

Vision 2020

A Vision for Northeast Indiana

Topical Group Activities



In Association With:
Team Kolzow, Inc.

Prepared For:
Northeast Indiana Fund

*Quality of Life
Topical Group*

April, May, 2010



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Strategizing the Pillar: Quality of Life

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

At each regional outreach meeting, one table of participants received a form with a list of “must have” policies or initiatives related to Quality of Life. The list was developed using two main sources: 1) an extensive review of the region’s existing economic development studies; and 2) a series of stakeholder interviews with representatives of various interest groups and geographies.

Participants worked individually to read through the list of must haves, select the top three initiatives, and then rank those three initiatives in order of priority. Following the meetings, these forms were analyzed and the initiatives were given a weighted score (receiving 3 points for being ranked first, 2 points for being ranked second, 1 point for being ranked third).

Using an aggregate compilation of the input from all ten meetings, the initiatives for Quality of Life are listed in order of priority in the table below. The initiative ID number refers back to the original forms used at the outreach meetings. The table also indicates if an initiative was ranked as #1 for a particular county or counties.

Regional Initiatives for Quality of Life

ID	Initiative	Weighted Score	Top Priority for:
4	Develop a regional identity that highlights quality of life assets – including favorable tax rates, affordable housing, and strong education system.	91	Adams (tie with #11), DeKalb, Huntington, LaGrange, Noble
11	Provide amenities that attract young professionals – including housing, entertainment, recreation, and transportation.	55	Adams (tie with #4), Steuben
2	Support active lifestyles in the region – increase walkability and bikability; enhance access to healthy foods; improve access to outdoor spaces and recreational activities.	54	Wells, Whitley
3	Protect and improve the region’s natural areas, including parks, open spaces, and rivers.	33	
8	Celebrate the unique assets and characteristics of various communities throughout the region.	32	
9	Encourage redevelopment and infill instead of sprawling development patterns.	26	Wabash
1	Invest in downtown Fort Wayne as the vibrant urban core of the region.	19	Allen
5	Enhance the region’s arts and cultural resources – ensure affordability and diversity in scope.	16	
6	Ensure high quality health infrastructure throughout the region, including access to health insurance and primary care physicians.	16	
10	Enhance social connectivity among all races, classes, and ages.	9	
7	Elevate development standards. Create neighborhoods that are sustainable, walkable, and diverse.	6	

ADDITIONAL “MUST HAVES”

Participants were also encouraged to write-in additional initiatives that they would like to see added to the “must have” list. The following strategic priorities were suggested by participants at meetings throughout the region. Strategies are organized under several broad themes: Amenities, Educational Programs, Healthy Lifestyles, Identity/Marketing, Infrastructure Investment, Leadership/Collaboration, and Quality of Place. Certain broad themes are further divided into sub themes.

Many of these themes relate to one of the original “must-have” initiatives on the ranking form. Where appropriate, the relevant initiatives are indicated in parenthesis.

Amenities

Amenities (initiative 11)

- More activities for singles and non-residents.
- Regional public transportation (especially to healthcare systems). Trains.
- Farm teams (amateur) from surrounding communities to support Tin Caps, Komets, etc.
- High-speed rail system linking vital communities.
- Obtain a professional sports franchise.
- Diversity of housing - not everyone wants to live in a single/double wide. Focus on single, two-family housing. The type of structure brings like results. Different types of recreation, arts, gyms, eating establishments.
- Need a main attraction here that will draw people to our county and make it a destination community.
- Better transportation system so people can easily travel from place to place.
- In order to support this corps of young people let's build a living and lifestyle center for them in our downtown

Arts and Culture (initiative 5)

- Turn Huntington into an "artists Mecca" that does not now exist in NE Indiana.
- More music/art activities in the parks and cafés. Free to the public - attracts to downtown stores/restaurants.
- Large monument in center of courthouse lawn similar to Indianapolis or even Angola. Public Art
- Develop a music and art community downtown - housing, studios, retail - to include music venues - old buildings renovated to house etc.
- Create a high quality arts festival to attract visitors from 150-200 miles.

