COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP SERIES

2024

Community Report

About Us

Terre Haute 10

The Terre Haute 10 is a group of parents, business owners, teachers, professors, laborers, pastors, doctors, and students who want schools that develop the best in our children. The group is focused on gathering input from the community to develop recommendations for how to improve educational outcomes for all students.

Human Relations Commission

The Terre Haute Human Relations Commission is an entity of the the City of Terre Haute. The group's work is focused on bettering human relations in Terre Haute. They are helping to build a vibrant, thriving, and unified community through working to eliminate barriers and promote equity, accessibility, and sense of belonging for all people.

Introduction

The Terre Haute Human Relations Commission and the Terre Haute 10 partnered to host a series of community conversations to gather information about our community's challenges, develop strategies to address those challenges, and provide recommendations to our community leaders and partners for improving our community.

We know that residents of Terre Haute care deeply about our community and understand first-hand how it is challenged. We also know that the members of our community hold unique talents and have creative ideas that can help us develop innovative strategies for improvement. Involving the community in both the information-gathering and strategy-development phases ensures that our community-specific needs will be addressed.

Methodology

The Human Relations Commission and the Terre Haute 10 elected to host three community conversations to engage the public in identifying challenges, analyzing those challenges, and developing solutions. The group decided to call these conversations, "Community Engagement Workshops."

In preparation for this project, the group developed a set of focus areas and desired outcomes for the community engagement workshops. The group chose to focus on the following areas:

Housing	Employment	Education	Criminal Justice

Over the course of the three workshops, the group set out to achieve the following outcomes:

- Understand the major challenges in our four focus areas
- Analyze and evaluate the causes of the challenges
- Develop strategies and solutions for solving those challenges

Overview

🏠 Housing

Major Challenge #1: **There is a high rate of homelessness in Terre Haute. This problem puts a strain on resources and creates long-term challenges for those who are unhoused.**
- Participants cited the summer PIT (point-in-time) counts which have indicated over the past few years that there are around 500 individuals experiencing homelessness in Vigo County.
- Participants also noted that many individuals experiencing homelessness, have difficulty finding housing due to previous evictions.

Recommended Strategy: Create a resource and education hub for financial literacy, life skills, fair housing, and tenants' rights.

Major Challenge #2: **Terre Haute and the greater Vigo County area lack enough affordable housing units to support the high rates of individuals who need access.**
- Participants noted that 44% of Households in the Wabash Valley are considered "ALICE" Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed according to the United Way of the Wabash Valley.
- Participants also noted that the Housing inventory in Vigo County is at a notable low point and that the stock of homes is aging and their condition is poor compared to other communities.

Recommended Strategy: Develop second-chance housing opportunities that would allow individuals who have been evicted to find access to housing.

💼 Employment

Major Challenge #1: **The inability to find or retain a job in Terre Haute and Vigo County is attributed to people's limited access to reliable, affordable, and effective transportation. This problem disproportionately affects individuals who do not have a vehicle and are low-income and/or have a disability.**
- Participants noted that the Terre Haute Public Transit system is often unreliable and requires significant time to travel to their destination.
- Participants also noted that there is not consistent public transportation to manufacturing jobs.

Recommended Strategy: Make Terre Haute Public Transit more user-friendly with more interactive live maps, well-marked stops, and other resources to improve ridership.

Major Challenge #2: **A common challenge for employers is attracting and retaining new talent attributed to the community's poor self-image.**
- Participants noted Terre Haute struggles with low self-esteem and there is "a lot of negativity associated with Terre Haute."
- Participants also noted that young people leave Terre Haute because they don't see it as a place of opportunity.

Recommended Strategy: Develop more youth programming that will make Terre Haute more attractive to potential candidates with children, and empower the next generation of workers.

Overview

📚 Education

Major Challenge #1: Educators and families noted a lack of effective professional development for teachers and staff in Vigo County's public schools, which can negatively impact staff and student culture.
- Participants noted that not all professional development is mandatory and that those who need it most tend not to opt in.
- Participants cited the importance of educating administrators, staff, and teachers about implicit bias, trauma, and restorative practices, and the ways it can create a comprehensive learning experience that will benefit students, families, staff, teachers, and administrators.

Recommended Strategy: Develop corporation-wide strategies for professional development that are adequate, effective, and incorporate the principles of equity and inclusion.

Major Challenge #2: Within Vigo County Public Schools, the staff and faculty demographic does not adequately represent or reflect the diversity of the community that they serve.
- Participants noted the struggle with retaining teachers of all backgrounds due to low teacher pay and lack of adequate resources.
- Participants mentioned that there seems to be limited recruitment efforts related to the recruitment of a diverse pool of applicants.

