

Community Voices 2008:

Focus Group Summary



Prepared By
Diana L. D. Punzo, Ph.D.
Earlham College
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Purpose & Focus Group Topics

Purpose

The purpose of the community assessment project is to give local organizations specific and concrete feedback about the pressing needs and wants for our community. The first phase of this assessment, The Community Voices 2008 Questionnaire, highlights prevalent themes and provided an outline of important community issues. It also provides numerical information that can serve as benchmarks for tracking attitudes and satisfaction levels.

The second phase of this project, the focus group discussions, 'drilled deeper', filling in that outline with specific, actionable ideas. Working with these themes while keeping the partners' interests in mind, we held semi-structured discussions with area residents¹. For the most part, we asked participants to share their visions of a successful and productive community around 4 topic areas.

Focus Group Topics

The 4 areas of focus included:

1. *Recreational Vitality*: These focus groups asked participants about the types of recreational opportunities they would like to have.
2. *Economic Vitality*: Participants elaborated on the meaning of, and means for achieving, economic vitality and ways that community non-profit organizations can support achieving that goal.
3. *Education*: Community members discussed the ways in which community organizations, outside of the school systems, can support their desire for 'good education'
4. *Caregivers for the Elderly*: These discussions focused on desirable attributes for a support program of caregivers for the elderly and on best practices for marketing such programs to area residents.

¹ See the sections on Methodology and Focus Group Sample Characteristics for more details on the specific questions and participant demographics.

Introduction to the Summary

Following is a summary of participants' responses, grouped by topic area. Within each topic, individuals' responses were classified into larger categories and themes. Again, the purpose of this information is *to elucidate community members' views and visions on these issues—and to do so succinctly while capturing the richness and diversity of their responses*. With this information, organizations, working singly or in collaboration, can strategically address the issues and visions that our community has outlined here².

² See section on 'Next Steps' for suggested ways to effectively use this information.

Economic Vitality

Of course a major issue for community members is improving the economic vitality of the County. Critical questions for many of the partners are—how can we improve the economic situation in the County and what can the partner organizations do to support those efforts? We approached this issue similarly to the issue of recreation—by having participants imagine or envision an economically vital Wayne County. Their responses come in three parts. First, what would that vital community look like? Second, how might we get there? Third, what are ways in which community organizations might contribute to that vision? Below are their responses.

An Economically Vital Wayne County Includes . . .

- **More activity and activities.** Many people's responses implied **greater numbers of people** in the County and also more people 'out and about' during the day. There was also a sense of more 'things to do'. One person said that there might be an actual 'rush hour' in Richmond if the economy was going well. Not only would there be more people, but several participants said that people would **look happier** too.
- **Young people returning** to the area or not leaving in the first place most likely because there were jobs—**good jobs** (well paying and sustained employment). The ability to have good jobs rests on the fact that young **people are well educated** and thus attractive to prospective businesses.
- Sure signs that Wayne County is flourishing. This includes clean, **fixed-up housing, no vacant buildings** or 'for sale' signs. More **shopping and dining options, a flourishing artistic** community, and **Green** (parks, produce, and products) all indicate that Wayne County is doing well. Finally, there is **less crime**.

We Achieve that Vision by . . .

Many of the answers to this question focused on 'fixing problems', sure, but interestingly, most of the responses called for 'focusing on the positive'!

- In almost every focus group, participants said having a **top notch educational system** was crucial to economic vitality.
- It would require coordination and **collaboration among community organizations**, churches, businesses, and government.
- People must be willing and **committed to living and staying** in the area. This also includes broader **community involvement, thinking 'outside of the box'**, and having a **positive attitude**.
- As one participant said, 'Once we have the positive, we need to advertise it.' Promotion and advertising were mentioned across several focus groups and had that same theme—we need to tell others (and ourselves) about the good parts of the area.

From these four major themes, come additional ideas.

- Organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity, could work on **restoring homes and buildings** (rather than building new ones).
- **Businesses should originate from the area** as well as new ones being attracted to the area.
- A **clean community, environmentally sustainable community, mural art, music, and museums** are ways of incorporating art and beauty, gaining community involvement, and providing activity options to the area.

Organizations (United Way³) Can Contribute to this Vision . . .

