



Mercer County: Better Together

Success through collaboration.

#MCBT

Forum Series Concludes with Enthusiasm, Passion for Community

Mercer County, IL – June 21st, 2017 – Over the past five months Mercer County’s emerging community and economic development entity, Mercer County: Better Together (MCBT), has conducted a series of community forums, one in each of the county’s eleven population centers. These forums help MCBT gain insight into the values, hopes, concerns and ideas of residents, which unlike other community and economic development efforts, directly impact action steps taken. Throughout its first year MCBT has worked to understand who county residents are, hear their unique stories and learn why they have chosen Mercer County as their home. The forum series ended with events on opposite ends of Mercer County, separated by over 35 miles.

MCBT community forums are structured around the completion of a community survey, followed by small group discussion. This format provides attendees the greatest opportunity for engagement with their friends and neighbors.

On May 31st, a crowd of 12 residents participated in a forum at the Keithsburg First Christian Church. Those present represented portions of the Keithsburg and Mercer township areas. Through small group conversations, participants considered new strategies to add vitality to the community they call home.

On June 7th, the New Windsor community held the penultimate forum of the series at the New Windsor Presbyterian Church Hall. Nearly 40 area residents attended the event, most interacting with MCBT for the very first time. Participants hailed from the Richland Grove, Rivoli, and Mercer township areas. “The New Windsor community needs some revitalization to be a sustainable small town that people want to visit,” said New Windsor Community Representative Kelly Adamson. “In the MCBT process, we come together as a community and everyone has a voice.”

Finally, on June 14th, 15 New Boston area residents conducted deep discussions on how to add vitality to the community they love. Residents felt that, under current leadership, the City of New Boston has made considerable improvements, and that future countywide collaboration will help them sustain that progress. Participants represented portions of the Eliza and New Boston township areas.

Data from all community survey and small group questions are compiled by MCBT, and will be used during the action step phase of the process from July-September.

MCBT Community Representatives categorized survey data from each place, then summarized survey responses into most common themes. This information will be shared with forum attendees, elected officials and the public in each place. Be on the lookout for this information in your community!

The Mercer County: Better Together planning process is being supported with funds from the Looser-Flake Charitable Foundation, as well as Mercer County and its communities. For more information on these forums or the Mercer County: Better Together initiative, contact Project Coordinator Kyle McEwen.

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