

Notes from the Hometown Collaboration Meeting August 13, 2018

Present: Wendi Gore, Jim Schultz, Tim Clark, Shirley Boardman, Levi Voils, Yolanda Toschlog, Brandon Harris, Sherri Mitchell, Mandy Chittum, Monica Feikama, Marina Stant, Sandy Higgins, Torrie Rae, Nancy Crocker, JoAnne Himebaugh, Kevin Fleming, Darren Byrd, Jan Mills, Brian Blackford

Sincere thanks to Brian who led us through this session to begin identifying a potential capstone project. We began the transition from leadership training back into the HCI process. After a very successful leadership building block, now we need to decide what we will do to keep the momentum we've established going. Our mentorship team of Brian and Tanya will be available to us as we move forward, but we might not always need their help. At some point, we will hopefully be a self-sustaining group that continues to work to improve our community.

Brian walked us through a quick recap of the process to date, with Torrie giving a brief overview of the first months. For those of you who joined us during the Leadership Training sessions, if you would like to see meeting notes from previous sessions, send an email to Jan at janhmills@gmail.com. I will be happy to share those files. Hometown Collaboration is about relationship and capacity building, which we've done successfully during the leadership process. The core team is very grateful to all of you who are continuing the journey with us!

What's Next?

Our goal is to identify a project and complete the application in the next 30 to 60 days. The project should then be completed by June of 2019. We have a \$5,000 match available from the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (the Brown County Redevelopment Commission is providing our \$5,000) that can be used for the project. Please take the time to read through the application that was provided via email.

Greetings from Brown County

The following are short notes each member wrote to their neighbor – a vision of what Brown County could be in 10 years:

Hi Nancy,

Just visited BC. Happy to see the community was able to preserve the quaint, natural environment of the town. The citizens have prospered through the new leadership that has been elected. With less than 15% living in poverty, the community has become a national leader for all to learn from.

Wendi,

Greetings from BC! My heart is at peace. Every school in the district has replaced its lawns with community gardens that not only feeds the kiddos but brings the community together! Since marijuana became legal our town is FLOODING with money!

Dear Torrie,

I recently visited Nashville Brown County and am so excited! The public art installations are amazing. I can really see how the County and Town are working together. The new Music Venue is great and I love their traditional sign. The historic buildings look great, there must have been some people working hard to restore them. We have young friends that have moved into your affordable housing and love it! Keep up the good work!

Brandon,

I was pleasantly surprised to find that a couple of my kids returned to Brown County because we finally have the opportunities for this generation to succeed and find a purpose.

Hey Sherri,

Been gone for a while, boy a lot has changed! What happened to our beautiful downtown? Lots of late night places everywhere, not that quiet compared to when I was there. Oh well, I guess the money always wins! I heard a lot of people have been leaving? I hope all is well. Talk to you soon.

Dearest Marina,

Greetings from the Hills O' Brown! It's been a while since I've been here but noticed a few changes. Lots of new restaurants, unfortunately Sysco and national food chains but lots of locally produced booze. Happy to see more pedestrian infrastructure so people are able to get around safely while enjoying the natural assets. Salt Creek Trail is cool too. The children's/youth center skate park heritage farm is pretty rad! I love how the farm has a program working with the local rehabilitation and resource center, which is a program that came out of the opioid epidemic and the community coming together. Their community kitchen and food hub was pretty cool.

Hey Monica,

It was strange to go back home after so long being gone! I was not looking forward to it – this town full of drugs, smelly trucks, and chubby tourists. But some things have changed. There was a community garden that was dedicated to developing young people's leadership skills. It is also a place for people in recovery to play in the dirt. The newspaper has a column that tells stories

about recovery and mental health awareness. Do something BC is thriving! There is also a center for teens to hang out.

Jan,

Greetings from Brown County! I recently returned and you would not believe how things here have changed! There is an awesome Youth Center central to most with some awesome programming. Local government has also engaged younger residents. It seems like the town has returned to some roots involving lessening the look of another Gatlinburg. The school system is graduating students with 100% having a personal plan past graduation. It really is a more cohesive and collaborative community!

Yolanda,

Things are so much better in BC now. Thanks to a new streaming media outlet the voters have kept office holders in line. Our beautiful countryside is preserved, protected from urban blight; our overloaded debt is declining while our services are maintained. It's all thanks to the new crop of leaders.

Jim,

Will see: community focused on tourism; a little Vegas of the Midwest with casino; electric signs everywhere - "little Memphis"; more crime; less population; fewer schools; higher poverty rate; more congestion on roads; and "Back to the Future" BIF WORLD.

Kevin,

The hardwork seems to have paid off. I see that government is working more efficiently and in general Brown County has reinvented itself. I did not think this was possible given all the negativity when I left. So congratulations on your efforts.

Levi,

Well it's been 10 years since you been here. I know our county pretty much looks the same but there are new people in all positions of government, volunteerism, business, etc. With these new changes of personalities comes small changes in how we continue to exist. We have tried to grow with new venues but have pretty much stayed the same. Our economics unfortunately follows the nations. Know you are always missed and welcome home.

