

PRIORITIES FOR PROGRESS

Executive Summary, Key Findings, and Recommendations
2021



Community Foundation
of Southern Indiana

A REPORT FOR THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SOUTHERN INDIANA PRODUCED IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH THE IU SOUTHEAST APPLIED RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER



Executive Summary

As the third decade of the 21st century gets underway Clark and Floyd counties work to capitalize on natural assets to build strong quality of place with trails, waterfront amenities and downtowns built for social activity. At the same time, locals recognize the need to devote significant energy and resources to addressing core quality of life issues such as substance abuse, mental health, housing, education, workforce development, and the need for living wage jobs for workers of all skill levels. By directing resources to both quality of place and quality of life, local leaders hope to increase engagement in active lifestyles that can hold chronic disease at bay and improve mental health and resilience. Strong social capital, positive regard for the region and its assets, proximity to a mid-size city, and a beautiful location on the banks of the Ohio River provide a foundation on which to build thriving communities.

The Community Foundation of Southern Indiana worked with the Indiana University Southeast Applied Research and Education Center (AREC) to produce its first assessment of needs and priorities for Clark and Floyd counties in 2015. The current report updates and expands on that work with a more detailed community survey and a closer look at public data to inform local planning and decision-making.

The IU Southeast team hosted listening sessions throughout the two-county region including sessions in Borden, Georgetown, Greenville, Henryville, Jeffersonville, New Albany, New Washington, and Utica. We hosted survey completion events in Greenville, Henryville, and

Utica. Unfortunately, data collection using paper surveys and survey events ended as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We distributed the survey via email contact lists, and Facebook. With pandemic restrictions in place, the research effort struggled to reach lower income residents. The AREC worked with community partners to do an additional push with paper surveys made available at local food bank locations and through a local public housing program. Even with these efforts, the resulting sample skews toward higher income residents (household incomes over \$50,000). In total, we received 690 surveys. The resulting report triangulates public data, community conversations, and *Priorities for Progress* surveys to produce an assessment of local assets and aspirations.

A Changing Region

Clark and Floyd counties are a mix of densely populated centers in Clarksville, Jeffersonville, and New Albany, more suburban communities like Sellersburg and Charlestown, and small towns and rural communities (eg. Borden, Georgetown, Greenville, Henryville, New Washington, and Utica). Both counties continue to see new housing development. The completion of the Lewis and Clark Bridge on the East End creates increased demand and opportunity for housing in Utica and Charlestown, while Floyd County engages infill development in walkable areas of New Albany and in pockets of land in more rural areas.

Clark County is home to a larger, younger, and more racially and ethnically varied population. The region as a whole is diversifying: school data indicate that the area's elementary school

population is more racially and ethnically diverse than the high school student population, suggesting that young families moving to the area are diversifying the local population. Diversification is not, however, even across the region. Elementary schools range from 5.6 percent of students that are not “white alone” at William Borden Elementary to 75.1 percent not “white alone” at Parkwood Elementary.

Floyd County is more affluent, but also has significant pockets of concentrated poverty, leading to a larger gap between the incomes of high- and low-income residents.

Economic and Financial Well-Being

Manufacturing provides an economic base for the region and River Ridge offers room for growth in new manufacturing. Logistics, healthcare, and education contribute additional opportunities to attract and keep professionals. In addition, the river towns are engaging local quality of place development via the Ohio River Greenway, parks, and walkable communities filled with locally owned restaurants, bars, and shops.

Clark County’s median income (\$54,240) is in line with the state median (\$54,325) while Floyd County’s higher median income (\$61,754) is just above the national median (\$60,293). The gender wage gap is significant in both counties and contributes to poverty, particularly in female-headed households. Twenty to thirty percent of female-headed households with no husband present lived in poverty 2014-2018, compared to an estimated 9.5-11.2 percent of the population as a whole. People of color, especially Black residents, comprise a larger share of the poor population than their share of the population as a whole. Unemployment rates are low and employment ratios are strong (pre-COVID).

Living wages and affordable housing are top priorities for southern Indiana. Enhanced support and empowerment for minority and women workers and deliberate attention to eliminating systemic biases that limit opportunities have the potential to improve the local economy and reduce poverty. Among key strategies to improve the current and future labor force is investment in high quality early care and education that supports labor force participation, creates good jobs, and

builds a stronger future workforce. Collaboration across the public, nonprofit, and for profit sectors has the capacity to strengthen the labor force, increase employment stability, and create high quality jobs.

Basic Needs

More than 22,000 Clark and Floyd county residents (11 percent) experience food insecurity resulting from financial strain and more than 13,000 do not have access to a full-service grocery. More than 15.3 percent of local children live in food insecure households. In Clark County, 32 percent of food insecure households do not qualify for the supplemental nutrition assistance program or other public nutrition programs. That number is an even higher 40 percent in Floyd County.

The housing market in Clark and Floyd Counties has rebounded from the 2008 collapse and slow recovery, and yet the area continues to offer more affordable home prices than Louisville and other metropolitan areas. The median home price in Clark County (\$137,800) is just above the state average (\$135,400) while Floyd County’s median home price is substantially higher (\$165,700).

