

# Waving the Community's Flag

## Winchester and Clark County's Moment



A Report for The Greater Clark Foundation  
Prepared by The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation

by Richard C. Harwood



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The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation is a nonpartisan, independent nonprofit that teaches, coaches and inspires people and organizations to solve pressing problems and change how communities work together. Founded by Richard C. Harwood in 1988, the Institute partners with some of the world's largest nonprofits, and their tools and frameworks have spread to all 50 states in the U.S., across Australia and Canada, and have been used by individuals in more than 40 countries worldwide.



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The Greater Clark Foundation, located in Winchester, Ky., inspires a vision for the future by asking, "What's Your Ambition?!" It is working to stimulate a community identity that is forward-leaning, self-sustaining, engaged and resilient through investments focused on civic and economic vitality; educational attainment; and health, well-being and quality of life. GCF also provides aspirational leadership to the Greater Clark County community by working upstream on the root causes of social problems in order to enhance the four conditions required to make long-term change: capacity, collaboration, communication and cohesion.

*Waving the Community's Flag: Winchester and Clark Country's Moment*  
was prepared for **The Greater Clark Foundation** by **The Harwood Institute  
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# Table of Contents

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Letter from The Greater Clark Foundation. . . . . 1

Preface . . . . . 3

A Guide to This Report . . . . . 5

Introduction . . . . . 6

Making Winchester and Clark County Thrive . . . . . 8

Our Voices . . . . . 10

Winchester and Clark County Public Capital . . . . . 22

Community as a Common Enterprise . . . . . 41

Addendum . . . . . 44



# Letter from The Greater Clark Foundation

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Dear Friends:

The Greater Clark Foundation (GCF) has an *Ambition for a Vibrant Community*. Strong citizens build strong communities. But this doesn't just happen. The right conditions — capacity, collaboration, communication and cohesion — must be healthy and vibrant to stimulate a community identity that is forward-leaning, self-sustaining, engaged and resilient.

These core beliefs are the foundation of GCF's community investment strategy and The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation shares these core beliefs. We are delighted to have them as a community partner to help our community grow stronger by building from within. The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation is a nonpartisan, independent nonprofit that teaches, coaches and inspires people and organizations to solve pressing problems, and to change how communities work together. As Rich Harwood says, "We want people to get off the path of the status quo and onto a path of possibility and hope."

We hope you will read and reflect on the report that follows. Most importantly, we hope you will feel called to roll up your sleeves and become a Public Innovator for our community. When we all Turn Outward and make more intentional judgments and choices in creating change, we will produce greater impact and increase the likelihood that ours is a thriving community well into the future.

Thank you for being open to new possibilities.

*What's Your Ambition?!*



Jennifer A. Algire  
President and CEO



Paul G. Embs  
Board Chairman



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# Preface

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One of the many people we met in Clark County, Kentucky said to us, “Everybody’s got hope; you just got to bring it out.” It’s a simple and direct statement—and a true one. The question is how does this happen? And how does it happen across an entire community to make hope real for all people?

A lot of changes are happening across our nation now. People are angry at political leaders. People’s faith in many organizations and institutions has dwindled. Jobs can be scarce and wages too low. Family breakdown and drugs undermine people’s daily stability and sadly limits their future prospects. Many Americans wonder if it is possible to get on a better path.

My own work tells me that while we are experiencing dramatic change nationally, that getting on a better path often will start locally. It is in our communities where we can get our arms around many of the challenges we face and understand how they affect people’s daily lives. It’s locally where we can best determine what needs to be done. And it’s locally where we can see concrete results take root and grow. Importantly, it is in our communities that

we can restore our belief that we can get things done together and re-ignite a can-do spirit.

None of this is easy. But it can be done. Experiences here in Winchester and Clark County prove that.

The title of this report, *Waving the Community’s Flag*, comes from another person we talked with here.

This individual said that too often, too many leaders, organizations and community residents are waving their own flags. They can get too focused on “What’s in it for me?” At issue in Winchester and Clark County is how to wave the community flag. Put another way, how do we come together?

The central challenge facing Winchester and Clark County—like so many other places throughout our country—is how to make community a common enterprise again. At the conclusion of this report, there are seven key steps to do just that. What this report shows is that, while this area has its share of problems, it has many strengths to build on. Making progress—real progress—is doable and achievable if people come together to act.

The moment to do this is now.



Richard C. Harwood



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# A Guide to This Report

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In 2016, The Greater Clark Foundation began discussions with The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation about how to strengthen the community of Winchester and Clark County. In April of 2017, the Institute, with support from the Foundation, will hold a Public Innovators Lab for up to 100 community leaders who wish to develop new ways to bring people together to solve local challenges and strengthen how the community works together.

Before undertaking the Lab, the Foundation asked the Institute to help them learn more about the community and identify strengths to build on moving forward. This report, *Waving the Community's Flag*, presents what we found.

Over a three-month period, The Harwood Institute undertook a series of conversations with community residents from 10 different neighborhoods and areas across Winchester and Clark County. Each conversation was held with cross-sections of 8-15 people. Two other conversations were held specifically with high school youth; each of these conversations was made up of 18 students. In addition, we conducted 36 in-depth interviews with community leaders, which included elected officials and leaders from government agencies, non-profits and religious institutions, among others.

- **Introduction** – this section provides an overview of the report, and in it we outline three main themes that emerged from the conversations and interviews in Winchester and Clark County and lay out a series of questions for what it will take for the community to thrive.
- **Making Winchester and Clark County Thrive: What to Keep in Mind** – this section provides a quick way to help you think about and make sense of what follows in the report. It serves as a reminder of some key points that are critical to make Winchester and Clark County thrive.
- **Our Voices** – in this section, you will hear people in Winchester and Clark County describe how they see and experience the community; share their concerns about its future; and discuss positive steps forward.
- **Winchester and Clark County's Public Capital** – this section is a snapshot and analysis of the fundamental structures, networks and norms of Winchester and Clark County through the lens of The Harwood Institute's Public Capital Framework. This snapshot reflects what it takes for a community to work together effectively; it was developed through the Institute's research and on-the-ground work in communities across the U.S.
- **Community as a Common Enterprise** – this section lays out seven recommendations for Winchester and Clark County to get on a stronger path of possibility and hope.

# Introduction

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There's a question that now sits squarely before Winchester and Clark County that begs a response. It's not whether this community is dead or done or doomed—as some might wonder—but rather, how to build on what's working to make it thrive.

Winchester and Clark County have a rich history. People here hold a deep affection for the community. Many families go back generations; others are more recent newcomers who now make this place home, too. The area is situated geographically where the Eastern Appalachians meet the Bluegrass. It sits strategically at the crossroads of major roadways. But it faces a different crossroads now: How to move forward—as a community.

## Where the Community Stands

People here say the community has seen better days. Many feel they've been bypassed, left behind and left out as other parts of the nation press ahead. There's a sense of being beaten down; people can't catch a break. Negativity and mistrust persist. This has led to frustration, anger among some, about what has happened in the community and to their lives; what is happening now; and why things can't or won't significantly improve. When asked, there are those who suggest the motto for the area should be "Deadchester" or "Winchester Fail." For some youth, there is a desire to leave.

This report contains insights and findings from conversations with community residents and leaders

from across the county. These findings are not meant to be definitive, or to close off conversation. Instead, this report is meant to spark further discussion and, most importantly, action. There are three overarching themes from these conversations:

- **Too many people feel unseen and unheard.** Throughout the community, many people feel that their voices do not matter and that no one is listening—and that maybe, no one even sees them. People need more genuine opportunities to engage in conversations that matter to their everyday lives and for their voices to be part of the community's process for moving forward. Without this, it is difficult to gain shared agreement about how to move forward and generate the civic confidence necessary to seize the moment.
- **Real divides hold the community back.** There are a series of fault lines in the community—including race, where people live, religious denominations and old vs. new, among others—that are blocking the community's progress. The community must bridge these dividing lines or risk stifling progress and losing hope.
- **People are hungry to get things done.** The community suffers from an ingrained negative narrative that various conversations, programs, initiatives all get started, but not completed, or fail to produce concrete results. The community must focus on finding "wins" where real progress can be demonstrated. Without this, skepticism, even cynicism will prevail.

*“Let’s work, not trying to wave our individual flag, but let’s wave our community flag. That’s what I think we’re missing.”*

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## Making the Community Thrive

Amid such challenges are positive signs of strength in the community. Good things are happening. People and groups are coming together. Make no mistake: Progress is being made. We highlight examples of this progress throughout this report. But more—much more—is needed now.

- How does this community come to leverage its strengths to build upon them, grow them and make them real for more people?
- How can more people in the community genuinely feel that their future is brighter?
- What will it take to produce ever-more momentum, with greater opportunities for all?
- How can all this be done by honoring the past and seizing the moment at hand?

If there is a message that emerges from this report it is that Winchester and Clark County are ready to move forward—together.

In one of the conversations, an individual said, “Let’s work, not trying to wave our individual flag, but let’s wave our community flag. That’s what I think we’re missing.” Too many people, too many organizations and too many leaders are flying their own flags. Too many others have decided to retreat from the community altogether. This can make it near impossible to move ahead; it disheartens those working hard to make the community better.

The choice before Winchester and Clark County is how, in the face of significant challenges, to get people to work together to move the community forward. But let’s be clear: The goal isn’t to forge total agreement on all issues or for everyone to walk in lockstep. That’s not realistic or even possible in any community. What’s needed is to sort out where agreement can be forged, where action can be taken and how to build momentum and civic confidence.

“Everybody’s got hope; you just got to bring it out,” is what one person said in these conversations. That’s what this report—*Waving the Community’s Flag*—is about. This is Winchester and Clark County’s moment.



Photo © Paulo Peres

# Making Winchester and Clark County Thrive

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## What to Keep in Mind

As you read this report, here are some key points to keep in mind. They'll help you make sense of what follows and also think more about what it will take to help make Winchester and Clark County thrive.

