Final Report:
Attracting and Retaining Clinton County's Young People

Prepared by

Anna Wiederhold,[a] Laura Black, [b] and Ted Welser [c]

[a] University of Nevada, Reno – Communication Studies Department
[b] Ohio University – School of Communication Studies
[c] Ohio University - Department of Sociology & Anthropology

September 2013

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This report is the product of a year-long collaboration with community partners in local government, the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission, and the Wilmington-Clinton County Chamber of Commerce. The study consisted of an online survey, which yielded 288 complete responses, and three focus group interviews with a total of 30 young adults. Each focus group session lasted approximately two hours, for a total of six hours of audio recording and field observations.

The 27-question survey asked respondents to describe their sense of community, report on their volunteering activity, and, most importantly, identify economic, social, and physical factors influencing their decisions regarding where to live, work, and spend their money (see Appendix A). With the assistance of our community partners, a link to the survey was distributed via email and social networking sites to a viral sample of Clinton County residents past and present. The survey was launched on March 28, 2013 and remained open until May 24, 2013. At the closing date, the survey yielded 288 completed responses.

On April 24, 2013, a group of four researchers from Ohio University (Drs. Wiederhold and Black, accompanied by two graduate students) came to Wilmington to run and facilitate a series of three focus groups. At the beginning of each session, we introduced ourselves as visiting researchers and passed out informed consent forms. The facilitators asked focus group participants to first identify problems they see for attracting or retaining young people in Wilmington and Clinton County. Then, participants identified things that they like about the area and developed proposals for future action (see Appendix B for a full outline of the interview protocol). Participation in the research was, of course, optional and we had a total of 30 participants in the focus groups. All focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed, resulting in 162 pages of single-spaced text. For the purposes of this report we have assigned pseudonyms to all participants in order to respect their confidentiality.[1]

The first section of this report provides a detailed description of our methods of data collection and analysis. Generally speaking, our goal with this research project was to determine what factors young adults consider when deciding where to live, work, shop, and dine. The hope was that the data generated by this study might inform evidence-based regional planning as decision-makers in Wilmington and Clinton County look forward to future development.

In the second and third sections of this report, we provide the results of our research, presenting summaries of both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The quantitative analysis of survey responses is divided into three major sub-sections: sense of community; social, economic, and community matters; and focusing on the at-risk/disappointed group.

---

[1] Quotes from interviews and transcripts are presented verbatim except that a few have been edited for clarity. This editing involved removing repeated words or phrases that do not add to the meaning of the quote (e.g., we sometimes deleted extra "ums" and "you knows?") to aid readability.

First, respondents' sense of community was calculated based on a validated scale asking survey-takers to comment on the extent to which Wilmington/Clinton County meets their basic needs, provides them with a sense of membership, allows opportunities for influence, and builds a shared emotional connection between its residents. Overall, this study suggests that respondents highly value a strong sense of community; however, compared to older adults (aged 50+), there are a higher percentage of young people who experience a low sense of community in Wilmington and Clinton County.

We delve more deeply into the dynamics of this first quantitative conclusion in a sub-section focusing specifically on the at-risk group of residents who are currently disappointed with their experiences living and/or working in Clinton County. Interestingly, respondents reporting both favorable and unfavorable opinions of the area still valued at the same level the importance of experiencing a strong sense of community in the place they call home. However, disappointed people reported feeling less connected and less bonded with the Wilmington/Clinton County community than their happy peers. Importantly, people who reported feelings of dissatisfaction plan to leave Wilmington in the next five years at a remarkably higher rate than their satisfied counterparts, which suggests that this group might be a primary target for future efforts geared toward better retaining the area's young people.

The remainder of the quantitative analysis section outlines differences between reported preferences of disappointed/happy people, as well as preferential differences across age groups. Notably, with regard to social, economic, and community matters, there are many similarities across age groups. Among the differences, however, young people tend to emphasize the importance of finding well-paying jobs in their particular industry of choice, having access to a variety of local dining and recreation opportunities for single adults, and developing the physical aspects of town that would make the community more pedestrian friendly. Disappointed members of the Wilmington/Clinton County community also placed a high value on dining, shopping, and recreational opportunities for single adults, but above all else emphasized the importance of salary in determining where they ultimately choose to make their home.

The third and final major section of this report supplies the conclusions drawn from our systematic analysis of open-ended survey questions and focus group interviews. These qualitative data provide more extensive insights into the problems, assets, tensions, and proposals indicated by the quantitative analysis. Specifically, the primary areas of concern revolved around the lack of coherent community identity and the missed connections between young people and local businesses. Playing into these problem areas are additional issues regarding perceptions that Clinton County lacks diversity and that tensions exist between "insiders" and "outsiders" that makes the tight-knit interior of the town difficult for newcomers to break into.

Despite these problems, Wilmington and Clinton County were celebrated by respondents for their many assets. In particular, participants in this study appreciated the small town atmosphere and strong sense of community in this rural locale. They expressed comfort in the safety and quality of life in the country but appreciated downtown development efforts

and the proximity to larger cities. Tensions like these—wanting the comfort of rural life but the conveniences of city living—were pervasive and warranted a sub-section of their own. In this report, we discuss three sets of contradictory sentiments expressed throughout participants' qualitative comments.

The first tension points to a meaningful disconnection between local employers and local job-seekers. Certain long-time residents claim Wilmington/Clinton County as home but note the lack of available jobs in their industry or area of training as the sole reason why they would leave a place they love so deeply. In contrast, another segment of respondents claim they came to Wilmington for employment alone, and if it were not for their job they would likely leave because they have not developed a sense of connection to the community as a long-term home. In these responses we see a tension many residents negotiate between satisfaction in one realm of their work/home life balance and dissatisfaction in the other. Some longtime residents are not equipped to fill open positions locally and find themselves unemployed or underemployed while local businesses must recruit new employees from qualified pools of people lacking connection to the area.

The second tension discussed in this report points to one explanation for the lack of connection newcomers feel when they move to Wilmington for work. Several participants highly valued the close-knit feeling of the local community; however, they also felt that the tightly-woven interior created a barrier to entry for anyone outside of that fabric. Breaking into tight circles and finding a niche appears to be viewed as an at times insurmountable challenge.

Finally, respondents recognized that Wilmington today is the product, at least in part, of the economic turmoil borne of the DHL departure in 2008. However, newcomers and young people express frustration that this victim narrative continues to define the area when it is also the site of innovation, opportunity, and change. As a result, the recognition of lingering ramifications of past hardship exists in tension with a desire to move forward into an action-oriented future.

The final sub-section of the qualitative analysis capitalizes on this image of Wilmington as a site of opportunity and lists ten participant-supplied proposals for future action. Our goal with this report was to summarize, organize, and illustrate our findings from an extensive mixed-methods study of the problems, assets, and opportunities currently characterizing Wilmington and Clinton County. We hope it proves to be a useful resource for local leadership in thinking about current and future directions for the city and region's development.

Research Goals and Methods

The broad goal of our research was to better understand economic, social, and physical aspects of Wilmington and Clinton County's struggle to attract and retain members of the 18-40 age demographic. Specifically, we studied factors young people consider important when deciding where to live, work, and spend their money.

Study Rationale
The origins of this study go back to an event held on August 7, 2012 at the Foster J. Boyd Regional Cancer Center Conference Room. Mayor Randy Riley, Regional Planning Director Chris Schock, and Energize Clinton County co-founders Mark Rembert and Taylor Stuckert hosted this event with the goals of engaging young professionals in a process of generating a prioritized list of issues and action ideas that the City and local organizations might consider in order to better attract and retain members of the 18-40 age demographic.

Why this age group? Well, between the 2000 and 2010 censuses, Clinton County saw a population increase of nearly 4 percent; and yet, during that same time, the population of young professionals fell by 4 percent. As summarized in a July 26, 2012 Weekly Briefing disseminated by the Wilmington-Clinton County Chamber of Commerce, "If the young professional population had grown at the same rate as the county population as a whole during that time we would have more than 600 young people living in our community than we have today." And so, the sudden attention to this particular demographic has been motivated by certain local leaders' determination to address the endemic problems of brain drain—the evacuation of young people—and the resultant aging population in order to stem the negative economic effects such a population shift could have for Wilmington and Clinton County communities.

Approximately 30 participants attended this first meeting in August 2012. At this event, attendees were asked to form five groups of four to six people. In these groups, participants were assigned one general question to discuss together before sharing their ideas with the broader group. The questions posed were as follows:

- Describe the look and elements of your "dream neighborhood."
- What are some things that would prevent you from staying in the community?
- What makes Wilmington/Clinton County a "cool" place to be?
- What are some barriers to Wilmington/Clinton County being seen as "cool?"
- What makes you most proud/least proud about Wilmington/Clinton County?
- What makes Wilmington/Clinton County feel "welcoming" or "unwelcoming?"

After seeing interest from attendees in continuing these conversations about the relationships young people have with Wilmington and Clinton County, these community partners decided to employ the research and facilitation skills of faculty and graduate students at Ohio University to elaborate on their initial efforts. Specifically, we began working together to adapt the Community Attitude Survey—which has been distributed across Clinton County since 2007 with the goal of better understanding current opinions,

ideas, and experiences of the area's residents—to focus more explicitly on those opinions, ideas, and experiences of the area's young people.

As attention turned to addressing the multi-faceted problems of brain drain and an aging population, new problems rose to the surface including a distinct disconnect between education and business sectors and a divisive culture of insiders versus outsiders that make newcomers struggle to call Wilmington "home." This project draws on survey data and focus group conversations of young adults in the area to understand obstacles to attracting and retaining young people in Wilmington and Clinton County and to brainstorm the possible actions community members could take in building a better future for the younger population and the local economy.

Study Procedures and Data
In the fall of 2012, Drs. Wiederhold and Black teleconferenced with Mayor Randy Riley and RPC Director Chris Schock to establish the broad goal of our collaborative relationship. The purpose of this project would be to engage a variety of young professionals in conversations about how to attract and retain members of their demographic group. These conversations would then be used by the community leadership to develop a goal-driven assessment of Wilmington's competitive landscape to plan possible future developments.

Online Survey
The first step in our study consisted of developing and distributing widely a survey designed to assess community members' attitudes and priorities regarding their experiences living and/or working in Wilmington or Clinton County. This survey consisted of 27 questions, which asked respondents to describe their sense of connection to the Wilmington and Clinton County communities, report on their volunteerism and community engagement activities, and indicate the importance of various economic, social, and physical factors in determining where they choose to live, work, and spend money (see Appendix A).

A pilot version of this survey was distributed in early March 2013 to college students enrolled in two different research methods courses. This pilot run allowed us to gauge average time spent answering questions and to test the overall coherence of the survey. Respondents provided feedback regarding question clarity, survey design, and ease of use.

A modified version of the survey was activated on March 28, 2013, and Mayor Riley, Chris Schock, and Mark Rembert distributed the survey widely by sending a link through their various listservs and encouraging recipients to pass it on. The link was also posted on the Buy Local and Chamber of Commerce Facebook pages and sent out in personal messages to over 120 Wilmington High School graduates on the project team's Facebook friend list. Lastly, the survey was advertised in the *Wilmington News Journal* at its launching and a week before the survey closing date.

In total, 325 people completed the survey, but only 288 of those surveys were complete and usable for analysis.

In our analysis of the survey data, we did three things. First, we ran some general descriptive statistics to learn which aspects of the community matter most to Clinton County residents when they make decisions about where to live, work, eat, and shop. This description offers us a baseline understanding of what aspects of life in Wilmington and Clinton County are most important to the participants.

Second, we compared responses from young adults (ages 18-40) with older adults to see if there were significant differences between these groups in their answers about what matters most to them about the community. Given that the particular interest for this project is on young professionals, this analysis allowed us to better understand which dimensions of life in Wilmington and Clinton County were more important to this group and which areas they think need the most improvement.