The rental market, however, places safe, quality housing out of reach for many workers. The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines “affordable” as housing costs (including utilities) that total no more than 30 percent of monthly income. In 2019, an estimated 50.6 percent of the two-county region’s renter households spent 30 percent or more of monthly household income on rent (not including utilities).¹ Nearly 7,000 Clark and Floyd county households spent 50 percent or more of monthly earnings on housing (not including utilities) during the 2014-2018 period.

Living wages and full-time jobs across skill levels have the capacity to support households’ ability to meet their basic needs. Two strategies to address the region’s food deserts include improving public transportation and supporting efforts to get small full-service grocery stores to Borden, downtown New Albany, and New Washington. The region needs more mixed income housing development and must find ways to ease the price pressures on the local rental market and increase access to affordable housing for low-wage workers.

Health & Wellness

Health and wellness are foundational requirements for a thriving community. Wellness includes physical and mental health, and the means to maintain both. While individual health issues may be personal concerns, at the community level, health and wellness are public issues that shape education, economic, and quality of life potential. Structural factors such as natural resources, the built environment, economic opportunities, education, and quality of life amenities all shape health and wellness.

Affordable access to quality health and mental health services, including substance abuse treatment, are the top priorities for Clark and Floyd counties. The local economy's ability to provide living wages, to expand access to transportation, and to support successful engagement in school and employment will affect health and mental health outcomes. *Availability, proximity, and cost* comprise access to healthy food, physical activity, physical healthcare, mental healthcare, and substance abuse prevention and treatment. Efforts to increase access should tend to all three components.

Education & Workforce Development

Education is a foundational ingredient for economic development and well-being. Education, along with health, is essential to economic development.² A strong K-12 system increases civic engagement³ and provides a foundation for vocational and educational success across interests. Educational attainment improves earning potential and thereby improves health, and interest and development in arts and culture.⁴ Clark and Floyd counties value education and have positive regard for local schools. Across areas, “getting and keeping quality teachers” is the most widely shared priority for the region.

The region experienced progress in educational attainment of the adult population over the last several years, but remains behind state and national attainment of four-year and graduate degrees. Clark and Floyd county adults are more likely to have some college with no degree or an Associates' degree than is the case for adults over

age 25 in the state or in the U.S. This may reflect a recent focus on increasing trade certificates and tech-related Associate's degrees at Ivy Tech. Given growth in fields that require more than high school, but less than a four-year degree, this is good. However, increasing higher levels of attainment is essential to generate and maintain well-paid jobs and to build and attract a highly qualified workforce that helps create good jobs throughout the economy.

The region needs to ensure that all children have access to high quality early care and education. Schools and the local culture should promote and value diverse career pathways and levels of educational attainment. School districts must work to attract and retain high quality teachers and eliminate barriers to youth engagement in extra-curricular activities. Finally, the region can benefit from efforts to align the contributions of education, workforce development and employer training to produce good jobs and a work force prepared to succeed and to adapt to ever-changing demands.

From Youth to Old Age

Childhood is the foundation for healthy living, education, and economic well-being. In many respects, creating healthy, safe, engaged, high quality childhood experiences is the key to building a strong future for any community. On the opposite end of the life course, a community's ability to care for the aging is important to retaining residents in their home communities upon retirement. The ability to age in place is important to quality of life for seniors. As the baby boomers continue to move into retirement, these issues are important considerations for maintaining functioning community service systems that will undoubtedly see increased demand.

Several indicators suggest that childhood is difficult for many of the region's kids. The two-county region needs to support families with easily accessible mental health services delivered through school-based programs that can detect and respond to needs as they emerge. Across the life course, substance abuse prevention and treatment are essential to the physical health and mental well-being of residents. Mental health services and substance abuse prevention and treatment can play a significant role in reducing the number of children in need of services (CHINS). In addition,

respondents indicate a need to improve support for single parents across the income distribution.

Community in Southern Indiana

Community is comprised of social relationships, a shared sense of place and local identity, art and cultural activities, civic engagement and responsibility, and the collective work a locality does to govern itself and provide public infrastructure and services for shared use. *Social infrastructure* refers to built environments that promote social engagement—from libraries and community theaters to coffee shops, parks, and trails.⁵ Public infrastructure includes social infrastructure such as libraries, parks, and public transportation as well as hard infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and utility networks.

Clark and Floyd county residents want to see more opportunities to gather and engage in community-building activities in public spaces. Responses suggest that people want to see investment in indoor and outdoor activity spaces and want to be sure people of all income levels, in cities and rural towns, have access to those spaces and to activities from outdoor recreation to arts and culture. The area has strong social capital, people feel positive about their local community, but there are gaps in public infrastructure to support community success. Emergency medical services are tenuous for rural portions of the region. Local water and sewer infrastructure needs to modernize and grow ahead of further development. Henryville residents, for example, cite lack of adequate sewer infrastructure as an impediment to economic development while Greenville struggles with water quality. Finally, public transportation has the capacity to increase access to activities across the life course and for people with disabilities. Moreover, improving public transportation can help support stable employment and improve air quality to reduce strain on those with respiratory illness.

