

# HENDRICKS



# CQUNTY

*InFocus*

Executive Summary  
June 2012

**Get Involved: Stay Engaged: Live Well**

## About Hendricks County In Focus

What makes Hendricks County such a desirable place to live, and how can residents ensure that it continues to be the ideal home for their children and grandchildren? Are there any aspects of life that need to be improved? Are decision-makers in companies, government, and non-profit organizations focused on what's most important? Are their programs and efforts effective?

Finding the answers to questions like these is the goal of Hendricks County In Focus -- a joint effort to help local residents identify the factors behind Hendricks County's quality of life, and then develop ways to measure and monitor those factors in the coming years.

By keeping focused on what's most important, and knowing how Hendricks County measures up, we'll all be able to ensure that it remains a great place to live today, tomorrow, and for future generations.

## Who Is Behind Hendricks County In Focus?

Participating organizations include:

- Hendricks County Community Foundation,
- Hendricks County Convention and Visitors Bureau,
- Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership,
- Hendricks College Network,
- Hendricks County Office of United Way of Central Indiana,
- Hendricks County Parks Department,
- Hendricks County Plan Commission,
- Leadership Hendricks County, and
- All of the county's Chambers of Commerce.

The effort is also being supported by all six of Hendricks County's public school systems and all local libraries. No tax dollars are being used.

Have a question about Hendricks County in Focus? Please email it to us at [HendricksCountyInFocus@hcedp.org](mailto:HendricksCountyInFocus@hcedp.org) or call 317-745-2400.

## **How we got here?**

During the first part of 2012, Hendricks County In Focus developed and promoted a survey about a wide number of aspects affecting the quality of life in the county. The survey was available online, as well as through the county's public libraries, Chambers of Commerce, food pantries, United Way agencies, and the Hendricks County Economic Development partnership. In addition, each of the local school districts hosted meetings at which area residents could learn more about the survey and the process.

The Hendricks County In Focus team studied the survey results and organized the many aspects into nine categories. Next, through a series of six public meetings, the team invited attendees to develop a vision for each of those categories, along with existing and potential indicators that would allow us to determine whether Hendricks County was moving toward those visions.

This document is a summary of what we learned through the survey process and the visioning meetings. As such, it provides an overview of the key points and messages developed along the way. It is not intended to be a comprehensive review that identifies every comment, concern, or suggestion that was aired through the process, because that would result in hundreds of pages.

## **How is this effort being funded?**

The non-profit entities that are partnering in the development of the survey and the process are funding it along with generous private-sector support from investors in the county's business community. In addition, the effort is receiving non-financial support from all six of Hendricks County's public school systems and all local libraries. While they are not contributing tax dollars, they are helping us through activities such as spreading the word, distributing surveys, and providing locations for community forums.

## In summary

Hendricks County is a great place to live, for many reasons.

A simple statement to be sure, but it represents the overall tone of responses to the survey and information gleaned from public sessions. Most respondents are proud of the county and communities they call home. Whether it's the sense of safety, the quality of public education, the abundance of open spaces, or simply the "small-town feeling" that weaves throughout daily life, they believe that our county is a desirable place to live. Most want to keep it that way.

That doesn't mean they believe it's perfect, though. There are concerns that the rapid pace of growth is having significantly negative impacts on the area's way of life, and that the county's infrastructure isn't keeping up. You may have expected that roads would be cited as a major issue, but the fact that nearly half of respondents said it was easy to get around the county might surprise you. Many respondents are nervous about what they see as an increase in crime rates. Others believe that the county's employment growth isn't creating the right kind of jobs.

Despite those concerns, the responses were overwhelmingly positive. Local residents value the area's quality of life and want to preserve and refine it for generations to come. This report is one of the first steps in helping to make that happen.