Finally, we split the whole sample into groups based on how important a sense of community is to them and how much they feel that the Wilmington/Clinton County community is meeting their needs. This split allowed us to isolate two important groups for further analysis. The first group consists of those who feel that the community is important and they feel that they have a strong sense of community in Wilmington/Clinton County. The second group consists of those who feel that having a sense of community is very important in general, but they strongly believe that they do not personally have a sense of community in Wilmington/Clinton County. We believe that this second group, who we are calling "disappointed," are important to pay attention to because these are people who could be a great asset to Clinton County, but are likely to leave because they are not having their need for community met at this time.

Focus Group Interviews
On April 24, 2013, we convened focus group interviews with 30 young adults in Wilmington, Ohio to talk about their experiences living in the community. Each focus group lasted approximately two hours. All focus groups followed roughly the same set of questions. They began with brief introductions, and then asked participants to reflect on what they thought it meant to be 'engaged' in the community. The next set of questions asked them to identify problems or concerns about their community. Third, we asked them to describe things they like about their community and any aspects of the community that could attract and retain young adults. Finally, we asked them to make suggestions for future development. The aim of these conversations was to hear from the participants and generate ideas, not to make any decision.

Although the conversations were designed to follow a fairly structured set of questions, we noticed that participants tended to blend their conversations about problems and solutions and values and not necessarily follow the 'script' of our focus group protocol. The interviewer provided some very general behavioral guidelines, posed the interview questions, took notes, and asked occasional follow up questions, but did not actively facilitate the group toward any kind of particular process. When participants wandered 'off task' or began talking about possible solutions when we had only asked about problems, the interviewers did not intervene or attempt to redirect conversation in any way. They

simply let the discussion occur, providing additional questions when participants seemed to need them.

Our first focus group conversation took place at the local hospital and consisted of a small group (n=5) of hospital employees contacted with the help of Dana Dunn, CMH Director of Community Development. A second set of conversations took place on the Wilmington College campus and consisted only of currently enrolled students (n=13), recruited with the help of Mark Rembert and Drs. Corey Cockerill and Michael Snarr. This conversation involved two small groups meeting in the same room, and then pausing part way through the session to mix the groups. We chose this design so that participants would be able to talk with most of the other participants rather than staying in one small group throughout the focus group. The third set of conversations was held that evening and was open to "young professionals" (n=12) in the Wilmington area. These participants included survey respondents who indicated they would be interested in participating in a focus group, as well as other young professionals who responded to Mayor Riley's general advertisement of the event. This session was held in a meeting room at the Municipal Building in downtown Wilmington and followed the same design as the college student meeting. All meetings were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed.

As researchers, the first and second author were primarily involved in the focus groups as meeting organizers and note takers (some graduate students acted as the interviewers), and our first analytical step was to build familiarity with the whole corpus of materials. We accomplished this through reflecting together with the interviewers on some of our observations about the groups' communication. This reflection was helpful for us to begin to form impressions of the communication in the meetings. Next, we read over the transcripts of the group meetings with each of us focusing special attention on the groups we had not directly observed. This allowed us to build our familiarity with all of the conversations and begin to form insights about the communication practices being used.

Our formal analysis began with each researcher carefully reading the interview transcripts and doing a kind of functional discourse analysis by marking places where participants were naming problems, identifying possible solutions, discussing values, or noticing tradeoffs associated with different possible solutions. In this analysis we noticed that in some cases participants presented problems as straightforward and easily remedied by relatively simple solutions, but in other cases they saw much more nuanced, complex systems of competing values that created serious challenges and would require integrated and complicated solutions. In the sections that follow, we provide a summary of our thematic analysis in order to relay young professionals' perceptions of problems, assets, tensions, and possible avenues for future action.

Key Conclusions from Quantitative Analysis

As described in the previous section, the first step in our study consisted of developing and then distributing widely a survey designed to assess community members' attitudes and priorities regarding their experiences living and/or working in Wilmington or Clinton County. This survey consisted of 27 questions, which asked respondents to describe their sense of connection to the Wilmington and Clinton County communities, report on their volunteerism and community engagement activities, and indicate the importance of various economic, social, and physical factors in determining where they choose to live, work, and spend money (see Appendix A).

The online survey yielded 288 complete and usable responses (110 men, 158 women, 20 people who did not indicate their sex). The respondents ranged in age from 18-90 years old (mean=29, s.d.=14.3 years) and most of them (71%) identified as Christian (11% indicated their affiliation with another religion, 7% and marked their beliefs as atheist or agnostic, and several people left this question blank). In this section we provide the main results of the survey by describing general trends related to the participants' sense of community in Wilmington and then breaking down the respondents into meaningful groups in order to address more specific questions of interest to this report.

Sense of Community

Our first set of analyses explores how important community is to the participants, how much of a sense of community they feel in Wilmington/Clinton County and to what extent they engaged in volunteer activities in their community.

Overall, the people who responded to this survey felt that it was important to have a sense of community. The first question asked participants to rate the importance from 1 (prefer not to be part of a community) to 6 (essential). The average score for the sample as a whole was close to a 5 (mean=4.8, s.d.= .88), which indicates that community is 'very' important. This means that overall, the people who responded to this survey place a high level of importance on feeling a strong sense of community.

Thinking that community is important is not the same thing as feeling that one has achieved a strong sense of community in a particular place. To measure how strongly participants' feel a sense of community in Wilmington, we asked a series of questions that make up the brief "Sense of Community" scale.[2] This scale provides a validated way to assess people's overall sense of how much they feel a part of their community. This scale is made up of eight items which tap into people's sense of (a) how well their needs are fulfilled by the community, (b) how included they feel in the community, (c) the extent to which they have influence or can make a difference in the community, and (d) their emotional connection to the community.

---

[2] Peterson, N. A., Speer, P. W., & McMillan, D. W. (2008). Validation of a brief sense of community scale: Confirmation of the principal theory of sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology, 36*, 61-73.

Each item is rated from 1-5 with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of importance. We summed the scores on this scale and gave each participant a score between 8 (indicating all questions were answered with a 1, the lowest possible score) and 40 (indicating that all questions were answered with a 5, the highest possible score). Conceptually we think of these scores as levels. Scores below 20 indicate a low, or limited sense of community. Scores around 30 indicate a medium-level sense of community, and scores close to 40 indicate a very high-level, or extensive sense of community.

Running basic descriptive statistics, we see that the participants as a whole had an average score of 27.5 (s.d.=5.9), which indicates that overall they had some sense of community in Wilmington/Clinton County, but this sense of community was not extremely high. This information serves as a background for the rest of our analysis, which looks in more detail at different groups within the sample.

The particular focus of this research project is on young adults, ages 18-40, and their opinions and experiences in Wilmington/Clinton County. Initially we divided the sample into three groups: adults aged 18-40, people in their forties, and adults aged 50 and up. We did this because we expected that young adults would differ considerably from adults in their 50s and older, but that it may not be the case that people in their late 30s (included in the 'young adult' group) would vary much from people only three or four years older.

We then compared these three groups to see to what extent there were differences in respondents' sense of community in Wilmington/Clinton County. These differences are evident in Figure One.

Figure One

Sense of Community among Young, Middle Aged, and Older Adults
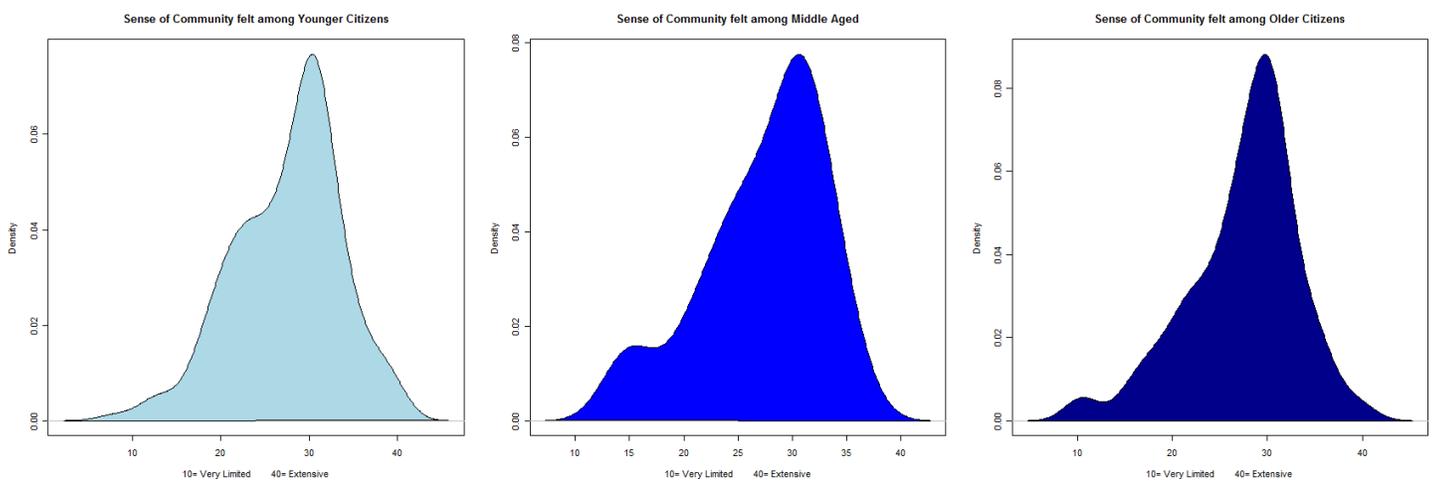
The density plots above present a visual representation of the three groups' scores on the sense of community scale. As stated above, the scores on this scale range from 8-40, and a score of 30 represents a somewhat high level, or a somewhat extensive sense of community. Although all three groups show that the highest number of respondents were slightly above a score of 30, it is evident that the younger adults, and adults in their forties, have many more respondents who reported a limited sense of community in Wilmington/ Clinton County. This trend is more pronounced in the young adult group, as evident in the kind of false summit around the score of 20. This shows that, compared to older adults, there is a higher percentage of young adults who experience a low sense of community in Wilmington/Clinton County.

These data are consistent with what we heard in the focus groups. The young adults who attended our focus groups seem to value the idea of community, yet a fairly high number of them were dissatisfied with their own sense of community in Wilmington.

After seeing these plots we decided that it made sense to further divide the sample of young adults in those who were under 25 and those who were 26-40. This proved to be a fruitful distinction and the rest of our analyses provide results for four groups: Young adults 18-25 (n=60), young adults 26-40 (n=114), people in their forties (n=34), and older adults aged 50 and up (n=80).

Figure Two presents the importance of community to each of these four groups.

Figure Two

Importance of Community
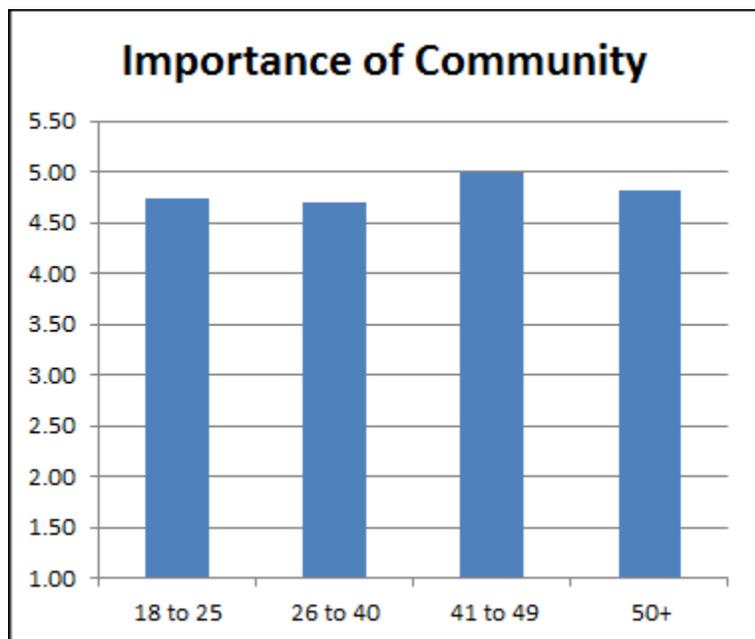
As evident in this figure, there are not substantial differences in how important community is to members of these four different age groups. All four groups seem to place a high level of importance on feeling a sense of community with others in Wilmington.