- **Trust, trust, trust—it's where everything begins and ends.** Throughout this report, you'll hear people talk about a variety of topics in ways that make clear that a lack of trust is at the very core of Winchester and Clark County's challenge to thrive. Efforts to move the community forward must intentionally focus on building trust—which means people seeing and hearing one another, bridging divides and fault lines in the community, people working together and people sharing in the community's success.
- **Personal connections must become community strengths.** It's clear that a great source of pride in Winchester and Clark County is people's deep personal connections with friends, neighbors and fellow church members, among others. But such bonds also can have a potential downside: leading people to become closed off from one another, especially from those they don't know or those who seem different from themselves. To move forward, people will need to turn their personal connections into a community strength by reaching out to others across various dividing lines.
- **Change will come from different directions and will grow over time.** In reading this report, you'll hear people complain that too many groups and organizations are working in isolation, even at odds with one another. Because of this, one might think the community must get everyone working in lock-step under a single plan of action. But such steps often undermine real progress; communities need to innovate and try different things, driven by different local groups and people, to see what will work and stick. Change then takes root, grows and spreads over time. There is no magic bullet or plan to make a community thrive.

- **Don't let talk stop action.** You'll hear people in this report say the community often doesn't complete things. That may be true at times. But what seems most at issue here is that when people get together in meetings, forums and official settings, not enough action follows. This can create the feeling that the community has stalled out, or is limping along. To move forward, the community must move from talk to action—demonstrating that real progress is truly possible.
- **A real community conversation is also needed, not mere talk.** In the following pages, you'll read that many people in Winchester and Clark County don't think the conversations that take place are productive, open or engaging. All talk is not created equal. Talking "at" people, asking people simply to comment on pre-set plans, not leaving ample room for people to engage openly with each other—these things produce more disengagement and mistrust. Winchester and Clark County don't need any more of that kind of talk. What it does need is more open, authentic engagement where all people are seen and heard and where they know their voices matter.
- **A vibrant community requires many groups and leaders to get things done.** Read this report, and you will know that frustration abounds about the fragmentation and lack of good communications between and among organizations and leaders in Winchester and Clark County. Oftentimes when people see such problems, they want one group or organization or one set of leaders to take charge and single-handedly drive change. But to make a community thrive—for Winchester and Clark County to thrive—requires a whole collection of organizations and leaders. No single group or leader alone can do all the work required.
- **Much bigger things can come from people's wonderful generosity and friendliness.** This report shows clearly that one of Winchester and Clark County's biggest assets is people's generosity and friendliness. When people are in need, someone shows up to help. Moving forward, the question is how can Winchester and Clark County tap into and leverage this generosity and friendliness—for people to work together on larger community concerns?
- **Bad perceptions matter; address them head-on.** There are different findings, quotes and assertions in this report that some people may not like or agree with. Whether true or not, these perceptions exist. To dismiss them out of hand is to risk more mistrust, less engagement and block further progress. The burden is on those who wish to build trust and move things forward to address these perceptions head-on.
- **People need more experiences they hold in common.** This report highlights many good things already happening in Winchester and Clark County. But too many of them remain too isolated, happening only among a fragment of people or groups or parts of the community. For a community to thrive, individuals must come to hold shared experiences and tell stories to one another about those experiences. Winchester and Clark County need to pay special attention not simply to producing positive change, but also to generating change that produces shared experiences within the community.

# Our Voices

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*To seize the moment requires being clear  
on what the moment is about.*

Listen to the voices of Winchester and Clark County residents and leaders and it becomes clear how people see the community and their future. This isn't a simple story. Nor are there simple answers to the community's challenges.

Here's what we know. Many people love this community and also feel trapped within it. Many see a whole collection of seemingly intractable challenges—from drugs to family breakdown to the state of downtown—but also see emerging areas of promising progress. Many want to come together, but at times the dividing lines seem too great. Many are looking for leadership but too often can't find it.

What follows are the main themes that emerged from our conversations with community residents and leaders.



## A “Great Place” to Live

People in Winchester and Clark County hold a deep commitment to the community. Across all conversations people talked about the sense of caring and generosity that exists. “There’s good, good people here in Winchester and an inordinately compassionate community,” said one individual. He continued, “If there’s one thing I’ve learned, it’s that no matter how much money you have or don’t have, if someone’s in trouble, people will help, which is something you don’t find in a lot of places... No matter what time, day or night, if I needed them or if anyone else needed them, I could call them, and it tends to be across the board.”

Another person said of the community, “This is a great place to live. My three boys were raised here. Will they come back? Maybe not. That’s the path their lives have taken. But I love my community. Even with all its flaws.” The community is seen as being friendly and welcoming—a “modern day Mayberry,” observed one person.

And people are proud of the special place this community enjoys geographically and the place it holds in Kentucky and the rest of nation. “Clark County is a gateway community to the mountains, the first Appalachian county, and a gateway from Appalachia to central Kentucky and the rest of the state. There are many strengths,” this individual said.

A relative newcomer who had previously lived in numerous other places in the U.S. heralded the community’s sense of working together. “One of the greatest spirits of cooperation and collaboration I’ve seen in my career.” Similarly, an individual who moved to Winchester some 15 years ago said, “Everybody is trying to further themselves in life in a more community-based way. It’s not just all about me. It’s about everybody.”

## The Cancer of Drugs

Yet against this backdrop of friendliness and generosity stands the problem of drugs, a topic raised in virtually every conversation. One person after another told often moving stories about someone they know who has been impacted by drugs—who has lost a loved one to drugs, whose family has been devastated by drugs, whose parks are littered with drug needles. One person described the problem this way: “It’s a terrible, terrible, terrible problem. It is destroying families and individuals and neighborhoods. There’s not a single family anywhere that has not been dramatically and drastically impacted by drug abuse.” People pointed out that this problem is not limited to those who are poor or who live in poverty; it impacts all parts of the community—poor and rich, young and old, white and black, children and parents, those who attend church and those who don’t.

People complain of drugs being openly sold. Of kids being exposed at young ages and falling prey to this scourge. Of teachers having to constantly deal with the problem in their classrooms, starting even as early as preschool. Of people having to keep looking down as they go for a jog because of all the needles on the ground. Of businesses being unable to find employees who can pass drug tests. Of families who are scared to shop downtown due to these problems. One person familiar with the challenge downtown said, “We see blatant drug use. In two weeks we had six overdoses in the building next door. It can get a little dicey after dark. We don’t go out our front door after dark. We park in the back. I don’t blame people for not wanting to shop after dark.”

No doubt, some people say that the problem here is no worse than anywhere else in the nation, and some wonder whether there is anything that can really be done about the problem given its national scope. And different people hold different views on the

*“It’s been so eye-opening to me, so provoking and thought-changing. As we’re dealing more in the substance abuse problem, I have people come up to me afterwards and say, ‘We want to thank you for what you’re doing, because we feel like for so long nobody’s believed in us and really feel like we’re worthwhile to direct efforts at.’”*

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root cause of the problem. For some it’s about youth being bored and disengaged; for others it is about drug dealers from out of town who have easy access to Winchester due to its proximity to major highways; for still others it is an escape from a hard life; and for some, it’s a way to take part in an underground economy and make a living. But no matter how people describe the causes, they all agree there is a problem.

There is at least some good news on the horizon. For instance, the Clark County Health Department has done two community trainings on the use of Naloxone, more commonly-known as “Narcan,” so that those individuals and family members close to heroin and opioid addicts can administer the life-saving drug to reverse the effects of an overdose. One person connected to those trainings said, “It’s been so eye-opening to me, so provoking and thought-changing. As we’re dealing more in the substance abuse problem, I have people come up to me afterwards and say, ‘We want to thank you for what you’re doing, because we feel like for so long nobody’s believed in us and really feel like we’re worthwhile to direct efforts at.’” (It should be noted

that there are some who ask whether this is an implicit endorsement of drug use.) Another positive example is the drug court that has proven successful, despite many people feeling that it remains under-resourced to meet the magnitude of the challenge. And there are the drug awareness programs in the early grades in schools, even though some lament that they end after the 5th grade, just when kids are entering a vulnerable phase of personal and social development.

Still, the individual who talked about drug-related problems downtown said that perception hasn’t caught up to the reality of the situation. “There seems to be a disconnect between what is really happening versus perception. The issue isn’t being taken as seriously as what it really is.” This person then relayed what happened when they reported the problem of drug overdoses they encountered in the next-door building: “The police said we hadn’t got a crime problem!” Another person talked about calling the police about drug activity in a nearby park, with little to no action taken. The need for the community to address the drug problem was put this way: “Heroin is really a big one. But we



Photo © Paulo Peres

see people selling drugs to each other, and we're quiet." He then continued, "How can you not see the devastation that this is causing? Whatever community you're in, you need to stand up against these people that are supplying this stuff. Don't be so loyal, even if it's your relatives or because it's your culture or whatever. You don't know if it will touch your family or not, so you can't be so loyal and so obedient to culture or family. Like cancer it spreads."

## Family Breakdown

As with drugs, people focused on family breakdown as something that is happening nationwide, not just in this community. At the same time, it is happening here, and it concerns many people. What makes this challenge so difficult is that it is intergenerational. Too many children are growing up in broken homes, one generation after another. Said one person, "Our homes are now broken. The women that are raising these children now are broken. We as women have a mentality of fear, and we pass that on to our kids, that 'I can't attitude. They take that attitude into the schools, where in all honesty, teachers tell them they can't."

Too many children are now having children. "We have children raising children," said one person. "It goes back to family. You really can't legislate family. And you can't let them starve. People turn to drugs out of despair and also because it's easy money. It's what they know." People also talked about how parental authority has been undermined to the point where some say they are reluctant to discipline their children for fear of their kids calling the police as a form of retribution against parents. "Now the kids are actually telling the parents what to do, and the parents are scared of their children. That's why the children are running on the streets at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, getting in trouble, doing drugs."

"We need to do something!" said one person. "There's not respect anymore. Kids don't care because their parents don't care." Another person added, when referring back to their own childhood, "I'm not ancient, but we had chores. If you wanted an allowance, you didn't get it for breathing." Then, she said, "Everybody wants everything right now."

## *“We have one street. Why in the heck can’t we clean up one stinking street?”*

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Making progress on these concerns will not be easy or come fast. One person said, “We gotta work together, but a lot of times people are so beaten down by life they can’t trust nobody. So even those who are trying to help them, they think they’re just trying to benefit themselves and getting gain at their expense.”

### **Downtown: A Living Symbol of Our Problems**

Not everyone in the area goes to downtown Winchester, or even wants to. Nor does everyone even see its redevelopment as the biggest challenge confronting the area. But most everyone in these conversations saw downtown as a living symbol of the stagnant conditions impacting the entire area—and a potent sign of the area’s inability and lack of resolve to effectively address its challenges.