# PHASE I

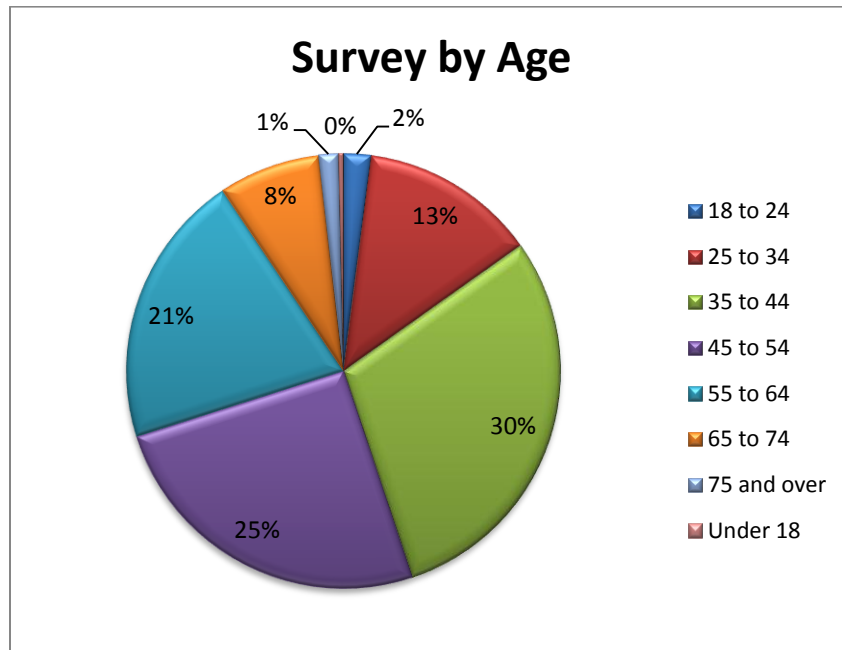
## Hendricks County In Focus On-Line Survey

### Who completed the survey\*?

#### GENDER

Female	59.4%
Male	40.6%

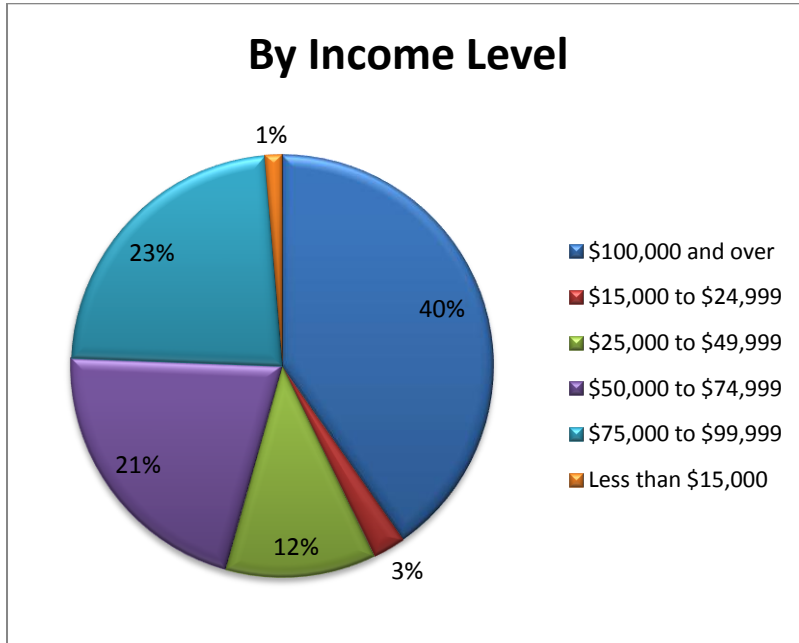
#### AGE



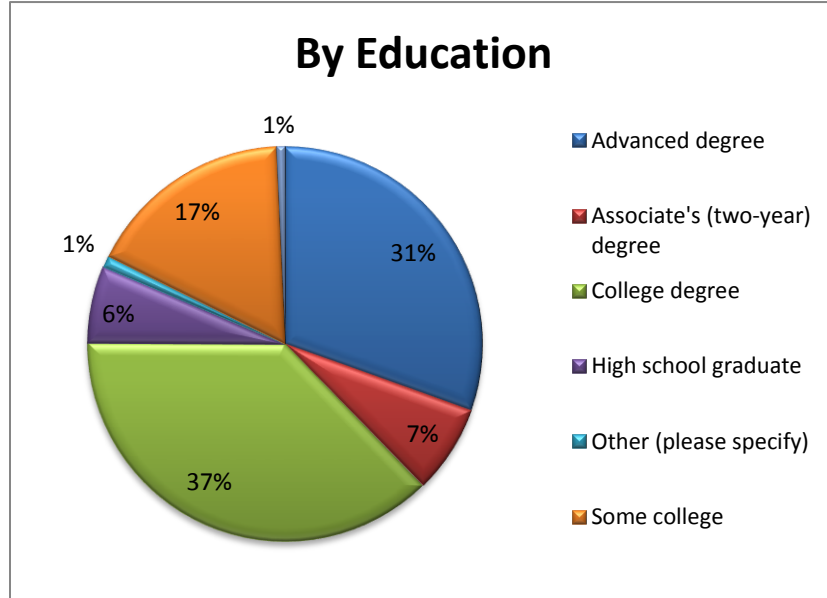
#### ETHNICITY

White or Caucasian	97.6%	Asian or Pacific Islander	0.7%
Other	1.4%	Black or African-American	0.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.2%	Hispanic or Latino (a)	0.4%