Educational Programs

- Plenty of money for programming and coordination with the schools, like Honeywell Educational Outreach Programs. Education, highly educated people.
- Start a college in Noble County.
- Be the first region to unite colleges/universities. Provide multiple university participation a B.S. in 2.5-3 years and at a cost advantage to the student.
- Capitalizing on higher education institutes - "popping the bubble" to include the higher education institute in ALL community events, initiatives, and engage students.
- Let's become the "intern capital of the great lakes region"

- Student exchange programs need development. We are land-locked and have no clue the rest of the world exists.
- Enabling/attracting a national research university or private/national research development center to attract doctorate level research - increase entrepreneurship.
- Research university downtown. Start with educational grant for rivers from US Government in collaboration with university (engineering department) from Purdue, IN, Notre Dame etc.
- Online education opportunities! Local adult education opportunities!
- Learning center to support education beyond high school for those who cannot attend college.
- Educational systems.
- Raise the bar in our schools as far as behavior expectations, values, respect, consequences
- Build a new HS adjacent to Indian Springs middle school; HS as community center

Healthy Lifestyles (Initiative 2)

- Focus on health/ green initiatives. Address high rates of STD's, teen pregnancy, smoking, obesity
- Construct a regional network of trails that connects the region for hiking and fishing.
- Develop an outdoor sports cluster-RVs, boats, fishing, etc.
- If we had walking trails and more bike trails that could really improve our quality of place.
- I feel we need to get people outside more with families is great. We have the environment plus it promotes family connection and fitness and tackles adolescent obesity.
- Enhanced natural spaces and cultural opportunities = people walking/biking = increased overall health of our population. All liked and all relatively cheap and easy.
- Create a paved network of bicycle trails which connect neighborhoods, schools, shopping, Ft Wayne network

Identity/Marketing

Marketing Assets (initiative 8)

- I would love to have a really strong tourism message, with plenty of money for advertising, someone very savvy to "work" the tourism angle, attract visitors.
- Market what quality of life does exist.
- Marketing plan
- Accent the positives - plan for growth.
- Need media in the community: TV radio, etc. to promote Huntington County.
- Promote the entire region in all communities. Each community market each other community's activities.
- Adams County DOES offer many quality of life opportunities. However, many local people overlook these opportunities. Produce a marketing piece that shows activities and events in Adams County, in a 30-mile radius, a 3-hour driving radius, and 6-hour driving radius.
- Celebrate and enhance the area's Indian heritage as a destination place

Regional Quality of Life Identity (initiative 4)

- Educate citizens on what quality of life is.
- Strong community support and a plan

- Need a specific identity for Noble County besides Meth #1.
- Create a Quality of Place Office that coordinates, advocates, supports, and is a clearinghouse of tech support.
- Focus on families; great place to raise kids.
- Slogan: "Come, grow." Play off our "fertile" land, available land, open spaces, education, infrastructure, entrepreneurship, etc.
- I think we need to be able to present our county as a safe and clean area. This is for the benefit of visitors and that of people considering moving to the area. There are concerns regarding meth.
- We need to better broadcast our work ethic - we have a strong work ethic.
- Decide what we are and promote it to the midwest as only a short drive away.
- Promote our rural areas/safety and peaceful atmosphere.
- Promote attributes - most desirable in years to come.
- Increase market awareness of our assets, money spent here, improves here.
- We must change our attitude about ourselves and toward projects that can help move us forward. If we aren't trying to move ourselves forward no one is going to come in and push us forward. Time for an "attitude adjustment".
- Regional identity - "A great place to grow a business" target national level goal to be a center for entrepreneurship and innovation!
- Project to develop pride in our community, homes, backyards, families, etc.

Tourism

- Create a regional Visitors Bureau with county satellite offices.
- Need to elevate tourism to a level of importance for LaGrange County. We need the resources to improve all phases of tourism as an economic engine.

Infrastructure Investment

- Expand the "most wired city" to the "most wired region" in the country!
- broadband promotion and requirement to establish sustainability example
- Expand broadband service to every home in the county
- Provide the proper infrastructure to enhance the quality of life.