So, to what extent do these different groups feel a sense of community in Wilmington? The following table provides a more detailed look at how each of the four groups responded to the eight questions in the sense of community scale.

Table One

Sense of Community measures

Sense of Community	18 to 25	26 to 40	41 to 49	50+
I Can Get What I Need	3.35	3.14	3.06	3.20
Feel Like a Member	3.18	3.20	2.94	3.19
Have a Say	3.65	3.72	3.76	3.68
Feel Connected	3.38	3.61	3.59	3.69
Community Members Influence Each Other	2.87	2.93	3.18	2.84
Community Helps Me Fulfill My Needs	3.53	3.59	3.56	3.53
I Have a Good Bond with Others	3.73	3.65	3.53	3.70
I Belong in This Community	3.78	3.80	3.74	3.63

The scores presented here are the means for each of the different groups. We have color coded them to show the highest and lowest items. The items highlighted in green show high level on that variable, red shows a low level, and orange is in the middle. Overall this shows that people in all four groups have a high sense of belief that they "belong" in Wilmington. It also shows that all four groups have relatively low levels of needs fulfillment, a sense of influence, and a sense of membership in the community. While young adults in their teens and early twenties (many of whom are college students) feel that they have good bonds with others, this score decreases for people in their thirties and forties, which may be important for understanding the experience of young professionals.

We also asked participants to report the extent to which they engage in volunteer activities.

Table Two, displayed on the following page, shows that overall people in our sample are not active in volunteering for political activities. There also appear to be some age-related differences in the types of organizations that people volunteer with, and young adults have lower scores than the other groups on almost all organizational types.

These general descriptions are useful because they help us understand that overall, people in Wilmington feel that having a sense of community is important, but they also feel gaps in their own sense of community in Wilmington/Clinton County. This gives us a solid starting

point for exploring which aspects of the community are most important to them and what suggestions they have for improvement.

Table Two

Volunteer Activities

Current volunteering	18 to 25	26 to 40	41 to 49	50+
Political Group	1.68	1.70	1.82	1.96
Campaign	1.42	1.68	2.00	1.99
Political Official	1.38	1.55	1.65	1.85
Community Group	2.83	2.85	3.32	3.23
Local Charity	2.95	2.61	2.94	3.00
Environmental Group	2.08	1.88	2.18	2.10
Religious Group	2.32	2.25	2.79	2.91

Social, Economic, and Community Matters

The next set of analyses we performed investigated what factors mattered the most to survey respondents when they were choosing a place to live, work, or spend their money.

The first set of questions asked participants how important the following aspects are when determining a place to live. All of these questions were on a 1-5 scale with 1 representing "not at all" and 5 representing "essential." Table three provides the mean scores for the economic aspects of this choice of where to live.

Table Three

Importance of Economic Issues on Choice of Where to Live

Economic Issues	18 to 25	26 to 40	41 to 49	50+
Local Jobs	4.48	4.35	4.50	4.06
Range of Industries	3.80	3.82	4.06	3.73
Average Household Income	3.08	3.36	3.68	3.38
Affordable Housing	3.97	3.96	4.26	3.90
Tax Rates	3.33	3.58	3.79	3.73
Cost of Living	3.78	4.00	4.06	4.03
Educational Opportunities	4.28	4.16	4.41	4.10

The availability of local jobs was extremely high for the three groups of adults under the age of fifty. Educational opportunity was also seen as very important. Affordable housing was seen as very important by people in their forties, but was not a key factor for the other groups.

Another set of questions asked respondents how important social issues were in determining their choice of where to live. Table Four provides the mean scores on these social measures for all four age groups. Again, all scores range from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (essential).

Table Four

Importance of Social Aspects on Choice of Where to Live

Social Aspects of Community	18 to 25	26 to 40	41 to 49	50+
Friendly Neighbors	3.72	3.72	3.85	3.69
Extended Family Nearby	3.45	3.25	3.35	3.40
Feeling Safe	4.28	4.36	4.47	4.48
Diversity of Local Residents	3.20	3.01	3.15	3.10
Recreation for Single Adults	3.73	3.31	3.06	3.00
Recration for Families	3.53	3.73	3.79	3.74
Volunteer Opportunities	3.60	3.06	3.15	3.11
Local Arts	3.60	3.39	3.21	3.33
Local Music	3.70	3.47	3.18	3.29
Local Shopping	3.72	3.75	4.00	3.86
Local Dining	4.02	3.90	3.94	3.94
Available Religious Institutions	3.28	2.85	3.62	3.40

For all four groups, feeling safe was extremely important in their choice of where to live. Other high scoring social aspects were the presence of local dining and, for older adults, local shopping. Recreation for families was seen as somewhat important as was the presence of friendly neighbors. Younger adults indicated that having recreation opportunities targeted to single adults was important.

Finally, we asked about how physical aspects of the community influenced people's decisions about where to live. Table Five provides the mean scores for the questions about a range of physical attributes for each of the four age groups. The table shows that there are some meaningful differences between groups, but it is important to keep in mind that even the highest scoring physical aspects here are lower than the scores for some of the social aspects indicated above.

Table Five

Importance of Community's Physical Aspects on Choice of Where to Live

Physical Aspects	18 to 25	26 to 40	41 to 49	50+
Air Quality	3.88	3.80	3.85	3.99
Minimal Noise Downtown	3.08	3.26	3.38	3.45
Interstate Highway Access	3.25	3.28	3.53	3.54
Hiking and Biking Trails	3.70	3.60	3.47	3.43
Quality of Sidewalks	3.82	3.62	3.62	3.53
Road Quality	3.65	3.73	3.82	3.78
Public Transportation	3.08	2.75	3.00	3.11
Quality Public Parks	3.88	3.83	3.56	3.66
Quality of Downton Buildings	3.73	3.52	3.50	3.59
Historic Homes Availability	3.05	2.35	2.59	2.51
New Housing on Market	2.85	2.68	2.91	2.99

As Table Five shows, air quality, road quality, and the quality of public parks are high for almost all of the age groups. Young adults stand out as different from the other groups in the importance they place on the quality of sidewalks, the availability of hiking and biking trails, and the quality of buildings downtown.

Overall, these tables show us a variety of things that are important to young adults as they are choosing a place to live in Wilmington. Economic aspects like the availability of good jobs, and social aspects like local dining and recreation opportunities for single adults stand out as issues that are important to younger adults that may not be seen as important by older adults. Young adults also emphasized the importance of physical aspects of the community that would make it more pedestrian friendly and improve the quality of life for those living in downtown Wilmington (such as public parks, quality of downtown buildings, better sidewalks, etc.)

In order to understand what influences people to choose a place to work, we asked participants to rank order several attributes of the workplace. There were seven items and Table Six provides the mean score for each item for each age group. Because these were rank ordered from 1-7, lower numbers indicate a higher level of importance. To maintain consistency in the presentation of the data across tables, the green highlighted scores indicate the ones that are the most important to participants.

Table Six

Importance of the Qualities of the Workplace Environment

Job Environment	18 to 25	26 to 40	41 to 49	50+
Day Care	5.93	5.60	5.79	5.45
Flexible Schedule	3.70	3.56	4.15	4.19
Health Benefits	3.22	3.21	2.88	2.40
Business Type	2.50	2.97	2.74	2.76
Job Title	4.23	4.39	4.65	4.35
Salary	2.47	2.19	1.97	2.79

For all age groups except the oldest adults, the most important aspect of the workplace environment was salary. The second most important factor for younger adults was the type of industry or business. These two findings are very consistent with the qualitative findings from our focus groups where young professionals and college students talked about the importance of "career type jobs." Younger adults also indicated that schedule flexibility was important to them. In contrast, older adults were more concerned about the availability of health benefits than younger adults.

Finally, we asked participants to indicate how important various issues were to them when deciding where to spend their money either shopping or going out to eat. Table Seven provides the results for shopping and Table Eight provides results for dining. Like the results in Tables Three through Five, these questions were scored on a 1-5 scale with a score of 1 indicating that something was "not important at all" and a score of 5 indicating that something was "essential."

Table Seven

Factors Influencing Choice of Where to Shop

Shopping Options	18 to 25	26 to 40	41 to 49	50+
In Clinton County	3.05	3.15	3.35	3.46
Locally owned	3.38	3.33	3.35	3.39
Low Cost	4.15	3.98	4.09	3.95
High Quality	4.20	4.31	4.24	4.21
Variety of Products	3.98	4.00	4.03	4.05

For all four age groups, high quality of products was seen as extremely important. Young adults and people in their forties indicated that low costs were important, and all groups indicated that having a variety of products was "very important." All groups gave lower

scores to factors such as a business being located in Clinton County or being locally owned with those items being seen as "somewhat important."

Table Eight

Factors Influencing Choice of Where to Eat

Dining Options	18 to 25	26 to 40	41 to 49	50+
In Clinton County	3.30	3.21	3.35	3.28
Locally Owned	3.42	3.22	3.24	3.30
Low Cost	4.05	3.83	3.85	3.74
High Quality	4.32	4.39	4.41	4.24
Variety of Meal Options	3.93	4.04	4.00	3.99
Option to Drink Alcohol	2.98	2.95	2.47	2.64
Locally Produced Ingredients	3.22	3.31	2.94	3.13
Vegetarian Options	2.32	2.34	2.09	2.20
Vegan Options	1.93	1.86	1.82	1.94

Similar to the findings about shopping, the top issues that influence participants' choices about where to eat are having high quality, varied food options. Low cost was also seen as important, especially for young adults ages 18 to 25. Having local ingredients, being locally owned, or being located in Clinton County were all seen as "somewhat" important. The availability of vegetarian or vegan options was not seen as important by any age group.

Focusing on the At Risk/Disappointed Group

For our last set of analyses, we split the whole sample into groups based on how important a sense of community is to them and how much they feel a strong sense of community in Wilmington/Clinton County. This split allowed us to isolate two important groups for further analysis. The first group consists of those who feel that the community is important (Importance of Community 5 or 6) and they also personally experienced a strong sense of community in Wilmington/Clinton County (community index score of 4 or greater). These community members are largely happy and satisfied with their experiences in Wilmington and Clinton County. This "happy" group includes 14% of all the people who responded to the survey.

The second group consists of those who rated community at the same high level of importance but who reported low levels of having a sense of community in Wilmington/Clinton County (community index score of 3 or less). We believe that this group, who we are calling "disappointed," is important to pay attention to because these are people who could be a great asset to Clinton County, but are likely to leave because they

are not having their need for community met at this time. This "disappointed" group consists of 12% of all the people who responded to the survey. Interestingly, both the happy and disappointed subgroups are slightly younger than the remainder of the population. Below is a table that describes the average levels of community related variables for these two groups, as well as the remaining ~75% of the sample as a comparison group.

Table Nine

Sense of Community for Happy and Disappointed Groups

Baseline for Disappointed and Happy	Disappointed	Happy	Remainder		Difference
Importance of Community	5.21	5.55	4.56		-0.34
Index of Community Felt in Wilmington	2.45	4.44	3.41		-1.99
Measures of Community					
I Can Get What I Need	2.39	4.13	3.14		-1.73
Feel Like a Member	2.24	4.33	3.09		-2.08
Have a Say	2.70	4.65	3.67		-1.95
Feel Connected	2.36	4.75	3.55		-2.39
Community Members Influence Each Other	1.97	3.90	2.88		-1.93
Community Helps Me Fulfill My Needs	2.91	4.30	3.52		-1.39
I Have a Good Bond with Others	2.36	4.75	3.67		-2.39
I Belong in This Community	2.67	4.70	3.73		-2.03

This table shows that the disappointed and happy populations are similar in terms of importance of community (all rated importance as either a 5 or 6); and both of these groups are clearly higher than the remainder of the population. We selected these populations because they are so different on how much community they felt in Wilmington, so the difference in their sense of community is as expected. However, an interesting story emerges in terms of which items within the index are scored differently for the two groups. The "Difference" column indicates larger differences with the intensity of red highlighting.