As with other community challenges, people do see positive steps that are being taken downtown, which give at least some of them hope. As one person put it, “The downtown area, you can walk down it now and see that it doesn’t look like it’s stuck in the 1950’s. It has fresh stores... there’s community activities.”

Leeds Theater, an important downtown landmark, unused until just a few years ago, was renovated by a local nonprofit group. Its redevelopment is viewed as a positive example of the nonprofit arts and culture sector, local government and local business all working together. Another positive example is the Sphar Seed Building, which also was empty for many years, will now become the new home of the local tourism office, Chamber of Commerce and industrial development authority, among others. There is also a new downtown master plan, a new Farmers Market and a new section of original cobblestone street restored, among other efforts. The Main Street program is also singled out as a positive force for change downtown.

But people’s frustration—even anger—about the state of downtown is real. Despite various positive steps, not nearly enough action is being taken, and not nearly enough pro-active action. Said one person, “We have one street. Why in the heck can’t we clean up one stinking street?” People complained about “demolition by neglect”—deteriorating buildings that are being left to rot while sidewalks and steps are left to crumble. “Those steps have been like that, with modest changes, since before I was born here,” one long-time resident said.



Photos © Michael Andrews

Another person noted, “So many of these buildings down here have been allowed to deteriorate to the extent that upgrading them to where they can meet current building regulations is almost cost prohibitive.”

Many vehemently singled out “slumlords”—a phrase that was commonly used by people in these conversations—who fail to keep up their properties. “We just have some landlords down here who, frankly, couldn’t care less,” said one individual. Adding to people’s frustration is that they see official leaders doing far too little to enforce building codes, which is talked about as a form of protecting the status quo, even corruption.

People in these conversations also railed against drugs being openly sold downtown, with no apparent action being taken to stop it. They point to “sleeping rooms” and prostitutes that are visible to all and nothing is done to put an end to them. As one person asked, “It makes me crazy. Why is there a brothel on Main Street? Why is that allowed to happen? Who’s benefiting from that?” Some people said they no longer felt safe going downtown and so instead choose to go to neighboring communities to shop. Adding to this problem is the rotating businesses

that leave downtown for the bypass or others that seemingly close as fast as they open. And there are those who say that North Main, once a symbol of pride, has been allowed to deteriorate.

In addition to dealing with drugs, prostitutes, crumbling buildings and the like, people wish for more sit-down restaurants downtown where they can eat and visit with one another. Many believe the community must make a choice about whether downtown will be historic and inviting or just old and rundown. And some want small businesses better supported and downtown better marketed to people who live in the east end of town, closer to Lexington, and to out-of-town tourists.

## Losing Our Kids to Lost Hope

Many adults are deeply worried about the community’s youth and children. They talk about a lack of activities for youth, broken families and children being raised by children. Making matters worse, some people said that bad internet connections can mean that some kids must leave their homes to go to other places to do their homework and class projects. In talking about this, one parent said, “I live six miles from the courthouse,



and I don't have Internet service, and I don't have cell service at my house. Whereas roughly half of our population is rural, I would wager that a good percentage of those do not have access to internet service."

Perhaps the only thing more worrisome than what adults had to say about youth is what local high school youth had to say about their own lives and the life of the community. The picture they paint is toxic and depressing. Much like adults, they, too, point to a lack of activities and good sports facilities, which many said leaves them bored, and that boredom often leads them to drug and alcohol abuse and prostitution. They talked openly about how drugs—their distribution, sale and use—now permeate every facet of their lives. As such the youth in these conversations said they can feel unsafe, fearful of being robbed and frustrated by having to live with drug paraphernalia constantly present.

When it comes to drugs, they can neither ignore this problem nor get away from it.

But even more than these particular experiences, the high school youth engaged in these conversations felt the community has given up on them. In turn, many have given up on the community. Many do not feel ready for work or adult life; the education system, they argued, despite recent awards, has woefully prepared them for everything from academics to financial education to drug awareness. This was echoed by adults, one of whom said, "Kids are coming out of schools without soft skills. They don't know how to write a resume. They don't know how to do an interview. They don't know how to dress in a respectful way. They don't know how to speak in a respectful way. They don't know how to show up." Whether this is the best role for schools to play is up for debate, but what is clear is that many youth feel ill-prepared to step into the world around them.

*When asked for community mottos, some youth offered, “Get Out!” or “Run While You Can!” Another, as noted earlier, was “Deadchester.”*

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Many of these youth lamented that they have limited connections to adults outside of their strained families. They yearn for broader community role models. Those that are connected to mentors from, say, Big Brothers/Big Sisters or the Phoenix Academy, praised these connections but also wondered why they are not more widely promoted.

These youth said the community is stuck in an endless loop of negativity, complaints and little proactive action. There is the prevailing sense of “You live your life, and I’ll live mine.” When asked for community mottos, some youth offered, “Get Out!” or “Run While You Can!” Another, as noted earlier, was “Deadchester.” In short, these youth want out. They see little future for themselves here. They see even less support, oftentimes feeling abandoned by the community. When asked, one described life here as, “Hell.”

## Community Divides

One of the great strengths of this community is the extent to which people feel connected to one another, but this sense of connection is often contained to family members and familiar friends and neighbors (a topic to be explored again later in the report). Not too far beneath the surface of connection sit a collection of divisions within the community—a series of significant fault lines

that serve to keep people separate and apart from one another. These divides come in different shapes and forms and were consistently raised throughout these conversations.

## Race and Culture

One divide focuses on race and culture. One white leader in the community said, “There is still a gross ignorance about what are other’s cultures. It’s almost comical how much we don’t know each other.” Another noted, “Some just want to build a wall and say, ‘Well, if you could just get rid of that group, this community would be OK.’ Well, we need to take a look at that group, embrace their challenges, look at their strengths, and see how we help raise that group up.” But this will require more engagement and interaction. As one person said, “We have an issue with race. So I think if we truly want to know the impact of racism in our society, we have to talk to the African-American members of our community and get their perspective.”

These sentiments were widely echoed throughout these conversations. An African-American community member put it this way: “I don’t know what everybody else has said, but we just sweep it under the rug. The community is segregated by race. Now, we don’t have riots and shootings every single night; no, that is not what I am saying. But there is still a great divide

here.” Here’s how another person described the situation: “The town struggles with diversity. It hasn’t embraced diversity and recognized it or addressed it properly.” One festering symbol of this struggle is how the Labor Day Weekend Festival and Pioneer Festival have competed for the public’s attention for 38 years, creating a largely unrecognized frustration in the African-American community. As will be noted in the remainder of this report, the divide of race and culture seems to permeate virtually every aspect of community life. At the same time, there was a belief among some that efforts are being made to bridge this divide, even if progress is slow. Said one person, “You still have that separation, but it’s not from a lack of trying.”

and can’t access the other services and everything and the benefits of this community.” Another individual said about the North End, “Really no voice over there.” And he wasn’t optimistic that people in the larger community would be willing to listen. Another person made this observation: “A lot of people on the north side of town say that Winchester used to be a nice place to live, even for poor people. There’s nothing nice about North Winchester now.”

### “Old vs. New”

The divide between “Old vs. New” was raised time and again as another fault line. Here’s how one individual described the tension: “We’re seeing

*“The town struggles with diversity. It hasn’t embraced diversity and recognized it or addressed it properly.”*

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## Where People Live

The divide of race and culture extends to where people live. “Bucktown,” the name for the historic African-American neighborhood—a clear source of pride for many African-American residents, where economic opportunity and culture once occurred—strikes some newcomers as a blatant racial slur, while many old-time residents accept and even embrace it. Numerous comments were made about how this area, also known as North Main Street, has fallen into disrepair and how some people may wish to turn away from the challenge. Said one leader, “I think a lot of us who aren’t dealing with it daily, we say, ‘Oh our community’s got no problems with race.’ Cause we’re not seeing it from the lens of an African-American person that lives in the North End

a community that has very differing ideologies. We have a very progressive side of the community that wants to embrace modern trends and be much more cosmopolitan and have that more worldly perspective, and we have a section of the community that wants to hold onto the very conservative traditions of the past.” Indeed, many in these conversations said there can be distrust of newcomers, new ideas and a desire to take new actions. And yet, the same person just quoted also observed, “I feel like some individuals that don’t have a great respect for tradition and are trying to bring about change in this community, they don’t recognize the underlying concepts here. Sometimes it can take generational change just to occur. Who’s to say sometimes too that some of these changes, depending upon your faith and different things are





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changes that you don't ever want because they are against your moral code." At issue is how to navigate these tensions, and it leads to stalemates on a host of issues. One resident summed things up this way: "We get stagnant. I don't know if that is because we are trying to preserve our heritage and our history or if that is just where we are. I don't know."

## Church Denominations

There are divides, too, in the community between and among church denominations. While some talked about this divide in terms of black and white

churches—"There are all black churches and all white churches. That is still an issue that needs to be dealt with here"—most talked about it in terms of a kind of persistent parochialism across many churches, regardless of race, where individual churches can remain fragmented and fractured from one another, looking out after their own flocks. One person noted, "The county's 80 churches suffer from the same problem: It's hard to get them together. My faith friends don't like to hear me talk about that but nevertheless, I do. I think it further fractures whatever effort you want to do with regard to your community." One pastor lamented how this dynamic

*One could listen to all the challenges in Winchester and Clark County and choose only to focus on them. That would be a big mistake and misread what's happening in the community.*

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can play out in the community; for those churches with a more liberal theological orientation, they can be considered “fake,” perhaps “Godless.”

“We separate, we compartmentalize,” he said, which leads to unnecessary, even harmful divisions.

Of course, people consistently told stories of the good works of many churches in the community. And yet while still vital, the role of churches has gone up and down over the years. Said one person, “Years ago the social fiber of the community was more aligned with the churches, and they were a vibrant part of the Clark County community. I think it still is, but it’s not like it used to be. That’s just the way of our times.” Some youth complained that while churches take good care of emergency needs in the community, they have largely failed to address underlying issues of social justice. Some people said they see a resurgence of sorts happening within some churches now. But even if that’s the case, in these conversations people said that the efforts by local churches can remain undermined by a sensibility to maintain a separateness.

