

# I N D I A N A

IDENTIFYING CHOICES AND SUPPORTING ACTION TO IMPROVE COMMUNITIES

CENTER FOR URBAN POLICY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

MAY 2003

## *Indiana Humanities Council Forums Confirm Priorities of Indiana Leadership Summit*

# Community Leaders Cite Concerns About Jobs, Education, and Leadership

In March and April of 2003, the Indiana Humanities Council (Council) held eight community forums throughout the state to assist local efforts in strengthening leadership and community building and to provide opportunities for local and regional input at the 2003 Indiana Leadership Summit. The Council asked the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment (Center) to prepare background materials for the forums and to summarize issues raised at them. This Center issue brief reports findings from the forums.

*"I was especially pleased to see young, fresh faces in attendance. Expanding the circle of leadership and reaching out to the next generation will be essential for continued regional development."*

—Howard Cohen, Chancellor, Purdue University Calumet

The Council has launched the Leadership Summit as a new initiative to stimulate formation of a growing, inclusive, well-informed leadership base for Indiana and its communities. The Leadership Summit convenes leaders from the business, government, education, and nonprofit sectors, and provides opportunities for nonpartisan, thoughtful collaboration to mobilize leadership across sectors. The Leadership Summit, (May 13-15, 2003), is a program of the Council, in partnership with the Stanley K. Lacy Leadership Association.

Community forums were hosted by a variety of local businesses, foundations, nonprofits, and academic institutions in Anderson, Columbus, Evansville, Gary/Merrillville/Hammond, Jeffersonville/New Albany, Richmond, South Bend, and Terre Haute. The forums, which were focused around the theme of change, included opportunities for participants to discuss strategies that will develop the leadership needed to build more vibrant communities. Center materials included summaries of regional changes in demographic and economic indicators and maps of recent development patterns (see the Center Web site for copies: [www.urbancenter.iupui.edu](http://www.urbancenter.iupui.edu)).

Nearly 240 local leaders attended the forums. Participants identified unique strengths in their communities that will provide a foundation for future growth. They also voiced concerns about common

issues: economic strategy, human capital, and public sector leadership—as well as the need for cultural activities that contribute to the character of Indiana communities. Each of these topics is being addressed in depth at the Leadership Summit.

Although participants identified a number of challenges, the forums were encouraging in that they demonstrated a growing awareness of the need for change and a willingness to address the future. The Council, with support from the Center, is exploring other ways to continue and build on this initiative.

The Council determined forum locations in an effort to be inclusive and to allow opportunities for input in all regions throughout the state. Map 1 illustrates the Indiana cities in which forums were held. The number of participants at each forum ranged from 6 to 69 with an average attendance of about 30. (Bloomington, Fort Wayne, Lafayette, and Muncie also were invited to participate but did not elect to do so.)

### **Community Forums Focus on Change and Leadership**

Dr. Scott T. Massey, President and CEO of the Council, facilitated the community forum discussions to address the broad issues of change, community building strategies, and vision for the future. Forum participants were asked to address the following series of questions:

#### • **Change**

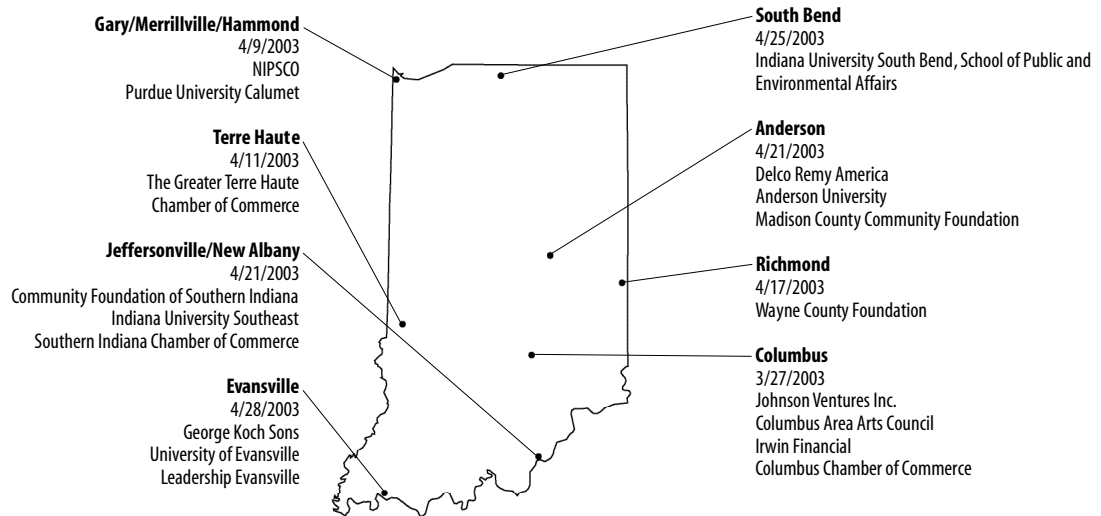
- How is the speed and scope of change affecting your community?
- Is your community a) unaware of change forces, b) just realizing the speed and direction of change, c) coping with change, or d) leading forces of change?