Feeling connected and having a good bond with others were dimensions that showed the greatest differences between the disappointed and happy subgroups. This finding is very consistent with the qualitative comments we heard from young professionals who felt disconnected, or had a sense of being on the outside of a close-knit community.

Perhaps the most important finding from our investigation of the happy and disappointed groups has to do with their plans over the next five years. Table Ten shows the data for

this measure and also provides information about these groups' volunteer activities and the important economic factors that vary considerably between the two groups.

<u>Table Ten</u>

Future Plans, Volunteering, and Economic Factors for Happy and Disappointed

Outcomes	Disappointed	Happy	Remainder		Difference
Plan to Leave	0.33	0.03	0.10		0.31
Volunteering and Economic Issues					
Index of Volunteering Activity	2.02	2.84	2.13		-0.82
Range of Industries	4.00	3.83	3.79		0.18
Average Household Income	3.55	3.30	3.32		0.25
Educational Opportunities	4.15	4.53	4.14		-0.37

This table shows a very strong finding that disappointed people are at a <u>much</u> higher risk of leaving than the rest of the population. This makes sense conceptually, but the numerical difference is very striking. For the bulk of the population, 10% of the people surveyed said that they expected to be living somewhere other than Wilmington in the next five years. The number was lower for people who we are classifying as "happy;" only 3% of those expected to be living elsewhere in five years.

In contrast, 33%, or <u>one third of all the disappointed people,</u> planned to leave Wilmington within the next five years. This means that disappointed people are 11 times as likely to say they plan to leave than those in the happy subgroup. They are also three times more likely to say they plan to leave than the remainder of the population (those who were not classified in the 'happy' or 'disappointed' groups). This is a startlingly high difference and should be notable to planners and public officials hoping to retain young adults in Wilmington.

We also noted that happy people are volunteering more than disappointed people. This is an interesting finding because volunteering is potentially a way that people can become more involved in a community, develop a sense of belonging, and build relationships with others. These relational dimensions are key factors in the sense of community scale that distinguish between happy and disappointed people. This could mean that engaging disappointed people in more volunteer opportunities could potentially help them feel less disconnected from others, and could help build a stronger sense of their own belongingness in Wilmington. At the very least, volunteering could put disappointed people into more contact with people who are happy, which may help them develop relationships with others who can help them build connections in the community.

In terms of local economic issues, those who are happy place a higher importance on educational opportunities. In contrast, those who are disappointed place a higher importance on the range of industries and the average household income than do those in the happy group. This could be a manifestation of participants' concerns about having good jobs and financial stability. This interpretation is supported also by the participants' responses to the ranking of employment factors.

Table Eleven

Employment Factors for Happy and Disappointed Groups

Ranking of Employment Factors	Disappointed	Happy	Remainder		Difference
Health Benefits	2.85	2.88	2.98		-0.03
Business Type	2.61	2.55	2.86		0.06
Job Title	4.00	4.55	4.40		-0.55
Salary	1.85	2.63	2.43		-0.78

This table shows that those who are disappointed rank salary as their most important job characteristic. This choice is very clear, with almost all of the people in the disappointed subgroup listing salary as their number one choice. In contrast, people who are happy have a three-way tie for their important employment factor: salary, job type, and health benefits were seen as almost equally important. This is likely to indicate that those who are disappointed may be currently unemployed or underemployed, and thus in a difficult financial situation.

Finally, we compared the happy and disappointed subgroups on a range of factors that influence how they decide where to live or spend their money. These comparisons are seen in the following table.

Table Twelve

Factors Influencing Where to Live and Spend Money for Happy and Disappointed Groups

Social	Disappointed	Happy	Remainder		Difference
Extended Family Nearby	3.09	3.33	3.39		-0.23
Recreation for Single Adults	3.91	3.38	3.17		0.53
Local Shopping	4.33	3.78	3.73		0.56
Local Dining	4.45	4.10	3.83		0.35
Infrastructure					
Hiking and Biking Trails	3.67	3.90	3.47		-0.23
Road Quality	4.06	3.75	3.68		0.31
Public Transportation	3.45	3.05	2.86		0.40
Shopping					
In Clinton County	3.21	3.60	3.18		-0.39
Locally owned	3.15	3.58	3.35		-0.42
Variety of Products	4.30	3.93	3.99		0.38
Dining					
In Clinton County	3.24	3.80	3.17		-0.56
Locally Owned	3.12	3.73	3.23		-0.60
Variety of Meal Options	4.33	3.88	3.97		0.46
Vegetarian Options	2.61	2.15	2.24		0.46

One important finding here is that people who are disappointed placed a higher value on dining, shopping, and recreation opportunities for single adults as important when deciding where to live. In our above analysis of these factors for the population divided by age we saw that safety was the highest priority across the age groups. Safety was also important to people in the disappointed group, yet they indicated local dining opportunities as a higher priority.

Happy and disappointed people both prioritize eating locally, but disappointed people put a higher importance on a variety of meal options, and on the presence of vegetarian options. They are less concerned about restaurants being locally owned. In general, people who are happy in Wilmington seem to prioritize locally owned businesses more than disappointed people.

We also found that people who are disappointed value recreation opportunities for single adults and want high quality roads. They also value public transportation more than people who are happy.

Summary of Quantitative Results

Overall, the results of our quantitative analysis can provide some insights into the perceptions and experiences of young adults and the things that matter to them when making choices about where to live, work, and spend their money. One thing worth noting is that young adults have many things in common with other Wilmington residents. Overall they value having a sense of community, and many of the issues that matter to them are similar to issues that older generations also care about. For example, young adults share their older citizens' values of safety and they overall feel a sense of belongingness in Wilmington/Clinton County. They also value having local jobs and educational opportunities, and they are most likely to volunteer with community groups or charities. They want high quality, affordable dining and shopping opportunities and they value having good air quality and high quality roads. These findings are common across all groups and indicate that young adults are, in some ways, similar to other members of the Wilmington community.

What stands out as different is their concern about salary, having a range of different industries available for work, and their desire for more recreational opportunities targeted to single adults. They also value affordable shopping and dining experiences and want higher quality sidewalks. These things all make sense if we understand the young adult population of Wilmington as having a higher percentage of people who are either unemployed or underemployed and living on a limited income. The recreational opportunities and improved infrastructure they desire point to suggestions that could help make Wilmington more pedestrian-friendly and attractive to young professionals.

Our analysis also indicates that there are meaningful differences between people who seem to be happy in Wilmington/Clinton County and people who are disappointed (i.e., those who think community is very important but lack a strong sense of connection in Wilmington). People who are disappointed feel that they do not have strong relationships in the community, that they are not well connected with others. They feel that their needs are only partially met in the community, but the stronger finding is that disappointed people feel excluded.

They also volunteer less than people who are happy, and this could be a useful finding for community organizations and charities. If they are able to reach out to people who otherwise feel disenfranchised or excluded, perhaps the volunteer opportunities could help those people feel more connected and included in the community. Those who are disappointed also express concern about financial issues, as indicated by their ranking salary as the most important factor in choosing a job and valuing cost over local ownership for shops and restaurants. Finally, they want more recreational opportunities for single adults. The qualitative portion of our research looks more deeply at these issues.

Key Conclusions from Qualitative Analysis

In both the survey and the focus group interviews, participants were asked to reflect on problems, assets, and proposals for action. Problem-identification was prompted with the open-ended survey question, "Why would you choose to live somewhere other than Wilmington or Clinton County?" Asset-identification was prompted by inverting this question and asking, "Why would you choose to live in Wilmington or Clinton County?" Finally, proposals for action were solicited with the question, "Where do you think the city of Wilmington should be directing its money and resources to better develop the city for the future?" Focus group participants were asked variations of these questions to discuss at greater length. In these focus group discussions, it became apparent that a fourth category existed: tensions. A full description of each of these categories is provided with a summary of participant comments in the sections that follow.

Problems

Our first research question asks: what problems do young people see in Wilmington/Clinton County that might keep them or other members of their age cohort from choosing this area as their home, workplace, or money-spending destination? The problems participants identified generally revolved around four categories: (1) problems defining a coherent community identity; (2) problems connecting young people and local businesses to one another in meaningful and mutually-beneficial relationships; (3) problems of perception; and (4) problems specific to contexts deemed especially important to people in the 18-40 age demographic, such as public education, dining and shopping, housing, public transportation, and adult recreation/fitness. Each of these categories is discussed in greater detail in the sections below.

1. Problems Defining a Coherent Community Identity

During the focus groups in particular, many participants talked at length about an underlying issue that they believed serves as a foundation for many of the more technical and focused problems Wilmington and Clinton County have been experiencing in their economic development efforts. One young professional in the evening focus group session summarized the recurrent theme:

> "I don't think that Wilmington really has a cohesive identity. We're a rural town, we have a college, we have different industries, but not one of those is really our identity. And so that creates different segments of the people."

This speaker went on to say that the lack of an overarching community identity leads to the formation of many small subdivisions often according to education levels, work, and politics. This lack of coherent identity makes it difficult for young people to envision a role for themselves here, especially if they only have exposure to one narrow aspect, as evidenced by comments like the one this survey respondent offered as an explanation for why s/he would choose to live somewhere other than Wilmington/Clinton County: "I'm not huge into agriculture, which is a lot of our economy around here."

Wilmington's fragmented identity creates a challenge for young people attempting to envision themselves as part of the larger community (rather than merely a member of a particular segment defined by work, politics, or education), but it also could play a role in the difficulty those people working in economic development are experiencing related to their efforts to bring in and establish new businesses. This topic was discussed at some length during the evening focus groups:

Leah: It just feels like there's all these little things. Like that industrial kitchen, like Southern State, but none of them big enough to create a critical mass.

Spencer: That's true.

Leah: All just kind of—

Bryce: —spread out.

Leah: Right? Like, we're all just trying something, but we're all rowing in a different direction.

Kenny: We're not really collaborative, I don't think. I think we're collaborative within ourselves, but we don't cross-collaborate.

Spencer: Yeah, you know, like a food focus or something like that. It wasn't that long again that Athens, Yellow Springs said, "We want to be food-centered, local __ centered, farmers market-centered. We want to have little shops that sell organic fair-trade coffee. We want to make it a food op." To have that general identity. Obviously, I work with agriculture, so I'm into food, but it could be all kinds of things, you know what I mean? To say, "This is where we want to go, this is what we want to do."

Bryce: Whereas we're throwing everything at the wall.

Leah: And we were gonna be renewable energy, we were gonna get a solar park, we were getting a wind farm. We were getting an industrial kitchen. I think we've been trying to do just about everything in the last two years that I've lived here.

Leah's comment that "we're all just trying something but we're all rowing in a different direction" epitomizes the sentiment that recurred in these conversations. On the positive side, several new projects have been launched in recent years. On the negative side, those projects have not often integrated with other new projects or already existing projects to create synergistic energy. Because these projects are disconnected from one another and uncoordinated, there is redundancy, overlap, and a lack of staying power. The issue of redundancy was mentioned multiple times as respondents complained that food options lack variety, shopping options all revolved around crafts/gifts and failed to meet basic needs, and fitness options replicated the same mediocre efforts of existing gyms in the area.

This lack of overarching identity and consequent lack of coordination between projects/businesses was central to what some study participants saw as the key problem area for downtown development. One participant in the CMH focus group said:

> "Here, there's no products in their downtown area. It's a real estate appraiser, it's an attorney, it's a pizza shop, it's a gym, I mean, there's no synergy there. You're goin' through for one thing, you're gettin' back in your car, and then you're leaving downtown."

This first problem area, defining a coherent community identity, makes it difficult for some young people to envision themselves occupying a meaningful role in Wilmington/Clinton County and may be contributing to additional problems in economic development regarding redundancy, overlap, and lack of staying power among local businesses. People in leadership positions in Wilmington/Clinton County may wish to consider leading further discussions to explore approaches to developing a unifying and inclusive community identity around which to direct future development.