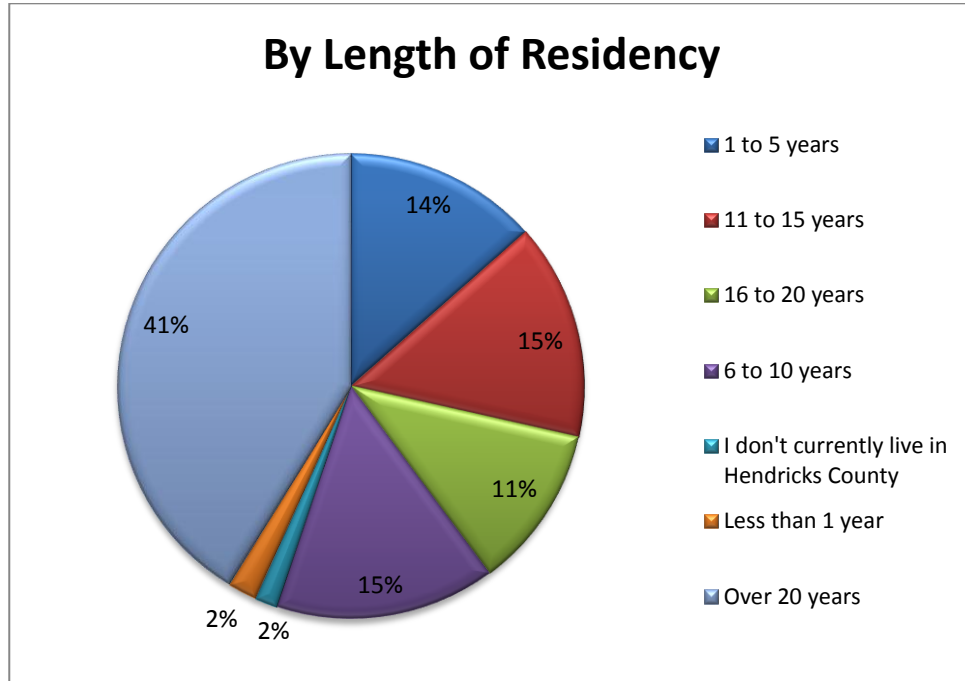
## HOUSEHOLD INCOME



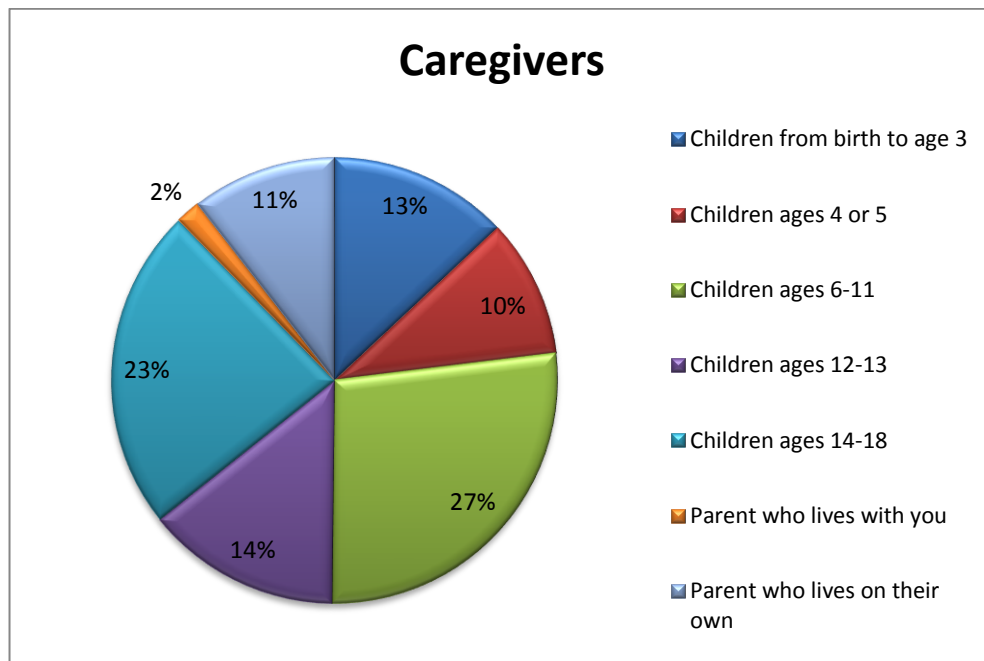
## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



## LIVED IN HENDRICKS COUNTY



## CAREGIVER OF CHILDREN/PARENTS



\*U.S. Census categories were used to identify demographic categories. Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

## How Hendricks County responded?

The survey began by asking residents about their overall level of satisfaction with life in Hendricks County, and an impressive 91.9 percent indicated that they were “very” or “somewhat” satisfied. In fact, just over half (50.4%) indicated that they were “very” satisfied. That compared to 2.6 percent who said they were “not very” satisfied, and just 0.4 percent who indicated that they were “not at all” satisfied.