Leadership/Collaboration

- A new Director, to lead us
- We need a county government that is willing to think outside the box - to broaden the manufacturing base.
- Develop a leadership model for each separate community that encourages broadly developing their own community to be a destination site for use of the local assets.
- We must work together as a county - ability to pull all communities together to work toward common goals. To ensure sustainability and stability as a county first, then as a region. Ensure local and county government are involved in this process and support the goals.

- Have the EDC Committees around the county meet and work together: Howe, Mongo, LaGrange, Walcottville, Shipshewana.
- Service opportunities- ways to enhance community life other than schooling, working, entertaining, etc. focus on volunteering.
- Spread funding around to all areas, not just in one concentrated community.
- Sharing resources in the region.

Quality of Place

Natural Areas (initiative 3)

- Develop the region's natural areas into reserve parks that people from all over the state and outside would like to come and visit with trails, amenities, recreational fields, etc.
- To improve our rivers/lakes with sewers/protection and cleaning of rivers. Promote activities in them and our park systems.
- Protect our rural heritage which includes our lakes and rivers. Support the Amish in our county.
- Make much more of our natural resources - lakes, rivers, streams in particular.

Vibrant Downtown (initiative 1 and 7)

- Make all downtowns walkable, filled with shops, restaurants, clean and attractive
- Downtown development - walkable.
- Promote the "Courthouse Square" downtown Auburn. Help with grants for coordinating storefronts, benches, trees, etc.
- The vision should implement a hub and spoke model for development of the region. An economic assault on the development of the downtown Fort Wayne District! The critical mass that does or can exist in downtown does so in a 5-block radius. Such a concentration allows for efficient use of resources. Something like Louisville's 4th Street live can combine work and play into one district. Housing should be included as well as other amenities required for downtown/walkable living. From that core, the plan should target development of border counties as neighborhoods that compliment the core.
- Major investment such as an aquarium or riverfront.
- River bank business development

Other Ideas

- Make pollution standards- we are a dirty state and burn coal for energy
- Cooperation amongst churches and between churches and other agencies to accomplish goals: church entrepreneurship projects.
- Plan for "are our communities elder-friendly" - are we prepared for the huge increase of retirees in the next two decades?
- Focus on senior living; great place to retire.
- Aging population, neighborhoods for families, create better environment.
- Getting young people to move back to the area after obtaining a higher education is very important.

- Alternative energy options
- Ensuring "basic needs" are met is essential in creating a welcoming atmosphere -> access to vital health and human resources and education
- Plan in this county in a way that this area develops into a model township.
- Institute signage off Toll Road introducing LaGrange County.
- Use vacant buildings around county as incubators for new and small business.
- Quality, safe affordable transportation links.
- Redefine "production" to include "non-material" and consumption to include "beauty," "ideas," and "experiences."
- A major event or venue, like a NASCAR track at I-69 and 469.
- Gain an understanding of what people need to feel satisfied and happy.
- Promote work ethics.
- Do away with mediocrity; family values- change of culture to include 40 developmental assets
- Attract an interesting mix of services and products
- Create an industry of community supported agriculture beyond our boundaries

County Perspectives on Quality of Life

INTRODUCTION

During the regional outreach meetings, participants engaged in a discussion on two questions: Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?; and Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?

This document captures the discussion on Quality of Life for each of the ten counties. Results are listed below in alphabetical order by county.

1. ADAMS COUNTY: QUALITY OF LIFE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to Adams County assets. • Increases "foot traffic" which increases economic benefits to the county. • Cooperation among individual communities for the betterment of the county. • Cohesiveness for the county. • Breaks down the barriers between the different communities. • Increases travel outside of the county by county residents. • Possibly draw young professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good parks and recreation system. • Growth of trail system, outdoor activities. • Health centers, youth facilities in Berne - also attracts outside visitors. • Safe community. • Local healthcare. • Good work ethic of residents - German/Swiss heritage. (not everyone has a great work ethic and it has decreased dramatically, possibly due to low-income housing)