2. Problems Connecting Young People and Local Businesses

The theme of disconnection was prominent among both focus group participants and survey respondents. This separation appears to be troubling to three specific groups: (1) job-seeking young professionals; (2) members of the college community; and (3) community-seeking working professionals.

First, for the job-seeking young professionals, a particularly emotional topic of discussion centered on issues related to employment and feeling of connection and disconnection between young people and the older population in Wilmington/Clinton County. In one of the focus groups, a young woman who came to Wilmington for college and stayed because she loved the town and the people nearly broke into tears as she described her struggles finding steady fulltime employment (places of employment removed to protect participant confidentiality):

Stephanie: "I am the unemployed one of the table, and it has been a really hard struggling to find a job right now in this community. I worked with _____ for about two and a half years after college, and that helped me to integrate with the community and make me stay. After my stint at _____ was over, I got a stint with _____ in town, I was selling advertising, and it sucked out my soul. I hated it. And, uh, had a nervous breakdown, thought, "I'm young, I have a bachelor's degree. I can do this. This is fine. I'll find a new job." And it's been, like, six months, and I'm finding that it's really hard because there are so many people in this community who lost jobs through the DHL crisis and all that, and they're very much in a kind of a blue-collar manufacturing sort of realm. And then you've got things like the hospital, which are very much— I'm no doctor, definitely not qualified for that. You don't want me there, trust me. [laughs] And there's this whole niche in the middle of people like me who have got the bachelor's degree in education and history, lots of experience,

volunteer work with AmeriCorps, and I cannot seem to find a job here. And that has been horrible. [near tears] And I hate to say it, but that would be the reason I would leave, because at this point, Columbus and Cincinnati have a lot more to offer people like me. It's hard, and I am getting emotional, because it is that community, that friend group, that sense of belonging here that keeps me here, and I don't want to lose that, but survival comes first."

Stephanie noted that education brought her to Wilmington and a temporary job kept her there following graduation, which provided her with time and a context for deepening relationships with people in the Clinton County community. However, she noted that a primary challenge for the unemployed demographic is the high levels of competition for entry-level and blue collar jobs due to so many unskilled workers still being out of work following DHL's departure. She also acknowledged that highly skilled and specialized jobs are available but would require further education.

Stephanie's story is indicative of a recurrent theme in the qualitative data: there is a serious disconnect between the educational and business sectors in Clinton County. Schools and colleges are preparing students for jobs but not necessarily the types of full-time jobs that are actually available in the area. Following graduation, locally-educated young people often find themselves in need of more industry-specific education, or else they need to move away to find fulltime employment in their completed field of study.

As a result of this disconnect between educational and business sectors, many people who feel strongly about making a life where their roots are then finding themselves piecing together part-time work in order to make enough money to support their life in Clinton County. Take, for example, Kara:

> "There are a lot of part-time jobs—and most people that I know stack part-time, you know—like, I do two part-time jobs. It'd be nice to do one full-time job… It makes it really hard to be stable, especially if one of those is contract—it's hard to find—to just have a career, you know, where you're just doing one thing, where you can have a stable hour schedule, flexibility, where you can identify with that. That's—I mean, most people I know are kind of in that space."

Importantly, she says that something that she experienced with a full time job that she does not get from part-time employment is identification with her career. In this way, part-time and contract work splits a person's time into unaffiliated and independent projects, removing opportunities for organizational identification.

In addition to these job-seeking young professionals, another class of young people find themselves at a distance from local businesses. Wilmington College students are professionally, socially, and physically disconnected from the Wilmington community, and many of them are pleading for greater integration of town and gown.

The most literal display of disconnection between college and community is evidenced by the lack of transportation infrastructure between campus and downtown. Recurrent

comments included references to the lack of sidewalks to support pedestrian culture between campus and downtown; early closing times for establishments and public transportation (the only public transit available ends at 9:00 p.m. on Mondays through Fridays and 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday); and the challenges presented for safely using a bike as a mode of transportation (no bike lanes, narrow shoulders on the road, and heavy semi traffic downtown).

In addition to the physical separation between the college and community, these two groups fail to connect in what could be mutually-beneficial professional relationships as well. Surprising to both current students at the Wilmington College focus group and young professionals participating in the evening session was the severe lack of internships from Clinton County businesses marketed toward the area's college students:

Bailey: "Like, once you find your job, the one that caters to you most, you're gonna stay in that area, and I feel like sometimes, I know that there are jobs out in Wilmington, but sometimes I feel like we as college students don't know about those jobs, but we want those jobs, so I feel like both of us are trying to get somewhere, but we haven't found that connection where people would say, "We have a job here that would be great for a college student." "Oh, I'd love that job." You know what I mean? No one's—I don't know, I just feel like we're missing that. I don't know how to get it, either. "

...

Brooklyn: "And if you look at it from the college standpoint, if there's not a connection now, why would people come back, you know what I mean? Like, if you're not building a connection to the community now, why would you want to stay here? 'Cause they don't really know it. They don't know the people here. You know, if you start going to local businesses frequently, then you become—then you start developing relationships with the people who work there, the customers, you know. Typically people who live here. But if you don't form those connections, there's really nothing that's drawing you here."

Bailey's comment describes the current situation of separation between college and community. Both have assets the other greatly desires—the college has educated and ambitious young people who are hungry for jobs, and the community has employment needs that are currently being insufficiently met. If active recruiting is happening on the college campus, a large number of the campus population is unaware of such efforts.

Brooklyn elaborates on Bailey's comment to suggest a possible relationship between the town/gown divide and graduates' decisions to look for employment elsewhere following graduation. Certainly, Brooklyn's conjecture is supported by our qualitative analysis of Clinton County's assets as well. As described in the following section, one of the primary reasons people choose to live in Wilmington/Clinton County is to be close to their friends and family who connect them to a larger sense of community. College students are not regularly included in this network of relationships except as a residual benefit of being raised locally for those students who came from area high schools. So, although the college attracts a large number of students from surrounding counties, few are motivated to stay in

Wilmington following graduation because, as Brooklyn stated, "if you don't form those connections, there's really nothing that's drawing you here."

Beyond these physical and professional missed connections, Wilmington College students also report a lack of social connection with the rest of the Clinton County community. Even when they are frequenting the same physical sites, events rarely integrate the two sects, as described by Nick, a current Wilmington College student, below:

Nick: "The community uses our campus, but they don't advertise that they're using our campus. Like, last year, I'm in a group called the Black Student Initiative, and last year they had—Wilmington the town had a multicultural thing for the community here. But no one in the club knew, no one in the town knew except for, like, two people who worked all the way on the other side of campus. So they need to advertise that they're here on campus for things that students are involved in."

Nick's comment taps into a broader criticism that permeated every problem area discussed in this report: poor communication outside of close social circles. Events are happening, jobs are available, and opportunities exist; however, interested populations are never receiving the information.

This problem of insufficient means of communication was especially salient for the third group experiencing challenges building connections between their community worlds and their professional worlds: community-seeking working professionals. Unlike the other two groups discussed in this section, these working professionals have often been born and raised outside of the Wilmington area and have moved to Clinton County for a career opportunity. Describing themselves as "outsiders," this sub-group of young people has successfully acquired employment, but has experienced much greater difficulty in breaking into the social scene and finding their niche in the community. The focus group at Clinton Memorial Hospital discussed this feeling of "being out of the loop" many times in their session. The following excerpt is just one example:

Rita: I've been here since 2007. I never know what's going on. Granted, I don't subscribe to the *Wilmington News Journal*. I do look at it occasionally online, but even then you really can't find things. So it—like, you said, it's just like, "Oh—Oh, Honey, I'm drivin' by on the way home, and they're gonna have the band at the Mural parking lot today." You know, or you hear about it after the fact. So I never—there might be things goin' on that I've just not even known about for the last seven years.

Kimberly: Yeah, and the farmers' market, I didn't know—I mean, I knew it existed, but I didn't know, like, the signs don't tell you when or where, you know, so you kind of just have to guess. [laughs]

Rita mentions that she does not subscribe to the local newspaper, but she does solicit information about community events online. Later in the discussion, she mentions that she

even followed the Wilmington or Clinton County Facebook page in order to access information only to find that those pages are maintained inconsistently, if at all. Additionally, as Kimberly's comment about the farmers' market implied, when events are advertised widely, rarely is enough information provided to allow outsiders access.

The general frustration expressed among "outsiders" like these is that, although they get the sense that there is a strong bond among community members and people in Clinton County are friendly, they feel as though they are on the outside of that tightly-woven interior. The large amount of information spread through word-of-mouth, tradition, and close-knit social circles leaves these working professionals feeling disconnected, tethered to the community only by their current job. Among survey respondents, a recurrent theme among people who come to the area for work is a reported desire to leave if an opportunity presented itself to move closer to family.

3. Problems of Perception

Whether the problem is poor communication and advertising of events or a true dearth of entertainment options, the perception exists among the area's young people that there's "nothing to do here." As one survey responded stated:

> "[Wilmington] needs more activities all year round. Three months out of a 12 year calendar, Wilmington decides to have activities. It is really sad when kids hang out in WalMart's parking lot at night. Wilmington needs a mall or some type of shopping center and ALL local businesses close at 5. Wilmington doesn't have a night life at all. As a college student I do not want to be stuck on the college campus all year; sometimes I want to leave campus and do something. Also, I don't want to have to go back to Cincinnati to do it; if I have to go to Cincinnati to have fun, I might as well move back there and go to school down there."

Perceptual problems extend far beyond the idea that there's nothing to do in Clinton County. In this section, we discuss two other widespread perceptions that are particularly damaging to efforts to attract and retain young people: perceived lack of diversity and perceived tension between insiders and outsiders.

First, the suggestion that Clinton County lacks diversity is not completely unfounded in fact. After all, according to the 2010 census, 95% of Clinton County's population is white, and only 1.1% of the population was born outside of the United States. In the realm of politics, Clinton County residents have voted overwhelmingly in favor of Republican candidates in recent years, supporting George W. Bush through two elections and rallying for John McCain in 2008. Some survey respondents indicated that the lack social and political diversity creates an environment that can feel unwelcoming to people who lie outside the norm. One person wrote, "Most people seem either older/married/family or lower class/uneducated—no diversity of people/talents/beliefs/opportunities."

The perceived lack of diversity leads some young people to leave altogether in search of a new place to "expand boundaries." One survey respondent explained their decision to move away from Wilmington as follows:

> "I choose to live outside of Wilmington because I need growth and new experience. Wilmington is a small town, with limited diversity and opportunity. After spending most of my life there, it is time to explore."

Similar explanation were offered by other survey respondents. For people in this category, to stay in Clinton County means settling for the familiar and limiting one's world to what is comfortable and easy. The identity issues young people navigate related to this topic of diversity, experience, and room for personal growth played out in the Wilmington College focus group:

Ian: I want to live in a city so badly. Like, I if stayed in Wilmington I'd kill myself because I want to live in a city. I want to have public transportation. I want to, like, be able to walk to my gym and my grocery store and my Chinese restaurant and live in an apartment, like, with 90, 100 other people. This is just not the community where I get that.

Brooklyn: I like living here. I always thought that I wanted to get away because—it almost goes back to our high schools, like in our high schools, we're basically bred, "Get good grades so you can go away to college and get the hell out of here." You know what I mean? That's the kind of the feeling that you get underneath of it all. So I was always kind of like against going to Wilmington and I felt embarrassed to tell people that I went here, because people assume that I'm gonna stay here. So I think there's this underlying stigma that goes all the way back to high school, like, people are telling you to get out, and for some reasons that needs to change. I don't know how to do that.

For at least some of the study participants, then, the perception that Wilmington lacks diversity contributes to a belief that in order to broaden one's horizons, grow as a person, or achieve society's definition of success, one must move away. Furthermore, those young people who do decide to stay grapple with the stigma associated with never venturing far from home to experience more than what they were raised knowing and choosing to make a life in a place perceived to be lacking the diversity to expose them to anything new.

