



Conversations about the Future
FRANKLIN
2013 Community Interviews

I. Johnson County: Community Profiles

Community Name: Franklin

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Demographics

- A. Population in 2011: 24,040 (U.S. Census Bureau)
- B. Estimated Rate of Growth for the next 10 years: Modest growth in the next 10 years based on U.S. Census predictions.
- C. Growth Indicators: Anticipated suburban sprawl from Indianapolis, industrial park built on speculation to attract new businesses, City's new comprehensive plan based on growth, new Kohl's store built in Franklin 2011.

Residential Development Projects in Planning or Consideration

- A. Residential Revolving Loan Fund
- B. Downtown Loan Fund
- C. Habitat for Humanity

Commercial Development Projects in Planning or Consideration

- A. Ivy Tech Expanding – purchased building & adjacent property
- B. Franklin Business Park – 2013 – industrial structures built on speculation
- C. Franklin Sports Complex – proposed
- D. Franklin College Sports Complex and College Library Expansion
- E. Revital Grant 2012 (\$250,000) + FDC (\$200,000) + JCCF (\$2,000) for downtown business district improvements
- F. Incubator space in downtown for small business development – proposed

Community Bonds - History and Trajectory

- A. Sewage Works Revenue Bonds 1993, 1994, 2000, 2005
- B. General Obligation Bond 2010 for purchase of lands, building and renovations \$3,479,863.83
- C. Parks and Recreation District Bonds 2012 for construction of facilities (pool expansion) \$3,647,239.70

Community Tax Levies- History and Trajectory

- A. Much of residential Franklin at the cap
- B. Re-growth of manufacturing tax base – 8 Japanese owned parts companies in Franklin

Roads and Highway Assess

- A. Central Indiana Mass Transit – Franklin is the Southern stopping point of Phase II.
- B. West Court Street Improvements 2012
- C. Main Street Drainage Improvements 2012
- D. Downtown Parking & Streetscape Improvements 2012
- E. SR 44, where it goes through the city, (Jefferson Street) – move ownership from INDOT to the City of Franklin – proposed
- F. Railroad line that runs through Franklin was sold in 2012 – improvements planned

Indicators of Commitment to Quality of Life

A. Education

Franklin College, a private four-year liberal arts institution was founded in 1834. It was the first college in Indiana and third college in the United States to admit women. Its current enrolment exceeds 1000 students.

Ivy Tech Community College has a campus in Franklin and has plans to expand.

Franklin Community High School was built in 2005/2006 at a cost of \$103 million. It is a beautiful state-of-the-art facility, including a performing art building, swimming pool, gymnasium, field house, multiple sports fields and many more features.

The Franklin Community School Corporation also has one middle school, one intermediate school, and five elementary schools. Franklin is also home to numerous preschools and daycares.

St. Rose of Lima, a private Catholic school educates about 200 students from Preschool through 8th grade.

B. Parks and Recreation

- Blue Heron Challenge Course
- Dog Park

- Historic Greenway Trails
- Blue Heron Disc Golf Course
- Pool
- Rec Center
- Boys & Girls Club
- Senior Center
- golf courses
- community garden

C. Cultural Venues

- Beeson Hall
- Artcraft Theater
- Johnson County Museum
- Our Town Players Theater Group

D. Public Gathering Spaces

- coffee shops
- public library
- parks

E. Community Events

- Parades
- Fairs
- farmers markets

F. Volunteer Structures

- United Way of Johnson County
- Leadership Johnson County
- Johnson County Community Foundation
- service clubs like Kiwanis, Rotary and Lions.