#### • **Local Assets/Barriers/Priorities**

- What are your top assets and barriers?
- What is your "brand identity?"
- What are the top local opportunities?
- With increasingly limited resources, what priorities would you set for your community?



**Map 1: Community Forum Locations**



**• Strategies for Community Capacity and Human Capital**

- What business-government-nonprofit partnerships would you forge to strengthen your community's ability to respond to change?
- What linkages would you prioritize among the leadership, educational, and cultural assets of your community to help develop its competitive strengths?
- How would you educate your citizens so that investors from around the world would want to invest in your community?
- What local industries would you link to form the basis for a viable economic core for your community's future?

**• Future Vision and Leadership**

- A year from the Leadership Summit, what would you hope/expect should have changed in your community?
- What would you include in a scenario for your community's future in 2020?
- What do you see as Indiana's future in 2020?
- Who would you identify as the rising leaders to carry this vision?

Center staff then compiled and evaluated the results of these discussions to determine the most pressing concerns of forum participants. While some participants identified issues that were unique to their community or region, this evaluation found that most of these Indiana communities face similar challenges.

**Indiana Communities Share Common Concerns and Challenges**

Conversations at the eight forums were lively and raised a wide variety of concerns (Table 1). Participants in each forum voiced concerns about issues particular to their communities, and the Council did not attempt to prioritize or reach consensus on the most important priorities. The Center's analyses of the results, however, show that common themes emerged from the forums and that Hoosiers throughout the state face common challenges.

Most participants placed economic strategy, leadership, education, and a sustained statewide vision at the forefront of local and regional concerns. Sentiments shared by these communities include:

- Lack of coordinated local, regional and state leadership and vision for the future
- Disconnection and fragmentation (media, time zones, etc.) in communities located outside of Central Indiana
- Struggles with losses in manufacturing jobs and the need to develop new economic strategies
- A sense of urgency in addressing educational needs

Participants outside Central Indiana consistently reported a stronger sense of connection and linked destinies with bordering states.

Center research shows that Hoosiers are making progress in the areas of educational attainment, employment, and poverty. Each of the eight communities and their surrounding regions, for example, experienced increases in the percentage of people over 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher between 1990 and 2000. Likewise, while a few individual counties lost jobs and experienced slight increases in the percent of families in poverty, all of these regions experienced net gains in jobs and declining rates of poverty.



*“While resistance to change is often cited as a barrier in Indiana, leaders in the community forums expressed an openness and readiness for change. However, community perceptions and brands are tied to realities twenty to forty years in the past. No community brand reported in the forums was grounded in a future-oriented identity. This self-perception is itself an obstacle to effective change.”*

—Scott T. Massey, President & CEO, Indiana Humanities Council

Nevertheless, forum results indicate that these issues remain a high priority in each of these communities. These challenges present policymakers with difficult questions.

Table 1, for example, shows that Columbus forum participants identified improvements in K-12 education as a priority. Other

forum communities also shared this concern. What changes need to be made to our educational system to ensure that children are provided with the skills and knowledge necessary for future success?

