




REPORT TO NEW CASTLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL FROM HOPE INITIATIVE



Cathy Hamilton, Beverly Hankenhoff, Jimmy Kidd, Jerry Cash, Ruth Hayworth, Brad Crowe, Jeff Ray,
Liz Whitmer, and Dennis Hamilton



**Welcome to HOPE Initiative's Second "Taking the Pulse"
October 10, 2013, Public Library, 6:30-8:30**

What a difference a year makes.....

A year ago, an eclectic group of people came together, representing the city and surrounding area. They agreed that they wanted their "home" to be a safe place, a welcoming place, and a place where intentional planning was evident in the decisions made and actions taken. If that wish became reality, they believed that within just a few years, the area would enjoy "education and economic realities that commanded regional and national respect and that the area would be a national draw for arts events, recreational opportunities, and trails programs."

Right at one year ago, with Mayor York's blessing, HOPE Initiative began the facilitation of five community forums. We used blue post-it notes to get a response to our question "what is good in New Castle and surrounding area," and we used yellow post-it notes to get a response to the question "what would make our city and surrounding area even better." A total of 263 people at five forums rendered seven pages, typed single spaced, of wonderful reasons for living in this area. In this past year alone, several new wonderful reasons have become realities. Enjoy the following photos of improvements/enhancements taking place in just this one year.....knowing surely that we have left out some!

And then, of course, read our collective update on the areas identified as opportunities for the city and surrounding area to become even more powerful in the lives of its citizens and visitors.



The City's Northend benefitted by Habitat for Humanity's moving RESTORE to Broad Street.



A small lavender farm, Millstone Farms and Gardens, opened for business even further north, near the hospital, the first new business in this area in decades.



Industrial Park: 3995 Brooks Drive, New Castle, IN 47362



The Newly-Painted Art Annex



New Animal Shelter is showcased at the December Open House



IVY Tech Campus in New Castle opened to students this year.



Jennings Project: New Business and New Housing



Six buildings came down to make room for a new parking lot and streetscape, and digitized walk-lights were installed on Broad Street. Building owners in the distance spruced up their places in response to new visibility. Kudos to them.



A new gasoline station and “quick” store opened on East Broad Street.



Buffalo Wild Wings is scheduled to open in November!



Maintaining excellence: Henry County Hospital re-seals its parking lot this October. (Lovely. Thank you!)



An effort is being made to create temporary housing for homeless men, using the old senior high school. Called "The House," several rooms have been created to move homeless men from the streets, to shelter, feed, and mentor them. This also relieves the overcrowding at Love Center.

2013-2015

Systematize beautification through education, expectation, and “hand-up”: Enforce ordinances that ensure cleanliness, mown yards, safe housing, and appropriate waste disposal.

- Mayor Greg York has ordered the demolition of 20 houses in the city since taking office; some have come down. Civically, Habitat for Humanity has taken down two houses and completed a double build. Privately, several citizens have financed the tearing down of uninhabitable houses in the city/county. (There remain several houses on the demolition list.)
- **Enforcement of cleanliness/orderliness ordinances at required level continues to escape us.**
- Churches, civic groups, and United Fund have orchestrated several clean-up days.
- Efforts have been made to keep Broad Street clean of pigeon droppings.
- Trees along Broad Street were removed.

Streetscape and Artscape (Murals and Signage)

- The Art Association of Henry County (AAHC) Director Vicky White, Healthy Communities member Jeff Ray, and HOPE Initiative Co-Director Cathy Hamilton attended a June two-day seminar in southern Indiana, sponsored by BSU’s “Building Better Communities” program. At the workshop, they learned that many communities have extended the arts into the larger community, creating a spirit for revitalization of their entire city. All left committed to doing their part in keeping the conversation alive in New Castle/Henry County.
- Director Vicky White and the AAHC Board, using the Arts Park, have taken a lead in downtown revitalization, getting new sidewalks in front of the park, and authorizing Ed Terrantino’s leadership in enhancing the Arts Annex, getting it painted and installing an arts gift shop in the Annex. They have hosted street fairs and concerts, putting the park more in the community’s public eye, and opened the area to the community through planned events (a Garden Tour participant, a co-sponsor with Henry County Concert Series of the first county music and arts fair, and host for the recent “Souper Supper”).
- They have extended hours for the Art Gallery.
- The Art Association of Henry County, partnering with Healthy Communities and HOPE Initiative, has applied for a consultant-in-residence to join efforts in expanding the arts further into the community.
- The City of New Castle financed the taking down of six buildings which clears the way for a parking area/streetscape.