Recommended Strategy: Attract and retain diverse teachers, admin, and staff through new recruitment strategies, and invest in current employees, specifically those of marginalized communities.

⚖️ Criminal Justice

Major Challenge #1: There is distrust of the criminal justice system, especially from marginalized communities, due to the disparity of treatment in arrests, charging, sentencing, and incarceration.
- Participants noted that there was room for improvement in the training and education of law enforcement in the areas of implicit bias, crisis intervention, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Participants noted that some marginalized communities struggled to build positive relationships, because police and sheriffs were only in their neighborhoods for crisis situations.

Recommended Strategy: Collect and analyze data related to disparities in arrests, charging, sentencing, and incarceration, and promote and practice strong community policing.

Major Challenges #2: There is a lack of diversity in the criminal justice system which includes but is not limited to the Police Department, the Sheriff's Department, and the Fire Department.
- Participants noted that having diverse public safety personnel and leadership can help ensure a wider perspective of lived experiences at the table when making decisions.
- Participants also noted that when officers come from diverse neighborhoods and backgrounds it contributes to more positive community relations.

Recommended Strategy: Create a diversity oversight board of interested citizens to promote best practices for recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce.

Identified Challenges:

The group began by identifying challenges our community faces related to their topic of housing. Below is the list of identified challenges:

- Out of State
- Landlords/Corporations/Absenteeism
- Affordable
- Housing
- Safe Housing
- Financing/Purchase
- Rates
- Red Lining
- Non-Habitable
- Homes/Rentals
- Squatting
- College Housing
- Zones
- Condemned Homes
- Homelessness

- Tenants' Rights
- Indiana Laws
- Weighted toward landlords
- Evictions
- Rental and Buying
- Screening Process
- Low-Income
- Housing
- Lack of resources for working poor
- Gentrification
- Inflation of property taxes and values
- Lack of financial literacy
- Tenancy Skills
- Terre Haute Housing Authority

Challenge Analysis:

After compiling this list, each group narrowed their focus and analyzed a select few of those challenges. They listed how their challenge disrupts our community, the root causes of the challenges, the barriers that limit progress, and the drivers of change for the future. Below is the group's analysis:

Major Challenge #1: Homelessness

Justification:
- Everyone deserves safe and adequate housing
- Homelessness can cause trauma and exacerbate mental health concerns

Root Causes:
- Generational Poverty
- Wages
- Justice Involvement
- Lack of Knowledge of rights and resources
- Substance Use Disorders
- 55% in ALICE (Asset-Limited Income-Constrained Employed)
- Mental Health

Barriers:
- Stigma
- Denial
  - When people don't see it, they don't believe that it is happening in their own community.
- Lack of Programming and Funding
- Current programs are highly restrictive
- Currently available resources are over-extended

Drivers of Change:
- Local Government
- Community Buy-In
- Public/Private Partnerships
- Employers
- Education

Major Challenge #2: Affordable Housing

Justification:
- Everyone needs access to housing
- 55% are ALICE (Asset-Limited Income-Constrained Employed)
- An additional portion of the population are unemployed or unable to work
- There is a large portion of residents who need access to affordable housing

Root Causes:
- Poor/old housing stock
- Restrictive zoning laws and history of redlining
- Lack of Community Action
- Out-dated ordinances and codes

Barriers:
- Wages
- Lack of Stock
- Lack of landlord accountability
- New Home Construction
- Lack of Investments

Drivers of Change:
- Local Government
- Community Buy-In
- Public/Private Partnerships
- Employers
- Education

Strategy Recommendations:

Following each group's analysis of their selected major challenges, groups brainstormed strategies to effectively address those challenges. In the strategy development phase, groups were asked to identify the necessary actions, benefits, trade-offs, and potential costs associated with that strategy. Below are the recommended strategies:

<u>Major Challenge # 1:</u> **There is a high rate of homelessness in Terre Haute. This problem puts a strain on resources and creates long-term challenges for those who are unhoused.**

<u>Recommended Strategy:</u> **Create a resource and education hub for financial literacy, life skills, fair housing, and tenants' rights.**

Actions:
- Work in partnership with employment resources such as Work One, Labor Link, and Vocational Rehabilitation to develop new employment training opportunities
- Develop a marketing plan to advertise this resource to the public
- Develop a curriculum

Benefits:
- Stabilized Housing
- Ability to plan and set future
- Community Pride and Growth

<u>Major Challenge #2:</u> **Terre Haute and the greater Vigo County Area lack enough affordable housing units to support the high rates of individuals who need access.**