When asked how they’d rate Hendricks County as a place to live, 46.1 percent said “excellent,” while 45.7 percent said “good.” Just 1.3 percent of respondents said “poor” or “very poor.”

The survey included 19 questions about specific aspects of life in Hendricks County. Respondents rated their satisfaction with each aspect on a scale from “very satisfied” to “not at all satisfied.” Then, respondents were asked what they liked most about Hendricks County, the biggest challenges facing what they saw as their communities, what aspect of life they’d like to preserve over the next decade, and where they saw a need for change or improvements.

For simplicity and clarity, we’ve merged the responses to these questions in this document. We’ll provide the results for each aspect individually, and then share specific factors that were most often cited.



## QUALITY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Very satisfied	56.2%	Not very satisfied	3.8%
Somewhat satisfied	27.6%	Not at all satisfied	1.3%
Neutral	11.1%		

Local public schools ranked second in the “like most” category and fourth in the “preserve” category. Respondents who chose schools as the aspect of like they liked most cited the quality of education and community support.

A large number of respondents cited school-related issues as the county’s biggest challenge -- most often the impacts upon local schools resulting from population growth, reductions in state funding, property tax caps, and a perceived loss of local decision-making in the face of stricter state and federal laws. Others expressed concern about spending practices and the cost of building projects. A small number questioned the competence of local educational leaders and their willingness to listen to the community.

## JOBS AND EMPLOYMENT

### Job training and workforce preparation opportunities

Very satisfied	9.6%	Not very satisfied	9.5%
Somewhat satisfied	35.1%	Not at all satisfied	1.1%
Neutral	44.6%		

### Opportunities to find a good paying job

Very satisfied	9.4%	Not very satisfied	18.8%
Somewhat satisfied	36.2%	Not at all satisfied	4.0%
Neutral	31.6%		

The overwhelming concern expressed in this category is a perceived lack of high-paying and professional-level jobs. Respondents worried that too many local jobs are in lower-paying areas, such as the service sector and warehouses. Several shared frustrations at needing to work outside the county.

## HOUSING COST AND AVAILABILITY

Very satisfied	30.3%	Not very satisfied	7.0%
Somewhat satisfied	47.1%	Not at all satisfied	1.4%
Neutral	14.2%		

Although many respondents said they liked the cost of housing in Hendricks County, there was widespread concern about the combined effects of foreclosures and new low-cost housing on home values and the financial health of the community. There were numerous concerns about “tract” and “starter” home subdivisions and vacant houses, as well as about a perceived oversupply of rental housing. Many respondents called for improved housing quality and fewer apartments.

## TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### Ease of transportation and moving around

Very satisfied	14.0%	Not very satisfied	27.5%
Somewhat satisfied	34.4%	Not at all satisfied	8.3%
Neutral	15.9%		

### Quality of the physical infrastructure (roads, bridges, public buildings)

Very satisfied	17.0%	Not very satisfied	15.2%
Somewhat satisfied	45.5%	Not at all satisfied	5.5%
Neutral	16.8%		

We’ve combined these two questions because the responses were closely related. To the vast majority of the respondents, the primary component of infrastructure affecting their daily lives is the county’s network of roads. It comes as no surprise that many comments centered on the daily congestion along U.S. 36 and the desire for a bridge over the railroad tracks on 267 just south of 36. This category represented the biggest challenge cited by respondents, and was the second-biggest in the “improve” category. Many respondents also recommended the development of public transportation, including bus or rail service between Hendricks County and Indianapolis.

## QUALITY/AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH SERVICES

Very satisfied	59.8%	Not very satisfied	1.9%
Somewhat satisfied	31.0%	Not at all satisfied	0.4%
Neutral	6.9%		

Health services tied for the aspect with the greatest satisfaction. Respondents were complimentary about local hospitals and health providers. Some called for greater attention to healthy lifestyles.

## OPEN SPACES

### Quality/availability of parks and open spaces

Very satisfied	60.9%	Not very satisfied	4.7%
Somewhat satisfied	27.1%	Not at all satisfied	1.4%
Neutral	5.9%		

### Protection/quality of natural environment

Very satisfied	38.1%	Not very satisfied	6.3%
Somewhat satisfied	40.7%	Not at all satisfied	1.8%
Neutral	13.1%		

Parks and open spaces was the second-largest category cited for the “preserve” question, with trails particularly popular. Respondents appreciate the amount of green space and

parkland in the county, and hope that more will be added as the population grows. Trails for walking and biking received the most comments of any element of this aspect, with respondents calling for more of them, along with numerous requests to link the county’s many trails into a system.