- Be and be seen as a **community leader**.
- **Coordinate and communicate** with individuals, groups, organizations, and businesses.
- 'Pass the message'—**advertise** themselves and keep the community focused on priorities of the area.
- Create greater and more diverse **involvement and awareness**—recruit and coordinate volunteerism.
- **Promote programming** that addresses key issues of education, health, adults, children, and families.
- **Serve as a forum** for people to voice their concerns.

Many of these ideas were in contrast to what people perceive the United Way is currently like.

Current Views of the United Way . . .

- Participants believe that the United Way is **not very visible**.
- Participants also suggest that the United Way does **not ask for nor receives the credit** they deserve for making a program or event possible. While this may be out of organizational 'modesty' (the idea that we are not supposed to receive credit for the good things we do), it may lend to the perception that they are *not seen* in the community.
- The image they do have is not always a very good one—a 'Give us your money, and we'll decide what to do with it' image. This being said, on the questionnaire that preceded each focus group, participants **ranked addressing the Community's pressing needs/issues as the most important constituency to satisfy** (with the other two being agencies' programs and donors who contribute money⁴).
- Participants also voiced concerns that the United Way focuses mainly on Richmond and **not across the County**.

³ This question was asked specifically about the United Way. There are ideas, though, that might hold for other organizations as well.

⁴ See section on Questionnaire Analysis for specific mean rankings.

Recreational Vitality

For this topic, we wanted to know what a recreationally vital county looked liked to residents. We asked for sights, sounds, tastes, activities, and a description of the surroundings. Here are common themes in their answers.

The Cornerstone . . . People

- Regardless of event, activity, or place, participants' vision included a strong, clear image of **people gathered that exudes energy**—a buzz, a place that's happening, bustling, a convivial atmosphere. In some ways, the event itself didn't matter as much as the fact that people were gathered having fun. *It's this energy that comes from groups of people enjoying themselves that lays the cornerstone of recreational vitality.* Despite the fact that specific elements of the visions differed from person to person (though still there are common themes), they all seem to be variations on the one theme—recreation and 'going out' means heading to a place where there are people and energy. The specifics type of event doesn't seem to be the point as it will likely satisfy some people's particular interest while not others—but what people want to see is *other people*. Even better if they are having a good time.

Add Food and Music . . .

- If you **add food** (could be of the organic variety or freshly fried elephant ears) **and music** (such as jazz or country), to the mix, whatever event whether it's a permanent event (such as a restaurant or club) or one time event, such as a community festival, it will be a success. Food (especially good food) and music are the ideal companions and catalysts to insuring that people have fun.
- Perhaps it is the fact that really at its essence, creating recreational opportunities is a **simple recipe of people, food, and music that is most encouraging.**

Both Indoors and Outdoors . . .

- Participants want *both options—we are community that not only likes to be indoors but enjoy the outdoors as well.* For indoors, people suggested clubs, theatre, coffee bars, restaurants, sports complex-based activities, and museums. Outdoors activities⁵ included open-

⁵ One thought I had was that many of the outdoor activities are not 'business or economic vitality' issues. Many of the indoor activities represent economic opportunities in the form of jobs and profit. Many of the outdoor activities, though, do not offer jobs or economic opportunities. Despite this difference it was clear that participants envisioned both kinds as components of recreation.

air markets, parks, festivals, picnics, open-air concerts, and sledding.

Making it Art-full . . .

- Beyond music and across focus groups, participants' recreational desires also had an **art focus**. People mentioned liking and wanting civic theater, children's museums, symphony (there's music again!), art galleries, going uptown for a show, and art classes.

Age Matters . . .

- In their responses, participants frequently indicated **age as a parameter** for their suggestions. Again, though, the ages varied—some mentioned 'youth specific activities' such as a children's museum, youth sports complex, and places to provide entertainment for young children. Also, people mentioned the importance of 'family oriented events'—where there is something for adults as well as children (the often-mentioned sports complex was viewed as a place that would serve many people of different ages). Teens mentioned that they wanted a teen oriented club and similarly, there was also an emphasis on a place for adults (young and old). For example, some wanted '35 and older only' clubs—something for just adults. The only age group not specifically mentioned was seniors or elderly individuals.⁶

Craving to be Active . . .