<u>Recommended Strategy:</u> **Develop second-chance housing opportunities that would allow individuals who have been evicted to find access to housing.**

Actions:
- Explore a similar program to "Second Chance Housing Indy"
- Involve HUD
- Establishing Relationship with Law Enforcement
- Working with City Court
- Find Willing Agencies

Benefits:
- Housing opportunities for people who wouldn't otherwise have it
- Increase accessibility of services for people in need
- Provide support/stability for families
- Lower Recidivism

Employment

Identified Challenges:

The group began by identifying challenges our community faces related to their topic of housing. Below is the list of identified challenges:

- Fragmented Child Activities (Access/Affordability)
- Disconnect City Government/Universities/YMCA/City Cooperative Projects/Hospital)
- Summer Youth Employment
- Felonies
- 24/7 Daycare (cost) (Access/Affordability)
- Graduation Rate
- Poverty
- Underemployment
- Proper Housing
- Connection Resources (Job Fair)

- Target Population
- Lack of Daily Newspaper
- Get students to return
- Recovery Scholars Employer Education Acceptance
- Employer Tax Incentives
- Drug Screen Pass
- Access to Public Transportation
- Discipline (Professional)
- Workforce Incentives
- Negative Community Self-Image
- Literacy Barriers
- Job Training

Employment

Challenge Analysis:

After compiling this list, each group narrowed their focus and analyzed a select few of those challenges. They listed how their challenge disrupts our community, the root causes of the challenges, the barriers that limit progress, and the drivers of change for the future. Below is the group's analysis:

Major Challenge #1: Transportation

Justification:
- People having access to transportation is their "Ticket to Work"
- Inadequate Transportation
    - Lyft Drivers
    - Cab Services
    - Lack of Cars
- The Bus system is challenging to use and incredibly time-consuming

Root Causes:
- Affordability of owning a car is high
- Drivers Licenses
- Lack of seeing it as a problem

Barriers:
- Funding Source
- Vigo County Footprint (rural /urban sprawl)
- Sidewalks
- Safe environment

Drivers of Change:
- Legislation
- Funding
- Dealerships
- Collaboration – City County Schools Employers
- Infrastructure

Major Challenge #2: Negative Community Self-Image

Justification:
- "Terrible Haute"
- 2nd Highest Poverty Rate in the State
- Improving the self-image will help to recruit employers and employees to want to come and stay in Terre Haute

Root Causes:
- Apathy
- "It's just the way we have always done things"
- Short period – Many Losses
- Poverty-generated Trauma
- Glamorizing other places
- Self-devaluation – complacency

Barriers:
- Knowledge of change resistance
- Fear of Change
- Lack of Leadership – Rainbow of Generation
- Entertainment (things to do) for all generations
- Adaptation to change
- Investment in Public Education

Drivers of Change:
- New Administration – City, School Corp, University Leaders
- Community Forum – Open to Inclusion
- Casino
- Government (City and County) Educators
- Diversity of All Types
- Employer Education – Public Policy
- Modeling the Behavior – Large Employers
    - Union
    - School Corp
    - ISU

Employment

Strategy Recommendations:

Following each group's analysis of their selected major challenges, groups brainstormed strategies to effectively address those challenges. In the strategy development phase, groups were asked to identify the necessary actions, benefits, trade-offs, and potential costs associated with that strategy. Below are the recommended strategies:

Major Challenge # 1: **The inability to find or retain a job in Terre Haute and Vigo County is attributed to people's limited access to reliable, affordable, and effective transportation.**

Recommended Strategy: **Make Terre Haute Public Transit more user-friendly with more interactive live maps, well-marked stops, and other resources to improve ridership.**

Actions:
- Eliminate barriers to transportation such as costs
- Install GPS systems in buses to be able to live-track them and have interactive maps
- Install marked bus stops and build structures for people to wait
- Develop videos, brochures, and other materials with information on how to ride, bus timetables, and easy-to-read maps

Benefits:
- More user-friendly service will increase ridership
- Ability to plan and set future
- Community Pride and Growth

Major Challenge #2: **A common challenge for employers is attracting and retaining new talent attributed to the community's poor self-image.**

Recommended Strategy: **Develop more youth programming that will make Terre Haute more attractive to potential candidates with children, and empower the next generation of workers.**

Actions:
- Work with schools to determine challenges and barriers associated with developing more extracurricular
- Create more community/youth centers
- Apply for grants and funding to pay for new programming ideas

Benefits:
- Makes Terre Haute more attractive to candidates and potential new business
- Retains young people and changes image of Terre Haute to one of opportunities

Education

Identified Challenges:

The group began by identifying challenges our community faces related to their topic of housing. Below is the list of identified challenges:

- Consistency with safety measures across building (VCSC)
- Mental health support for students and teachers
- Improve Relationships between K-12 and Higher Ed
- Communication in all directions
- Consistency with restorative practices and training
- Implicit Bias (Teachers)
- Manner with which Diversity is addressed
- Lack of Funding
- Political Group being negative toward the teaching profession
- Cell Phones/Technology/Social Media
- Lack of Staff and Faculty Diversity

- Censorship
- Lack of special resources for those on the spectrum (ASD)
- More support accommodating international/refugee students
- Curriculum
- Lack of diversity training for faculty, staff, and administration
- Ability to handle special accommodations (teachers and parents alike)
- Behavior and Parent Engagement
- Lack of Anti-Racism/Hate Speech Policy
- Collaboration between community, school board, school corp, to address issues (behavioral/suspensions)

Education

Challenge Analysis:

After compiling this list, each group narrowed their focus and analyzed a select few of those challenges. They listed how their challenge disrupts our community, the root causes of the challenges, the barriers that limit progress, and the drivers of change for the future. Below is the group's analysis:

Major Challenge #1: Lack of Effective Professional Development

Justification:
- Students, parents, teachers, staff, and community would benefit from quality professional development in the following areas:
  - Restorative Practices
  - Implicit Bias
  - Diversity
- Working with and supporting international and refugee students
- Lack of trainings adversely affects the student/learning experience, sense of safety, self-image, and respect for community.

Root Causes:
- Lack of Diversity in teachers, staff, and admin
- History of not prioritizing
- Ability to acknowledge there is a problem
- Fear and shame

Barriers:
- Not opening 'Pandora's Box' → trying to improve the professional development might lead to a domino effect of changes. Not letting this massive undertaking overwhelm the process and stop from making progress.
- Accountability
- Fear and Shame
- Sense of inadequacy

Drivers of Change:
- Admin
- School Board
- Community
- Lawsuits/Legislation
- Elected Officials
- TH 10
- NAACP
- Human Relations Commission

Major Challenge # 2: Lack of Faculty and Staff Diversity

Justification:
- Students can't see themselves reflected in their leadership
- Lack of diversity leads to maintaining of status quo
- More diverse teachers and staff bring
- Diverse Ideas
- New Perspectives
- Unique experiences
- There is a lack of males
- Isolation of marginalized staff
- Ability to relate to students

Root Causes:
- Lack of Pay
- Lack of Community Diversity
- Recruitment and Retention

Barriers:
- Ability to draw those from outside of TH
- Limited budget
- No mentoring programs for young diverse professionals to help ensure that the ones who join feel supported and stay

Drivers of Change:
- Admin
- School Board
- Community
- Elected Officials
- TH 10
- Human Relations Commission
- Chamber of Commerce

Education

Strategy Recommendations:

Following each group's analysis of their selected major challenges, groups brainstormed strategies to effectively address those challenges. In the strategy development phase, groups were asked to identify the necessary actions, benefits, trade-offs, and potential costs associated with that strategy. Below are the recommended strategies:

Major Challenge # 1: **Educators and families noted a lack of effective professional development for teachers and staff in our public schools, which can negatively impact staff and student culture.**

Recommended Strategy: **Develop corporation-wide strategies for professional development that are adequate, effective, and incorporate the principles of equity and inclusion. This can include weekly professional development, which could be made possible by having regularly scheduled two-hour delays or early dismissal for teachers to attend in-depth mandatory training.**

Actions:
- Build into the calendar specific PD
- Plan and Host In-Person PD
- Provide an incentive to complete

Benefits:
- More open-mindedness
- Improve student confidence

Major Challenge #2: **Within Vigo County Public Schools, the staff and faculty demographic does not adequately represent or reflect the diversity of the community that they serve.**

Recommended Strategy: **Attract and retain diverse teachers, admin, and staff through new recruitment strategies, and invest in current employees, specifically those of marginalized communities.**

Actions:
- Examine hiring and recruiting practices
- Recruit from a variety of universities including HBCUs
- Develop programs to mentor, provide development, and support new diverse teachers

Benefits:
- Improves culture and environment
- Students are exposed to more diverse perspectives
- Enriched and improved learning environment
- Students can see themselves reflected in their teachers, staff, and administration

Criminal Justice

Identified Challenges:

The group began by identifying challenges our community faces related to their topic of housing. Below is the list of identified challenges:

- Recruitment
- Over Charging
- City Ordinances
- Awareness
- 150 Body Cam Footage Each
- Distrust
- Lack of Communication

