EAST CENTRAL Indiana REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Randolph County

East Central Indiana Arts & Culture Plan

Community Input Session | April 30, 2025

Towne Square Community Center, Winchester

Overview

On April 30, thirteen residents from across Randolph County – representing arts, culture, government, business, health, education, and local media – envisioned a vibrant arts and culture future for their county in which:

- Everything decided has been successfully implemented.
- Arts & Culture in their county have been transformed with:
  - Resident engagement across creative discipline, geography, and demographics;
  - Art and culture amenities that are accessible to the entire community; and
  - A critical mass of authentic, yet bold, and sustainable assets.
- They have transformed the county in return – elevating quality of place across cities and towns.

The following ideas and insights emerged.

The Highlight Reel

1. **Arts, Heritage, and Technology Activate Place**
   Arts and culture animate historic sites and public spaces through storytelling, theatrical performances, murals, and digital enhancements like augmented reality and projections—blending tradition with innovation to make history engaging and relevant.
2. **Countywide Access to Arts Infrastructure**
   New and expanded arts facilities—such as galleries, studios, mobile units, and multi-use venues—ensure every community in Randolph County can access, create, and experience the arts close to home.
3. **Youth Engagement and Creative Attraction**
   Youth are actively engaged through music, theatre, and arts programs that build confidence and skills, while a vibrant, supportive arts environment helps attract and retain youth, artists, and creative entrepreneurs.
4. **Signature Attractions and Regional Connectivity**
   Each community features a fun, distinctive arts or cultural draw—supported by improved transportation, trails, and collaborative programming—that strengthens regional identity and encourages exploration across the county.
5. **Arts as a Driver of Wellbeing and Belonging**
   The arts foster inclusion, civic pride, and mental wellness by supporting public engagement, intergenerational connection, and creative expression—making Randolph County a more vibrant and welcoming place to live.

Public Input

The following are notes from discussion and individual inputs, edited lightly for space and categorization.

1. Who and what is distinctively Randolph County?

Discussion

- Farming
- Historical
  - Underground Railroad
  - Latino/Hispanic corridor (Texas > Winchester > Union City > Ohio)
- Religious and Family Oriented
- Transportation History
  - Railroad
  - Auto industry
- Summer Activities
  - Outdoor concerts in three spaces/venues located in Winchester, Union City, and Parker City
- Robert Wise (American filmmaker, born in Randolph County)
- State Line through Union City
- Rooted – many people do not venture out

2. Think BIG – Where can we go by 2035?

Discussion

- History Blended with Contemporary
- "Wow" Features compel drivers to stop in
- Community Culture
  - Strong Community Involvement
  - County Communities Collaborate strengthening the county
- Attractions Across the County
  - Fun, signature attraction in each community
  - Transportation to attractions/events (e.g., train on restored/existing tracks, branded busses) (e.g. 1 day bus ride to attractions throughout the county; "Mural Train")
- Historical Sites are Activated Across the County
  - Stories are shared
  - Visitors engage via App, QR (integrated into a trail), and/or live, theatrical performances
- New and Expanded Arts Infrastructure
  - Randolph County has its own
    - Orchestra
    - Art Museum that represents local artists
    - "Arts Place" type asset (gallery, theatre, classes, demonstrations, incubator) that provide community interactive events
  - Train car artist studios located in the field behind the Depot (Union City)
  - Programming spaces for arts opportunities
  - Indoor performance venue (not high school)
  - Multi-use Facility (conference center, tech center, arts venue)
- Arts & Technology Leveraged to Tell Stories
  - Engagement through augmented reality and/or digital projections on buildings
- Youth Actively Involved
  - Music opportunities for youth
  - Given a reason to stay or return
- Restored Historic Homes and Buildings
- Attracts and Retains Youth and Creatives
  - Youth actively involved; have music and other arts opportunities
  - There are reasons for youth to stay and creatives to come and stay
- East Central Indiana's Hub for Theatre
  - Community-first and storytelling focus
  - Builds practical skills for youth through adults (confidence, public speaking, etc.)
- Arts Addresses County's Mental Health Crisis
- Community Foundation Seeds Countywide Arts Expansion via funding to the Randolph County Art Association to develop satellite facilities (like Arts Place in Jay County) and/or an "art mobile"
- Thriving Downtowns – all buildings on the square/downtown are occupied and thriving

Post-it Input

- Ways to incorporate parks and trails, Cardinal Greenway?
- Open-mic music nights
- Theatre camp for kids *and* adults
- Combine unique visions of heritage and tradition – not just traditional, realistic interpretations
- Cemetery tours with re-enactors – "living history"
- History murals as part of a trail linking all the communities in Randolph County
- Catalogue of local artists which can be leveraged to provide artist demonstrations of different art forms
- Artwork on Parker City silos and old industrial buildings

3. Momentum & Opportunity: What can we build from?

Discussion: Momentum

- **Forum of Funders Focus on Public Art**
- **Schools** (momentum and opportunity)

Discussion: Opportunity

- **More Funding** including community foundation "Field of Interest" support for preservation
- **Promotion and Marketing** including structure – someone to "drive the bus"
- **Ohio/Indiana Stateline** (photo op, expanded history)

4. Tell us About Your:

Favorite Things and Events the Bring the Randolph County Community Together, Missed Opportunities and Capacity Needs…

Post-it Input

- There are so many small groups with the same types of goals that the limited resources are being spread thin. Then, because of a lack of resources, the ideas lose momentum, and we have a whole lot of unfinished projects which in turn makes the public stop paying attention.

About

This work is part of IEDC's READI Arts Initiative and conducted on behalf of the East Central Indiana Regional Partnership. For more information, see https://www.transformingcommunities.art.