Address the CSO Mandate

- Mayor York has authorized increased work on CSO, addressing a government mandate to bring the city into compliance.

Manage safe, beautiful parks

- Eighty-seven trees that were professionally perceived as dangerous to people were removed from the parks and seventy-two trees replanted.
- All park playground equipment were given a paint job, thanks to United "Day of Caring."
- Shelter houses have been repainted.
- Cameras have been installed at Baker Park.

Complete Broad Street revitalization, including occupation of the Jennings Building (Greg York, REDC, Private Entrepreneurs)

- Six buildings have been demolished, making way for a parking lot and an outside dining area.
- The deed and government tax credits for the Jennings building have been transferred to a private entrepreneur.
- All four condominiums, part of the 2009 NSP grant, have been sold.

Maintain strong economic development program, soliciting diversity in employment opportunities (Corey Murphy, Greg York, et al)

- Work One continues to partner with Economic Development Council
- Henry County Spec Building is generating inquiries and visits to the city
- With Anderson and Muncie, New Castle has been awarded \$150,000 planning grant from the US Economic Development Division aimed at even greater revenues to revitalize work opportunities in the region.

Secure tenant for EDC spec building

- Consensus is that we not panic in filling the building...be patient. While the spec building is receiving visits, its real asset right now is that it is drawing people to look at the entire area.

Increase varied marketing efforts on behalf of the city and surrounding area

- *Savor Indiana* has presented its product to city council; the product will cost \$10,000
- A New Castle/Henry County marketing team was announced October, 16, 2013.

Utilize TIF and various other fund sources to attract new and diverse business options, employment opportunities (REDC)

- TIF incentives were an enticement for California investors in Jennings building.

Housing Assessment should be completed and the process for the Unsafe Structure Ordinance Updated

- A housing committee has been together for some time, chaired by Kevin Polivick and Jerry Cash, attended by representatives from City Government, HOPE Initiative, Westminster, and Habitat for Humanity, private realtors, among others.
- Several fact-finding trips have been made to see Muncie's Building Court.
- The Housing Committee has offered to direct an authentic housing assessment (as opposed to a "marketing study") and is seeking the city's commitment to finance the endeavor (up to \$35,000).

Senior Citizens Center re-established**

- This goal is in a study phase....need to talk to senior citizens and ICAP. Jerry Cash and Tom Nipp agreed to chair this conversation.

Civic Center Clearing House

No action at this time.

Wellness Center Functioning**

- After much discussion, the consensus is that this project should be partly encompassed in the study of the Henry County Justice System, currently chaired by Sheriff Butch Baker.
- Deputy Sheriff Stacey Guffey and Director of Emergency Services at Henry County Hospital Kris Manning have agreed facilitate the study of the Wellness Center, as has CJ Johnson, Director of Meridian Services.
- ARIES, a local substance abuse program, is offering @ \$25,000 to combat drug issues.

Install lighting in oft traveled areas**

Install litter and street signage**

Installation of new street signs has begun.

Install signage at six primary city entries

- HOPE Initiative, with the Mayor's blessing, is sponsoring an art contest around this project. Open to the community, artists are encouraged to design a visual that would welcome visitors to our city. The winning design will be determined by a diverse committee. Chairs for this project are Beverly Hankenhoff and Cathy Hamilton.

Enhance educational offerings, PreK-12, post-secondary, and collegiate Danielson/IU East, IVY Tech, BSU**

- **More voices need to be heard on this project, but progress is yet being made.**
- IVY Tech opened for classes this year, with local monies helping to enlarge the facility before it opened for classes.
- A study of a State of the Art Early Education Center is being facilitated by Corey Murphy, Director of EDC, and Nan Polk, New Castle BOE Member.