- Mental Health Issue Identification
- Police Officers being Social Workers
- Lack of Community Involvement
- Nepotism
- Policy Change
- Staffing
- Judicial System

Criminal Justice

Challenge Analysis:

After compiling this list, each group narrowed their focus and analyzed a select few of those challenges. They listed how their challenge disrupts our community, the root causes of the challenges, the barriers that limit progress, and the drivers of change for the future. Below is the group's analysis:

Major Challenge #1: Distrust

Justification:
- The whole community is affected when there is broken trust
- Distrust of the system from the community contributes to the ineffectiveness of that system
- Improving trust will increase safety and decrease crime

Root Causes:
- Racism
- History of Police Brutality
- Targeting of marginalized populations
- Implicit Bias

Barriers:
- Education of Public Culturally
- Negative Perception/PR
- Neighborhood Breakdown
- Racism
- Policy Changes
- Communication Distortion
- Accessibility

Drivers of Change:
- Community Buy In
- Police
- Firefighters
- School Board
- Mental Health Agencies
- City Council
- Mayor
- Funding

Major Challenge #2: Lack of Diverse Public Safety Personnel

Justification:
- Always need more public safety personnel due to retirements
- A diverse workforce brings new perspectives and ideas. Diverse officers are perceived as more knowledgeable about diverse communities.
- When the community sees themselves reflected in police and fire, it builds trust.

Root Causes:
- Distrust of police in marginalized communities due to a history of targeting those populations
- Implicit Bias in policies and procedures
- Marginalized populations have historically experienced discrimination in employment

Barriers:
- Lack of funding
- Continued Distrust
- Recruits aren't able to pass test/physical requirements

Drivers of Change:
- Community
- Police
- Firefighters
- HR
- Mayor/City

Criminal Justice

Strategy Recommendations:

Following each group's analysis of their selected major challenges, groups brainstormed strategies to effectively address those challenges. In the strategy development phase, groups were asked to identify the necessary actions, benefits, trade-offs, and potential costs associated with that strategy. Below are the recommended strategies:

Major Challenge # 1: There is distrust of the criminal justice system, especially from marginalized communities, due to the disparity of treatment in arrests, charging, sentencing, and incarceration.

Recommended Strategy: Collect and analyze data related to disparities in arrests, charging, sentencing, and incarceration, and promote and practice strong community policing.

Actions:
- Form a diversity action board to receive complaints, analyze data, and ensure accountability
- Undertake data analysis related to measuring equity in treatment, arrests, charges, and offerings of diversionary opportunities, and make appropriate adjustments
- Mandate training related to implicit bias, crisis intervention, and diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Require officers to participate in community service and community engagement where officers and marginalized communities can interact in a neutral setting
- Promote community policing practices where officers patrol on foot or via bikes

Benefits:
- More and improved transparency
- Data analysis allows organizations to improve and benchmark their current operations
- Improved trust and relationships with the community

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Major Challenge #2: There is a lack of diversity in the criminal justice system which includes but is not limited to the Police Department, the Sheriff's Department, and the Fire Department.

Recommended Strategy: Create a diversity oversight board of interested citizens to promote best practices for recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce.

Actions:
- Create a diversity oversight board to assist in promoting diverse recruiting and hiring practices
- Interview officers to learn about their current experiences and thoughts on expanding programming to support diverse recruits
- Encourage formation of support or resource groups for officers from marginalized populations
- Maintain data and statistics on the diversity of the workforce

Benefits:
- Community can see themselves reflected in the workforce
- More diverse ideas and perspectives at the table

Conclusion

Together we can build a more vibrant, inclusive, and unified Terre Haute.

Our community, especially our most vulnerable populations, continues to be at risk of unequal outcomes. However, we can use the information in this report as a resource to find solutions and creative positive change in the areas of housing, employment, education, and criminal justice. The strategies in this report outline the ways members of our community envision a better future for our city. We encourage you to use this a guide for your own organizations' future planning.

What can YOU do?

1. **Pause and Listen.** Before immediately responding with the solutions your organization has already enacted, take a moment to listen to the findings of this report and reflect on why the community has brought forward these concerns.
2. **Incorporate these strategies into your strategic planning.** Use this community input to guide your goals, objectives, and strategies for improvement.
3. **Review your internal policies and procedures.** Critically analyze how your own policies can contribute to the challenges our community has identified.
4. **Spread Awareness!** Share this report with your peers, boards, commissions, friends, and family.
5. **Continue the conversation!** Reach out to the Human Relations Commission, the Terre Haute Ten, and our broader community at large to collaborate.
   - **Human Relation Commission:** humanrelations@terrehaute.in.gov
   - **Terre Haute 10:** theterrehaute10@gmail.com