



Delaware County

East Central Indiana Arts & Culture Plan
Community Input Session | April 10, 2025
Minnetrista Museum & Gardens, Muncie

Overview

On April 10, thirty **residents from across Delaware 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. Connected and Vibrant Communities

The region features improved transportation infrastructure like light rail and trail systems, thriving downtowns, arts and cultural opportunities across the county, and seamless cultural corridors that physically and socially connect people across the county.

2. A Thriving Creative Economy

Film studios, audio/visual production, makers, local fabrication, and food innovation have become exports, supported by government investment, expanded markets, and strong local prioritization.

3. Arts & Culture as a Tool for Healing and Identity

The community has moved beyond the trauma of manufacturing decline through arts, culture, and placemaking, building a strong sense of place, pride, and resilience.

4. Diversity, Inclusion, and Shared Leadership

Decision-making tables are inclusive of voices previously left out, embracing the county's identity as both "big city" and "small town," and recognizing diversity as a core strength.

5. Empowered Youth and Lifelong Arts Education

Arts education is widely available for young people, with creative opportunities that embed youth in the cultural and economic fabric of the region.

Public Input

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

1. Who and what is distinctively Delaware County?

Discussion

- **Cultural Influences**
 - Agrarian
 - The Middletown Studies as a cultural reference
 - Ball Family contributions; natural resources
- **Makers:** Refined industrial arts
 - We make things; gritty, scrappy, and eclectic
 - We combine things – old and new / mixed art
- **Walkable:**
 - Areas to experience cultural and arts
 - Walkable pockets in small towns
- **Community Mindedness:**
 - Army of volunteers
 - Welcoming, approachable and available to all
- **Renewal**
 - People care/want to make a difference
 - Collaborative and lift others up
- **Unique**
 - Youthfulness and fresh ideas
 - Ball State: Constant new...
- **Nature:** Water and greenways options
- **Rich and robust**
 - Festival Culture and growing restaurant culture
 - Theatre Community
 - History: glass, gas boom

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

Discussion

- **Overall**
 - Stronger population
 - Thriving Main Street
 - Big City in Small Place: rich, diverse, dense
- **Destination**
 - Increase in visitors
 - Strong, vibrant downtowns
 - Recognizable and iconic arts
 - Strong amenities decrease Indy reliance
- **Connections**
 - Transportation. Light rail system connecting downtown to Ball State
 - Trails Cardinal Greenway and other trails
 - Cultural corridor
- **Government supports** real development
- **County-wide / Inclusive Arts Opportunities**
 - Muncie groups actively go out into county
 - Diversity is an asset
 - Include those not traditionally present
 - no longer "us and them"
- **Strong Creative Economy**
 - Capacity building
 - Expanded "market" for work
 - Prioritize local in fabrication
- **Film & Video**
 - Film studio is here
 - Audio/Visual production big export
- **More arts education** for youth
- **Food Renaissance**, healthy, hyper-local

Post-it Input

Strong Sense of Place and Pride

- We have moved past the cultural trauma of manufacturing job loss
- This is because arts, culture, and placemaking can do that.
- We also will have an industry of creators. Some folks think we are "big city", and some think we are "small town"
- This is actually an asset to be preserved because multiple perspectives create diversity.

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

Discussion: Momentum

- Great Philanthropic Leadership
 - Local foundations
 - Generous community
- Indiana Arts Commission
 - Forward thinking Support
- Unique Prosperity Legacy

Discussion: Opportunity

- K-12 Arts Education
 - Increased opportunities
 - Valued
- Perception
 - Muncie doesn't believe it's as good as it is
 - Arts & culture should be central to city identity
- Public Transportation
- Arts & Economic Development
 - Policy commitment – e.g. % for Arts
- Passport

4. Tell us About Your:

Favorite Things and Events the Bring the Henry County Community Together,
Missed Opportunities and Capacity Needs...

Post-it Input

- Minnetrista
- Bob Ross
- Representation.
I think people that are missing tonight are people representing the rest of the county. There are great assets in the small towns (Yorktown, Albany etc.) that aren't included, and they will only keep getting left out if we don't include them in these conversations. That might take going to their place and meeting them where they are.
- Murals and Identity.
This didn't come up tonight there's real opportunity to build upon murals/activation of alleys and downtown buildings not just in Muncie but in smaller towns throughout the county! This is a "pride of place"/identity-creating that is vital!

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>.