All this adds up to a series of fault lines that block people’s ability to see and hear one another and work together. As one person observed:

*“We don’t know that somebody’s hurting because we haven’t invested in our neighbors. We really haven’t invested. We don’t know they’re hurting. Second of all, we’re scared to death to knock on that door because we don’t know what’s on the other side of that door. We’ve lost largely a sense of community. If you’ve lost the sense of community, then how are you going to connect across property lines, street lines, neighborhood lines? How are you going to connect with all those people and really invest in them?”*

This reality can leave people feeling left out and left behind. Invisible. Unwelcomed. “We don’t know each other,” is what one community member said.

“If there’s no relationship, we’re not going to trust each other. So there’s a lot of disconnect so to speak,” summed up another.

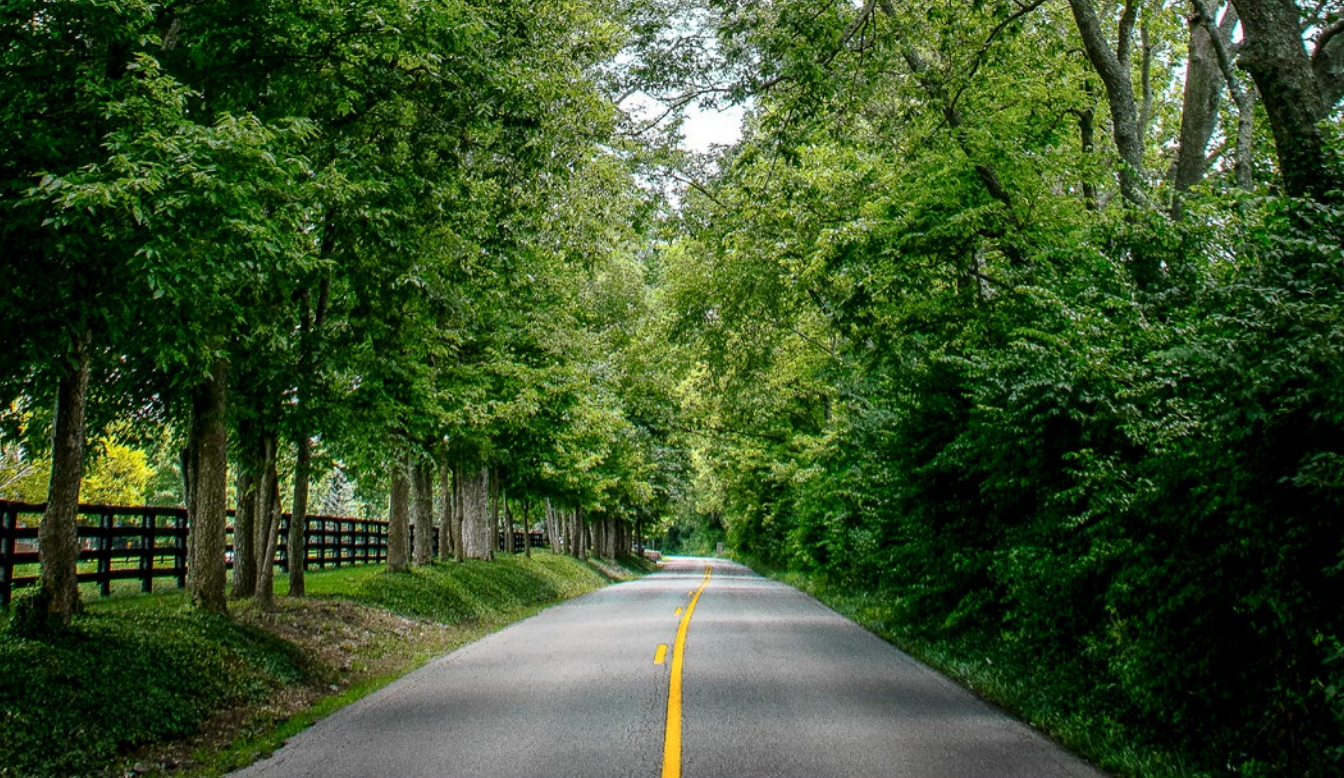


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## Promising Signs

One could listen to all the challenges in Winchester and Clark County and choose only to focus on them. That would be a big mistake and misread what's happening in the community. It would foreclose genuine opportunities that exist to build on current positive progress. For amid the community's significant challenges, there are promising signs of hope, many of which will be highlighted in the following pages.

Some of these promising signs have been percolating for some time now; others are relatively new. No matter, these varied signs of hope are occurring in different pockets, all across the community. For instance, you can see them on Main Street, including

the new Farmers' Market, renovated Leeds Theater and redeveloped Depot Street. For many, the new hospital is a sign of great community pride. Then there's the County Health Department's efforts to create a healthier community. Relatively new bike and walking trails are popular. Rose Mary C. Brooks Place is a result of community members rallying around the need for a safe retirement community in Winchester. The community as a whole has yet to see or experience these promising signs, but they are there. And while the examples listed here aren't intended to be comprehensive, they do reflect a growing trend of positive steps being taken throughout the community. Indeed they represent that hope can be brought out in people and made real in their daily lives. Now is the moment to build on these strengths.



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## Winchester and Clark County Public Capital

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The Harwood Institute’s research and on-the-ground initiatives in communities across the U.S. and elsewhere suggest that for a community to work effectively, it needs a web of fundamental structures, networks and norms. “Public capital” is what we call this rich, complex system. There are nine factors that make up The Harwood Institute’s definition of public capital, each of which a community can actively develop and grow.

In this section, we offer a close look at the Winchester and Clark County community through the lens of public capital. This framework should be thought of as a touchstone—not a scorecard—for understanding the current conditions of Winchester and Clark County and how to strengthen the

community so that it can tackle its challenges and create a greater sense of possibility and hope.

When trying to picture how public capital works, keep in mind an ecosystem that exists right outside your door—or put more simply, how our air, water, land and habitat interact daily. On their own, each of these factors seems quite simple and isolated at times. Indeed, each are often talked about as independent elements. What makes an ecosystem work is the robustness of each element and the healthy relationships between and among them. Public capital operates in much the same way. The nine factors are at once independent and yet highly interdependent. It is the rich, complex interaction between and among them that make a community work.

# Public Capital

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## TANGIBLE DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC CAPITAL

**An Abundance of Social Gatherings** – that enable people to learn about what is happening in the community and begin to develop a sense of mutual trust.

**Organized Spaces for Interaction** – where people can come together to learn about, discuss, and often act on common challenges. These spaces help a community begin to identify and tap resources to address concerns.

**Catalytic Organizations** – that help engage people in public life spur discussion on community challenges and marshal a community's resources to move ahead. These organizations help lay the foundation for community action, but do not act as the driving force.

**Safe Havens for Decision Makers** – where a community's leaders can deliberate and work through community concerns in "unofficial," candid discussions.

## LINKS BETWEEN THE TANGIBLE DIMENSIONS

**Strong, Diverse Leadership** – that extends to all layers of a community, understands the concerns of the community as a whole, and serves as a connector among individuals and organizations throughout the community.

**Informal Networks and Links** – that connect various individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions together to create the cross-fertilization effect of experiences, knowledge, and resources. People carry and spread ideas, messages, and community norms from place to place.

**Conscious Community Discussion** – where a community has ample opportunity to think about and sort through its public concerns before taking action. People play an active role in helping decide how the community should act.

## THE UNDERLYING CONDITIONS OF PUBLIC CAPITAL

**Community Norms for Public Life** – that help guide how people act individually, interact, and work together. These norms set the standards and tone for people's engagement.

**A Shared Purpose for the Community** – that sends an explicit message about the community's aspirations and helps reinforce that everyone is headed toward a common goal.

Recall that to understand the public capital of Winchester and Clark County, The Harwood Institute conducted extensive conversations with community residents that spanned a three-month period. We also interviewed 36 community leaders. What follows are the insights that emerged from these engagement efforts.

## An Abundance of Social Gatherings

One of the most tangible dimensions of public capital is the presence of social gathering places. From youth sports games to potluck dinners, these are occasions for people to learn about what is going on in the community, forge relationships and begin to develop a sense of mutual trust. These gatherings are the seedbed for creating and maintaining public capital.

### What's Going on?

**Numerous social gatherings exist throughout the community.** People identify a whole host of places where they gather with others to talk, exchange stories and create stronger bonds of friendship and trust. The list is plentiful and varied and includes places like hunting and fishing clubs; "coffee clubs" at places such as DQ, Arby's and McDonald's; as well as places such as Grace Coffee, Cairn Coffee House, JK's at Forest Grove and the Engine House Deli. Some people pointed to after-hours cocktail events hosted by the Chamber of Commerce; others the Farmers' Market and film night in the park. Some noted "pop up events" like the Better Block Project that brought people together. And many people said that churches, including local funerals, are vital gathering places. As one person remarked, "Going to a funeral in this community is like going to a social event."

**People gather mostly with those they know.** People said that in most of these gathering places, they are with people they know and feel comfortable with. As one person noted, "I don't see a lot of reaching beyond as far as community." Indeed, in these spaces, there tends to be little mixing of people from different areas of the community, different races, different economic backgrounds, different cultures.

**Youth lack places to go.** Both adults and high school youth said that the community's younger people do not have enough places to get together with friends. Many youth complained that there is "nothing to do" in the community. There's no community center or youth center. There was once a skating rink and bowling alley—both gone now. Many of the sports activities are made up of formal teams that most youth are not be a part of; and many athletic events are now sparsely attended. As mentioned previously, one youth referred to the area as "Deadchester."

### What's Behind it?

**Some gathering places have closed up.** Some people said that there are important gathering places that have closed up over the years, including the bowling alley and skating rink. Others said that local restaurants once located downtown have either shut down or have moved out to the bypass. And there are some who said that local parks in some parts of town, which were once gathering places, no longer feel safe due to crime and drug use.

**There aren't enough "sit-down" restaurants.** People often noted that the area is filled with a good variety of fast-food places to eat, but what they long for are more "sit-down" restaurants where they can enjoy a meal, have a glass of wine or a beer, linger around and meet-up and talk with their friends and neighbors. As one person said, "There aren't enough

restaurants for people to bump into each other and chat.” This was a recurring theme throughout the conversations.