The perception that Clinton County is a homophilous community (a place where people love anything that is the same and dislike anything that is different) underlies the second major perceptual problem that is damaging to efforts to attract and retain young people: perceived tension between insiders and outsiders. Self-described "outsiders" report feeling discomfort and self-selecting out of activities when they feel like they don't know the tacit rules or the right people. General comments supporting this theme include remarks about how hard it is to get involved, meet people in the first place and learn about things of interest. Several participants stated that it seems as if there is "one magical person that you have to meet and then you are 'in,'" but it's often difficult to find that elusive person.

Some people attribute this problem to poor communication networks, which we have discussed as an issue that permeates most of the problems identified in this report. However, several others pointed to another way in which outsiders become marginalized and made to feel different from those who "belong" in the community. Specifically, they highlighted the ways in which local businesses are designed with attention to "regulars" who do know the tacit rules, which forces outsiders to "out" themselves as not belonging if they ask for direction, as illustrated in the focus group excerpt below:

Stephanie: There are still days, even though I do feel connected now, that I'm like, "I don't want to go in because I don't know anyone there and I feel like I don't really belong."

Kara: And we make it hard. Like, the first time you went into Jen's Deli, do you remember the first time you went in? You don't know what to do, right? It is so confusing. It's just ordering a sandwich. [laughter] I mean, it's like scary to order a sandwich.

Rebecca: My aunt got very upset. They moved her along, and she was like, "I don't really know what I'm doing." I was like, "I'm sorry."

Facilitator: We were there today. We were like, "What do we do?"

Rebecca: Yeah, there's a lot of stimuli if you're there at lunchtime. [laughter]

Kara: I think that is hard, and it's things I take for granted, having grown up here.

4. Problems with Specific Contexts Important to Young Demographic

The first three problem areas we discussed in this report center on broad, systemic issues. However, certain technical issues that warrant attention were also highlighted in focus group interviews and open-ended survey responses. Often, these issues were discussed in less detail but generally named as contexts that tend to be especially important to young people as they decide where to live, work and spend their money. In particular, study participants expressed concerns about the quality of public schools, local businesses, housing options, transportation infrastructure, and fitness/recreation sites. We briefly examine each in turn.

Education.
First, questions about the quality of public schools raised concerns for the expected population of parents of small children, but also, young adults who might eventually want to raise a family. Without providing much more detail, 25 survey respondents wrote in that they would choose to leave Clinton County in order to be closer to better schools. Only one young person elaborated on the problem by writing, "The high school seems to be in shambles compared to the quality teachers I had when I graduated." The greatest insight into concerns about the area's public schools came from the CMH focus group and we quote it at length below:

Rita: Right now, if things don't change, I don't want my kids to go to any Clinton County schools.

Moderator: Will you say more? How do you see the state of the schools right now?

Rita: I personally don't think they're good… I mean, I remember reading in the *Wilmington News Journal* when the school year started this year that there were seniors, high school students getting four and five study halls because they didn't have teachers there and they had to cancel the classes, and they said, "Well, it's not gonna stay that way, we'll rearrange them." I'm thinking, "What is that?" How can you, you know, send out a preliminary schedule with four study halls on it? People aren't gonna get anything. And it comes back to taxes, it comes back to keeping young people here. That's something young professionals with families are gonna think about, "Do I want my kids to go here?" … Are they gonna get one foreign language, or are they gonna have an opportunity to take four foreign languages? Will they have three levels of math or will they have five levels of math? Where are they gonna go after here? Are they just gonna stay here and not get a higher education? So I think that—that eventually will come up if we vamp up the city and get people here and the tax dollars go back to the schools, but I think that is a concern, probably, for young professionals that have kids. Are their kids gonna stay here for school, or are they gonna have to drive 'em somewhere?

Moderator: Do you currently have a child in school?

Rita: My oldest is only two, but that's been weighing on my mind since he was born.

Moderator: Absolutely. So as a mother, though, what are the messages that you're hearing about the school, aside from the study hall?

Rita: You know, I hear some people sayin' that they're good, but the people I hear that from are people whose kids are already grown and graduated, so maybe they were good then, when the economy was better here. But right now, I don't hear really anything from the schools. You know, you hear about it once in a while, I think somebody did really good in some sport, swimming or something, and so that's a big deal, but I don't hear about people going on to college or doing things. I mean, we have lots of young patients over at our office, and I think a handful of 'em are sayin' they're goin' to college, and most of 'em are saying, "Well, I'm workin' at McDonald's." Which is fine, I'm glad they're working, but they don't have any bigger plans outside of that. I don't know if that's just the schools or just the nature of the people who are here or the combination, but— I don't want to leave. For all of these negative things we've said, I really enjoy Wilmington, and it felt like home, more so than the other couple places I've lived, um, but, you know, I'll have to think about that

in the next couple years. Am I gonna stay here? Am I gonna move away a little further? I don't know.

Brennan: Yeah, and we don't have children, so it's not somethin' that we—I've thought about up to this point, but certainly if we had children, I would say I would agree wholeheartedly, 'cause education is a big deal to me and my wife.

Local Businesses.
Over and over again in response to the question of why someone would choose to live somewhere other than Clinton County, the answer came, "better schools, shopping, and dining." The critique of local shopping was resoundingly unanimous: Wilmington has plenty of wonderful craft and gift shops, but residents cannot buy locally staple items that they truly need. If someone wants to buy their family or friends candles, candies, crafts, or books, they can find a shop in downtown Wilmington to meet their needs. If, however, they need quality clothing, shoes, food, or appliances, their options are severely limited.

As for the local food scene, the most common complaint was that Clinton County offers few eating options that are not fast food. Relatedly, few restaurants provide a social atmosphere conducive to making dining out an evening event. In particular, participants reported limited options for drinking alcoholic beverages or taking in live entertainment with their meals. Finally, the scarcity of coffee sources was noted by many groups of participants but was especially emphasized by college students. Since South Street Coffee closed down and Jen's Deli's hours are limited to early afternoon, students are desperately seeking a place to sip coffee and snack while working on homework. And, it would not hurt if such a place would display some Wilmington College paraphernalia, which is a rare sighting around town.

Housing.
Housing options tend to be oriented toward middle-class families, with few options for young single people, old people, or low income families. The housing options that do exist are hard to find. Wilmington is a small town that is centrally located between Cincinnati, Dayton, and Columbus. That means the town is too small to have a media market all its own, but also that advertisements get dispersed (and lost) between the three metropolises.

Transportation Infrastructure.
The issue of public transportation was mentioned in the section above about the disconnect between campus and downtown. However, the topic was also mentioned among other focus groups and survey responses and warrants more space here. The general consensus of these comments can be summed up by two conditions: first, the public transportation system in Clinton County is poor to non-existent, and second, the limited pedestrian infrastructure does not promote connections between different parts of town.

As a result, the transportation infrastructure in Clinton County requires a car to get around. Even the design of downtown Wilmington doesn't encourage walking from place to place. For frustrated young pedestrians, the semi presence in Wilmington best exemplifies how downtown is not being developed in a pedestrian-friendly manner:

Spencer: You're never gonna have a downtown if—you've got to get these semi trucks out of the downtown. They are loud, dangerous, noisy, dirty. If someone says, "Well, it's still 68—" that's not true. You can take 68 from the north, still get 73, come around, get off by Wal-Mart, go back down Davidson, Airborne to 134 you could still bypass. You could still have a trucker. And the same way from 68 south. You could still come up, get on 134, go up by the air park, go back around, get on 73, and come back around. It's just—everyone says, "Well, you know, 73, but we should have done it for 68." That's not true. You did do it. You just have to put up a sign that says, "Truck go this way." You got the huge 18-wheelers comin' right down your Main Street!

Bryce: There's about two hours of quiet time, and I know, because they're right outside my window.

Leah: It's the main route for taking your trash from Dayton to their landfill. It goes right through our town. So it's not even like they're nice trucks. They're rubbish trucks. That's what all of those are.

Bryce: Flashing lights outside my window at 4:30 in the morning.

Spencer: Honestly, if you're talkin' about something like a pretty obtainable goal, I don't know if we can get seven restaurants in here by the end of next month, but you could do that pretty easily. That would be a—you know, obtainable goal. We've got to get somethin' to get the ball rollin', and people could see and grab that.

Leah: That's exactly one of those topics, though, that gets that close-minded elders [trails off]. There was this institutional knowledge that if you were on a state route, it was good for your economy. There's just been this fear about taking at state route out of town would be bad for our economy.

Bryce: It's not like all that's gonna stop here and spend lots of money.

Leah: Yeah. But that's a really, really good example of how that mindset sometimes holds us back.

Adult Fitness/Recreation.
Gyms, adult fitness/recreation opportunities, and other businesses attractive to an active lifestyle are insufficiently advertised and/or developed to meet the needs of this age demographic. The recurring complaint about current gym offerings is that people would rather have one really nice gym than five mediocre gyms. Additionally, given all of the park space in Wilmington, many participants lamented that more has not been done to provide organized adult recreation leagues, which would add some excitement, energy, and entertainment to the young adult scene.

Assets

Our second research question asks what aspects of Wilmington and Clinton County young people consider to be assets that could be better highlighted in order to attract and retain more members of their age demographic. To answer this question, we draw from our transcripts of focus group discussions and the open-ended survey question regarding reasons someone might choose to live in the community. Five general assets were identified over and over again in conversation and survey responses: (1) strong sense of community, which is often related to personal connections with friends and family; (2) small town atmosphere with easy access to Cincinnati, Columbus, and Dayton; (3) Wilmington College; (4) development in the downtown area; and (5) a number of spaces available for adult recreation activities and great potential for building upon existing community events. We discuss each of these below.

1. Strong sense of community

Overwhelmingly, the top reason why young people would choose to live in Wilmington is the strong sense of community and the tightness of the bonds between its members. For many of the participants in this study, sense of community was rooted in personal relationships with friends and family. Here is a sampling of the responses in this category:

> "[Clinton County] is where I have roots and believe it would be a great place to raise a family."

> "Wilmington/Clinton County is home! I have lived here with my family and friends my whole life and although I may have to move due to lack of jobs in the field that I am interested in, I will always consider it home… There's something about going to the grocery or a local sporting event and seeing people you know or making new friends, that's what makes you feel like you really are at home here in Clinton County!"

> "Although I may not know everyone in my community, I feel as if I can relate to them all and I think they can relate to me. It just feels like 'home.'"

These relational bonds create, for some respondents anyway, a sense of obligation and purpose, as indicated in comments like these:

> "I grew up here, and I want to continue to give back to the community that gave so much to me growing up."

> "I would choose to live in Wilmington because I believe in strong community. I have strong relationships there with individuals and businesses. My family is there and Wilmington did a lot to make me who I am today."

Young people, therefore, are looking to make a home in a place where they feel connected to family and friends because these relationship ties are the basis for a bonded community.

Certainly, these same relational bonds can make a person feel stuck or trapped unwillingly in a situation; however, in this context, respondents inflected "obligations" with a positive connotation, suggesting that they felt a sense of duty to participate in the perpetuation of a community that did so much for them. In this way, investing in building connections across the community between generations creates a mutually beneficial situation in which older generations build up the younger generation in order to be supported and cared for by them in the future.

2. Small town atmosphere with access to bigger cities

Despite common assumptions that all young people want to live in the heart of bustling cities with all the modern amenities, participants in this study ranked high in their list of assets the small size of towns in Clinton County. Being away from the cities means no traffic, affordable housing, and a slower pace of life. Respondents put a high premium on the safety and security that Clinton County's small towns afford and took comfort in knowing their neighbors and being recognized when they were out in the community. Again, consider a sampling of responses:

> "We enjoy the small town feel of Wilmington and the proximity to Columbus, Cincinnati, or Dayton. The community seems to really care about the people of Wilmington."

> "Peaceful living with all the extras of work, food, shopping within a short drive (Dayton, Cinci, Columbus, etc.), cost of living is low, and some schools are pretty good."