## SENSE OF COMMUNITY

### Community strength and stability

Very satisfied	45.7%	Not very satisfied	3.9%
Somewhat satisfied	38.0%	Not at all satisfied	1.2%
Neutral	11.2%		

### Vibrancy of nearest downtown

Very satisfied	13.9%	Not very satisfied	24.4%
Somewhat satisfied	30.6%	Not at all satisfied	9.6%
Neutral	21.6%		

### Sense of community and caring

Very satisfied	32.9%	Not very satisfied	6.6%
Somewhat satisfied	44.2%	Not at all satisfied	1.8%
Neutral	14.6%		

“Community” was an important element that was cited in any number of ways. For some respondents, that meant the towns of Hendricks County; for others, it was their neighborhood, subdivision, or church. A common concern was how to protect the “small-town feeling” as the county grows. There were numerous calls to improve planning related to population growth and housing development, and to preserve the county’s agricultural land. Many respondents hoped for revitalization of local downtown areas.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO ENJOY ARTS/CULTURE ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

Very satisfied	19.7%	Not very satisfied	14.0%
Somewhat satisfied	40.0%	Not at all satisfied	2.2%
Neutral	24.2%		

Most respondents felt that there was much to do within the county for individuals and families, although there were many calls for more activities for teenagers. There was also a sense that more arts and cultural activities were needed. Many respondents cited specific stores and restaurants they would like to see. There were several requests for more independent restaurants and fewer “chain” eateries.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Quality of governmental services

Very satisfied	23.8%	Not very satisfied	7.8%
Somewhat satisfied	42.0%	Not at all satisfied	2.5%
Neutral	23.9%		

### Ability to influence local government decision-making

Very satisfied	9.8%	Not very satisfied	16.3%
Somewhat satisfied	30.3%	Not at all satisfied	8.1%
Neutral	35.4%		

Issues related to governance generated many comments, although most spoke of generalities, such as keeping government small and conservative. There were many concerns about the loss of local control and the intrusion of state and federal mandates. Respondents often cited a need for various governmental units to work more closely with each other to coordinate planning and resources. Interestingly, there were comparatively few concerns expressed about local taxes.

## FEELINGS OF SAFETY IN HOME/NEIGHBORHOOD

Very satisfied	55.4%	Not very satisfied	1.8%
Somewhat satisfied	35.4%	Not at all satisfied	0.8%
Neutral	6.7%		

This was the single-biggest category cited in the “preserve” question. While many respondents noted that they felt safe and secure in their communities, a large number cited maintaining that feeling of safety as the county grows as a key challenge. Many respondents perceived an increase in drug trafficking and other crimes, and more than a few pointed to Marion County residents as the source of problems. There were also concerns that the county has an inadequate number of police on the street.

## **SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **Quality/cost/responsiveness of social services for children**

Very satisfied	14.1%	Not very satisfied	5.1%
Somewhat satisfied	24.1%	Not at all satisfied	1.9%
Neutral	54.8%		

### **Quality/cost/responsiveness of social services for families**

Very satisfied	12.8%	Not very satisfied	5.2%
Somewhat satisfied	23.2%	Not at all satisfied	2.0%
Neutral	56.9%		

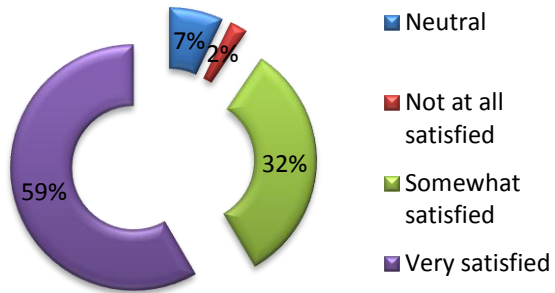
### **Quality/cost/responsiveness of social services for seniors**

Very satisfied	14.1%	Not very satisfied	5.7%
Somewhat satisfied	22.4%	Not at all satisfied	1.9%
Neutral	56.0%		

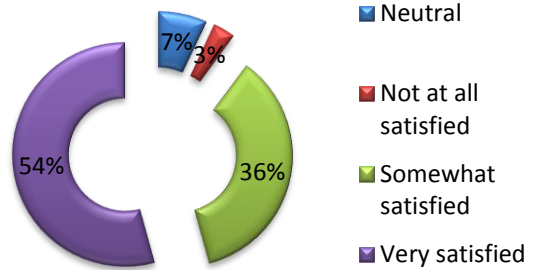
There were comparatively few comments referring to social services, and a substantial share of those dealt with issues related to senior citizens. Other comments focused primarily on providing services to at-risk and homeless families.