### **Negativity and rumors can drive conversations.**

One challenge that some people talked about was the “negative talk” that can drive local conversations, with the seedbed for this negativity often being social gathering places, where conversations can turn to rumors, gossip and misinformation being passed along, amplified and embellished. One person said, “The issue or problem is that a lot of times the factual basis upon which the discussion occurs probably is a bit lacking at times.” Such negativity has a way of seeping into the larger community conversation and how people view the community. “A lot of the discussion is very negative. From those, a lot of misinformation is distributed out into the community just by word of mouth,” lamented one person.

**Pressures on people and families diminish opportunities to connect.** People’s ability to gather together was also affected by everyday pressures they are experiencing in life. People talked about an inability to gather with others due to having to work multiple jobs and/or having to drive to work outside of town, taking care of family members and combatting various social problems such as drugs. These and other challenges can separate people from one other.

## **Organized Spaces for Interaction**

These spaces provide room for people in a community to come together to learn about, discuss and often act on common challenges. Organized spaces for interaction help a community begin to identify and tap resources to address concerns. The focus is on the opportunities that exist for people to come together—and not necessarily the existence of physical buildings.

## **What’s Going on?**

**There is a small number of isolated examples of organized spaces in the community.** The same examples of where people come together as a community were identified throughout the different conversations. These included efforts by the County Health Department, Leeds Theater, Chamber of Commerce monthly meetings, Extension Service, downtown business association, Leadership Winchester, Clark County Public Library, the local hospital, the Bluegrass Heritage Museum and churches, among some others.

**Meetings tend to focus on a group’s members—not the larger community.** People said that most of the spaces that now exist focus on the particular members of the particular groups holding the meetings. For instance, while people pointed to the Chamber, downtown business association and Leadership Winchester as all positive conveners, their activities by definition are largely attended by their own members. While some churches are working hard to span boundaries, many remain largely parochial in their focus on those who attend their church. Various local institutions such as the Extension Service fill vital niches but do not necessarily bring people together from across different parts of the community.

**Community residents often don’t show up.** People throughout the community lamented that many residents do not show up for those meetings that are open to the public. They said meetings can be sparsely attended; few public comments are made; and people appear to be disinterested and/or apathetic about what is happening in the community. One person lamented, “You’re seeing the same familiar faces again and again.”

## What's Behind it?

### **No place to “wave our community flag” together.**

The community lacks opportunities where residents can gather together, beyond the occasional official public meeting that is held. As one person noted, “All of our civic organizations do wonderful things. No question about that, but we do not have any spot where people can come together and say, ‘Let’s do this together. Let’s work, not trying to wave our individual flag, but let’s wave our community flag.’ That’s what I think we’re missing.”

### **A lack of “know-how” is preventing stronger**

**engagement.** “There has to be structure. People who come together have to have an understanding about what value will come from the discussion. If they understand that, then they will participate and they’ll come together. But if you don’t have a clear objective and a clear idea about what’s going on, then they won’t show up,” observed one person. Some people in these conversations said the need existed to develop stronger approaches and methods for how to more effectively engage the larger community. For instance, the community needs to learn how to frame

*“All of our civic organizations do wonderful things. No question about that, but we do not have any spot where people can come together and say, ‘Let’s do this together.’”*

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**Community meetings can leave little room for people’s concerns.** Many of the places for people to gather are official meetings organized by government entities which often leave little room for residents and their concerns. People in the community complained that these sessions have turned into “dog and pony” shows where officials endlessly talk and where community residents have little opportunity to truly engage with one another. In other cases, such meetings have led to endless acrimony and divisiveness; one example many people cited is the operations of the Fiscal Court. People wondered aloud why they should show up for such meetings.

issues in ways that reflect people’s broader concerns; do better outreach to make people feel more welcomed and encourage them to attend meetings; and provide stronger facilitation of meetings so discussions are more productive.

**Trust is in short supply across dividing lines.** While trust may exist in pockets of the community—where people already gather together and know one another—there is too little trust when people come together from across different neighborhoods, races, faith denominations and economic backgrounds. As is noted in other sections of this report, people consistently said they have been afraid to speak their





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minds, are worried about stepping on one another's toes and fear negative repercussions if they disagree with others. As one person put it, "Nobody wants an argument." Trust is missing.

## Catalytic Organizations

Catalytic organizations engage people and institutions in the work of public life, spur discussions on community challenges and marshal community resources to move ahead. These organizations help lay the foundation for community action, but once an initiative is up and running, these organizations often move on to the next challenge.

### What's Going on?

People point to a cadre of organizations doing good works. There is a clear group of organizations that people said are helping to move the community forward in a positive way, which include but are

certainly not limited to: The Homeless Coalition, Leeds Theater, Community Ministries, the effort between some 10 churches and Habitat for Humanity, Clark County Public Library, the Activity Coalition (a coalition of groups that works on wellness), the Clark County Community Foundation and The Greater Clark Foundation, Community Services, the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Commission (which has come up with an alternative master plan that includes bikes and pedestrians) and Extension Service, among others. These organizations are highly valued among people in the community.

**The County Health Department is perhaps the best example of a catalytic organization.** The department has focused on issues that matter to the whole community—from drug abuse to obesity to general community health. It has successfully brought together different sectors of the community to act on these and other concerns. It has driven the ongoing "MAPP" process, which initially focused on

*“Too many organizations are more concerned about their own agendas than about reaching across the community to help others grow.”*

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substance abuse and obesity, and sparked various groups to work together to produce the popular Farmers’ Market, the countywide walk/bike plan that’s now been adopted, and a grant application for a pedestrian overpass for the high school. MAPP has now turned its attention to the next wave of public concerns. In short, the County Health Department has helped to convene groups across dividing lines, identify common community concerns and catalyzed action throughout the community.

### What’s Behind it?

**Too few organizations and groups span dividing lines and concerns.** Many of the groups and organizations doing good work in the community tend to work in niches and bring people together for those expressed purposes. No doubt, these efforts have led to many productive outcomes.

But the community lacks groups and organizations that intentionally bring people together across the community’s dividing lines of neighborhoods, race, economic backgrounds and faith denominations, among others.

**Some groups persist in operating in isolation from one another.** Beyond organizations choosing to work in a particular niche, they can end up working in highly fragmented ways. As one leader put it, “Too many organizations are more concerned about

their own agendas than about reaching across the community to help others grow.” In turn, they can end up protecting their own turf and resisting collaborative efforts. They can produce duplicative and redundant efforts. Another said, “Many organizations and their boards are concerned about fundraising and staying in business, so their concerns are more inward-looking and limited in outlook.” One oft-cited example of this fragmented situation was the tension between the (now closed) YMCA and the Parks and Recreation Department. Another has been the split between the Homeless Coalition and Beacon of Hope. Each and all of these groups are seen as doing good work and in some cases may have very different missions, but people cannot figure out why they can’t—or won’t—work better together. All this can undermine the effectiveness of their efforts and diminish the community’s confidence in its ability to get things done.

**Not enough concrete action is being produced.**

A common theme echoed throughout these conversations was that people in the community have seen too many efforts fail to produce concrete results. Meetings are called. Discussions take place. Promises are made. And then nothing. One example was the assorted “visioning” exercises that have taken place over the last handful or more of years, which have led to little noticeable results. People said that too many initiatives have come and gone. All this makes people leery of engaging.

## Save Havens for Decision Makers

Safe havens are places where community leaders can come together to talk and work through community concerns in “unofficial,” candid conversations.

### What’s Going on?

**If it’s happening, people don’t talk much about it.** When asked about this, many people in the community—leaders and community residents alike—said they did not know if leaders meet in “safe havens.” Of course, some leaders talked about meeting up for the occasional cup of coffee or to share a meal, but there was little discussion of leaders coming together to forge stronger relationships and work through issues together in these spaces.

#### **Open meeting laws dictate certain practices.**

Another factor in talking about safe havens was that many people said when it comes to public officials, open meeting laws required them to meet in public.

### What’s Behind it?

**The community is mistrustful of many leaders.** Many people questioned even the idea of safe havens because they are so mistrustful of many leaders. They said there are already too many “backroom deals” made in Winchester. As one person remarked, “Well, what I’m going to say is a little controversial, but it’s something I firmly believe: There is so much business done behind the scenes in Winchester that it’s real hard to get a handle on what the truth is and who’s really making policy.” What’s more, people said that too many leaders are focused on their own agenda. As one person stated, “About 50 percent of them follow their own agendas.”

## Strong Diverse Leadership

Strong, diverse leadership must extend to all layers of a community. Leaders must understand the concerns and aspirations of the community as a whole; they must serve as connectors among individuals and organizations throughout the community.

### What’s Going on?

#### **The “Good Ol’ Boys” run the community.**

Repeatedly, people used the same phrase—the “Good Ol’ Boys”—to describe those who lead the community. While there was no formal or even widely agreed upon definition of this group, people tended to include elected officials (many of whom they say have stayed in office for too long), downtown slumlords (who have failed to maintain properties), “old money” individuals and families (who have wielded too much influence) and some businesspeople (who have looked out for their own interests). People said that a divide exists between those who are powerful and connected and the rest of the community at large. One person noted, “We’ve had a lot of the same leadership for a period of time, and it’s not always open-minded leadership. Our leaders are passionate about the community, but there is a little bit of disconnect in being proactive in moving forward.” Some people also asserted that the community’s leadership lacks diversity, as this person did: “I don’t see many people of color whether African-American, Asian or Hispanic or others in any position of leadership within this town. The city as a whole has been racially divided for so long that it has become a way of life that people just accept.”

**People see too much dysfunction among many leaders.** People complained about the dysfunction of certain leaders and their official bodies which undermines a belief that the community can and will improve. Many spoke openly about the Magistrates

*“I don’t see many people of color whether African-American, Asian or Hispanic or others in any position of leadership within this town. The city as a whole has been racially divided for so long that it has become a way of life that people just accept.”*

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on the Fiscal Court, who seem gridlocked, and the school board, where different factions have seemed to work in knee-jerk opposition to one another regardless of the merits of an argument.

**Community is plagued by too many leaders “talking a good game” but not taking action.** There was a pervasive sense that when it comes to taking action, too many leaders have talked a good game but do not produce enough results. Even when they have pursued admirable goals, leaders have failed to connect with one another enough. People argued that too many leaders simply were unwilling to invest resources in the community; whenever the need for new investments arise, some leaders immediately say, “No!” As one person put it, “The first thing that happens is they automatically assume their adversarial persona and then say: ‘How much is that going to cost?’ Never, ‘What kind of benefits do you see coming if we do this?’ It’s always about the money.” The question for many is: How can we figure out when sound investments do make sense?