2. ALLEN COUNTY: QUALITY OF LIFE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract people to the region. • Critical mass of talented people - recognized by local companies. • Must market Fort Wayne • Assets already bring in people to Allen County - must increase those assets and get the word out in order to bring companies and talent to Fort Wayne • People want to live and visit "cool places." • Positive attitude - "I'm proud to be here." • We've lost our swagger, must work to get that back. • Time to be more open-minded in regards to attracting business. • Young people want urban lifestyle • Bring us back to our "former glory" - entertainment downtown. • NO identity - "upstate area" - call us something. Entertainment is at the heart of all that. • DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban environment. More people are back downtown. Harrison Square, Embassy, etc. • Our community is not very diverse - arts, food, etc. must elevate our diversity. • More innovation from diverse groups. • Riverfront development - great asset that needs to be developed. • Time for redefinition - we have a blank slate - turn that into an asset. i.e. Indianapolis' downtown redevelopment. • Must take a chance - opening new restaurant downtown, developing rivers, etc. • Very easy community for risk-takers. • We have foundations willing to engage and help risk takers. • Greater starting point for revitalization. • Not ashamed to be identified with Fort Wayne • Re-engage families.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complacency - no one wants to bring anything new. • Should be a great place to DO things, not just live. • Motivation to grow and build. Create a vision to market our community. • "Good enough" mentality - need to adjust attitude and progress forward. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraiser in Florida raising money for Fort Wayne • Diversity, educational institutions, FW Zoo, Medical care. • Keep Warsaw in our orbit, get their business community to acknowledge Ft. Wayne |
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3. DEKALB COUNTY: QUALITY OF LIFE

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| <p>Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need more cultural opportunities • Elderly - senior housing - close to a college seems to draw them - entertainment lectures. • Tourism - need multiple sites, not just museums (antique shops) • Downtown - more work needs to be done • Younger families - parks, bike trail, friendly park for dogs, picnic - to draw them here. • Connection of bike trails - regional implementation important • Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis - you have to go through here to get there - we should capitalize on this! Find ways to make people WANT to stop here. • Dinner theater - one weekend a year 600-700 people attend functions and museums. Not well-attended - why? • Amenities: DeKalb is a nice small town atmosphere - close proximity to Ft. Wayne. Some like/prefer. • Suggestion: classes free to seniors in small town. • Grants - non-profit • Better advertising - emails, word of mouth, program at museum. | <p>Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I-69 • Easy to get around city • County roads (some need paved like CR-4) • Small, quaint • Antique, farmers market - big plus • Library, hospital, YMCA |
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4. HUNTINGTON COUNTY: QUALITY OF LIFE

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| <p>Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure and visibility • Strength in numbers. Quality in the region, creates quality if this places. • Regional tourism. • Marketing exposure/media exposure. • Partner with sister cities. • Publicize our assets, highlight them. • Public transportation • Improved technology. | <p>Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courthouse • Dinner theatre • Reservoirs • Athletic facilities • Affordable housing • Parkview Huntington Hospital • Huntington University • Huntington County Chamber of Commerce • Huntington County Visitors Bureau • Huntington County Community School Corporation |
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5. LAGRANGE COUNTY: QUALITY OF LIFE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract young professionals back to lifestyle; moving back from afar at some point in time. • Recruitment - quality of life helps recruitment effort of business and talent. • More tourism/visitors to continue appreciating quality of life, increased tax base. • Useful tool to retain existing businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very rural county - no cities. • Lakes are key asset not currently used as much as it could be. • Shipshewana big asset could continue to be beautified. • Amish business community and furniture business can continue to be built upon as key economic development tool; critical to honor and not exploit. • Strong work ethic. • Tollway exit as gateway to county - what message do we want to send? • Fabulous park system. • Fish and wildlife areas and rivers - unique because NOT developed. • Great drives. • Family-focused community. • Access to local growers/agriculture, wonderful Farmer's Markets. • Pride of community.