- Though some mentioned more passive (entertainment) activities such as watching plays or concerts, a great deal of the **suggestions were very active**—sports such as tennis, baseball, hockey, and ice skating. Other activities included go-carts and an indoor water park. Even when participants mentioned a festival, part of their vision included people 'playing frisbee'. For many of the participants then, recreation went beyond 'shopping and eating out' but included **active, energetic recreation**. Health concerns, particularly obesity, are hot topics (in fact some items on the survey addressed this very topic). In light of those issues, it is interesting that area residents strongly want *active* recreational opportunities.
 - Participants also want to make sure that **sport and physical wellness facilities and programming were available** because those things make the activities more accessible. For example, participants mentioned wanting a sports complex, a meditation park, walking trails, and a teen recreational facility—all of which require facilities and some of which may include organized programs.

⁶ Keep in mind that this was true even though we did have older adult participate in these focus groups.

Community Events . . .

One of the questions specifically asked what people imagined when thinking of an event that the entire community could attend. As you would expect, most of the answers incorporate all of the aspects listed above but with a few event-specific ideas.

- The event should represent the area and should be a **source of community pride** and deliver a sense of connectedness.⁷ For example, it might be related to the area's rich historical heritage.
- The event almost always was envisioned as **occurring outdoors** (usually during nice weather).
- Several participants wanted to use the event as a way to **involve** aspects of the community such as local businesses, young professionals, and school bands.
- Finally, one focus group discussed ways to **improve the County Fair** (such as making it larger, involving different kinds of people, bringing 'big names' to perform).

⁷ Note that this sense of community pride is part of Wayne County Visions' 7 themes.

Education

One of the major findings from the questionnaire was that people want 'good education' and believe it to be a pressing need for our community. So, our first question for this focus group was 'When I say 'good education'—what comes to mind?' The responses were incredibly diverse. It means a lot of different things to different people. Still, there were commonalities in how people answered the question. Here are some of the common groupings of answers or common 'meanings' of 'good education'.

Having a 'Good Education' Means Having . . .

- I **A degree and graduating**
- I **More than formal education** or knowing more than what is taught in school

- I **Basic skills** such as reading & writing
- I **Technology** available and being able to use it
- I Broader **cognitive skills** such as critical thinking & open-mindedness
- I Exposure to **the arts** such as music, art, and literature
- I Exposure to **diverse peoples** (race, culture, class), learning to interact with diverse people
- I **Life Skills** such as being able to budget money, communicate well, solve daily problems, nutrition, sex education

Having 'Good Education' Results in . . .

- I **Better opportunities for the future** such as being able to go on to college, getting a job and financial success (money, car, nice house), allowing a person to continue to learn and preparation for life.
- I **Competent, capable, contributing citizens and leaders**

Having 'Good Education' Involves . . .

- I **Family**--it starts at home and it involves parents supporting/helping their children, insuring that children have adequate sleep, food, and are on time for school, and valuing school
- I **School** specific issues such as adequate funding, well run schools, good teachers—including teachers who appear and act in a professional manner, and a good curriculum.
- I **Community**
 - o Good role models; a lot can be learned from being around others in the community 'Community Education'
 - o Promoting education in the work environment
 - o Sharing of information among families
- I **Individuals** should take responsibility for their own education and value education.

'Good Education' also . . .

- I **Celebrates achievement** of students who excel and **supporting** those who don't value education

- I **Involves adult education** or opportunities for adults to keep learning such as reading groups, hands-on trade opportunities
- I Is sensitive to **different types of learners**
- I Means **being smart** and begins **early on**
- I Is the **perception and image** of having good education

Education: Role of the Community

The second question asked more explicitly what the role of the 'community' -outside of the schools-was in promoting good education. Below are some of the themes that came from participants' responses.

Community Efforts are Designed to . . .

- I **Build awareness** about educational opportunities through an 'education campaign'
- I **Increase collaboration** among individuals and organizations
- I Provide **role models**

The End Result Should . . .

- I *Establish and reinforce* the **education as a community-held value**
- I One individual called for a '**Total County Effort**' in the educational campaign.

This Educational Campaign needs to Involve . . .

- I **Parents & Families**
 - o Provide programmatic support for parents as they work with their children.
 - o Support parents to provide basic needs to youth.
- I **Community members**
 - o Provide **programming** that involves community members and students such as study buddies, Big Brother, and mentors.
 - o **Role models** -an important need articulated by many focus group participants.
- I **Business/corporate community**
 - o Provide **funding** for educational efforts as well as use their workforce as **volunteers** for educational efforts-again, reinforcing the idea of 'role modeling' for youth.
 - o Businesses could be accountable for helping the education of children.
- I Other **prominent people** such as ministers and peers need to become involved in strengthening the fabric of educational efforts in the county.