## GREATEST SATISFACTION

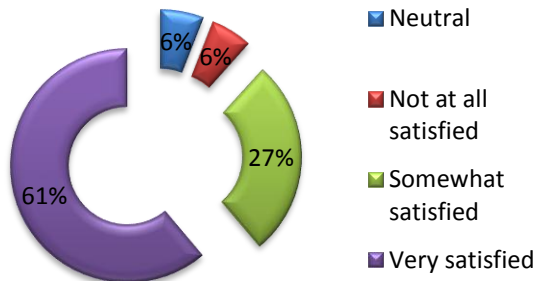
### Quality/Availability of Health Services



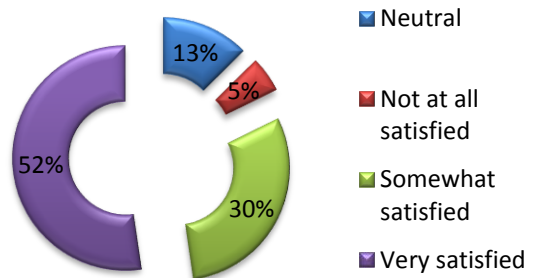
### Feeling of Safety in Home/Neighborhood



### Quality/Availability of Parks & Open Spaces in Community

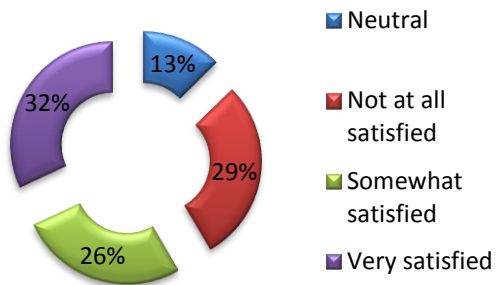


### Satisfaction with School System

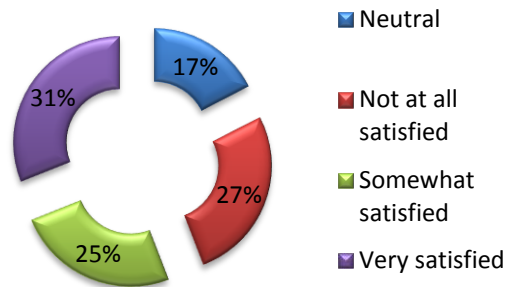


**LEAST SATISFACTION**

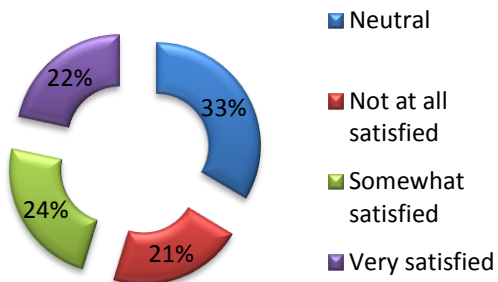
### Ease of Transportation and Moving Around HC



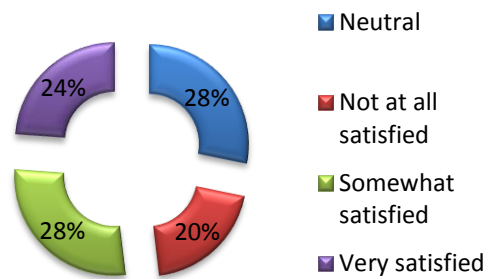
### Vibrancy of the 'Downtown' Nearest Your Residence



### Your Ability to Influence Local Government Decision Making



### Opportunity to Find Good Paying Job





## **Phase II**

### **Public Review of Survey Results**

Between surveys and forums, we heard from more than 1,000 people. That number might seem comparatively small in view of Hendricks County's total population of 145,000. However, from a statistical perspective, it provides a reasonably accurate reflection of the opinions of county residents. JCCI, the organization guiding us through this project, has worked with communities throughout the nation, and tells us that the response rate in Hendricks County was unusually high.

The sample also correlated fairly closely with 2010 census data. For example, 97 percent of respondents were white, while the census reports that just over 90 percent of Hendricks County's population was white. Roughly 59 of respondents were female; 50.2 percent of the country's population is female. Respondents were more likely to have higher income and higher educational attainment than average residents, but the statistics were close enough to create a high level of confidence in the results.

## **Phase III**

### **Creating visions, Identifying Community Indicators and Measurements of Success**

Following the completion of the surveys, we hosted several public sessions at which participants developed visions for Hendricks County in nine different categories. They also listed currently available measurements related to those visions and identify additional data that could be measured. In this section, we share the vision for each of those categories, along with current measures and other potential indicators.

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

The promotion of sustainable business growth will match the cultural, social and educational levels of local residents seeking quality job opportunities in their home community, while maintaining strength of location and value of commerce of all stages and sectors.

