

2015 Assessment of
**NEEDS
AND
PRIORITIES**
in Clark and
Floyd Counties

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A report for the
Community Foundation of Southern Indiana
by the IU Southeast Applied Research and
Education Center



Executive Summary

The Community Foundation of Southern Indiana surveyed Clark and Floyd county residents, nonprofit community service organizations, business and community leaders, and their own fund holders to develop strategic community goals based on needs and priorities. Respondents shared that they are proud of their community, its history and culture; they feel safe and enjoy opportunities to engage in the community; and they want more to be done to better meet the needs of local residents and build an educated workforce and a strong economy. Responses indicate the following broad community goals:

- Meet the basic needs of community members, particularly the homeless and the mentally ill.
- Build a qualified work force to attract good jobs by supporting education and enrichment across the life course.
- Sustainably develop the economy to provide meaningful work and broadly shared economic security through living wage jobs and a clean and safe environment.

These broad goals reflect both priorities and needs and identify areas in which people indicated the community is not doing very well or about which respondents expressed negative sentiments.

In addition to these broad goals, respondents repeatedly indicated overlapping needs and priorities in transportation, child care, and substance abuse treatment across different topics, from economic concerns to healthful living.

PRIORITIES

Priorities tend to be things that people value and think are important. The community's shared values may lead to very effective efforts to meet needs or provide a valued resource to the area. But in many cases, people identify priorities in areas that they value and that are not adequately addressed in the community. The combination of prioritization and assessment of performance provides a measure of where the community would like to invest time, effort and resources and some indication of what they would like to achieve as a result of those investments.

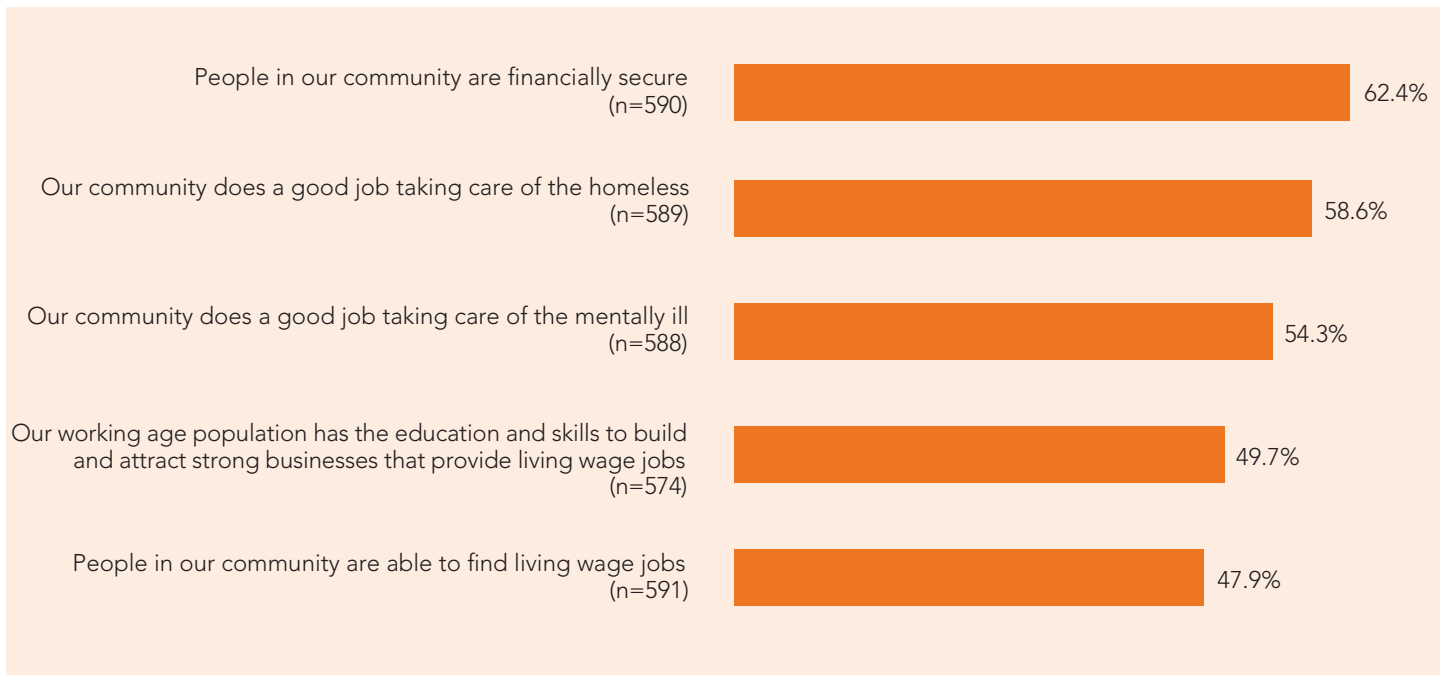
The survey required people to prioritize across several broad areas: sense of community, meeting basic needs, education, the economy, the environment, health and wellness, relationships, recreation, community pride and identity, and arts and entertainment.