6. NOBLE COUNTY: QUALITY OF LIFE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative class - young professionals/empty nesters may choose to locate in Noble County. • Educational base may grow; entrepreneurial base may grow; economic base may grow. • Attractive community for living - bedroom community. • Create pool of creative people - need to create opportunities for staying here. • Gain regional identity - create new opportunity. • Develop/build upon assets we already have to connect with young talent/retirees. • Better regional planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lakes/recreations. • Health resources. • Proximity to major cities. • Giving/caring community, • Historic value • Natural resources • Land for development • Faith-based • Diversity of culture

7. STEUBEN COUNTY: QUALITY OF LIFE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better known for what we are • dollars • increase economic impact for Visitor's Center • gain national coverage for quality of life and Visitor's Center • better institutions for kids (HS, universities) • reduce brain drain with better quality of life • need to have something to bring kids back • need occupational training schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive natural resources; Pokagon • Interstates- I80/90, I69 • Dedicated group of people; Chamber of Commerce, Govt, Business association. Active tourism bureau • Cutting edge of green revolution • Home of University; Good k-12 • Healthcare opportunity because of hospital • Downtown business and community • Commercial attractions- winery, hiking trails, buffalo

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical community will grow with Allen Co. hospitals growing north • Competitive with business (medical) • More people working from home, a large business can be located throughout the state • Innovation center- place for people to develop their ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • farm • YMCA • over 100 natural lakes • good child care • large inventory of wetlands in the state • lots of herons and other wildlife
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8. WABASH COUNTY: QUALITY OF LIFE

<p>Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain income stream with improved quality of life - replace lost income. • Critical to population stability and homeownership. • Attracts higher educated professionals. • Create a "new story" as a place you want to be - changes story from within, hopeful. • Change perceptions of outsiders (executives) regarding drug issues, jobs available. • Student recruitment. 	<p>Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the story of those (many) who have returned. • Low cost of living - housing. • Walkability. • Unique feature of pristine water source. • Short commute. • Similarities to Key Quality of Life in metropolitan areas without the extra costs and commute. • Easy access to large metropolitan areas (Chicago) and money available to do so because of low cost of living. • More time available to enjoy life. • Strong sense of community - "village of support" to raise a family. • Cultural assets of big city - college, 4-star hotel, large venue. • Vibrant downtown core. • Natural resources around. • Schools/education critical to quality of life. • Community festivals to build on.
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9. WELLS COUNTY: QUALITY OF LIFE

<p>Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NE IN regional trail system- interconnectivity of QOL • NE IN regional water control/ quality • NE IN Alternative energy initiative • Wells YMCA, Interconnectivity of wellness • Local parks/ state park enhancement • Community support of the arts/ commerce center/ 4-h building • 5-10 year review of Master Plan by local govt units 	<p>Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership/ vision contributions/ examples • Partnerships with other regional communities • Philanthropic/ Charity organizations • Best buy schools • Interconnectivity of church efforts • Safety/ low crime rate • A strong sense of community spirit
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10. WHITLEY COUNTY: QUALITY OF LIFE

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract families to live here, including doctors • We'll have kids who will come back after college • I'll feel good as a grandparent having my grandchildren raised/ educated here • Trails • Economic Development, tourism • Art and culture • Higher incomes- be able to afford more • Things to do • I feel a sense/ acceptance of mediocrity • Better behaved students, teachers, grandparents, parents • higher standards, respect • being proud of your area • renewed enthusiasm people who are in position to make change • It shouldn't be about money, needs to be about pride, process • Green space: county parks, city parks, pocket parks • Walkable, bikeable spaces, sidewalks • Grocery stores in walkable distance • Maintenance of trails- walk in winter, without trash • Green standards in terms of pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is good and progressive, but Churubusco doesn't have the tax base • Y- it needs to grow again • Community foundation • Strong health system- being connected to Parkview is really helpful • Good city park system • Healthiest in IN, we can build on this • Master gardening programs • We don't have traffic jams • Convenience- 10 min to get to everything • Small businesses • Community supported agriculture • Farmer's market • Affordable housing • Highest income in NE IN • Lakes- with sewer systems • Camp Whitley • Our churches interested in helping others • Senior Center • Movie Theaters • Safety, judicial system