### **“Promoting Quality Job Opportunities”**

#### Current measurements

- Capital investments
  - Real estate
  - Personal property
- Job growth
- Average wage rates
- Commuting patterns
  - Commuting out
  - Commuting in

#### Community indicators

- Median household income
- Young professional talent
  - Retention of HC graduates
  - Attraction of young professionals
- Tracking actual vs. commitment of jobs/investment
- Building development
- Permit applications
- Vacant commercial space
- Job loss vs. job growth
- Information from leasing agents when change occurs

## EDUCATION

Hendricks County nurtures a solid base of learning opportunities for all ages and abilities, and values ongoing education and training as keys to a competitive future.

### **“Leading, Living, and Learning Every Day”**

#### Current measurements

- Educational attainment
  - K-readiness
  - Graduation rates
  - Competition and attainment
- ISTEP Scores
- Postsecondary enrollments
- Job training enrollments

#### Community Indicators

- School readiness
  - Pre-K to College
- Increasing dual credits
  - Number of students graduating with transferable AP scores
- Reduced remediation need
- Post secondary student enrollment
  - Some college
  - Degrees obtained
- Hendricks College Network enrollments
  - Certificate
  - Degreed programs
- Numbers of job training
  - Available
  - Access
- GED
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)
- Individual class sizes
- New enrollments/applications
- Dropout rates

## ENTERTAINMENT

Unique and plentiful shopping, local and specialty dining, plentiful community events, and a commitment to family friendly fun weave together the fabric of our community. As such, Hendricks County will continue to be engaged with community arts and culture organizations to provide a wide variety and breadth of artistic outlets for all residents and visitors.

### **“Engaged Community Arts and Culture”**

#### Current measurements

- External
  - Independent research company (Certec, Inc)
- Internal
  - Occupancy rates
  - ADR (average daily rate)
  - Food and Beverage tax

#### Community Indicators

- Number of events and attractions
- Revenue per event
- Smith Travel research
- Evening commutes

## HEALTHCARE

Hendricks County citizens will be healthier with access to affordable quality health care facilities and practitioners by establishing community partners with compassion for all and a passion for a healthy society.

### “Accessible Community Partners and Healthy Lifestyles”

#### Current measurements

- Patient demographics
- Form of payment
- Prenatal care
- Tobacco and drug use
- Obesity
- Length of stay
- Premature death
- Poor or fair health
- Low birth weight
- Adult & teen smoking
- Adult obesity
- Physical inactivity
- Excessive drinking
- Motor vehicle crash death rate (Alcohol use)
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Teen birth rate
- Uninsured
- Primary care physicians
- Preventable hospital stays
- Diabetic screening
- Mammography screening
- Children in poverty
- Inadequate social support
- Access to recreational facilities
- Limited access to healthy foods
- Fast-food restaurants

#### Community Indicators

- Access
  - Proximity to location
  - Transportation
  - Access to local health care
- Healthy environment
  - Rates: smoking, obesity, tobacco
  - Access: trails, activities, etc.
- Outpatient care
  - Time
    - To obtain appointment
    - With patients
- Immunization rates
- Number of ER and immediate care visits
- Local business having wellness plans
- Companies providing insurance
- In-patient care
  - Length of stay at hospital
- Affordability
  - Invoices paid vs. default
  - Companies providing insurance

## HOUSING

Hendricks County thrives as an attractive county to live and conduct business. We offer downtowns with character and vibrant, diverse communities to live, work and visit. Our healthy real estate market in Hendricks County includes housing whose availability and demand grow in balance throughout the area.

### **“Vibrant, Diverse Communities to Live, Work and Play”**

#### **Current measurements**

- Sales
  - List price vs. purchase price
- Inventory
  - Length of time on market
- Market comparison
- Foreclosures
- Available lots
- Inventory single family/multifamily
- Housing assistance

#### **Community Indicators**

- Development standards vs. actual

## **PARKS AND GREEN SPACE**

The continued enjoyment of well-maintained park areas; the interconnection of parks, destinations and communities by trails and greenways; and the responsible preservation of natural areas with regards to future growth will be a priority that will define our community and represent the standard of park and recreation resources we currently enjoy.