Education: Barriers between Community and the Public Schools

Participants were asked to state what they thought were barriers or obstacles between the community and the school system. They had no difficulty in responding to this question. Following are themes that connect many of the responses made during the focus groups.

Interestingly, no one said that there were no barriers. Participants described an 'Us'-'Them' mentality in which the schools (on the one hand) and parents, students, and the community (on the other) are perceived as adversaries rather than partners. Other societal factors such as legal regulations and socioeconomic conditions were also cited as important contributing factors to the issue.

- I **Parents** were viewed as a barrier in that they may be afraid of looking stupid and feeling intimidated by school employees. They may also not provide discipline at home and not have the basic resources to adequately feed and support their children.
- I **Students** are a barrier when they do not take responsibility for their own education. They may also not have places where they can get support they need to succeed in school.
- I Participants cited **schools' unwelcoming behavior** as experienced by **locked school doors, condescending or rude behavior** on the part of school personnel, and **not being receptive to community** involvement. There was somewhat of a perception that some **teachers may not really care** about their students.
- I **Regulations—on teachers and schools can erect barriers between parents, children, and the schools.** Teachers and schools are expected to do too much and their hands are often tied by regulations. Particularly mentioned was the 'No child left behind' expectation. One focus group imagined that each constituency perceived the other as being responsible for the child—*For example, teachers might think, "You're the parent here, this is your responsibility" while the parents are thinking, 'You're the teacher here, you should be teaching him, why aren't you teaching him?'* Lack of discipline in the classroom was stated as a barrier. Finally, participants also said that the policies that the schools do have are not enforced (e.g., dress code).
- I **Societal Factors** also served as a barrier between the community and the schools. For example, **socioeconomic class differences** between school administrators and teachers and parents may make communication difficult. **Transportation**—to after school care, perhaps in getting to school—provides a barrier between schools and the community. **Community apathy** and lack of awareness—people are too busy or they just 'don't care'—keeps us from having good working relationships with the schools. Finally, participants recognized the role of **poor publicity**—unflattering information in the news may

create or exacerbate the gap between the community at large and the schools.

Education: Strengths of the Community

The last question that we asked regarding education was 'What strengths in our community are already in place that we should be sure to take advantage of?' Participants were readily able to answer this question though in some of their responses they digress to either what is not going well or what could be done to fix things⁸.

- I **Established educational programs** such as the mentoring program, study buddy program, job shadowing, 3rd grade academy, Century 21 Scholars

- I **Effective organizations**--Birth to Five, Communities in Schools, Institute for Creative Leadership, County-wide Partnership for Youth, Boys and Girls Clubs

- I **Involved Businesses**--Richmond Baking Company--that encourage employees to become involved with the community

- I **Newspaper**--recognition of volunteerism in the Palladium-Item

- I Strong and **active community members** who are already making 'revolutionary' changes

- I **Higher education opportunities**--Ivy Tech, IU East, and Earlham are strengths of the community

- I **The arts** such as Civic Theatre

- I **College students**--want to volunteer and make a difference; they provide a good resource

- I Strong **historical heritage** to the area

- I **Psychological attributes** of the community--accepting community with genuine people; willing to help out

- I **Opportunities to become involved**; educational opportunities are there if people a) know about them and b) are willing to pursue them

- I **Community discussion**--the community is talking about the issue

- I **Attributes of the schools**--school spirit, good/great teachers

- I **Low crime** community

⁸ It might be interesting to note that the most recent movement in the field of organizational psychology (and psychology at large) is to focus on the strengths of individuals and organizations and then build from there. To use the efforts, capabilities, and resiliencies that already exist as starting blocks and foundations.

Caregivers for the Elderly

The questions for this section focused on two major areas. The first area concerned the contents that participants would like to have in a support program on caring for the elderly. The second area of questions asked about the best ways to increase awareness about Area 9 Agency programs. Following are major themes in participants' responses to these issues.

Desired Contents of Program to Support Caregivers . . .