Quality of Place

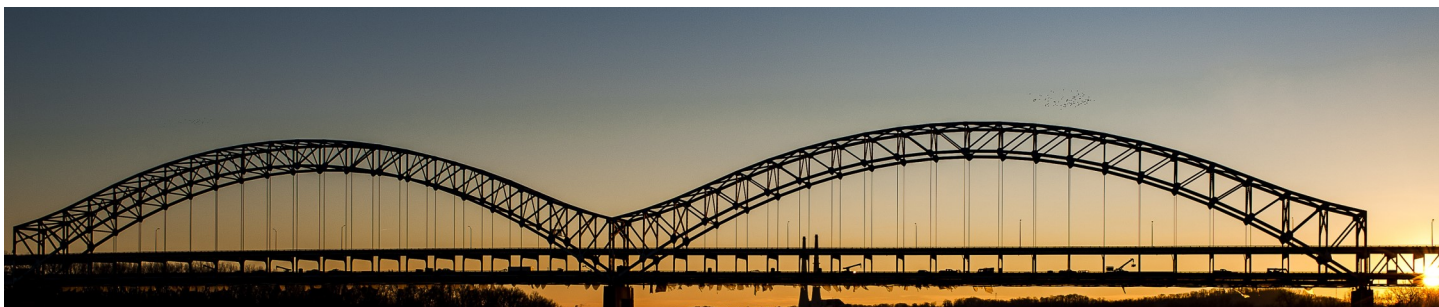
Today, researchers and community development experts recognize how intertwined quality of place and quality of life are and increasingly embrace the notion that investments in quality of place can and do improve and

enhance quality of life. The Ohio River Greenway, for example, is a major quality of place amenity that is also encouraging outdoor physical activity and social engagement, both essential to physical and mental health.

Priorities for quality of place vary among survey respondents, but discussions in listening sessions suggest significant interest and energy around outdoor amenities and the potential to leverage natural assets for local small business development and community building activities. Given significant needs related to health and wellness, investments in infrastructure that provides free access to healthful outdoor activities are a promising way to improve well-being in southern Indiana. Quality of place efforts will need to draw from public and private sectors, both for-profit and nonprofit. Significant attention to ensuring that people of varied abilities, income levels, and life course stages have access to such amenities will be essential to ensuring they reach their full potential for impact.

Priorities for Progress

The region enjoys strong social capital, quality schools, and a manufacturing base that means quick recovery following the pandemic is likely. This recovery may, however, leave some behind as some jobs will not return. Attention to workforce development (including retraining for new jobs), race and gender equity in hiring and wage structures, and livable wages across skill levels will be essential to a strong recovery. Clark and Floyd counties face a few key challenges that will need attention: substance abuse, mental health, affordable housing, and wages are significant areas of need that, if addressed, can provide leverage for generating positive progress in other areas. A focus on improving child well-being can benefit adults and children alike. Public data and community perceptions provide useful information for identifying leverage points to address priorities in each sector discussed in this report. *Priorities for Progress* offers some ideas about where to start these conversations.



Strengths, Opportunities, & Community Priorities

Clark and Floyd counties are good places to live. The survey sample in this study is not fully representative of the population, as higher income and more highly educated community members are overrepresented (Figures 75 and 76). Among this group, however, the majority have positive sentiments about most of the communities' resources, about the character of the people and the community they engage in together, and about their ability to access healthcare and raise their children in quality school systems. Positive sentiments around these many and varied assets (Figure 5) indicate a strong foundation of institutions and social supports for addressing challenges the region faces.

Respondents identify several important opportunities for improvement, all of which are leverage points for generating ripple effects in the community (Figure 6):

- Increase access to affordable high quality early care and education.
- Increase access to mental health services.
- Ensure that people across income levels have access to art and cultural experiences.
- Build and attract living wage jobs.
- Educate and train a high quality labor force that can build and attract good jobs.

Improvements in these areas that community members identify as concerns can build on one another. Increasing access to high quality early care and education creates good jobs, increases the current labor force, and contributes to educating tomorrow's high quality workforce. High quality,

developmentally appropriate early care and education improves mental health outcomes and increases resilience in ways that improve educational attainment and lifetime earnings. Building and attracting good jobs both requires a high quality labor force and attracts a high quality labor force, which generates a virtuous cycle of positive community impacts from education and health to income and quality of life.

In addition to these areas of community institutional concern, respondents identify substance abuse, homelessness, mental health, poverty, and youth drug or alcohol use as the social issues of greatest concern to the region (Figure 7). These concerns overlap areas identified as weaknesses (Figure 6) as well as areas selected as priorities by the largest share of respondents (Figure 8). Priorities include attention to education and workforce development, substance abuse, mental health services, housing, and wages. The consistency with which these areas are identified both as needs and as priorities reinforces their importance. Addressing weaknesses in each of these areas has the capacity to generate improvements in each of the others.

The remaining sections bring together publicly available data on the region with community perceptions and priorities for each area. By triangulating these data, noting overlaps, and recognizing the ways the factors affect one another, the community can better identify strategies for building on its strengths to address areas of concern and generate positive cycles of community development.