### **“Preserve of Rural and Recreational Areas”**

#### **Current measurements**

- Acres of parks/green space compared nationally
- Handicap accessibility compliance
- Number of green spaces in communities

#### **Community Indicators**

- Connection points among all county-wide parks
- Acres of accessible parks/green space per capita (compared to national standards)
- Proximity of parks and green space to population
- Proximity of neighborhoods within communities to trail network access points
- Level of compliance of recreational resources to meet Universal Accessibility best practices
- Progress of local parks departments in meeting the needs assessment (action items) of their individual Comprehensive Master Plans as established by the residents of their respective communities.
- Open space requirement for developers
- Track amount of land acquired for park and recreation



## **PUBLIC PLAN FOR GROWTH**

**“Plan It: Maintain It: Fund It: Build It: Live It: Evaluate It”**

### **Current measurements**

- Transportation network
  - Traffic
  - Counts
  - Patterns
- Population growth
- Utility capacity

### **Community Indicators**

- Standardized cost/benefit report
- Collection of impact fees
- Bike lanes - miles added each year
- Alternative transportation

## SAFETY

The safety and security of Hendricks County is maintained by anticipating and preparing for growth in population and development. Hendricks County Public Safety agencies cooperate in assessing and addressing safety and security challenges.

### **“Preparing: Accessing: Addressing”**

#### Current measurements

- Case reporting statistics and crime trends
- Historical data and statistics
- Tracking new residential and retail developments
- Drug task force activity
- Inmate book-ins
- Juvenile crime data, etc.

#### Other indicators

- Trends
  - Track number of crimes, safety and transport needs by type
  - Track number of runs by type
- Communication
  - Countywide department info sharing mechanism
  - Monthly Chief’s meetings to share information and trends
  - Meetings with the communications center through operations board and governing board
  - Meetings with existing and new neighborhood watch groups
  - Communication with retail businesses and homeowner associations, etc.
- Number of community info meetings
- Education
  - Number of community and school awareness programs available
  - DARE program for schoolchildren,
  - Be All You Can Be program for schoolchildren
  - Survivor speak out for those convicted of operation while intoxicated,
  - Speeches to schools and special programs for schools as requested,
  - Hand out educational materials at the County Fair, etc.

## SOCIAL SERVICES

Hendricks County will continue to be a safe community where people of all ages and circumstance will prosper; where residents will have safe, accessible and affordable housing, sustainable income, and awareness of community resources.

**“Learn more, Earn More and Lead Healthy Lives”**

### Current measurements

- Children in poverty
- Unemployment
- Inadequate social support
- Children in single -parent households violent crime rate
- Domestic violence rate
- County teen violence
- Victim assistance
- Alcohol/drug use
- Depression/mental health/low birth weight
- Transportation services
- Homemaker services for disabled and seniors
- Low income housing
- Child abuse rates
- Divorce rates
- Parenting classes
- Access to transportation (no client turn downs)
- More affordable housing
- Community resources communicated thru all agencies, newspapers, media, radio

### Other Indicators

- Access
  - Track client demands
- *Number of reports and communication between agencies*

## PHASE IV

### What are the next steps?

As we move forward, we will continue to fine-tune the visions and measurements, with the goal of focusing in on what's important to Hendricks County residents. We will continue to work with the experts at JCCI, the organization guiding us through this effort, to identify the most practical and instructive measurements. By monitoring those aspects of life, we'll be able to share information about trends in the county with the public, business owners, elected officials, and other local leaders.

They'll be able to use that information in a variety of ways, such as:

- Local government leaders could focus services in areas where they're most needed. For example, if residents in a particular community felt less safe than their counterparts elsewhere, local law enforcement agencies could increase patrols and community policing activities.
- Non-profit agencies could use the information to decide where to focus their programs and efforts. As an example, if senior citizens throughout the county expressed a particular need, one or more local social-service agencies could develop programs to meet that need.
- Local businesses could add products and services that residents desire, helping those businesses grow and prosper.
- Local government officials will better understand taxpayers' priorities, helping to ensure that tax dollars are being spent correctly and efficiently.

To succeed, Hendricks County in Focus must be an ongoing process, and it must continue to engage and involve as many representatives of the community as possible. We encourage you to participate by staying in touch with us at [www.hendrickscountyinfocus.com](http://www.hendrickscountyinfocus.com).

## **Our county's quality of life is obviously good, so isn't this a waste of time?**

There are many communities that were very desirable places to live and work for many years, but are no longer. Typically, that's because of changes in a number of key factors, and those changes tend to happen gradually, without people noticing. We don't want to see that happen in Hendricks County. That's why we want to identify the factors that make this a great place to live and work, find ways to measure them, and monitor those measurements so local leaders can respond to any negative changes before they have an impact on the community.

While nearly everyone agrees that Hendricks County is a great place to live and work, it can be difficult to pinpoint exactly why that's the case. The better that local leaders understand the factors that contribute to making this such a great place to live and work, the better they'll be able to make the right decisions to keep it that way.

Think of it like maintaining a car. If you regularly change your oil, check your fluids and tire pressure, and perform other maintenance, you're less likely to end up stalled at the side of the road.