**Innovative leaders are emerging, but there are still too few of them.** While people complained about the leadership of the community, they also said that

a growing cadre of more innovative leaders were working hard on behalf of the community. There’s no way to provide a comprehensive list here, but some names that did come up in our conversations time and again included: Rachel Alexander, executive director of Main Street Winchester; Scott Lockard, director of the Clark County Health Department; Cherie Sibley, CEO of Clark Regional Medical Center; Nancy Turner, executive director of Winchester Tourism; Marvin King, pastor of First Baptist Church; Jen Algire, CEO of The Greater Clark Foundation; Cindy Banks, executive director of the Winchester-Clark County Chamber of Commerce. Still, many people said that there are too few of these leaders in numbers and that there weren’t enough younger leaders, people of color and people from different parts of the community in leadership roles.

### What’s Behind it?

**Some leaders are out for their own good.** People said consistently that some leaders make decisions that they see as “corrupt”—a word that came up in many of these conversations. No one talked about any one leader stealing public or civic resources, or seemingly using public dollars illegally. Rather,



the perception of corruption comes in the form of looking the other way when action should be taken, such as ridding the streets of prostitutes and drugs. Others said that some leaders have played favoritism in making decisions by not enforcing building codes downtown or by refusing to take action on something that seeks to preserve the status quo. One person said, "What I've seen in the past is that you have a couple of people who have a lot of political clout and they can change the whole process. That's very disheartening to me." And another said, "Names, family, history and tradition drive attitudes about change. It can get clannish, and a good ol' boys network can sway outcomes." Still others pointed to the long tenures for some elected officials who, one person said, "You only really see them or know them at election times," which was equated with the self-preservation of power.

**Many leaders fail to work on behalf of the whole community.** Overall, many people expressed the feeling that leaders were "Not in it" with the community. This included political leaders as well as government agency officials and non-profit and faith leaders. As one person said, "I think leaders of the community typically, when they decide to step

up and become a leader in the community, have an agenda. They have a single issue or set of issues that may or may not match up with the constituents." Another problem was that while many leaders belong to a variety of organizations, they tend to come into contact with only those parts of the community they directly serve or see. This has meant that they have a limited view of the larger community, its aspirations and needs. And some believed that political leaders, specifically, only show up when they want something. Said one person, "It doesn't have to be every week or every month, just some time, where you're visible and you show me that you're concerned about my needs or wants. Don't just come around election time. That's a big, big disconnect in my opinion."

**The fragmentation of leaders harms community efforts.** "There are some really strong leaders within the African-American community, and there are strong leaders in the white community...Seldom do you see those cross and be in one place." People said that too many leaders do not cross the community's different dividing lines, and that too many leaders "go off in different directions" when they needed to be working together. As noted elsewhere, examples of this fragmentation have included work on homelessness issues as well as the persistent divides between the now-closed YMCA and Parks and Recreation and the two Labor Day Festivals to divisions among churches, among others. As noted, the problem with persistent fragmentation included elected leaders and non-profit, religious and other leaders, too. "You still have that separation, but I think it's not from a lack of trying," is how one person put it. No matter the extent to which this sentiment is true, most everyone agreed that the community must break down the walls of separation.

**Leaders can be afraid to stick their necks out.** One challenge for the community is that those leaders who want to help move the community forward can



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be afraid to speak out for fear of getting cut down. It can be hard to stick your neck out, especially on tough issues where there may be resistance within the community to acknowledge certain issues and work through different options for moving forward. There can be voter backlash to ideas that are thought to push ahead too fast, or in one particular direction or another. Racial tensions can flare up. And established leaders—the “Good Ol’ Boys”—can undermine efforts they don’t support or which challenge the status quo. As one person said, “Fighting the establishment is not for the faint of heart, and most people aren’t up to it.” And for leaders who are newcomers this can be especially hard, said one person who added that established leaders are not always “very open to the potential for new ideas, for new perspective, for new experiences.”

There is a clear desire among some leaders to work together more. Leaders from different neighborhoods, races, faith denominations and economic backgrounds all said they need—and want—to work together more. Some said there have been good efforts that have already taken place,

many of which are already highlighted in this report. These efforts have taken intentional actions to bring leaders from different areas together and to find ways to work better together. It’s hard work, and those doing the heavy lifting can burn out.

## Informal Networks and Links

Informal networks and links work to connect various individuals, groups, organizations and institutions together to cross-fertilize experiences, knowledge and resources. Through these networks and links, people carry and spread ideas, messages and community norms from place to place.

### What’s Going on?

**Some networks and links are being forged in isolated areas.** There were a number of areas within the community where people said larger, cross-cutting informal networks are forming, taking root and spreading. These networks have helped the community get its work done. Such networks and links include the County Health Department’s

## *“There are high functioning spheres, but nothing linking them.”*

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MAPP effort; work between the hospital and health department; area churches working with Habitat and also with Community Services, which has been taking on emergency services for the poor; and Partners in Education, which provides mentors in schools. In these and other instances, new relationships have formed that not only benefit the focus of their particular efforts, but also forge stronger relationships and links that will produce greater trust and good work on other community concerns.

### What’s Behind it?

**Being highly personally connected does not necessarily translate into larger informal networks.**

It is true that people in the community have shared strong personal bonds of connection, which are largely personal in nature and exist within pockets of the community. These ties can create the appearance of a shared understanding and knowledge of the larger community and that people are working together—but that’s often not the case. Instead, in some ways, such connections can also keep people separated from one another. As one person pointed out: “I think we don’t understand the people and groups of the community. We think we understand. We think because we have known people, that we know people. Just because you’ve known people doesn’t mean you know people.” In practice, fragmented networks can actually diminish the cross-fertilization of ideas, knowledge and productive community norms.

**Fragmentation is still the default mode for doing things.** Outside of the highlighted positive efforts, many people said that fragmentation was still the dominant mode of working in the community. One person observed, “There are high functioning spheres, but nothing linking them.” “Leaders from different sectors don’t work together,” is how another individual put it. When people do get together, their interactions can be limited to specific efforts, where there has been limited learning from one another, sharing of ideas and generating of new efforts together. As one person noted, “There’s a lot of activity and there’s a lot of interest, and trying to get people to look over there, or look on the other side of the fence, or look outside the silo is a little difficult. The reaction is: ‘Why? That’s not my gig. That’s not my deal.’”

**There’s a lack of common knowledge of different efforts.** Many people said they simply do not know about what is going on with different collaborative efforts, meetings and events in the community. As one person observed, “I am still amazed that I will be out talking to folks and they will be like, ‘Well I didn’t know that was going on, or, I didn’t know this was going on.’ It is a big challenge.” This was a common refrain. And yet there has been a variety of efforts to better “communicate” in the community by different groups and organizations through email blasts, notices in the newspaper and through local radio, among other sources. It appears that many of the networks exist in pockets of community, not

connected to one another, and where the flow of information and knowledge does not extend far and wide. What's more, the information flow also can be one-directional. There are many groups trying hard to "tell" others about what they are doing, and so they think of themselves as making an effort to connect. But this doesn't necessarily mean that enough two-way communication is happening, which promotes real links, attachments, word of mouth and relationships.

## Conscious Community Discussion

It is through conscious community discussion that a community creates opportunities to think about and sort out its public concerns before taking action. Communities that work together make a conscious point to constantly engage each other—citizens, institutions, leaders and others. This is a key part of creating a shared sense of purpose and direction within the community.

### What's Going on?

**People hold up some good examples, but they're isolated and limited.** People struggled to identify times and places when the community had come together to discuss important issues and work together to figure out how to move forward. And the ones they did identify were often limited in nature. Some people pointed to the school consolidation process, which did bring together different voices and provide for some frank and open discussion, but some were quick to point out that that effort was mandated by the state. Another example was the Winchester Clark County Emergency Management group, but while that process is open to the public, it has largely been a discussion held among professionals. Still others said that the Narcan

training has brought people together from different walks of life. A number of people pointed to Main Street Winchester, as one person said, "Main Street Winchester program does great meetings. They have events. They have worked on a master plan, and that process included open community meetings. We had 50 or more people. People standing. We all broke up into small groups to talk about issues. Then we presented back." And yet even here people pointed out that there has been a lack of diversity of participants and voices.

### People quickly point to efforts that didn't work.

While people struggled to identify productive efforts to engage the community, they were quick to point out what hasn't worked. At times they struggled for things that hadn't worked as well, but this negative sentiment was strong nonetheless. Some pointed to Stand Up for Winchester and Clark County, an annual get-together that took place over a number of years, which seemed to produce some benefits in terms of creating more local bonds of trust, but which many say petered out. One individual noted, "After three years the process fizzled—maybe because we tended to get the same people out each year. Only about 100 participated. There was some diversity, but mostly it was white males between 40 and 70." Other conversation participants mentioned earlier "visioning" exercises that experienced a similar fate. For some, the jury is still out on the more recent "1107" (new park area) engagement efforts.

**The same people show up.** Indeed there was a widespread concern that the same active community people have tended to show up for community discussions and that they are usually directly affected by whichever issue has been on the table for discussion. While there was frustration expressed about this, there was also a recognition that people's lives can be complicated and limit their involvement. "There's a lack of broad participation



*“Discussion largely happens at the organizational and professional levels, so the wider community isn’t often involved.”*

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in the community. I guess it’s just the way people anymore go about their daily lives. So many people are struggling to make ends meet and that sort of thing. They don’t really get involved in anything.” Another person stated, “People are so focused on their daily lives and raising families that they don’t get involved. It’s even hard to get parents to attend school meetings.”

### What’s Behind it?

**There’s formal input, but not enough genuine discussion.** People said there have been routine places for community residents to have “input” into formal bodies, such as the City Commission, Fiscal Court and the school board, among others. But as one person said, “Much of the discussion takes place at official meetings where people are asked for their input on things already created or even decided. There are too many ‘dog and pony’ shows, where people must remain passive. Conversations don’t go deep enough.” And another, “Discussion largely happens at the organizational and professional levels, so the wider community isn’t often involved.” Far fewer opportunities have existed where people from the community can talk with one another about things that matter to them. Said one person, “In order for change to occur in this community, it requires time and patience and a pretty comprehensive public discussion. If you’re willing to put in the time and work and have that discussion with the public, then it will pay off.”