FIGURE 5: ASSETS—AREAS WHERE 60 PERCENT OR MORE “AGREE” OR “STRONGLY AGREE” OR RATE QUALITY “GOOD” OR “EXCELLENT”

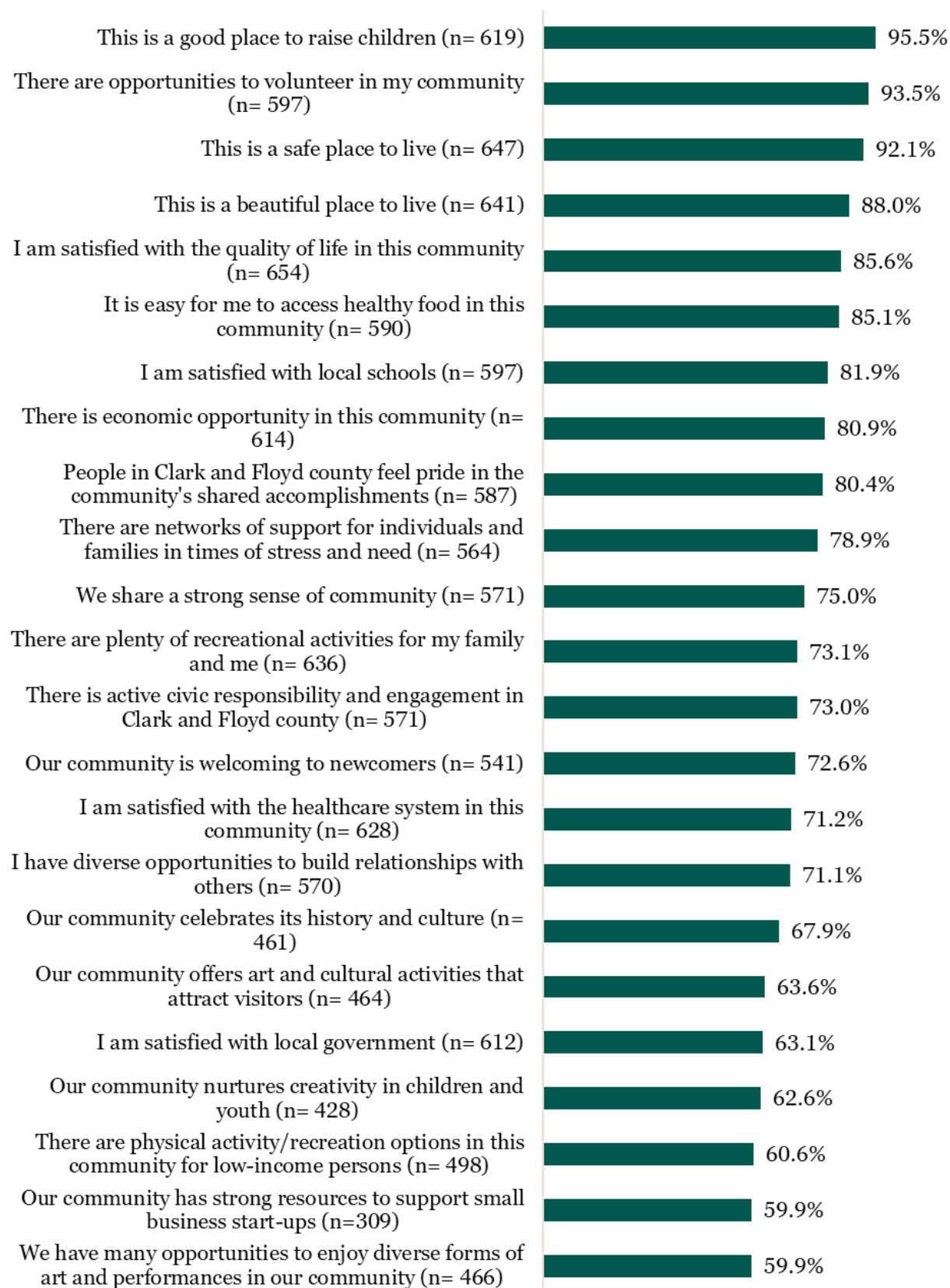


FIGURE 6: LESS THAN 50 PERCENT “AGREE” OR “STRONGLY AGREE” OR RATE THE ITEM AS “GOOD” OR “EXCELLENT”