Economic strategy is generally accepted as an important part of community identity. Richmond participants identified tensions between residents seeking traditional manufacturing and service sector jobs, and those wishing to attract new economy employers such as those in the life science sector, as an obstacle in their economic development efforts (Table 1). Job losses were also a concern in each of the other communities. What tools do communities need to mobilize resources in support of the transition from manufacturing to new economy employment?

Table 1 also shows that participants at most forums cited fragmentation issues at the local, regional, and state level as a potential barrier to their future success. How do local, regional, and state leaders develop a strategic, unified vision that connects the business, education, and culture arenas? Policymakers will need to answer these questions as they work to meet goals for Indiana’s future.

**Table 1: Illustration of Some Comments Made at Community Forums**

| <b>FORUM LOCATION</b>      | <b>ASSETS</b>   | <b>BARRIERS</b>  | <b>STRATEGIES FOR FUTURE VISION AND LEADERSHIP</b>   |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| Anderson                   | Large engineering base and strong local industries.   | Have developed a “bunker- mentality” over time becoming risk averse and afraid of change.  | Must work towards a community where local leaders reside in the community.   |
| Columbus                   | Strong architectural history and significance.  | School improvements needed. Need to ensure students do not lag behind.   | Need to rethink definition of community. Up to 15,000 workers commute everyday. How can they be incorporated into the community? |
| Evansville                 | Large city that maintains a small town feel.  | Fragmentation exists within the city and throughout the state.   | Capitalize on strong educational base to improve opinion of area within city and state.  |
| Gary/Merrillville/ Hammond | Very diverse area. Different cultures and humanities can unite community and facilitate change. | Negative stereotypes and perceptions of northwestern Indiana. Neighboring communities competing for the same jobs and economic base. | Commuter rail system and airport development could be used to increase traffic and entice business to the region.                |
| Jeffersonville/ New Albany | The river provides commercial and recreational opportunities.                                   | No unified sense of community.   | I-65 improvements and new bridge will provide additional economic opportunities for the region.                                  |
| Richmond                   | Many cultural offerings for a community of this size.   | Large working class population prefers to focus on creation of manufacturing and service sector jobs.                                | Attempting to leverage strong educational and medical resources to develop regional medical hub.                                 |
| South Bend                 | More than half of U.S. markets can be reached in less than one day.                             | Tensions between rural/small town and urban lifestyles.  | Create an environment that retains local youth and emerging leaders.   |
| Terre Haute                | Many strong, local higher education facilities. Possibilities for collaboration.                | Attitude that if it was good enough for Grandpa, it’s good enough for me.  | Indiana should aim to be in the top 25% of state economic performance and innovation output by 2020                              |

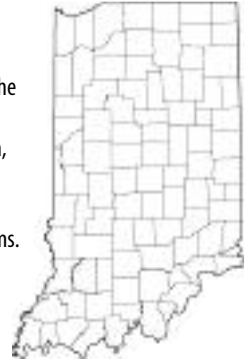


## Indiana's Future: Identifying Choices and Supporting Action to Improve Communities

This project, funded by an award of general support from Lilly Endowment, Inc., builds on the Center's research to increase understanding of the Central Indiana region. The Center's faculty and staff work to identify choices that can be made by households, governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to improve our quality of life. Our goal is to understand the people, economics, problems, and opportunities in Indiana, and to help decision makers understand the impacts of policy decisions. The Center also works to mobilize energy to accomplish these goals.

One way the Center has attempted to further this understanding is through participation in the Indiana Humanities Council community forums. These forums focused on the theme of change and provided opportunities for participants to discuss strategies that will develop leadership needed to build more vibrant communities. Through this partnership with the Council, the Center prepared background materials for forum discussions and summarized issues raised by forum participants.

The Center for Urban Policy and the Environment is part of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis. An electronic copy of this document and other information about urban trails and other community issues can be accessed via the Center Web site at [www.urbancenter.iupui.edu](http://www.urbancenter.iupui.edu). For more information, visit the Web site or contact the Center at 317-261-3000.



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The Indiana Humanities Council is dedicated to “building stronger communities through targeted initiatives in leadership, education, and culture.” The Council is an independent, not-for-profit organization supported by contributions from Indiana individuals, corporations, and foundations and by the National Endowment for the Humanities ([www.ihc4u.org](http://www.ihc4u.org)).



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