Dear Tim,

Greetings from Brown County. How amazing was my visit back home! The community has reached out from their county seat and done some beautiful, sustainable development in

Helmsburg, Bean Blossom, and Gnaw Bone. There are small food hubs, green buildings/homes and a year round farmers market. Art and music still flow through the streets. Come visit soon.

JoAnne,

It's so great to be back. I missed my rural home in the forest. I'm so happy people have gotten the infrastructure they've been looking for. It seems they've become very informed and have been included a lot in the development process.

Shirley,

Greetings from Brown County! It's great to be back in this lovely, peaceful community. So much has changed for the better – shops are once again featuring local art, restaurants are all farm to table, the hotels are updated – and all because the county finally developed a strategic plan. Brown County has become a destination for young people and retirees alike.

Sandy,

It's been busy in Brown County. Was excited to see the great programs at the high school for students to be engaged in practical programs to develop career interests. I see the Maple Leaf is thriving and Kids on Wheels Skate Park continues to be adding additional features. Volunteerism is at a peak and the Brown County Community Foundation now has an endowment of \$20 million. Good things are happening here – saw some tiny houses too – very cute!

Mandy,

Brown County is buzzing with positive energy and there are a ton of collaborative projects being implemented. The power of communication through technology has empowered all citizens to become informed and have a voice in shaping their community. Even the youth are being given powerful leadership rolls. The county is known for being truly supportive of the true "pursuit of happiness" that is the dream for our community.

Hey Darren,

OMG, what the heck happened in the past 10 years to my BC! It has changed so much. It has grown so much – there are 2 huge music venues now. New home additions – Town of Nashville seems to have blown up and is now even larger. The traffic is still horrendous. And I was there in April (NOT OCTOBER). On a good note – homeplace still feels like home and the BC Park still looks the same. I still love my Brown County! Talk to ya later.

Survey Discussion – Challenges, Opportunities, Potential Projects

Participants were divided into 3 groups of 6 and looked at the following highlighted topic areas from the survey. Each group addressed 2 categories.

Local Government – balancing commercial and public interests, overdevelopment; format for decision making

- Open communication
- Develop a plan/outline for the processes (road map)
- Easy ability to find information on upcoming meetings and events, particularly on web
- Clarification of land and property use; ensure zoning and ordinances are known

Education – local government school curricula; after school science theory experiment and field work; adult and youth exchange opportunities, as well as college scholarships; another necessary component of a healthy community; community gardens

- Expand leadership training
- Connect local resources with students
- Demonstrate the local opportunities available to students
- Community gardens

General Community Engagement and Improvement – regular bipartisan and nondenominational fellowship events; I just want to help the community function more efficiently

- Connections (that reflect interests and passions)
- Communications
- Network mapping – “SCORE Method”
- Leadership that is topic/skill driven
- Standardized leadership process/method
- Sustainable system (not person driven)

Economic Growth – shopkeeper viability and regenerative capacity; local sourced goods with foreign sourced fortifications; we need to raise enough money to fund services which those living here have come to expect; sustainability and decreased gap between wages and cost of living

- OCRA economic development strategic plan (WIP)
- Low moderate income 53.1%
- Free and reduced lunch 52%+
- Population decreasing
- School enrollment decreasing
- Median home values rising

Nature and Sustainability – wildlife conservation, soil, water, and air protection; I want to help protect the county’s natural environment; one of our foundational roots

- Preservation of “quaint town atmosphere”
- Development of strategic plan that community will endorse and maintain
- Educational opportunities
- Cooperation between schools and 4H for sustainability and leadership programs
- Community garden

Arts and Culture – the Playhouse, painting, public performance (busking and or street recitations); one of our foundational goals

- Engaging youth – open mic night
- Summer theater program / community theater
- Cultural tourism (horseshoe pits, train depot in Helmsburg)
- Opportunities for community fellowships
- Fundraising concerts for funds for future projects using local talent
- Collaboration of art groups and other not for profits
- Collaboration with IU faculty and students for educational programs
- Community Center – maybe even “pop-up” space

Next Steps

We will analyze people’s preferences for future meeting times, but will plan to definitely meet again on September 10. Yolanda may be getting a group together before that date for additional discussion. She will be sending out any meeting notice. We are all encouraged to gather together in small groups to discuss possible projects. Ideally we will meet more frequently than once a month so that we can keep the momentum going and get busy on the project application.

Food for thought:

- Is there a statistic from the survey or Forum that we don’t like? Could we make a real difference addressing it?
- What have other communities undertaken for their capstone project? Check out the HCI website where other communities are listed: IndianaHCI.org
- Do a Google search on some of your favorite project topics, i.e. problem-solving co-op or network mapping

Next scheduled meeting: Monday, September 10, 6:00 p.m., Community Foundation

Keep an eye on your email for a possible earlier gathering to discuss topics!