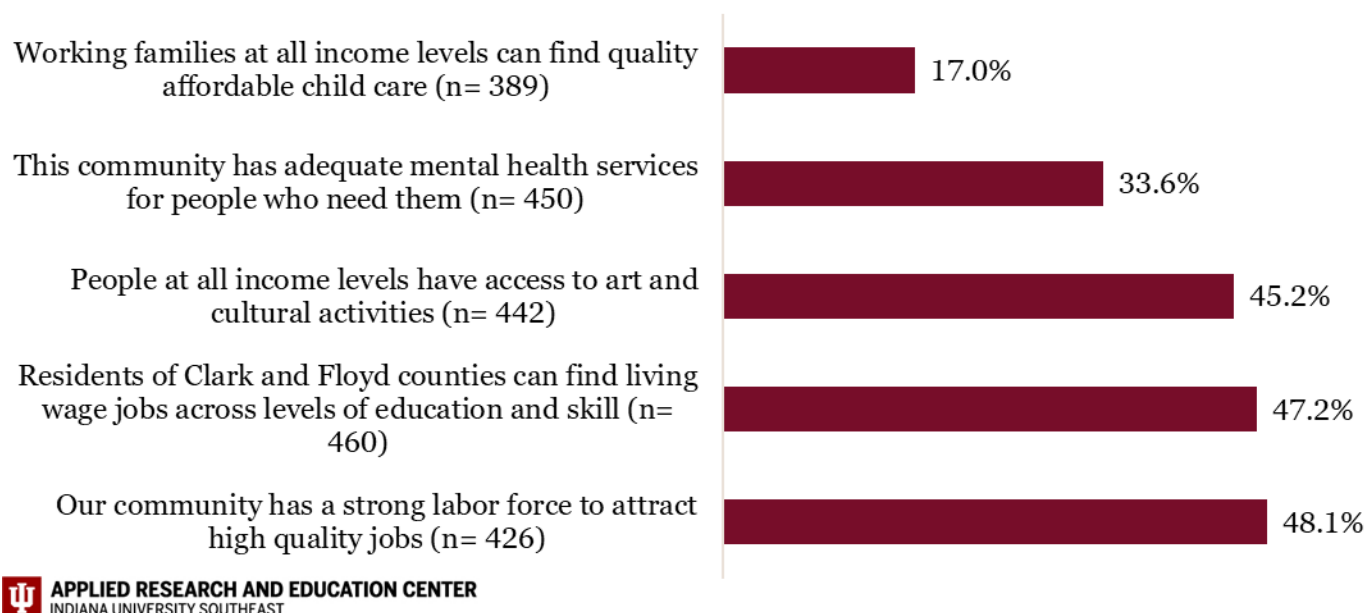


FIGURE 7: SOCIAL ISSUES OF GREATEST CONCERN

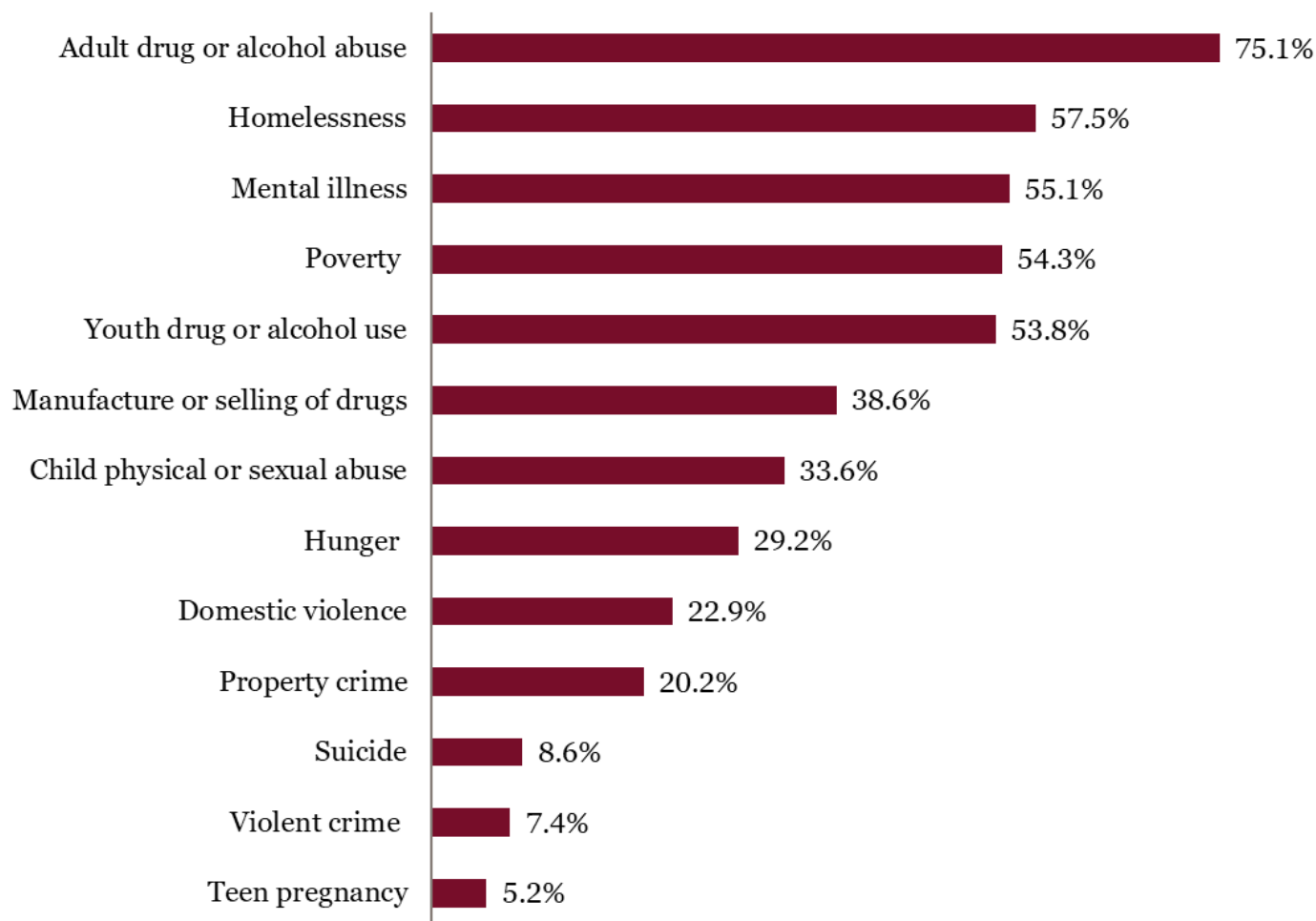
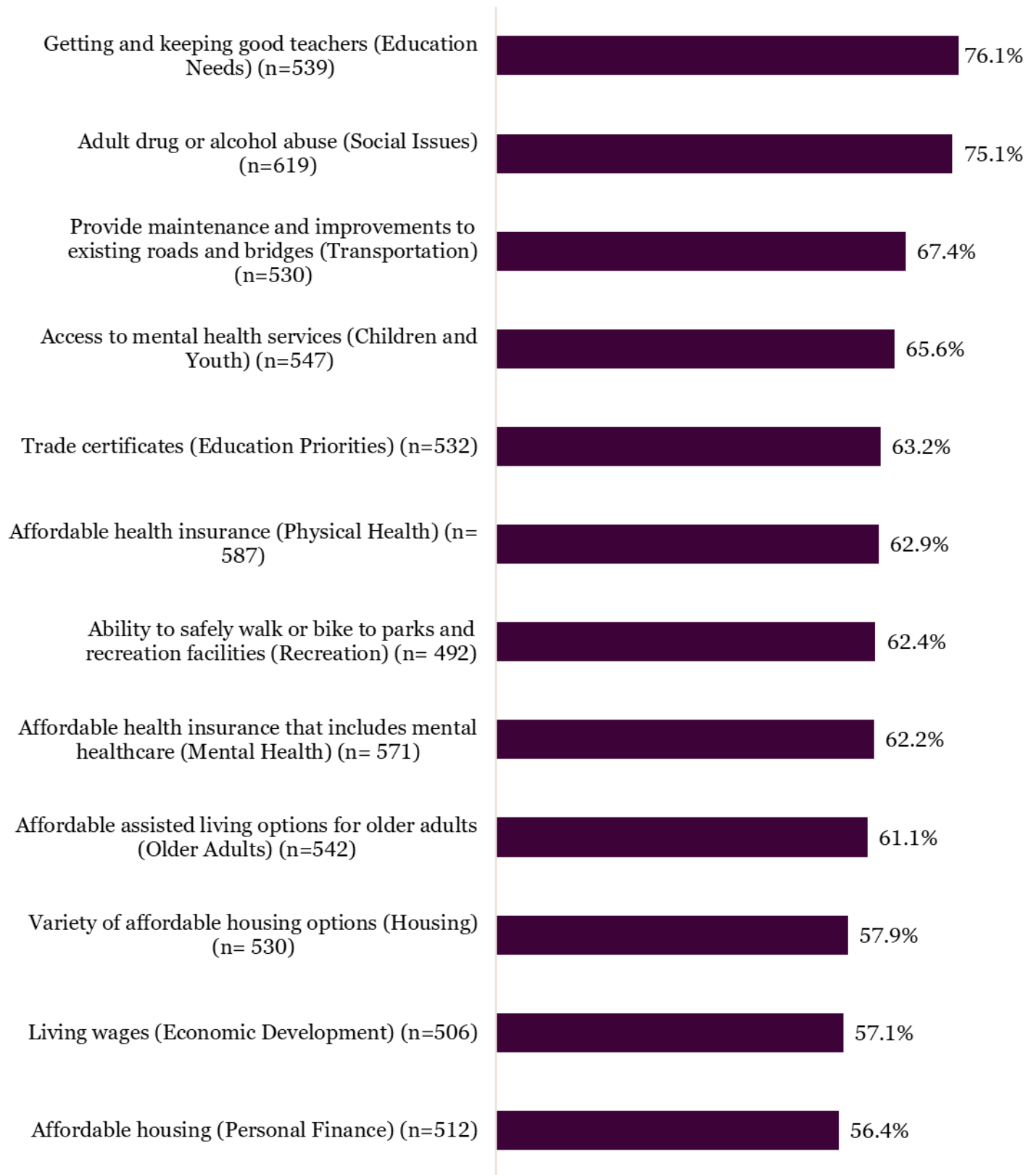