The assessment instrument required respondents to choose five of 11 broad areas covered on the survey as priorities—issues or opportunities that people think are important or highly valued. The top priority areas were determined based on the number of respondents that included the item in their top five (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Priorities Across All Areas (n=604)



Figure 2: Overall Needs Across All Assessed Areas (Percent that *Disagree* with the Statement)



Priority lists within a service area included more specific needs within each sector. For example, the topic of meeting basic needs included food pantries, hot meals, clothing distribution, emergency shelter, supportive housing and day shelter. In addition to basic needs, the survey assessed priorities for engagement and relationship building; economic development; healthful living; and education.

NEEDS AND STRENGTHS

Respondents indicated whether or not they thought the community was doing well in providing particular types of programs and services and generating positive community experiences and sentiments.

Needs are areas where a large share of respondents indicate that the community is not doing very well. The top five overall needs are those items where the largest number of respondents indicate that they do not think the community provides enough support or service or are community attributes where they indicate the region falls short (Figure 2).

All of the top five needs also emerged as priorities which means that residents value the community's ability to respond more effectively to those needs. In some areas, respondents did not feel the community was falling short, but public data indicate that the area is, in fact, not performing well. For example, respondents repeatedly prioritized clean air, water and environment, but did not indicate that the community is not doing well in this area.

Public data, however, indicates that more needs to be done. Items like these were incorporated into the broad community goals.

Strengths are those areas where the majority of survey respondents indicate they think the community performs well. Southern Indiana's greatest strength lies in strong social ties and a sense of shared identity (Figure 3). The top priority item was also identified as the top strength: people prioritize safety, security and civility and they feel safe in Southern Indiana. Strengths are the community's assets and may be used to better address priorities and needs in order to reach community goals.

IMPLICATIONS

Respondents in Clark and Floyd counties have concerns about financial security and recognize that the quality of the local workforce is essential to attracting and building living wage jobs and a healthy economy. Respondents believe that more needs to be done to address homelessness, mental health and substance abuse. Findings indicate that people value clean water, air quality and access to fresh local food and some have strong concerns about the area's struggle with pollution. Many indicate that transportation and child care are essential to meeting the needs of families and workers and developing tomorrow's high quality labor force.

Figure 3: Overall Strengths Across All Assessed Areas (Percent that Agree with the Statement)



Amid these needs, residents report strong pride of place, shared identity and culture and ample opportunities to build relationships with one another. The strength of the community provides a firm foundation upon which to build efforts to address areas of concern.

Building a strong and resilient Southern Indiana community will require:

- Support for the community services system that prevents and responds to housing, mental health and substance abuse issues.
- Investment in education and workforce development.
- Environmental clean-up, and sustainable development strategies.
- Building and attracting good jobs to ensure more widespread financial security.

Responding to priority needs will require commitment and resources from local, state and federal governments, investment from local, regional and national foundations, and coordination and communication across nonprofit, for-profit and public sectors.

BASIC NEEDS

Meeting the basic needs of all community members supports quality of life in the region. According to survey responses, Clark and Floyd counties are home to active faith-based communities and nonprofit organizations that do a good job making sure those in need are fed and caring for the developmentally disabled. Across income groups and

respondent categories, people want to see the community do a better job responding to homelessness through food pantries, providing shelter, increasing the supply of affordable housing and helping people return to paid work. Community members recognize that behavioral health services that treat mental illness and addiction will be essential to preventing and responding to homelessness and instability in the community.

Nonprofit organizations indicate gaps in services and funding in the following areas:

- Coordination of services to prevent and respond to homelessness.
- Behavioral health services for the treatment of mental illness and substance abuse.
- Supportive housing for the mentally ill and disabled.

Local government, nonprofit agencies and private investors may be able to collaborate in responding to basic needs in the community. Possible ways to address these needs may include the following:

- Bring together for-profit and non-profit developers, builders, real estate professionals and those working in public housing and community services to identify opportunities to better match rental housing costs to area income levels and provide support services for those who need assistance to remain housed.
- Continue to support food and clothing programs and coordination of those efforts to ensure that community-wide needs are met.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A high quality educated workforce can build, attract and maintain sustainable economic development. Business and community leaders share strong concerns about the quality of the local labor force in Clark and Floyd counties and all respondent groups see education as a high priority.