**Conversations can be negative, reactive and produce little positive action.** When people do get together, they said the conversations often go nowhere. Negativity and complaints about a lack of activities, stores leaving downtown, dilapidated buildings and drugs, and other issues dominate conversations. One person characterized conversations as, “Not focused. Pretty much grumbling. Not proactive. More reactive. From my experience, I haven’t seen much positivity in those conversations.” Another person pointed out, “We’re playing Whack-a-Mole.” Instead, this person said that the community needed to ask, “How can we make the biggest impact in our community? How can we cause the biggest fundamental change? What’s going to bring about this generational change? ... What are the members of these communities telling us themselves? What do they say? What would they say is my biggest need?” Another pointed out, “I really haven’t seen really a lot of public forums that invite communities to have discussions about issues the community needs to address.”

**Many people fear speaking up and being left out.** Time and again people—community residents and leaders alike—pointed to being afraid to speak up for fear of being singled out. “People in a small town are sometimes apprehensive about speaking out because everyone knows who they are, and they run the risk of retaliation. The relationships that people have kind of hinder people from being very objective and to talk very critically about an issue.”

This challenge took on even greater importance as people talked about the need to bridge divides in the community, which comes with even more risks of speaking out.

**Sessions are held at times and in places that don't fit with people's lives.** Too many meeting times have been scheduled when people were working, they have occurred in places that aren't convenient, and they often aren't served by public transportation. It was pointed out repeatedly that many people in the area have to work multiple jobs, must travel out of town for work and are challenged by a lack of child care. Said one person, "A lot of our institutions, we all need to do a better job of having available times and considerations for working parents. We always want everyone to work and do these things, yet consistently we'll have functions in the middle of the day and the school will do something and send you two days' notice, if you get that, if it's not the day before of the event that's occurring."

## Community Norms for Public Life

Common community norms for public life help to guide how people act individually, interact and work together. These norms set the standards and tone for public life and engagement.

### What's Going on?

**The community prides itself on being friendly and generous.** The community takes enormous pride in its friendliness and a sense that when someone or some group is in need, people step up to help. Said one individual, "Our community is generous when it comes to supporting what they perceive to be significant needs. When you're talking about the homeless or food, shelter, clothing. People step up for that." Those who live here have deep affection for the community, notwithstanding its challenges.

**There is increasing levels of collaboration happening.** There are stronger norms emerging within the community of people and groups working more collaboratively, seeking to bridge community divides and addressing common challenges. Many examples have already been cited in this report.

**Many people are still complacent, even resigned to what is.** People said there is a kind of "complacency and resignation" to current conditions that has been hard to dislodge. One person said, "I think that the way of life is comfortable for people. It never challenges us to look at ourselves or to consistently evaluate, are we becoming the best we can be? Then you don't see the sense of urgency that's necessary or the commitment necessary to bring that kind of change about." Another put it this way, "Most of the people in the community, they're somewhat negative, and even worse than being negative, they're apathetic. They will complain about numerous issues, but very seldom do they show up to voice those complaints in a manner that is effective to their cause."

**The community can't—or won't—move forward.** People pointed to lots of activity, conversations and meetings in the community but said that too many efforts have produced too little progress. There can be a lack of push to move things forward. "There's this reluctance to take stands and say, 'This is what needs to be done. We need to move forward.' There's just this, 'Don't rock the boat' attitude."

### What's Behind it?

**There is tension in balancing the old and the new.** Winchester and Clark County have a rich tradition, and people are torn about how to balance it with the new. Progress can be blocked; some people have wanted to keep things the way they've always been. At the same time, those seeking progress may not



*“There’s this reluctance to take stands and say, ‘This is what needs to be done. We need to move forward.’ There’s just this, ‘Don’t rock the boat’ attitude.”*

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fully understand or acknowledge what’s important to people who have lived in the area for a long time. This means that the community can feel stymied or stuck.

**Frustration and fear dampen engagement and hope.**

Throughout this report, we have noted that many people in the community are frustrated—even angry—about the lack of progress in the community, people’s fear of speaking out and the persistence of various community divides that separate people from one another. One person said that a different approach is called for. “It’s almost like we need people to take ownership and leadership of these projects then ask people to get involved. I am a working mother. I don’t have a whole lot of spare time, but I also cannot say ‘no’ if somebody asked me to do something. I don’t know how effective we are at asking people to become involved. Maybe that is what it is going to take.”

**There aren’t enough commonly shared examples of positive action.** One person observed, “Many people have gotten content with the way things are because there’s no systemic change. There’s no consistent change. Things don’t change often enough to generate excitement or enthusiasm. People just kind of get lulled into a sense of complacency. ‘This is how it

is’ and ‘This is how it’s going to be.’ People then adapt the minds of what voice do I have because nothing’s going to change anyway.” While positive forward steps have been taken in the community, they are not part of a “shared” story of the community. They are too isolated, not widely known and not held in common.

**A strong desire exists for more “community know-how” to move things forward.** “It’s hard to get people involved,” said one person. “I don’t know how to do that.” Indeed in many of these conversations people said they would welcome more opportunities to learn how to productively engage the community in genuine conversations, how to navigate and bridge the community divides and how to translate ideas into action. Said another, “How do we get more participation, different participation? How do we change that?” One person added, “The people who come together have to have an understanding about what value will come from the discussion. If they understand that, then they will participate, and they’ll come together. But if you don’t have a clear objective and a clear idea about what’s going on, they won’t show up. They’ll say, ‘I’ve got to feed my children, and I got to get their bath and do homework, and I got to get them in bed.’”



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## Shared Purpose for the Community

When communities have a shared sense of purpose, explicit messages exist about the community's aspirations and about everyone heading toward a common goal—or at least trying to work at common goals.

### What's Going on?

**People don't feel the community has pulled together.** Things can feel very fragmented to people, with different efforts going on, and different people leading them, often moving in different directions. Leaders and citizens alike do not feel like they are moving forward with a sense of shared purpose. "I don't see many initiatives that pull people together and actively deal with addressing the social,

economic and academic and educational concerns of the people. I just don't see it," one person observed. "There is no common vision of what positive change is," another said. "There needs to be more conversation to figure out what a shared purpose is."

**While there may be agreement on some challenges, there's not on what to do about them.** There appear to be a number of issues where general agreement that something needs to change—from drug abuse to downtown to various health concerns. But on these and other issues, there often isn't agreement on what to do. Speaking about such efforts and those that lead them, one person remarked: "They are all good people, and they all want what is best for the community. But there's just not a real consensus a lot of times. I truly believe every person that is serving this community really wants what's best for it."

*“There is no common vision of what positive change is,” another said.*  
*“There needs to be more conversation to figure out what a shared purpose is.”*

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**Despite people’s friendliness, even generosity, the community lives in divided ways.** While people consistently celebrated the small-town feel of the area, its friendliness and, especially, its generosity, the community has remained divided by race, income, religious denomination and old vs. new, among other divides. Some people have felt that their voices are not valued and welcomed and fear negative repercussions for speaking out. Indeed, one pastor made this observation: “I have been asked, ‘Why won’t African-American people come to meetings?’ Why do you think? If you are asked a question and you give an honest answer and nothing happens, how many times are you going to give an honest answer?”

**The story of the community is up for grabs.** There has been a decidedly ingrained negative narrative in the community that it is stuck and resists change. As one person noted, “We have been stuck for a period of time.” When asked, another individual said the motto for the community could be, “Winchester Fail.” This person elaborated, “Good things will start to happen, and then they flutter away.” Perhaps the sheer potency of this negative narrative was most clearly heard when talking with the high school youth of the community, who offered up such community mottos as “Deadchester” and “Run While You Can!”

At the same time, there has been a new, emerging narrative of people seeking to work together, tackle tough issues and make some progress. One person put it this way: “Everybody is trying is further themselves in life in a more community-based way. It’s not just all about me. It’s about everybody.” This same person continued, “Maybe that’s half our problem. Maybe we need to get back to our roots and give back to our community.” She then continued, “I think people are starting to do that. It’s been over the past probably two or three years.”

### What’s Behind it?

**“What’s in it for me” attitude.** Despite the friendliness and generosity of the community, there has existed a pull among people and groups and organizations to look out for themselves. One person put it this way: “You look out for me, and I’ll look out for me.” Perhaps for some individuals and families, this has been because of the tough times already noted in this report. In terms of people in power, one individual said, “People in power here, they want change, but only the change that puts money in their pocketbooks. If it helps the community as a whole, they’re not interested. If it helps their businesses, then they’re all for it.” People remarked this attitude of ‘What’s in it for me’ is pervasive. Organizations

often are more concerned with their own survival and protecting their turf. Churches, many of which do good works, are often fractured along denominational lines and tend primarily to their own flocks. Many political leaders seek to protect their own interests and power. And community residents are often focused on their own interests.

**The community is reactive—not proactive.** People repeatedly said that if and when the community does act on challenges, it has been reactive. Notwithstanding some positive examples, little proactive action was seen as being taken. Said one person, “I don’t see this community readily embracing or trying to get the best of breed ideas and the best of breed perspective, the best of breed gifts and talents. I don’t see that.” And another added, “What is lacking is all of us pulling together and trying to come up with some common goals and objectives that we can work together on as opposed to individual efforts.”

**People can be afraid to dream.** Life has been tough for many people who make this community home. Many have seen the community try things to move forward, only then to peter out. All this has contributed to people being fearful to dream about

their future and the future of the community. One person observed, “The leaders in town may agree on the challenges, but they do not ‘dream big’ or invite different kinds of people and ideas into the discussion.” Said another:

*“What I’ve noticed in this town is that there are very few people who dream very big. It’s almost as if people are used to doing things the same way all the time, and the same people do the same things all the time. There’s no fresh perspective that comes to the table. It’s like when there is a community initiative, it seems like the people in leadership go to the same people all the time, and you get the same ideas all the time. What happens is it stops the creativity of other people...to where people feel like they cannot be a part of or are not good enough to be a part of. What happens is when people don’t feel like they’re good enough or they’re not invited to the table, they’re not valued, what happens is it causes contentment, it causes complacency and so people stop dreaming, and people stop having visions.”*

# Community as a Common Enterprise

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## *The moment for Winchester and Clark County is now.*

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At the start of this report, a basic question was asked about how Winchester and Clark County can build on its strengths to thrive. For some people, this may seem like an odd question given the tough, seemingly immovable challenges that have confronted the community over many years. Isn't the current path of the community destined to continue? But listen to the voices of residents and leaders from the community, and a quite different path begins to emerge and take shape. On this path, the community recognizes its challenges but does not succumb to

them. It sees the divides that exist but commits itself to bridging them. It hears people's fear of speaking out and makes the choice to create safe spaces for those same people to engage without such fear. On this path, past failed efforts are to be learned from but do not dictate what comes next. This path is about generating greater civic confidence and not allowing negativity to drive the story of the community. The alternate path is one of possibility and hope—for all.