G. Libraries

- Franklin Branch of JCPL
- Administrative offices of JCPL
- Johnson Memorial Hospital Medical Library
- Hamilton Library at Franklin
- Franklin Schools media centers

H. Others

- Low cost of living compared to the northern part of the county
- County seat
- Easy commute (hub) to Cincinnati, Louisville, Indianapolis, and Chicago

Neighborhood Groups

- A. Franklin Heritage, Inc.
- B. Franklin Development Corporation
- C. Discover Downtown Franklin
- D. Many area homeowners associations

Health, Wellness, and Security

- A. Major Healthcare Providers
 - Johnson County Hospital
 - Partnership for a Healthier Johnson County
- B. Community/Public Health Events
 - City still recovering from 2008 flood
 - Franklin was named a 2012 Playful City USA community by non-profit KaBOOM!
 - Franklin Clean Community Challenge
 - Dump the Plump Challenge
 - City-wide Smoking Ordinance
- C. Safety and Security Issues and Perceptions
 - Increased prescription drug usage by teens
 - Increased bullying in the schools
 - Heightened sense of insecurity in schools based on recent national events

II. Historical Perspective

A. "Small Town Saturday Night" Background

Historically, Franklin was a small town surrounded by a farming community. Many people came into town on Saturdays to shop and spend time in the downtown area, which built up around the courthouse square. Franklin has also long served as the county seat, providing vital services to area residents. The town has since expanded into a small city which is still focused on the historic downtown, but has grown into the surrounding farm country.

B. Franklin Moving Beyond Past Reluctance to Change

In the past, members of the city administration were seen as unwilling to make changes, even ones that could potentially benefit the city.

This included allowing the construction of a large factory that would have created many jobs for local residents. This reluctance had a negative effect on many businesses in the city, and some of these businesses have since left for other locations or gone out of business. The current perception is that this “old guard” is slowly being replaced by new administrators who are pro-growth and more open to change.

C. Franklin Experiencing Rapid Population Growth

Franklin has seen an increase in new residents over the past 10 years, including new types of residents. The number of residents below the poverty line has significantly increased, as evidenced by a large increase in the number of free and reduced-cost lunches provided by the schools. There have also been an increasing number of families and individuals with a higher education. There is also a perception of an increase in racial and ethnic diversity. Much of this growth can be attributed to an increase in the number of families with parents stationed at nearby Camp Atterbury that choose to live in the city, families requiring financial assistance programs that are based in the county seat, and people who like the combination of a small town feel with proximity to Indianapolis and other cities such as Cincinnati, Louisville, and Chicago.

D. 2008 Flood Led to Migration, Increased Sense of Community

In the immediate aftermath of the 2008 flood that affected many homes in Franklin, some families were forced to move out of the city in order to find new housing. This led to a decrease in the number of students at certain schools in the area, based on the attendance boundaries and the areas hit hardest by flood damage. However, in the years that have followed, many people and organizations have banded together to restore less damaged buildings and rebuild where houses and other buildings had to be torn down.

III. Current Facts

A. Visible Upgrades Lead to Increased Activity

Although Franklin Heritage and the Franklin Redevelopment Commission have been working for many years on restoring and upgrading buildings around the downtown area, highly visible upgrades in recent years, such as the restoration of the Artcraft's

façade and the current Franklin Window and Door building, have lead to a significant increase in interest in these efforts as well as attendance at Artcraft movies and events. These upgrades are also attracting the attention of other cities looking to revitalize their downtown areas. Current expansion of the Franklin city pool and recreation center is also attracting attention from many residents, although the impact of these changes is yet to be seen.

B. Franklin Becoming Destination City

Due to its proximity to Indianapolis, combined with its small-town feel and many downtown amenities, Franklin is becoming a destination for many looking for an affordable local vacation or “stay-cation”.

Attractions include Franklin’s local festivals and events, downtown shopping, the Artcraft Theater, and bed and breakfasts. Other close destinations such as the Mallow Run winery also serve to draw travelers to the area. This may make an innkeeper’s tax a viable source of new revenue, as well as providing more opportunities to market the city, such as when other local cities used funds from similar taxes to hire buses to take travelers back and forth to Indianapolis for the Super Bowl in 2012.

C. Common Problems Face Franklin’s Youth

Franklin is not immune to the problems that face many children and teens across the country. According to community leaders, the major current problems are bullying, prescription drug abuse, and gangs. While there are many organizations and initiatives geared toward eradicating these issues both locally and nationally, it can be difficult to reach all those who are affected due to demand for resources.