FIGURE 8: OVERALL PRIORITIES





Priorities for Progress

Clark and Floyd counties enjoyed progress on a number of fronts from 2015-2020. Recovery from the 2008 recession hit full speed, development related to the Big Four Bridge flourished, completion of the East End Bridge led to upper middle and high-income development in Utica, and riverfront and downtown development in Jeffersonville and New Albany targeted young professionals. The Ohio River Greenway opened, New Albany and Jeffersonville made improvements to the look and feel of downtown areas, and new restaurants popped up in the area's population centers. Housing developments in population centers, suburban, and rural communities welcomed newcomers, but also raised property values in ways that continue to challenge the region's ability to maintain affordable housing for low-wage-workers. Poverty rates and unemployment declined and median incomes rose. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted this exciting progress and will require attention to the basic needs of those hardest hit by the resulting recession.

The region enjoys strong social capital, quality schools, and a manufacturing base that means quick recovery following the pandemic is likely. This recovery may, however, leave some behind as

some jobs will not return. Attention to workforce development (including retraining for new jobs), race and gender equity in hiring and wage structures, and livable wages across skill levels will be essential to a strong recovery. Clark and Floyd counties face a few key challenges that will need attention: substance abuse, mental health, affordable housing, and wages are significant areas of need that, if addressed, can provide leverage for generating positive progress in other areas. A focus on improving child well-being can benefit adults and children alike. Public data and community perceptions provide useful information for identifying leverage points to address priorities in each sector discussed in this report. *Priorities for Progress* offers some ideas about where to start these conversations.