From early childhood education and care through higher education and workforce re-training, the community needs to do more. The primary objective is to increase educational attainment among working age adults for those already in the labor force and for future generations of workers.

Increasing educational attainment will require public and private investment in educational institutions, enrichment programs and support services that allow people to succeed in education and training programs.

Some ways for public and private investments and efforts to improve educational attainment and workforce development might include the following:

- Support programs that prevent high school drop outs.
- Support for child care providers to increase their Paths to Quality Rating (the state of Indiana's quality rating system for childcare providers).
- Support for enrollment of low-income children in high quality early childhood education and care programs.
- Attention to child care transportation, which is often a barrier to accessing quality care.
- Increase awareness of and support for programming for children and youth from child care through 12th grade: afterschool programs, opportunities for educational enrichment beyond the school day, and quality non-academic youth programming.
- Increase educational attainment among working age adults and youth.
- Support many pathways to success by providing information and encouragement for pursuit of skills training, trade schools, and college.
- Provide financial assistance for adult education, trade schools, and higher education (certificates, associate's and bachelor's programs).
- Increase awareness of the importance of higher education to economic prosperity in the 21st century.
- Advocate for support of higher education that eases the cost burden on resident students so they can focus on their studies and complete associate's, bachelor's and graduate degrees without significant debt.

- Continue to support Education Matters Southern Indiana and 55,000 Degrees' efforts to increase educational attainment in the region and work with those programs to ensure that energy is directed both to associate's degrees and certificates and to bachelor's degrees.

HEALTHFUL LIVING

Healthful living results from a combination of behavioral, programmatic and environmental factors. Air and water quality are essential to the health and well-being of residents. Opportunities to engage in physical activity are abundant throughout the two county region, but health behaviors leave many in the community suffering from chronic illness and obesity. Low leisure time activity rates, smoking and poor air quality combined contribute to the three leading causes of death in the community: heart disease, cancer and lower respiratory disorders. Community members see environmental quality, access to fresh local produce, recreational spaces, health and wellness education and programs for youth as top priorities.

Public policy, public and private investment, education and nonprofit programming all have roles to play in promoting healthful living. Efforts might include the following:

- Public regulation and private investment may converge in efforts to improve air quality and clean up local streams and rivers.
- Private innovation may be partially funded by public dollars available for brownfield redevelopment to clean up industrial waste and make way for sustainable development throughout Clark and Floyd counties.
- Public, private and philanthropic investments can support the creation and maintenance of recreational space, including bike lanes and paths, parks and indoor recreational facilities. Residents can utilize these spaces to build community around healthy active lifestyles.
- Nonprofit organizations and public schools will need public and philanthropic support to develop, implement, and expand strong programs to educate youth on health and wellness and engage them in physical activities.
- Public transportation routes and schedules should support access to full-service grocery stores, farmers' markets, physical activity and recreation.

ECONOMY

A strong economy is essential to quality of life and creating opportunities for all community members to thrive. Clark and Floyd counties need to build, attract and maintain quality businesses and a qualified local labor force to provide better jobs and a stronger local economy.



Sherman Minton Bridge, New Albany, Indiana

Economic development and environmental concerns may be addressed jointly through sustainable development strategies that create economic opportunities and support healthy air, water and food.

Public policies and institutions, private enterprise and innovation, and the nonprofit sector all have roles to play to ensure that market growth reaches all portions of the community. Efforts to improve economic security and develop a sustainable economy may include:

- Public and philanthropic support for local entrepreneurship and small business development.
- Increasing availability, reliability and use of public transportation through public investment and potential partnerships with the area's largest employers.
- Increasing access to affordable rental housing through cross sector coordination to increase the supply of safe housing provided at prices that match income levels in the community.
- Attracting socially and environmentally responsible and sustainable businesses to the region. The region may build economic opportunity out of the region's need to restore air and water quality and remediate brownfield sites.
- Encouraging fresh local food production and improved distribution through farmers' markets and relationships between local grocers, schools and area farmers.
- Attracting and recruiting diverse businesses that provide living wage jobs and opportunities for advancement to support a strong middle class.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Art and cultural activities and opportunities generate community identity, contribute to quality of life and foster creativity in youth. Area residents feel reasonably good about what is available in Southern Indiana, but see opportunities for growth and improvement.

Respondents recognize that income may be a barrier to engagement with and enjoyment of arts and culture. They would like to see a wider variety of art and cultural

activities and believe there is potential to attract visitors to the area to enjoy these amenities. Increasing opportunities for creative self-expression across the life course will improve quality of life and contribute to a more vibrant community.