- / Provide **resources of information** on medical, transportation, exercise, and legal issues.
- / Educate on the **aging process**.
- / Provide information for **dealing with emotions** and emotional issues involved with care giving such as establishing boundaries for oneself, handling issues of patience and criticism, and time management.
- / Teach **how to communicate** with an elderly individual and among family members.
- / Provide **emotional support** for caregivers; provide respite care.
- / Offer a **meal system** or resources for a meal delivery system.
- / Market and **create awareness of these programs** to the public.

Reactions to Powerful Tools Program: Things they Liked and Improvements they would Like to See . . .

- / Tools for dealing with **difficult emotions** such as stress
- / How to deal with **difficult decisions**
- / Time away from home would be worthwhile but only if there was **respite care** to enable individuals to attend
- / Like the idea of the **family coming to the class**.
- / A **supportive group** of people who are going through similar experiences
- / Like the **goals of giving elderly people ways to thrive** and grow.
- / A way to **relieve the stress** of care giving
- / Be sure that the program is properly and **widely advertised**.
- / May like option to **bring elderly person** he/she is caring for to the meeting.
- / Helpful information and **discussions about healthcare and legal issues** as well as resources available

The next set of questions focused on how the participants gain information about elderly issues and what they think about the Area 9 Agency's website specifically. Following are common themes or patterns in their responses.

When Facing Something Significant and want Information, they Refer to . . .

- / Internet
- / Ask people they know (e.g., friends, family, colleagues)
- / Books/library; phonebook
- / Professionals (e.g., doctors)
- / Self-help groups
- / Radio & newspapers

Participants **begin searching for information on elderly issues when there is a change**. Sometimes the change is a definitive event such as a medical diagnosis or a medical crisis (such as a heart attack). Other times it is a change in daily functioning (not keeping themselves as clean as they used to) or an emotional or psychological change. Many participants noted that they use the Internet when searching for information.

Would Like in an Area 9 Website for Caregiver Services . . .

- / **Tab for services** with a list of where they are, preferably for local services
- / **Links to other websites** for resources and information
- / A way to **chat with professionals** or others in a similar situation (**online support group**); This was particularly important to some so as not to feel like they were alone or the only ones who were facing this situation. A message board might be a similar kind of resource here.
- / List of **books, resources**
- / Should be **easy to navigate**
- / One important comment was that an individual said he/she **would NOT look or search under the term 'caregiver'**. Rather, they would search under elderly or search using a specific diagnosis such as Alzheimer's disease. That is interesting because it indicates that they are not thinking in terms of themselves as caregivers but more in terms of the other person they are providing care for.
- / A **mission statement** and display **credibility**

Ways to Reach People who may Not Identify with the Term 'Caregiver' . . .

Because people may not identify with the word caregiver, they were asked in what ways might we encourage people to identify themselves as caregivers.

- / **Shift terminology**, such as 'sandwich generation'. The term 'caregiver' seems to mean something extra or extreme to people.
- / **Ads that do not use the term caregiver** up front but rather list the behaviors such as 'Are you caring for an elderly person?' Having brochures using a similar approach might also help individuals identify themselves as caregivers.
- / Have **information in places where caregivers are likely to be** (doctors' offices).

- / Create **one-time events** that are likely to get caregivers involved (e.g., such as 'How to help your parents with their medical decisions).
- / One of **the obstacles to this is that people may see care giving as a duty or obligations**—as part of their role as daughter/son or spouse.
- / Interestingly, though, many people did see themselves as caregivers, though in various stages of care giving.

Thoughts about Area 9 . . .

- / Some thought I **didn't know about their services** or I vaguely knew about their services (there were many who responded in this way); that it was **not advertised well**.⁹
- / Others thought of **Area 9 as supportive** (meals on wheels, volunteer services) and that help was available.

⁹ Though federal money cannot be used for advertising, there are many ways in which events or outreach can include 'building awareness'—essentially fulfilling the function of advertising.

The Next Chapter

It's tempting, albeit incorrect, to say that this report concludes the Community Voices 2008 assessment process. In fact, doing so would be a gross misuse of the time and resources that went into this project --if it were simply filed away or nicely stored in a binder on an office shelf and declared 'finished'. To the contrary, assessments are really *the beginning* of the process of planned change and improvements. And, it is my hope that this report will be one of the catalysts of that change.