Economic and Financial Well-Being

Economic Development

Public policies, local government, private enterprise, and the nonprofit sector will all continue to play important roles in pursuit of shared prosperity. Efforts to build a strong and

inclusive recovery will need to tend to the following:

- Work to improve wages across sectors. The region might benefit from a wage study to better understand the wage structure in the area, how it affects employment stability, and what it means for quality of life in the region. Such a study could identify priority areas for improvement and help local government, business, and nonprofit leaders arrive at a common understanding of the issues and the roles for workforce and economic development in better responding to regional needs. Such an effort should direct significant attention to systemic prejudice in hiring and wage practices that maintain the gender gap in pay and disparate earnings across racial/ethnic groups.
- Coordinate planning for responsible growth across municipal and county governments, with input from residents, business, and nonprofit sectors.
- Pursue public/private partnerships to pilot models for high quality early care and education with a focus on making it available to people at all income levels, living and working throughout the region. Piloting multiple models offers the opportunity to try various strategies and financing models, evaluate what works and what does not (both in terms finance and in terms of child outcomes), and develop a system or set of options that can be scaled up to serve the region.
- Continue to support small business development with existing programs and convene local business owners to identify

opportunities to enhance and build on the successes of those programs. Encourage and support opportunities to increase minority and female entrepreneurship.

- Engage in brownfield redevelopment of former industrial sites and build environmental and quality of life protections into all economic development agreements.

Personal Finance

- Pursue public/private partnerships to make more affordable housing available throughout the region.
- Develop college and career readiness programming in K-12 schools that educates youth on costs of living, the wages needed to support themselves and a family, and the wide range of career pathways available to them.
- Support access to workforce development and training through subsidized programs, scholarships, and grants that reduce or eliminate the need for student loans and make education and training accessible to all.
- Identify creative opportunities to engage single mothers in education and training that meets their childcare needs and supports their ability to focus on improving employability and earnings potential.
- Support efforts to develop women's skills and confidence in negotiating wages and salaries, increase knowledge of their value in the labor market, and inform them of the wages men earn for the same work.

Basic Needs

Clark and Floyd counties saw important reductions in food insecurity between 2015 and 2020. These gains have disappeared amid the COVID-19 recession. The region has strong private systems that supplement public nutrition programs and these systems will need support to continue to manage the high demands of the pandemic recession. Priorities for progress need to recognize the near term needs presented by the pandemic as well as the longer-term needs reflected in the data on access to food and food security.



- Ensure that local organizations that fill gaps left by the recession and public programs have needed resources to keep local families fed and housed for the duration of the pandemic and the recovery that follows (organizations that provide regular, structured, and funded programs for food, clothing and housing are best equipped to manage this effort).
- Increase coordination between schools, child services, and social service providers to ensure that children's basic needs are met.

Food Security

- Support increased wages for low-skill occupations, and build and attract living wage jobs across the economy. Skilled or unskilled, full-time workers need to earn enough to feed and house their families.
- Work to bring a full service grocery to downtown New Albany.
- Work with TARC and with Indiana state government to improve public transportation that can facilitate access to groceries for food deserts within the region's population centers.
- Work to improve public transportation between population centers and rural communities.
- Support and encourage small business development to bring full service grocery stores to Borden and New Washington.

Housing

- Engage mixed income development by increasing affordable housing requirements for new development targeting multiple income levels (e.g. 30 percent area median income and 60 percent area median income).
- Enforce building, health, and safety codes at local rentals to even the playing field and remove disincentives to participation in federal rental assistance models.
- Identify potential partners and funding models, design and implement a program that provides home repair support for low-income homeowners.

Health and Wellness

Affordable access to quality health and mental health services, including substance abuse treatment, are the top priorities for Clark and Floyd counties. The local economy's ability to provide living wages, the community's ability to expand access to transportation, and to support successful engagement in school and employment will affect health and mental health outcomes. Availability, proximity, and cost comprise access to healthy food, physical activity, physical healthcare, mental healthcare, and substance abuse prevention and treatment. Efforts to increase access should tend to all three components.

Physical Health

- Support local organizations (public and nonprofit) bringing affordable healthcare and prescription resources to the two-county region. Coordinate efforts to ensure geographic coverage, to build effective systems for connecting residents in need to appropriate programs and services, and to identify and respond to remaining gaps.
- Advocate for universal access to affordable healthcare (including mental health) and prescriptions (including those to treat mental health and substance abuse).
- Work with local farmers' markets, nonprofit organizations, small business owners, grocery stores, and public transportation providers to identify food deserts and develop strategies for bringing affordable healthy food to low-income families in rural and urban food deserts.



Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- Support school-based mental health, substance abuse prevention, and early intervention services as a way to increase access, improve consistent engagement with treatment, prevent youth substance abuse, and support positive educational outcomes.
- Engage schools and nonprofit organizations to support substance abuse prevention through school-based and out of school programs that nurture developmental assets found to lower risk for substance abuse (e.g. support evidence-based programs such as LifeSkills and Footprints for Life in area schools, and support youth development programs that nurture social connection, confidence, and self-efficacy).
- Work with public, for profit, and nonprofit partners to increase access to affordable substance abuse treatment, both inpatient and outpatient.