Public policies and investments to support arts in schools and communities, nonprofit programming, and private enterprises all play a role in developing a rich landscape of local art and culture. Efforts to improve access and enjoyment of arts and culture, art and cultural education, nurture creative expression and boost economic development may include the following activities:

- Identify, promote and support making the arts more accessible to low-to-moderate income people.
- Public and private investment and support for the development of new and varied art and cultural activities in the region.
- Develop and promote arts and culture in ways that attract more visitors to the area and use those opportunities to showcase other local amenities by supporting efforts that cross-promote arts, culture and local shopping, restaurants or the farmers' markets.
- Target youth for attendance at performances and tie those experiences to active, hands-on opportunities for children to express themselves.
- Advocate for and support strong field trip programming that provides opportunities for all children, regardless of income, to learn about the history and culture of the region and be exposed to the performing arts through engaging and memorable experiences.
- Promote opportunities for adults to engage in creative self-expression.

COMMUNITY

Clark and Floyd counties enjoy a strong sense of community, pride of place and shared identity rooted in celebration of the region's history and culture. People generally believe the community is welcoming to newcomers and offers diverse opportunities to build relationships.

Fostering community among youth, in neighborhoods and among senior citizens are all top priorities. In some areas, new programs may be warranted, but increasing engagement with existing neighborhood, youth development and mentoring programs is a first step to ensuring that area residents build strong community ties from youth to old age. Nonprofit organizations note that they struggle to get the word out about their programs and are sometimes unable to attract target audiences.

Nonprofit voluntary associations and service organizations play the largest role in building community, but they also rely on support from local businesses and governments in order to fund activities. Responses indicate the following strategies may foster community engagement across the life course:

- Funding to nonprofit organizations for communications and marketing staff.
- Support to more effectively advertise programs to target populations—funding for targeted outreach and promotion of existing programs.
- Improved information, coordination and referral to ensure that available programs are fully utilized and to better understand full demand for existing programs.
- Build better systems for tracking unmet needs.
- Increase access to transportation to support youth and adult engagement in existing programs.
- Support neighborhood events and activities.
- Support the development and implementation of diverse programs to provide opportunities for senior citizens to engage in group activities.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION—MEETING NEEDS ACROSS SECTORS

Public transportation was not addressed by the core questions of the survey, but respondents commented on the need for more and better public transportation in response to basic needs, economic development, and in discussing barriers to future success in the region.

Public and/or program transportation can remove barriers to program participation among youth and adults and improve employment stability and air quality.

Public transportation is an area where the market falls short because those who need it most cannot cover the costs of providing effective public transportation. In addition, in a culture of drivers, shifting public behavior in ways that can increase demand and better cover the expense will require significant time, effort and money. Some places to begin to shift investments and behavior include the following:

- Increase use of available public transportation through improved service, incentives and promotion.
- Educate the public on advantages of public transportation to workers and potential impacts on air quality.
- Advocate for improved public transportation for Southern Indiana—target advocacy to Federal and State Departments of Transportation, Transportation Authority of River City, the Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency and local municipalities.

- Procure additional funding for transportation in grants to local programs that address priority areas that need attention: services for the homeless and mentally ill, after school programs, workforce development, adult education programs, child care facilities and youth development programs.

CHALLENGES

The survey did not ask any questions about local government or local leadership. The assessment did, however, elicit comments about potential barriers to success for the region and the responses were consistent across all respondent groups. People in Clark and Floyd counties share a perception that the area's greatest barrier to success lies with ineffective leadership. Respondents cited regional divisions, lack of cooperation, lack of vision and local politics.

In a community with strong social capital and shared priorities, these barriers are surmountable through community effort and public pressure to change patterns of governance and styles of leadership. Clark and Floyd county residents value civility and want to see the area move beyond polarized politics, division within and among area communities, and local power struggles that hinder effectiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

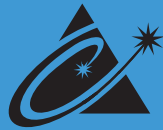
Clark and Floyd counties are good places to live where people welcome newcomers and enjoy a sense of shared identity and culture. People feel safe and connected to others in the community and they value civility and want to see the regional community work together to build prosperity and strong quality of place.

For those who live and work in this region, achieving quality of place will mean improving services that meet basic needs for vulnerable populations, improving education to build a qualified labor force, and developing a sustainable economy that provides living wage jobs and a clean and safe environment.

Clark and Floyd counties have many strong community attributes to build on and use in responding to areas of need. The Community Foundation of Southern Indiana's *2015 Assessment of Needs and Priorities in Clark and Floyd Counties* provides a guide to the area's shared priorities and needs. With a strong sense of social connection, the community can overcome barriers, invest in addressing priorities that need attention, and build strong quality of life for the future.

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A full version of the 2015 Assessment of Needs and Priorities for Clark and Floyd Counties
can be found at cfsouthernindiana.com/cna



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