

Thriving Communities Thriving State

INDIANA UNIVERSITY PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE



COMBINED SUMMARIES PUBLIC OPINION ON INDIANA COMMUNITIES

As part of *Thriving Communities, Thriving State*, Institute staff gathered input from Hoosiers about their communities in 2015 through five regional forums around the state and an online survey. Participants identified their communities as *urban, mid-sized, or rural/small town*, and shared their views about their current condition and future outlook.

The discussion and survey questions can be combined into four general categories – The Good, The Challenges, The Strategies, and The Dreams. (The summary of all the responses, not just those shared by all three community types, can be found at policyinstitute.iu.edu/thriving) The table below includes only issues that were common to all three community types.

The Good	The Challenges	The Strategies	The Dreams
<p>Community</p> <p>There's a strong sense of/pride in/engaged community. People described their communities as friendly, loyal to local businesses, and respectful, with civic connections and an ability to work together.</p>	<p>Attitude barriers</p> <p>Partisanship/parochialism/politics hinders vision and provides no incentive for bold action by leadership. People within the community may act as a barrier to progress because of fear of change, risk aversion, complacency, or low civic engagement.</p>	<p>Regional perspective</p> <p>Communities need to adopt a regional perspective to address broad problems that cross boundaries.</p>	<p>Cooperation/coordination</p> <p>Regional development authority is sufficiently funded with consolidated services, while maintaining local characteristics. There is a sense of cooperation and coordination instead of competition among communities, connecting small communities.</p>
<p>Education</p> <p>There are great institutes of higher education and good access to higher education.</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>K12 education policy and training/higher education don't align with community/employer needs. Skills-based education or credentials should be emphasized as well as 4-year degrees. State education policy is designed to save money, not invest in education. There is a lack of understanding about the value/importance of education.</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>To attract/retain families, communities need a way to adequately fund public schools from pre-K through adult learning opportunities, including quality after-school and summer school programs. Local schools can foster a sense of community.</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>Full-day kindergarten is funded for everyone and pre-K choices are expanded.</p>
<p>Economy</p> <p>For the size of the community, the job market/business sectors are diverse.</p>	<p>Infrastructure</p> <p>There is insufficient investment in building/maintaining infrastructure, including roads and bridges, public transportation options such as commuter rail, and sewer systems.</p>	<p>Replace lost revenue</p> <p>Communities need a way to replace lost revenue by either relaxing property tax caps or increasing revenue from the state.</p>	<p>Internet</p> <p>High-speed broadband internet is provided to the entire state at affordable rates.</p>

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The Good	The Challenges	The Strategies	The Dreams
<p>Cost of living</p> <p>The cost of living is relatively low/affordable, with some affordable housing options and relatively low taxes.</p>	<p>Housing, aging in place</p> <p>There is a lack of affordable, quality housing for specific groups, such as at-risk, young professionals, and the elderly. Communities are not adequately preparing for the aging population.</p>		<p>Housing</p> <p>Quality, affordable housing is available for everyone, including at-risk groups.</p>
<p>Environment</p> <p>The communities have natural and environmental assets. Among these assets, respondents listed proximity to natural beauty, state parks, greenspaces, and water amenities; and clean air.</p>	<p>Young people</p> <p>Young people are leaving for places with better amenities, better paying jobs, and quality of life characteristics. Young people need to be included in discussions about the future, not just the subjects of the discussion.</p>	<p>Young people</p> <p>Communities should better engage and attract young people and young professionals, and encourage a sense of responsibility and loyalty to the community.</p>	
<p>Downtown investments</p> <p>Communities of all sizes are investing in their downtowns. People highlighted specific downtown projects, including neighborhood and business revitalization efforts, arts projects, and infrastructure improvements.</p>	<p>No home rule</p> <p>Budgetary and structural requirements constrain communities and force them to favor short- not long-term thinking. Some constraints mentioned include: part-time officials/lack of leadership; weak government impacts regionalization efforts; conflicts between cities and counties; and property tax caps strain public budgets create insufficient funds for pension obligations, education.</p>		