No one believes this path will be an easy go or happen just because people wish for it or come about simply because people launch and laud more disparate activities. The only way to further expand and deepen possibility and hope is to take more intentional actions that reflect what matters to people and bring people together to get things done.

Here are seven steps to get on this path:

- 1. Further strengthen the community's existing good works.** As noted throughout this report, there are existing pockets of good things already happening in the community. These efforts should become the platform upon which to develop the community. As such, these efforts must be actively supported, nurtured and then expanded. It would be easy to turn one's attention to focusing just on new efforts; but that would be a mistake. Progress will be made by building on—and celebrating—what already works.
- 2. Develop leaders who want to work in better ways.** There is little doubt from community residents and leaders that Winchester and Clark County need more leaders who are ready to focus on what matters to people, work in more collaborative ways and zero in on how to bring about positive, supported change. Such leaders need to be actively cultivated and developed—this must be a priority. But merely developing more of these leaders and sending them off on their own will not produce the desired results. These leaders will face tough challenges, resistance, even efforts to pull them down; they will need to be continually brought together over time to share ideas, learn from one another, innovate together and find ways to support one another. This is not about coordinating all their actions, but rather, creating a network of leaders that can help to propel the community forward.
- 3. Get people talking about their shared aspirations and concerns.** Too much of the community conversation in Winchester and Clark County is focused on narrow or technical issues that do not adequately reflect people's lives, tend to be driven by professionals and can be framed in negativity and complaints. All this has undermined community residents' desire to engage and leaders' ability to understand what matters to the whole community. It's time to shift the conversation, and this will require taking intentional actions. First, the community's conversation should focus on people's shared aspirations for the community as a whole and to understand their main concerns in reaching those aspirations. Second, in holding these conversations, the community should—with sensitivity and care—make efforts to bridge divides that hold the community back. Third, safe spaces will need to be created to ensure that people do not fear speaking out and speaking up. Fourth, whatever emerges from these conversations must lead to action.
- 4. Focus on doable actions.** There is widespread belief in the community that positive efforts are doomed to fail or peter out. People's civic confidence is low, as are their expectations that change is possible. The only way to alter this reality is to provide clear, concrete proof points that demonstrate what is possible when a different path is taken. And then the only way for this new path to be truly believable is to demonstrate such actions over time. But let's be clear: The task before Winchester and Clark County is not to take on all of its challenges at once; nor to proclaim through a single project or process that somehow conditions in the community will be upended; nor to promise to turn the community around overnight. Such promises will only serve to generate greater skepticism, even cynicism. Instead, the



community should identify small steps that are actionable, doable and achievable—and which bridge divides—and build on these over time.

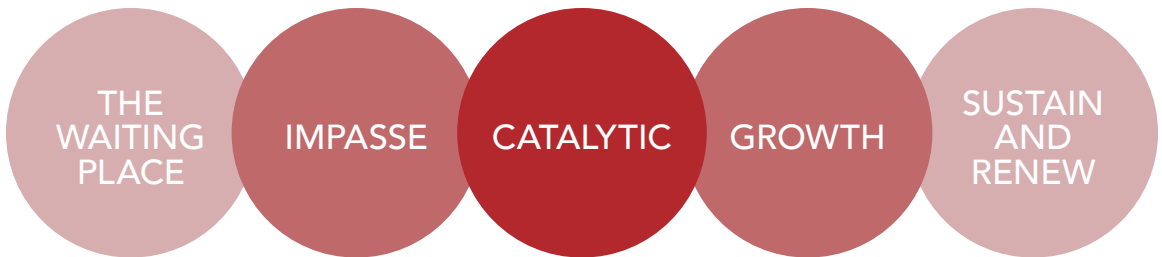
5. **Mobilize people to do work together.** Many people in Winchester and Clark County do not feel a part of shaping their future. Many feel that the fate of their lives—and that of the community—is beyond their control. And many feel that they are alone, being left out and left behind. Key to moving forward is to get people doing things together that restore their can-do spirit. The opportunity here is to focus on things that matter to people in the community and marshal people's individual and collective talents, time and energy to make a difference. And it is to leverage one of the few and most powerful resources that we have but which does not cost money: people. So many of the challenges now confronting the community—from broken families to drugs to park clean-ups to shut-in elderly to more youth needing mentors—require people to help solve them. This is an opportunity.
6. **Bridge divides that keep people separated.** Throughout the conversations, community residents and leaders alike returned time and again to various divides of race and culture, where people live, old vs. new and church denominations. Clearly, some actions are being taken to bridge these divides, but much more are called for. There is no magical way to do this. Instead, these divides need to be carefully tended to through how new community conversations are structured and held; and while such conversations are pivotal, alone they will not be enough. Divides are sometimes best bridged by people doing things together, often in small ways, over time. Then, people can see and hear others as people; they can better understand the lives of others; they can come to discover the strengths and gifts of others. As noted in point five, a priority should be placed

on finding shared community efforts that people can work on together, that can be highlighted and that can help develop civic understanding and confidence.

7. **Foster a new can-do story of the community.** Winchester and Clark County struggle with a persistent, ingrained negative narrative about the community. This narrative is often rooted in what is not possible, about how previous efforts have failed and about how the community is destined to be forever stuck. There is no public relations campaign that can turn this story around and make people believe a different reality. That would be a fool's errand. Instead, new can-do community narratives only emerge from the concrete actions that demonstrate the possibility of a new path. Such actions must be real. They must emerge from the community. They must be believable. As a community develops more and more positive actions, it must actively tell these new stories, without hype, without sensation, and without overblowing their significance. And it must tell these new stories consistently, over time, connecting one to the other, such that a new, more positive narrative begins to overwhelm the old ingrained narrative.

*Waving the Community's Flag* is about the state of life and conditions in Winchester and Clark County. But it is about much more than that. It is about how a community can seize greater control over shaping its own future. Recall the person who said, "Everybody's got hope, you just got to bring it out." That will require the people of this community to come together—and work together.

The moment for Winchester and Clark County is now.



## Community Rhythms: The Stages of Community Life

Why is it that some communities make progress and others don't? And why is it that when we implement an initiative in one community it creates great success, but in another community it doesn't seem to gain any traction?

Communities go through stages. There are five stages The Harwood Institute has discovered, which we call Community Rhythms. They are listed with descriptions in the chart below.

We often calibrate our strategies and solutions as if we are in one of the later stages such as Growth or Sustain & Renew, yet most communities are in one of the first three stages. If we don't calibrate our strategies to the stage of community life, our efforts are doomed to fail.

After reading this report, and looking at the descriptions of these stages – and, thinking about your own experiences – what stage do you think best fits Winchester and Clark County? And how can the community best move forward?

## THE WAITING PLACE

- In the Waiting Place, people sense that things are not working right in their community, but they are unable to clearly define the problem; the feeling could be described as a “felt unknown.”
- People feel disconnected from leaders and from different processes within the community for making decisions; the community itself is fragmented; discussion about common challenges is infrequent and/or highly divisive.
- Community discussion about challenges is infrequent and/or highly divisive. People want to create change, but negative norms for public life keep them locked into old patterns.
- People often are waiting - for issues to become clearer, for someone else to “solve” their problems. People in this stage often say, “Everything will be better when we get the right mayor to save the community!” So, people just wait.

## IMPASSE

- At Impasse, the community has hit rock bottom, and people can be heard saying, “Enough is enough! It can’t go on like this any longer!”
- In this stage, unlike in the Waiting Place, there is a sense of urgency in people’s voices; people are tired of “waiting.” But while people want change, they lack clarity about what to do.
- The community’s norms and ways of working together keep the community stuck in an undesirable status quo. The community is mired in turf wars; it lacks leadership at different levels and people seem fixated on their own individual interests.
- People’s frustrations have hit the boiling point, but the community lacks the capacity to act.

## CATALYTIC

- The Catalytic stage starts with small steps that are often imperceptible to the vast majority of people in the community.
- Small numbers of people and organizations begin to emerge, taking risks and experimenting in ways that challenge existing norms in how the community works.
- The size of their actions is not the vital gauge. Their actions produce some semblance of results that gives people a sense of hope.
- As this stage unfolds, the number of people and organizations stepping forward increases, and links and networks are built between and among them.
- A key challenge in this stage is the emerging conflict between a nascent story of hope and the ingrained narrative that “nothing can change.” Even as change appears, the old narrative will still dominate people’s communication and outlook until more progress is made and trust builds.

## GROWTH

- During the Growth stage, people begin to see clearer and more pervasive signs of how the community is moving forward.
- People in the community are able to name leadership at all levels and where such leadership is expanding and deepening - from the official level to neighborhoods, within civic organizations and nonprofits. Networks are growing, and a sense of common purpose and direction are taking deep root.
- People feel a renewed spirit of community. More people are working together. Efforts are taking place across the community and are targeted to more concerns.
- A feature of this stage is that you can randomly ask people on the street what kind of community they live in, and they provide similar answers. A common story has emerged about the community.

## SUSTAIN AND RENEW

- In Sustain and Renew, the community is ready to take on, in a deeper and more sustained way, the tough, nagging issues that may have been tackled before but were not adequately addressed.
- Such issues might include the public schools, racism and race relations and economic growth in all neighborhoods; change on these concerns typically requires sustained, long-term effort.
- Lessons and insights and new norms that have emerged over time pervade the community.
- But, the community may be struggling to maintain its momentum. It must find new ways to bring along a new cadre of leaders, civic groups and active citizens, as others tire or move on.
- There is a danger that the community will fall into a new Waiting Place as it comes to rest on its laurels.



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