Increased code enforcement personnel**

- **This remains an issue. With 8000 households, using the building inspector also as the code enforcement officer derails any effort to really enforce codes. Hopefully, city budget, through the mayor and council, will separate these two duties and hire intentionally. Enforcing legally created ordinances creates the most expeditious way to move from a hand-out to a hand-up culture. No one rises to a low expectation.**

Maintain safety for and from animals

- Under the leadership of Director Linda Bir Conn and a visionary Board, and with the generosity of the late Mary Polk, a wonderful animal shelter has been built, opening in December, 2012.
- The shelter contracts with the county and city for animal control.

2013-2018

Landscaped Spaces at Jennings Building & Justice Square

- Professional landscapers attend to the space at the Historic Court House.
- (See “Complete Broad Street revitalization”)

Sidewalks/bike trails installed, connecting to parks, to our “rails-to-trails” and to schools

- Chairpersons Jeff Ray and Rex Peckinpugh are chairing this effort and have secured architects and engineers to drive the project, already familiar with the area as the designers of the WW Trail.
- HOPE Initiative secured a \$15,000 grant from Henry County Foundation toward the \$35,200 phase one of this project; **the city has been asked to use “riverboat” monies to fund the other \$20,200. This phase takes six months to complete. Securing phase one locally, the committee will seek state and federal funding for phase two/completion. If we start this process right away, we can go for spring grant opportunities for the final phase.**

With the County, address justice issues

- In late summer, several citizens attended a countywide seminar on justice; two out-of-state consultants facilitated a conversation as to “next steps.”
- A committee led by Sheriff Baker is seeking an expedited needs assessment and simultaneous emergency aid for leaking roof.

Green spaces throughout city, including a “Victory Garden” & Orchard

- THE Place began a gardening program this summer.
- Westminster operates a greenhouse for the neighborhood each summer.
- NewCastlePride has begun restoration of Maxwell Park. CSO system into compliance/maintained. Questions arose as to whether the soil is suitable for edible plants.

Appropriate housing rehabilitation and/or development begun

- This work is constantly on the mind of several citizens/organizations (Westminster Center, Habitat for Humanity, City of New Castle, HOPE Initiative, to name but a few); however, there is consensus that a building development program must follow an authentic housing assessment: What do we have? What do we need to do with what we have? What housing is lacking?

Enhanced educational, recreational, *and employment* opportunities for youth

- The study of pre-school through post-secondary education will address the education piece of this project.
- There has been a creation of the Miracle League, a baseball opportunity for people with disability who do not play on other existing teams.
- A renovated bowling alley has made it a national draw for advanced leagues as well as a local favorite for recreation.
- The questions to be answered include a detailing of what already exists and for whom and who is underserved. Another issue is marketing what we have once we delineate our holdings.
- *What employment/volunteer opportunities exist for our youth?*

Enhance public transportation opportunities

- Address road conditions
- Assess public transportation availability to all demographics

Establish monitoring system to better ensure fidelity to strategic plan: Host bi-annual forums, taking the community pulse: How are we doing as a safe, invitational city? (HOPE Initiative adopted this goal.)

- HOPE Initiative has hosted two “take the pulse” meetings this year
HOPE attends Council meetings to enhance communication
HOPE provides written reports on progress/barriers to the framework

Maintain strong communication with County/State governments to better insure partnerships on projects in-common

- HOPE Initiative has hosted two “take the pulse” meetings this year
HOPE attends Council meetings to report on such meetings
HOPE provides written reports on progress/barriers to the framework
- HOPE Initiative is scheduled to present its process to County Council, Oct. 30
- Leaders in the community are partnering with County, State, and Federal entities to enhance the city, with the goal of creating a more liveable community

**Partner with other entities to ensure the most stable future:
Education, business, neighboring communities, and civic
organizations:**

- Chamber of Commerce, Visitors' Bureau, and EDC are working in common on major issues (new marketing committee is formed and continues to work over time)
- A major asset to the area is its sheer number of civic groups and churches; an effort is being made to get churches, civic organizations, and food pantries to more effectively work together to offer hand-up to citizens

Every part of city reflects citizen pride**

- The study is concerning itself with getting homes and surrounding area repaired and clean so businesses can be wooed to every area of the city; all schools are respected for work rather than stereotypes around demographic; and how to move away from language that derides parts of the city

2016-2028

**If the above framework is honored, meaning action follows words, the
following can be New Castle's systemic truth:**

**Education and Economics realities
command regional/national respect.**

**The area is a national draw for arts events,
recreational opportunities, & trails program.**