I don't think that my worse fears (that it will be filed away) will be realized though. As I re-read the report, it is difficult *not* to get excited about the things we could be doing . . . Tangible, achievable actions and events that would give people joy and make Wayne County an even better place to live . . . And it's difficult *not* to feel a bit of pride for the wonderful things we already do to make this a special place. As you read, I hope you feel that excitement and pride as well. It's the partner organizations, of course, who make the determination of how best to use this material. To get the process started, I've included some ideas for next steps.

- **Use this assessment in conjunction with other assessments.** Do they say the same thing? Reid Hospital and the Richmond Parks Department have recent assessment data. Compare the results of this assessment with those--are there similarities? Where do they have common themes and where do they show contradictions. Combining assessment sources will strengthen support for new ideas and provide convergent evidence for taking certain types action.
- **Compare ideas and suggestions in this assessment to actual events and programs.** It may be that many of the suggestions here are in some way covered by ongoing programs. Look to see what is 'left over'--what is not covered--where there might be gaps. For example, there are a lot of programs for youth--recreational and educational. Yet, this report mentions time and again, adults and particularly parents. What activities, resources, and programs are there for parents?
 - **Consider marketing as a key issue.** If programs and resources do exist and people are unaware of them, it may be that they are not marketed appropriately. Marketing is the other half of the equation in getting people to take advantage of the resources that already exist.
- **Use the assessment as an intersection for collaboration.** One of the hallmarks of this project is that it represents the collaborative efforts of community organizations as opposed to

a single organization—as is traditionally the case. Many of the suggestions contained within this report point to ideas that will *require collaboration*. In a sense then, building on this ideas will be an extension of the current path of this assessment.

- **Incorporate this assessment as part of a strategic plan.** All of previously mentioned ideas call out for a deliberate and intentional use of this assessment information. A strategic plan incorporates not only this information but also shows how it will be used and to what ends. It is the map that guides organizations as they move to achieve their goals and vision.

Methodology

Although the questionnaire data provided consistent themes/issues, the responses, on the whole, were quite broad—giving way to vague end goals. More detailed information points to specific directions, offering more concrete, achievable goals--rendering the information more useable for partner organizations.

Topic Selection

We selected the focus group topics based on prevalent themes that emerged from the Community Voices Questionnaire 2008 and on the needs and interests of the partner organizations. As stated earlier, the topics were recreational vitality, economic vitality, education, and supporting caregivers for the elderly. Though important topics to any community, our questions were often asked from a unique angle. Because many of our organizations are not in a place to directly affect these issues (e.g., economic vitality), we concentrated on ways in which organizations might support the effort without relying on usual means (e.g., 'bring in more jobs')¹⁰. Thus, we wanted participants to build a specific vision and also to generate means to achieve that vision that are do-able for local non-profit and public organizations.

Facilitator and Notetaker Training

Four additional facilitators (and myself), already skilled in active listening and asking open-ended questions, conducted the interviews. None of the facilitators directly work for any of the partner organizations. Also, four competent students from Earlham College served as notetakers. Training for both groups entailed familiarizing them with the assessment context, reviewing their job description (either to elicit constructive ideas or record participant responses), and familiarizing them with focus group questions and protocol.

Focus Group Recruitment and Discussion Process

Participants were recruited through several avenues. Some indicated interest on a form at the end of the Community Voices Questionnaire. Others were asked by some facilitators or by members associated with the partner organizations. Focus group size varied between 2 and 12 people with most consisting of 5-7 individuals. The discussions were held in public and private venues located around Wayne County (e.g., Hagerstown City building, the DOT Foods, Townsend Center, Earlham College). Most discussions lasted 1 to 1 ½ hours.

Upon arrival, participants completed a brief questionnaire asking for demographic information as well as 1 item for the United Way (see later

¹⁰ See next section for specific questions asked for each focus group topic.

section on Focus Group Characteristics and Questionnaire Analysis). After initial instructions, facilitators led semi-structured discussions while notetakers recorded participants' responses on a computer. Facilitators asked some preset questions (see next section) but they also asked follow-up questions. The notes were sent to me electronically for further analysis.

Data Analysis

The information from the questionnaire was analyzed and appears in a subsequent section of this report. The responses from the focus group discussions were content analyzed for reoccurring themes and were ultimately classified into categories. This summary strikes a balance between condensing the responses into a manageable amount of information while at the same time preserving the diversity and richness of the responses.