D. Statewide Tax Caps Impact School Funding and Budgets

While many Franklin residents view the new high school building as a waste of taxpayer money and the reason for local school budget problems, many school officials wish the public had a greater understanding of the impact that recent tax cap laws have had on the amount of funding available. Plans for repaying debt incurred by new buildings were put in place before the new tax caps were voted on and were based on previous funding levels. However, the tension caused

by this public perception and current school budget issues has created a distrust of school management.

E. Competition Reducing Between Communities

In the past, there has been a sense that communities in Johnson County had to compete with one another in order to be the best. However, in recent years, this competition has slowly been subsiding. In particular, the mayors of Franklin and Greenwood have had a greater spirit of cooperation with the belief that what is good for the county is good for the individual communities within the county.

F. Need for Workers with “Soft Skills”

The general perception of Franklin is still frequently of farmers and other blue-collar workers. As our economy increasingly shifts to an information and service base, more workers are needed with so-called “soft skills” in customer service, information technology, and other areas. At the same time, plant managers are searching for workers who are willing to remain in the same job for a long period of time, citing difficulties with hiring employees who quickly leave to attend college or seek other positions.

G. Sports Corporation Initiative Planned

Johnson Memorial Hospital, Franklin College, and several businesses are partnering on an initiative to bring more sports tournaments to Franklin to make greater use of our existing sports facilities. This will generate business for many local shops and restaurants by bringing in visitors from other cities.

IV. Patterns and Themes

A. Doing More With Less

Due to the recent tax cap legislation and nationwide recession, many agencies have seen budget reductions and a decrease in fundraising, while at the same time facing an increase in demand for services. For example, schools are faced with an increase in the number of students on free or reduced-cost lunch programs, as well as students requiring scholarship assistance while at the same time dealing with decreased revenue from budget cuts and tax caps. Consequently, these agencies

find themselves having to do “more with less”, whether in regards to staff, hours, resources, or all of the above.

B. Increase in Use of Technology

As use of technology continues to grow in the private sector, it is also increasing across the board in Franklin’s community organizations. Schools are investigating the implications of “bring your own device” policies versus providing devices for each student to use. Businesses and non-profits use websites and social media to attract new customers and promote services and events. Many organizations seek ways to bridge the ever-widening “digital divide” between those who have the knowledge and means to utilize technology and those who do not.

C. Need for Early Education Increasing

With the move to all-day kindergarten for all students, expectations for kindergarten readiness have increased. At the same time, many children in Franklin come from families that are unable to afford quality preschool education. Organizations like the Johnson County Early Learning Center strive to provide scholarships for these children so that they have access to early education and can keep pace with their peers when they enter the traditional school system. However, there may also be a lack of awareness of currently available preschool options, pointing to the need for a better awareness throughout the community about these services.

D. Franklin Needs More Variety in Housing Options

Current growth in Franklin and the wider county has revealed a need for more housing options within the city on both ends of the spectrum. On the one side, many doctors, lawyers, and other executives are choosing to live in Center Grove and other nearby communities due to a lack of high-end housing available in Franklin. On the other, 7 out of 8 current apartment complexes in the city are labeled as section 8 housing, creating a lack of affordable and appealing rental housing for recent Franklin College graduates and other young professionals.

E. Downtown Revitalization Progress

Many interviewees are excited to see the progress in Franklin's downtown area. A pedestrian-friendly downtown square that serves as a central location for community members to shop, eat, and socialize is desirable. While the downtown construction has been extremely hard on small businesses located in the area, many people agree that the work is a step in the right direction.

V. Emerging Insights

A. Lack of Communication a Problem

There are a number of opposing viewpoints between community leaders from different sectors, pointing to a possible lack of communication of issues across the community. Some leaders believed that there are plenty of workers but not enough jobs, while at least one business has jobs going unfilled due to a lack of appropriate applicants. Others see crime, particularly gangs and prescription drug abuse as a problem, while several business leaders believe that the only crime in Franklin is occasional vandalism. Many believe that the downtown area is Franklin's main strength, while others are frustrated with the lack of focus on the US 31 corridor and the west side of the city. There is also a perception that services may be being duplicated unnecessarily, rather than having organizations create appropriate partnerships to provide needed services more effectively.