Education and Workforce Development

- Pursue strategies to ensure that all children have access to high quality developmentally appropriate care from birth to age five.
- Promote the value of various education-to-career pathways, including trades, college attainment, and professional and graduate aspirations, throughout the K-12 system.
- Identify most important factors in producing, attracting, and retaining high quality teachers. Identify key strategies and coordinate resources to pursue them.
- Eliminate barriers to student participation in arts, music, and extracurricular activities. This includes increasing exposure to the arts in the standard curriculum, providing resources to ensure access to the equipment and supplies for arts and other extracurricular activities for every child, and developing school transportation strategies that remove transportation as a barrier to participation.
- Align workforce development efforts with regional needs. Secondary and postsecondary education should lay the foundation in basic skills, critical thinking, and problem solving that create a trainable workforce that can adapt to a changing economy. Education is not job training, but improved communication and coordination between the region's employers and its education system will help all parts of the system work more effectively to produce high school and college graduates well-prepared for their next steps. These efforts will also produce employers who understand their own role in training workers with the industry-specific skills they need.

Children and Youth

- Support community partnerships to deliver mental health services through local school systems. Many families will need to access care outside of school hours as well, but building these connections into the school structure increases access and supports children's health and educational success.

- Pool appropriate public and private resources to support local nonprofit organizations' community-wide and school-based substance abuse prevention and trauma-informed resilience building programs (which include violence and bullying prevention).
- Design, implement, and evaluate strategies to better support single parents across the income distribution.
- Use existing school infrastructure to ensure that all children have full access to extracurricular school clubs, homework help, performing arts, athletics, and needed community support services. Schools can become hubs of activity and support for families during the common working hours of 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Strategies might include bringing nonprofit afterschool activities to the schools, providing school bus transportation to off-site activities, and adding school bus transportation options that remove barriers to full engagement in activities and access to needed supports. A 6:00 bus gives all kids access to participation in arts, clubs, and athletics and it supports working parents.
- Improve adult access to mental health and substance abuse treatment to reduce the prevalence of child abuse and neglect.
- Collaborate and combine public and private funding to support more widespread access to youth substance abuse treatment, both outpatient and inpatient, for the uninsured and underinsured.

Older Adults

- Public and nonprofit organizations need to continue to collaborate to provide services to support aging in place. These collaborations may need to expand and will need to increase affordable housing and assisted living options for the region's seniors. As more of the baby boomer cohort moves toward age 75, the need for assisted living will balloon. Local leaders need to create options with an eye toward the demographic contraction that will follow this wave to ensure intentional and sustainable long-term community planning.

- Place the needs of seniors at the top of priorities in plans to expand public transportation and increase walkability. Walkability efforts need to include attention to accessibility to ensure that all residents can benefit from such improvements.
- Develop and maintain funds for the express purpose of assisting grandparents over the age of 60 who are responsible for children under the age of 18 in their households. Such supports might include funds or programs to help with clothing, student activities, and necessities like dental care.

Community

- Identify opportunities to use public social infrastructure to engage community-building activities including neighborhood activities, youth and adult mentoring programs, and opportunities for seniors to engage both within and across generations. To the extent that such activities can increase physical activity and health behaviors, they can address multiple regional priorities.
- Engage local and state government in a serious effort to understand the emergency medical services and firefighting capacity needed in a growing suburban/rural region. The structure for funding emergency services needs to be adequate to meet needs.
- Identify a plan to fund and implement water supply modernization and sewer service expansion in more rural areas not yet



adequately served. The structure for funding local water and sewer infrastructure needs to be appropriate to meet the needs of a growing community. State and Federal grants may be available to support infrastructure that must precede development, but will then raise the necessary revenue to maintain such systems.

- Continue to invest in and expand public social infrastructure that promotes social engagement, ensuring that opportunities for active outdoor engagement grow and that people of all income levels have access to indoor spaces for activities.
- Improve availability of and access to transportation for low income, differently abled persons, and those with special needs.
- Build on existing efforts to make art and cultural activities more widely available to people across income levels, including removing barriers to kids' participation in school and community based arts programs.

Quality of Place

- Develop a regional plan to improve safety of foot and bicycle access to area trails, parks, and recreational facilities, and coordinate public and private resources to implement the plan.

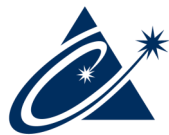
Include attention to connectivity between facilities and trails as part of the plan.

- Identify priority locations for improving playground accessibility and make investments in appropriate playground equipment. Public entities may need to make changes to infrastructure such as curbs, sidewalks, and railings, and private philanthropy and grants can support accessible playground equipment.
- Collaborate across sectors to build additional miles of paved trails. Private investments can enhance and supplement Rails-to-Trails grant funds to improve usability and support community development around such projects.
- Support small business and community efforts to use the developing trails system as part of broader strategies for economic development.
- Provide resources to organizations to use trails, parks, and recreational facilities to deliver programs to low-income youth that encourage active lifestyles, engagement with the arts, and safe, healthy youth development.
- Provide resources to organizations to use trails, parks, and recreational facilities to deliver programs to senior citizens that encourage active lifestyles, cross-generational interaction, and social engagement.





Priorities for Progress



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