Focus Group Questions

Recreational Vitality¹¹

Recreational Vitality Questions

- 1.* OK, close your eyes, imagine that your community has a lot of things to do—there's a lot of recreation opportunities—It's a Wednesday night and you feel like going out to do something . . . and there's so much to choose from . . . what options are you imagining?
- 2.* OK, now imagine that you're out on the weekend having fun—where are you? Who is around you? What do your surroundings look like? What do you hear? What are you smelling? What are you feeling? Who is there?
3. Now I want you to imagine that you're at a community event—something that the entire community is welcome to attend—what is that like? Who sponsored the event? What is around you? What do you see? Hear? Smell/taste? What time of year is it?

Economic Vitality

Economic Vitality Questions

- 4.* Now we're going to try it again only with a different topic. Imagine that things have gone as well as they can with Wayne County—in our community, in fact the newspaper headlines claim 'Wayne County named in the top 10 Economically Vital Counties'. Hold whatever comes to your imagination—Tell us what you see, hear, smell/taste feel, experience.

Ask about specific portions of this that DO NOT REFER TO ADDITIONAL JOBS AND HIGHER PAY.

- 5.* Now, think again about some of the images and experiences you've just heard. I want you to imagine one more time, the headlines say Wayne County named in the Top 10 Economically Vital Counties'—how did we get there? What do you attribute this success to?

Ask follow-up questions on aspects not directly related to bringing in more jobs/higher pay/lower taxes.

United Way Specific Questions

- *Give brief information of United Way here.*
- 6.* Clearly they are not responsible for bringing jobs to Wayne County and they can't influence taxes, but they can work on supporting people in the County. What would be some good ways of support they might provide?

¹¹ Remember that Recreational Vitality and Economic Vitality questions were asked during the same focus group sessions but are presented more distinctly here.

Education

Education Questions

1. When I say 'good education'—what comes to mind? What does that look like? Who are we talking about?
2. What is the role of the community (outside of the school system) in improving education (and graduation rate?)
3. Just for a moment, let's talk about the relationship between community organizations and the school systems. What are perceived barriers that you think exist between schools and the community in working together towards better education?
4. What strengths in our community are already in place that we should be sure to take advantage of?

Caregivers for the Elderly

Caregivers for the Elderly Questions

1. If you were designing a program to prepare and support those who would be caring for the elderly, what would you want in the program? What should that program provide?
2. *Presentation of Powerful Tools Program (a current caregiver support program offered by Area 9 Agency).*
3. Taking a look at this program, what would you see as the benefits of it? What are the areas that need to be improved?

Advertising a Support Program Questions

4. I want you to think about a time when you were facing something significant and different like buying a new car, or having a child, or starting a new career, they think that a loved one might have a Alzheimer's disease or dementia—Many times people's reaction is to find out more information—What are the ways that you do that?
5. What are the kinds of things that would prompt you to start that search for information when 'caring for an elderly person'?
6. People often use the Internet as a way to get resource/information—When it comes to 'caring for an elderly person', describe to me what you would want that website to be like?

Other Questions

7. Our experience is that people often come to us (Area 9 Agency) in a crisis; we believe that we can support people earlier. What are ways that we can get people to identify themselves as caregivers?
8. How much do you identify with the role of 'care-giver' to an elderly person?

9. When we say 'Area 9 Agency'—what thoughts come to your mind?
10. If you had to say, where on the care-giving continuum you were, where would you place yourself?

Focus Group Sample Characteristics and Questionnaire Analysis

Number of Focus Groups for Each Topic

Topic	Number of Focus Groups
Recreational vitality	6 ¹²
Economic vitality	6
Educational issues	8
Caring for the elderly	3

Each participant completed a brief questionnaire (see questionnaire in later section). Following are the averages or percentages for each item.

1. Wayne County Residency:

Status	Total Number	Percentage
Resident	84	95.5%
Non Resident	4	4.5%

- Average number of years in Wayne County: 25.1 years

2. Work in Wayne County:

Status	Total Number	Percentage
Work in Wayne County	67	76.1%
Does NOT work in Wayne County	8	9.1%
N/A	13	14.8%

3. Age:

- Average age of respondent: 44.5 years old

4. Gender:

Response	Percentage
Women	64.8%
Men	35.2%

5. Race:

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
Caucasian/White	92.9%
African-American/Black	4.7%
Hispanic	1.2%

¹² Discussions for Recreational and Economic Vitality were conducted during the same focus groups. That is, participants discussed both of these issues during the same focus group sessions.