B. Impact of Technology Yet to be Fully Realized

The continual forward movement of technology is having a great impact on organizations across Franklin, including businesses, schools, and non-profits. Many of these organizations are struggling to keep up with these rapid changes, and the full impact of new technologies on how they operate is yet to be seen. Organizations are being forced to create and re-create their branding and means of communication in relation to social media and new cultures of information seeking and access, while at the same time remaining accessible to those on the other side of the digital divide.

C. Need for Public Education about Community

Many educators are frustrated by a lack of understanding about how schools are funded and where the money is spent. Additionally, there is a general lack of knowledge about how to find information on

different services, such as preschools and resources for owners of historic houses. Franklin itself is frequently seen as a “hidden gem”, where outsiders and some within the community are unaware of businesses and events that may be of interest to them. Greater education of the public on these issues could increase the sense of community, attract new residents, grow the local economy, and promote use of existing services.

VI. Provocative Possibilities

A. Increasing Partnerships with Community Organizations

There is incredible opportunity for the library to partner with organizations across Franklin. First, we can expand our work with the schools to provide “another place for kids to reach their potential” and share our assets to reach our shared goals. The library can also serve as a meeting place for students and their mentors, providing additional opportunities to impact students’ lives and achievements.

We could also work with the Johnson County Museum to create new exhibits that would keep people coming back. To increase the sense of community, we could promote reading tie-ins and community reading events with Artcraft movies, as well as providing crafts and activities for children before certain movies. A downtown business incubator created in conjunction with the city government could help provide opportunities for new small businesses and grow the local economy.

B. Better Communication of Services

The library should consider expanding communication of our services to community organizations. One possibility would be to provide teacher meetings and trainings to educate them about services that may be of interest to them or their students, as well as demonstrating how to use technology and library resources in the classroom. We could also work with organizations that reach small business owners to educate them about the availability and use of databases the library subscribes to that would be helpful to them.

C. Increased Outreach to Parents in Need

Many parents in need of early education services may be unable or unwilling to attend traditional library programs such as storytime.

Therefore, the library should consider implementing enrichment and literacy programs that would be available to these parents at the library or at local organizations to meet them where they are.

D. Library as Leader in Digital Shift

The library is uniquely positioned to serve as a leader in the increasing digital shift. Many residents already come to the library for access to the Internet, which they may not have at home. The library can also continue to bridge the digital divide by providing access to e-readers, tablets, and other devices, particularly as these devices become more important within the schools. The library may also be able to work with the city to provide city-wide wifi access, reaching out to residents wherever they are. Additionally, the library could work with Franklin Heritage to digitize and provide access to records on historic homes and restoration resources for homeowners.

E. Increasing Programming and Opportunities for College Graduates

One goal for many within Franklin is to make the city more inviting for recent graduates of Franklin College and other local universities. The library can help meet this goal by increasing programs that would appeal to this age group. Additionally, the library can provide resources of interest to college graduates as well as opportunities for grads to connect with local organizations and potential employers.

F. Library as Community Communication Hub

The library has many opportunities to increase public education and awareness about other community organizations. The library could work with the Chamber of Commerce and the city government to research and create a history of the organizations and city, including a list of past mayors and major events. The library's website could also host a centralized list of links to other community organizations and their social media connections.

VII. Illustrative Highlights

A. "We Are Family" "Going from Good to Great"

B. Franklin Community High School had two National Merit finalists this year for the first time ever.



C. "Small Town Feel, Big City Convenience"



D. Families are overextended, and it can be hard to get parents involved. One organization started a parent read program, but no one attended.

E. "Collaboration and Partnerships"



F. Franklin is a giving community with volunteering citizens who still give even when they don't have much, as shown in the aftermath of the 2008 flood.

G. Mix of metro and community



H. Volunteers are passionate and really care about children in need, buying blankets, warm clothes, and other necessities out of their own pocket.

I. Great non-profit organizations



J. Franklin has the model parks and recreation department for other cities of our size.