> "It's a good place that is far enough away from anything big that you can actually obtain land and have room to play (I ride dirtbikes) but it's close enough to places that have stuff like clubs and malls and things of that nature."

Clinton County's "small town atmosphere" attracts people of all ages who are interested in living simple, private lives in the company of their neighbors. The quiet calm of country life appeals to this population, but the modern amenities of larger cities make Wilmington's location between Cincinnati, Columbus, and Dayton particularly ideal.

3. Wilmington College

Wilmington College was often discussed as the area's most under-utilized asset. The college currently exists in virtual isolation from the rest of the Clinton County community. However, young people see a lot of opportunity contained within the boundaries of campus. With the hiring of a new college president, young people seemed optimistic that in coming years the campus could become a location for more community events, faculty and guest speakers could draw in more members of the community, and students could become resources for local businesses through internships, co-ops, and service learning projects. Because most discussions of Wilmington College as an asset focused on the great potential for future developments, we will discuss these ideas further in the Proposals section.

4. Downtown development

Although downtown development in Wilmington is far from complete, study participants were excited about the forward progress. Many of the proposals for future action incorporated plans for continuing downtown revitalization (so we will discuss those further in the proposals section). However, a select few businesses were mentioned as models of the sort of development young people would like to continue to see. In particular, the Loft, the Murphy Theater, and the General Denver were named as three businesses that made explicit efforts to reach out to young people, make connections with both college students and professionals, and host events that make their establishments destinations for adult entertainment. One group elaborated on the General Denver as an example of how downtown development can be an asset to Wilmington and Clinton County:

Dave: The General Denver is a great example, because before, when DHL was still here, I have a group of friends, we'd go to basketball games, football games on a Friday night and you'd go to the General Denver afterwards because it was quiet and you could talk. [laughter] You could hear each other talk. And it's happened after DHL left. You go in there now, you can't go in there. I mean, we could go in there on a Friday night and we would be the only ones in there at 9:30. We'd sit at the table in the center of that place, nobody'd be there. After DHL left, all these young people were in there. [laughter] It's loud. You leave at 9 o'clock now instead. So it was really weird how that worked.

Thomas: There's a wait now.

Dave: Exactly, a wait. It's kind of a weird phenomenon that happened with the General Denver that I use as an example a lot. How did that happen?

Thomas: And I think there's—so, like, the coffee shop's a great example. I mean, you have a business that everyone wanted, and then—but that—just that—I always—I kind of—I'm a person of logic, so I try to break it down to either product or execution. And so they had the product, right? I mean, that was one piece of the puzzle. But the execution was abysmal. They'd be closed at 3 p.m. They'd be open at 10 a.m. You never knew. Um, and the thing with the General Denver is, I always— I mean, and I hate to sound so biased with them, but it really feels like one of those rare examples of having somebody that's more entrepreneurially inclined, so, meaning that they listened to what their customers want and they make changes. They try to incorporate certain things that are appealing to a broader audience. And so, I don't know how we sort of generate that in the community. I don't know how you replicate that.

5. Adult recreation and entertainment opportunities

At first glance, it might seem confusing that adult recreation is listed as both a problem area and an asset in Clinton County. However, this apparent contradiction makes more sense upon realizing that the adult recreation and entertainment opportunities listed as

assets are seasonal activities, all occurring between late spring and early fall. Therefore, while young people enjoy the corn festival, county fair, banana split festival, drive in movie, parks, golf course, and Cowan Lake as much as the older generations in the area, the presence of so much activity in the summer stands in stark contrast to the adult entertainment options for much of the rest of the year. We will discuss proposals for developing more of these recreational opportunities later in this report.

Tensions

Although we did not initially set out in this study to look at tensions young people negotiate in their decision-making processes, our analysis of qualitative data suggested that these respondents often wrestled with complex challenges and contradictions in their efforts to make sense of and report on their experiences related to Wilmington/Clinton County. In particular, we discuss in greater detail three primary tensions reported by survey respondents and focus group participants: (1) We are happily employed but unhappy as residents/We are unhappily employed yet happy as residents; (2) the close-knit community is a valued asset, but the tightly-woven interior is a barrier to entry; and (3) Wilmington today is a product of economic turmoil, but it is also a town in process of innovation and change.

1. We are happily employed but unhappy as residents/We are unhappily employed yet happy as residents.

On the one hand, long-time residents lament the fact that they can't find jobs and might be (or already are) forced to leave a town they love in pursuit of employment as indicated by Stephanie's story earlier in this report and comments like this among the survey responses:

> "Wilmington/Clinton County is home! I have lived here with my family and friends my whole life and although I may have to move due to lack of jobs in the field that I am interested in, I will always consider it home. As any town, it has it's up's and down's, and there are plenty of opportunities for improvement, but overall it is a very nice, clean town, full of many wonderful people! There's something about going to the grocery or a local sporting event and seeing people you know or making new friends, that's what makes you feel like you really are at home here in Clinton County! "

On the other hand, some respondents who came to the area specifically for work feel trapped in a community they wouldn't choose otherwise, as indicated by survey responses such as these:

> "I work here so I choose to live close to home. Despite what I consider to be poor communication of local events and poor shopping/restaurant choices and concern about the local school system, I enjoy my job and feel it is important so I stay local."

> "In all honesty, I work in Wilmington, but I do not and I would not live in Wilmington. I see it as a town that is crumbling and falling apart...literally and figuratively. The entire town is beginning to look run down and the people who are moving into Wilmington reflect this."

> "[I moved to Wilmington] for job opportunity, now it is sad how the city has declined. The parks, bike trail to nowhere. the YMCA is so poor quality. The complete lack of community development and pride has shunned away good working people from choosing to live in Wilmington. This community is often looked at for housing options for many business and working people from the Columbus, Cincy, and Dayton area. More often than not, Wilmington is passed upon as an option because of the lack of what the community has to offer. No community recreation center. No restaurants open uptown on Mondays. Other surrounding communities just offer more to their residents. What we have to offer continues to attract the population that does not work."

Many people on the survey and in focus group discussions reported living in Wilmington because of their job or having to leave Wilmington in order to find a job. For whatever reason, there seems to be a disconnect between the education and business sectors in Wilmington/Clinton County. Local businesses feel the need to recruit outside of the Clinton County talent pool, and local residents feel the need to leave Clinton County to find gainful employment.

2. The close-knit community is a valued asset, but the tightly-woven interior is a barrier to entry

As discussed in previous sections, a great majority of the young people associated with this area either by birth or circumstance consider the close-knit sense of community to be one of Clinton County's greatest assets. For people moving to this area, it can be challenging to find a "niche" but easy to get things done once they are connected/engaged:

Kara: I feel like there's a circle of people, especially kind of in some of the downtown organizations and businesses that once you meet one person, it's pretty easy to get connected because we're all looking for connection. I mean, it's people who are—I mean, used to being very social and used to larger networks and willing and able to be connected, so you almost have, like, ___ would put it, just a whole hub of connectors in the downtown. So that helps, knowing one person even.

Rebecca: But sometimes finding that one person, 'cause I lived here for six—I don't know, I've blocked most of it out, like a bunch of time before I met, like, the one key person that really got me involved in the community, and so once I met that one person, then I met everybody else. But until then, I knew nobody and I had no idea where to find people like me, 'cause I just assumed it was me in Clinton County.

3. Wilmington today is a product of economic turmoil, but it is also a town in process of innovation and change.

In 2008, as a result of a struggling economy and decreasing profitability, DHL decided to close its doors on domestic shipping in the United States, focusing its attention on the international market instead. As a result of the hub closing, about 8,000 people in Clinton and the surrounding counties found themselves suddenly unemployed. This event became a defining moment in Clinton County history. Because of the events surrounding this situation, Wilmington today is both a product of economic turmoil and also a town in process of significant change through innovation and creativity.

Undeniably, Clinton County was deeply affected by the economic upheaval that accompanied the loss of its largest employer. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in May 2008, the unemployment rate in Clinton County rested below state (6.2%) and national (5.5%) averages at 5.3%. That number began a steady incline following DHL's restructuring announcement, spiking at 16.1% in June 2010. Of course, in the summer of 2010, Ohio and the rest of the United States suffered economically as well, but with a state unemployment rate of 10.0% and a national average of 9.5%, Clinton County's growing unemployment lines dwarfed most of the country at that time. As DHL closed their Wilmington hub, Clinton County plunged into a severe economic tailspin from which few outside spectators expected the constitutive communities to recover.

In May 2013, five years after DHL's initial restructuring announcement, those rates for Clinton County stood at 9.7%. So, the Wilmington area still boasts some of the higher unemployment numbers in the state (Ohio's unemployment rate sat at 7.0% in May 2013, 0.6% better than the national average), and their recovery is far from over.

However real the economic devastation might have been and however unfinished the reconstruction process, the young participants in this study argued that community members need to stop talking about Wilmington as the place that DHL left if they hope to attract positive development and fresh energy to the area:

Rebecca: I yelled at my mom last month about that. I literally yelled. We were out some place together where she lives, and it was a random conversation. "Oh, she lives in Wilmington, you know, the—" I'm like, "Quit! Quit identifying Wilmington as the place that DHL left."

Aubrey: I think people think there's, like, tumbleweeds rolling down our streets.

Kara: And because there's, like, so many communities, like, that have faced such a difficult economic time, granted, Wilmington's was a lot—was very dramatic, but there are so many communities dealing with that. Why do we define ourselves by it? Because, I mean, the sob story—and you know it kind of works at the beginning to get attention, and you need that, because there is need, and there are people that are, you know, without jobs and that are suffering. But at the same time, to continually define yourself by what you

don't have and what you lack and in a negative way doesn't make the people living here feel any better about living here.

Deirdre: I do think that ties into Wilmington's pride problem. I mean, I'm not in touch with the high school scene yet, but I've heard that that's way different than when with were there. Again, I don't want to keep talking about where I was from, but I know that pride in your community is one of the things that makes people stay. And here, we're just—our claim to fame is, DHL left us. Not really, but for a lot of people. And so I think, as a community, finding other things that we can be proud of that are unique, that are—and bragging about them, not just, "Oh, you can go to a small movie theater or bowling alley."

Seth: I think one thing that's come up a couple of times is the idea of creation. I think that's the story we need to tell now, that this is, like, a place of creation. I think that's something that our generation has a real opportunity to do. I mean, we already are doing it. We're doing it just by being here. I mean, that's, you know, I spend a lot of time thinking about, like, what is our work, what is my work in Wilmington, and I think that my work is just staying in Wilmington, like, that's the most important task that I have in this community, is the fact that I'm here. I think that goes for all of us. I mean, it's—in a place that's losing young people, if you're young and you're here, then you're making a huge effect. Just—

Kara: And I think we should take pride, too, like, going back to community pride and tying that idea in the creativity of young people, because you do have to be creative to have a social life in Wilmington when you're young, which isn't a bad thing. When my friends come to visit, they're like, "You're having a Murder Mystery party?" They don't do that. They just go to High Street and they go to a bar, and that's it. You know, you have to come up with other things, the wine walk, or you make the things that are fun that you'll end up going to, the bands that come to different bars. O our friends are organizing that, and I think taking pride in saying, "This is a social community where you can make the thing you want to have happen. Like, if you want to have some kind of live music event, you can start that. It's kind of moldable.

Stephanie: That's the best advice that I've gotten here… she said that the greatest thing about Wilmington is that you can find a hole and fill it.

Kara: And it's kind of like, we initially had to define ourselves by the loss because it was something that caused a lot of us to do something, but now we have the opportunity to define ourselves by the creativity that resulted from that, and we can kind of let the other story take its place in—you know.

Rebecca: And the recognition that it was literally part of the grief process. I mean, the community was going through this grieving process. And so you have to do that, and you have to accept that. But you also don't wallow.

Proposals

In addition to identifying problems and assets, all participants in this study were asked to reflect upon what they would like to see happen in the future to develop the town of Wilmington and/or Clinton County at large. Specifically, survey respondents were asked, "Where do you think the city of Wilmington should be directing its money and resources to better develop the city for the future?" Along these same lines, focus group participants were asked what they would like to see in Wilmington that doesn't currently exist, what existing features they would like to see improved or expanded, and what existing features they would like to see minimized or eliminated altogether.