Biracial	1.2%
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6. Marital Status:

Status	Percentage
Married	64.7%
Single	21.2%
Divorced/Separated	11.8%
Widowed	1.2%
Living with significant other but not married	1.2%

7. Housing:

Housing	Percentage
Own	90%
Rent	10%

8. Average number of children/dependents living in household under the age of 19: .86 dependents

9. Employment Status:

Type of Employment Status	Percentage of Respondents
Full time employed	63.6%
Full time student	12.5%
Part time employed	10.2%
Unemployed	4.5%
Home maker	1.1%
Retired	8.0%

10. Household Income Bracket:

Household Income	Percentage of Respondents
Under \$15,000	2.5%
\$15,001-\$30,000	10.0%
\$30,001-\$45,000	11.3%
\$45,001-\$60,000	13.8%
\$60,001-\$75,000	10.0%
\$75,001-\$90,000	11.3%
\$90,001-\$105,000	15%
Over \$105,000	26.3%

11. Highest Level of Education:

Education Level	Percentage of Participants
Did not complete high school	16.1%
High school graduate/GED	5.7%
Some college	12.6%
Associates degree	10.3%
Bachelors degree	34.5%
Graduate school or Professional school	20.7%

12. Access to the Internet:

Category	Percentage of Respondents
Yes: have Internet access in home	88.6%
No: do not have Internet access	11.4%

13. School District Residency:

School District	Percentage of Respondents
Richmond	62.5%
Northeastern	11.4%
Centerville	9.1%
Nettle Creek	8.0%
Western Wayne	4.5%
Other	4.5%

14. Average Rank for Importance of constituencies for the United Way¹³:

Constituency	Average Rank
Community's pressing needs/issues	1.3
Agencies' programs	2.0
Donors who contribute money	2.7

¹³ Lower numbers indicate greater importance (e.g., a 1 is more important than a 2 or 3).

Community Voices: Focus Group Questionnaire 2008

- This information will tell us about the people who participated in these discussions.
 - There are no right or wrong answers . . . only what you think!
- No one will know which survey is yours. Please do NOT put your name on the survey.

1a. Do you live in Wayne County (Check one)?

- Yes No

If yes, how long? _____ total year(s)

2. Do you work in Wayne County (Complete one)?

- Yes No N/A (e.g., retired, unemployed, student)

3. Age: _____

4. Gender (Check one):

- Female
 Male

5. Race/ethnicity (Please specify):

6. Marital status (Check one):

- Single Divorced
 Married Living with significant other
 Separated but not married
 Widowed

7. Do you . . . (Check one)?

- Rent housing Own housing

8. Please write in the number of Children/dependents living in your household under the age of 19:

9. Primary Employment Status (Check one that *best* describes you):

- Full time employed Home maker
 Part time employed Student
 Unemployed Retired

10. Household income bracket (Check one):

- Under \$15,000 \$60,001-\$75,000
 \$15,001-\$30,000 \$75, 001-\$90,000
 \$30, 001-\$45,000 \$90,001-\$105,000
 \$45,001-\$60,000 Over \$105,000

11. Highest level of education (Check one):

- Did not complete high school Associates degree
 High school graduate/GED Bachelors degree
 Some college Graduate school or Professional school

12. Do you have access to the Internet in your home (Check one)?

- Yes No

13. Which school district do you live in (check one)?

- Centerville Richmond
 Nettle Creek Western Wayne
 Northeastern Other: _____

14. The United Way has obligations to several areas: the **AGENCIES** who receive funds to operate their programs; the **COMMUNITY** and addressing its most pressing needs/issues; and the **DONORS** who give money and have a say where it goes.

Based on your opinion, write the **order of importance**:

Write **1** for Most Important area
Write **2** for the Second most important area
Write **3** for the Third most important are

Use each number *only one time*.

_____ Agencies' programs
_____ Community's pressing needs/issues
_____ Donors who contribute money

15. Today's Date: _____, 2008

16. Focus Group Location: _____

Thank you for your participation!



Please return this survey to the facilitator.