towns, cities and counties

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Existing data review:
1. Secondary data – data snapshot

2. Existing community/county plans
   ➢ Review and discussion of progress on plan’s strategies

3. Asset Mapping
   ➢ Appreciative inquiry – looking at what could be leveraged
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New data collection:

1. Surveyed over 16,000 residents
   - Asked questions related to:
     - Leadership
     - Economy
     - Placemaking
     - Demographics

2. Community Forums
   - Review and discussion of survey results
   - Recommendations on next steps
Demographics

**Age**  
- 65+ years: 12.6%  
- 45-64 yrs: 40.7%  
- 25-44 yrs: 36.7%  
- Under 24 yrs: 10.0%  

**Educational Attainment**  
- HS or less: 10.0%  
- Some college: 36.7%  
- Bachelor's or Higher: 53.3%  

**Employment Status**  
- Employed: 75.4%  
- Unemployed: 5.2%  
- Full time student: 4.5%  
- Retired: 11.0%  
- Stay at home parent/guardian: 3.9%  

**Gender**  
- Male: 64.2%  
- Female: 34.9%  
- No Response: 0.9%  

**Race**  
- White: 98.8%  
- Black: 0.7%  
- Asian/Pacific: 0.5%  

**Length of Residency**  
- 61+ years: 6.6%  
- 51-60 years: 9.8%  
- 41-50 years: 13.0%  
- 31-40 years: 16.9%  
- 21-30 years: 17.4%  
- 11-20 years: 20.0%  
- 1-10 years: 16.3%  

**Sample size**: 12,802; Median = 3.0

**Sample size** for Length of Residency: 14,231; Median = 93.0

**Sample size** for Employment Status: 15,591

**Sample size** for Educational Attainment: 12,750; Median = 2.0

*Data collected starting in Gen 3.*
Emerging Themes: Placemaking

1. Residents use their Parks and Trails.
2. Residents feel their downtown is thriving.
3. Residents believe that there are very few family activities.
4. Residents find information about events and activities in their communities is accessible.
5. Residents feel that their communities promote its culture and heritage.
Emerging Themes: Leadership

1. Residents have mixed feelings about the responsiveness of their leaders and many do not know.
2. Diversity receives a mixed response as well, with over 1/3 of respondents not knowing whether diversity contributes positively.
3. A majority feel that the community would benefit from a leadership program.
4. Youth are NOT encouraged to share their thoughts about the local needs and priorities.
5. Approximately 50% agreed that only small number of people take leadership roles in their communities.
Emerging Themes: Economy

1. Residents were mixed as to whether the youth understood the value proposition of remaining in their community.

2. Residents felt that youth who leave for university tend not to return.

3. Supporting local businesses resonates versus a more regional perspective.

4. Residents are relatively unaware of how communities support entrepreneurship and BR&E.
World Café Method for Community Forums

A facilitated process for gathering community input in which groups of people discuss a topic at a series of tables/stations, with the groups rotating through the stations at timed intervals.
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**Expected** (Based on survey results)

- **Economy**: 2
- **Leadership**: 3
- **Placemaking**: 13

**Reality** (Based on Building Block selection)

- **Economy**: 4
- **Leadership**: 2
- **Placemaking**: 13

*Total Building Block Choices*

- Leadership: 2
- Economy: 4
- Placemaking: 13

*a few communities selected one building block and the pathway project was a different building block topic*
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**Leadership**
- Building a pipeline of future leaders in community
- Mini leadership program

**Placemaking**
- Understanding what is placemaking and all its components
- Walk-around in community — looking at needs

**Economy**
- Examining current business environment
- Exploring opportunities and challenges associated with operating a business.
# Outcomes from HCI Communities

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<th>Focus</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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<td>New Downtown Park</td>
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<td>Rush</td>
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<td>Business Directory, BR&amp;E program</td>
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<td>Seymour</td>
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<td>Pick Perry Campaign; one website</td>
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<td>Spencer Co.</td>
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<td>Crawford Co.</td>
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<td>Tourism – We Mean Business! Business Directory; Clean-up</td>
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<td>Vermillion Co.</td>
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<td>Logansport</td>
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<td>Creating a Uniquely Better Community</td>
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<td>Orange Co.</td>
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<td>Launched leadership program; Business Directory</td>
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<td>Cumberland</td>
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<td>Light Your Way Trail Mural</td>
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<td>Albion</td>
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<td>Albion Alley Activation</td>
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### Key Themes
- Placemaking
- Economy
- Leadership
Main Lessons Learned

• Relatively easy to gain perspectives on placemaking as its tangible, relatable and easy to understand
• Leadership is viewed as important but inclusive community engagement is still a challenge
• Education on economy topics is an area of tremendous opportunity

*HCI team members appreciated being coached on how to engage with their fellow neighbors and turn ideas into reality!*
Other Lessons Learned

• Community readiness and capacity levels are a big determiners of success.

• Community forums often initially dismissed. Upon completion, often mindsets were changed upon seeing how many other citizens were passionate about their community.

• Community champion was a critical component to a strong HCI team.

• Exploration of community assets best done when focused on a topic.
HCI Voices

“For me, the HCI program created a platform for me to serve as a leader and because of this it increased my confidence in my professional role. The program also provided an opportunity for me to work closely with established and emerging community leaders and to develop important relationships that remain extremely beneficial in both my professional and personal life.” ---HCI member Perry County

“I have been inspired and made hopeful that HCI is just a "beginning". I'd been feeling pretty cynical about "anyone" caring about bringing more "culture" and really trying to "promote" all our town and region has to offer. I've been very disappointed in the lack of promotion of our town and it's amenities. I am hopeful now that this group - and individuals - will take the lead and make things happen. “

---HCI Member Town of Albion
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