Responses varied widely to these questions, but the dominant themes are represented in order of prevalence below: (1) Just make more jobs; (2) strategically develop business downtown to work together to meet consumer needs; (3) improve downtown living; (4) invest in education; (5) connect the college and community to existing assets each already possesses; (6) create regularly occurring events geared toward engaging and supporting young professionals; (7) establish clearer, more efficient lines of communication; (8) develop better fitness and recreation options; (9) emphasize the importance of aesthetics for community pride and development; (10) build a more unified collective identity. Each of these themes is discussed in detail below.

1. Just make more jobs!

Without a doubt, the most common response to the survey question regarding how money and resources should be directed to better develop the area for the future was some variation of, "Just make more jobs!" 66 total responses offered some variation of this general plea to attract quality employment and move the area "toward job growth by any means."

Among the more specific business-related requests, participants suggested the following:
- Focus on bringing in more diverse businesses
- Recruit greater variety of dining, shopping, and entertainment
- Bring in more places to sit down and eat or drink while socializing with friends
- Extend the season for the drive-in theater so college students can attend
- Develop the air park
- Go green
- Focus on strengths to become a logistical hub for the Midwest
- Build upon the "boutique" feel in the downtown area
- Update the movie theater

Finally, along these same lines, survey respondents and focus group participants emphasized the need to put available jobs and assets on display for local youth and outsiders. Without these success stories and images of possibility being put forward as the

dominant message about this area, young people and outsiders are not going to flock to Clinton County to build their lives.

Putting assets on display includes better integrating the business and educational sectors. Students at all levels can benefit from direct contact with area businesses because they can begin to imagine themselves occupying a meaningful role in the community following graduation. Businesses can benefit from this relationship as well by establishing organizational loyalty with potential future employees at a young age through job shadowing, internships, and part-time work experiences.

2. Strategically develop businesses to work together to meet consumer needs

Another dominant theme in proposals for future action was that of reworking local business development to better meet consumer needs. Study participants suggested that a more consumer-focused business model would (1) prioritize bringing more needs-based products like clothing, fresh food, and staple items into the downtown area; (2) recruit another high quality sit-down restaurant to compete with Damons; (3) encourage businesses to set consistent business hours to meet consumer need, not owner convenience; and (4) develop a local food culture that would integrate the agricultural roots of the area with local business by using local ingredients in restaurants and continuing to grow the farmers' market.

A popular (though expected to be controversial idea) was to bring in big corporate names to serve as anchors in downtown:

Lindsay: This is probably—I'm sure there's gonna be some local people here who work really hard for local businesses who are gonna kill me, but I would love to see, like, some corporate restaurants and maybe some corporate stores downtown, like, I know that we really want local business, and that's great, but I drive 20 minutes to Chipotle at least twice a month.

Bryce: Chipotle, Target.

Leslie: A Target, oh, my God! I think there was gonna be one opening—

Bryce: I think it was Kohl's that was opening.

Lindsay: And I know that's terrible, and I want to keep local business, but I think you have to start somewhere, and maybe getting—maybe seeing that a business can work downtown with a corporation who knows what they're doing will encourage people to then open stores downtown.

Bryce: 'Cause if you can—I mean, one of our assets, I would think, would be one of these little towns, Sabina, New Vienna, they're all really close. So we have to attract the people who are 10 minutes away before we can attract people who are an hour away. So I know my parents, if they're going out to eat, they

> would much rather drive an hour to Cincinnati or Dayton than 15 minutes into Wilmington.

Spencer: And don't feel bad about that. Those big businesses could be anchors. They could be stabilizing forces. If you have a bucket, you put your big rocks in first, and then you use pebbles to fill in all the empty holes, and the small business can be like a pebble or something like that. That's not a bad— there's nothing wrong with that. It would bring in money and knowledge.

Lindsay: Yeah, but I feel saying it, mentioning it, I just know somebody over there is like—

Bryce: I want a Panera and a Chipotle. And I would just be so happy.

Lindsay: I'd be done. And I'd still go to all the other local places, but sometimes you need to go in and run in and run out. And that's what a corporation is great for. The local businesses, if I want to go and just sit and have a good time, I'll go somewhere local.

In this way, participants desire a greater blend of business offerings overall. Greater diversity of employment options can help to stabilize the economy and draw in people with a variety of interests and talents. A better mix of local and corporate, craft and staple shops will better meet the needs of the local citizenry.

3. Improve downtown living

Downtown Wilmington, as it currently exists, is not particularly hospitable to pedestrians. The sidewalks are often empty and the pocket park by Books N More is rarely occupied. Semi-trucks puff smoke down South Street and noise pollution makes outdoor conversation extremely difficult. Even when people make the effort to frequent downtown businesses, inconsistent and unusual hours of operation make success rates for finding an open business on any given day surprisingly unpredictable. Changes that would dramatically improve downtown living conditions include:

- Rerouting trucks away from downtown
- Revitalize historic buildings
- Strategically place storefront businesses to create synergy between shops
- Encouraging businesses to adopt more consistent, later hours
- Continuing to develop trail systems to increase accessibility by bike
- Continue renovating and renting loft spaces
- Make it possible for college students to live downtown

4. Invest in education

Generally, respondents suggesting more of an investment in education ended their proposal by simply saying the education system (be it K-12 public schools, trade school, or college) needs to be improved. One survey respondent provided a more elaborate answer:

Clinton County needs to focus more on improving and bettering the County Schools. If kids can see that they are wanted and needed in this community then maybe they would be more likely to stay and not count down the days until they can get out. / I would also HIGHLY recommend Wilmington put some money into expanding the College and helping them grow. The College is a very important part of this community, and while many are leaving due to jobs, the College is the one place that is still bringing new people to our sleepy town since the closing of DHL. If the city of Wilmington were to team up with the College to help our community come alive again by bringing in fresh faces that fall in love with Wilmington and decide to permanently stay, then I believe Wilmington and Clinton County will have a bright future!

5. Connect college and community to existing assets each already possesses
A significant problem discussed earlier in this report was the disconnection between Wilmington College and the surrounding community. Proposals for bridging this divide include:
- Have college representation on city council
- Have students do service in the community as part of their college experience
- Build an internship program
- Better integrate Wilmington College students into local economy by allowing Wilmington College ID card to be used as credit/money at local businesses
- Provide more college-focused entertainment events downtown
- Provide discounts for students at local establishments
- Display more Wilmington College gear in local businesses
- Host a college-oriented night at the Y
- Hold student-focused events midweek (at least at first) to build a group of students who want to come and will know about it. Possibly work with Greek system at college to publicize/organize events

6. Create regularly occurring events geared toward engaging and supporting young professionals
College students are not the only young demographic feeling overlooked when it comes to event planning. Working professionals and job-seeking young adults also compiled a list of proposed events that could be geared toward engaging and supporting them:
- Host downtown wine walks
- Organize neighborhood/town clean up days where residents would pick up trash in a group and then have a block party afterwards (like National Night Out)
- Establish regularly scheduled networking events for young professionals
- Create spaces for bridging the disconnect with the older generation—perhaps mentorship events or business outreach programs

7. Establish clearer, more efficient lines of communication
Community leaders need to establish a better way to spread the word about events of interest to young adults/families. One suggestion was that town events be published in local magazine, which could be made available at grocery stores, doctors' offices, local

businesses, etc. Another idea was to establish a social media presence by building a Wilmington Young Professionals Facebook page. Following the focus group discussion from which this idea emanated, Mark Rembert created such a group. The page receives modest traffic, but could easily become neglected if the page is not maintained and expanded to include more of the young professional population.

8. Develop better fitness and recreation options
Another set of suggestions has to do with developing better possibilities for recreational sports and fitness. Although physical fitness and activity may not be appealing to all young adults, it is a theme that came up in both the focus groups and in the responses to the survey. Recreational sports and fitness activities give young adults a way to meet people with similar interests, have fun together, and build a sense of community that is not tied solely to their work or school environments. In this way, things like recreational sports leagues, running clubs, and fitness classes are social activities that can help build a sense of community among participants.

Community members offered a few specific suggestions. First, they suggested that the bike trails should be better connected to make it easier for adults with or without families to engage in more recreational cycling, walking, or running. Another suggestion was to develop recreational sports leagues for adults, such as softball, basketball, soccer, or flag football. Similarly, participants suggested that events such as 5k walks/runs or recreational sports tournaments could not only give community members more recreational opportunities, but could also attract visitors from other areas.

Finally, many focus group participants wished that Wilmington had a higher quality gym that catered to young adults. They suggested that perhaps improvements could be made to the YMCA, and they commented that they would rather have one really high quality gym than several less-desirable options that do not offer the services to meet their needs. Some specific suggestions included making child care available on site, staying open later in the evening, having WiFi available in the gym, and offering membership discounts for young adults/professionals.

9. Improve aesthetics
Several participants also commented that they would like to see improvements to the aesthetics of their community. They generally appreciated the work being done to improve housing options downtown and improve the look and feel of Wilmington. They hoped that this work is able to continue and would be able to spread beyond the downtown area. Several people supported the idea of having regulations to improve the community aesthetics. As one person advocated, community leaders should

> "continue to keep bettering the look of Clinton County. Get rid of the rundown homes and require people that live in the city to keep their yards/porches clean and mowed. The look and feel of a town is what initially attracts newcomers and passersby to want to come back and stay."

10. Develop around a unified and inclusive identity
Finally, participants noted a need for Clinton County to develop a sense of identity that is unified and inclusive. As noted above, the young professionals we spoke with hope for a sense of community identity that is forward looking and highlights the core values of Wilmington's history and culture. They recognize the importance of agriculture as part of that history and culture, and they value the sense of small town values combined with easy access to larger urban environments.   Several participants lamented the fact that Wilmington is seen from the outside as "the place that DHL left" and they hope that future efforts can develop a shared sense of identity that moves away from this negative view.

Concluding Thoughts

In this study, we had an opportunity to hear about a variety of experiences people have had living and working in Wilmington and Clinton County. As members of local and regional leadership move forward with the development of strategic planning for economic development, we hope the opinions, stories, and trends relayed through this report can inform and enrich those future efforts.

In choosing to address the dual-problems of brain drain and an aging population, Wilmington and Clinton County join the growing ranks of US rural communities committed to developing sustainable local economies so the American small town does not go the way of boom and bust mining towns of the Old West. The task is not a simple one and the problems identified in this report will likely take creative collaboration and long-term commitment from a variety of stakeholders in order to achieve meaningful change.

In 2009, sociologists Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas published the book, *Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America,* in which they chronicled their time living in a small Iowa town very similar demographically and economically to Wilmington, Ohio. Carr and Kefalas's study suggests that the young people in small towns take fairly predictable paths as members of one of three groups: Stayers, Leavers, or Returners. Stayers tend to marry young and raise their families in their hometown. Leavers take the form of Achievers, who initially leave for college and then establish themselves as movers and shakers in larger cities post-graduation, and Seekers, who are eager to leave town as soon as possible and usually pursue that opportunity through military experience. Finally, Returners are those Achievers and Seekers who eventually find themselves coming back to their hometown either due to disenchantment or failure in the outside world or because they feel a sense of obligation and opportunity in returning home.

The conclusions drawn from our own study suggest certain problems and proposals that might be particularly relevant to each of these groups in the Wilmington community. However, we also add that an important demographic group in Clinton County is that of the "Outsider." Outsiders have moved to the area for employment opportunities and have struggles and solutions of their own. In this concluding section, we summarize the implications of our findings for each of these groups.

First, we turn our attention to the Stayers, those members of the Clinton County community who remained in their hometown to marry their high school sweethearts, work for their family business, or otherwise put down their roots where they had been planted. At least some of these residents face a difficult decision regarding long-term plans. Many survey respondents wrote that they choose to live in Wilmington or Clinton County because it is "home." Their friends and family are here and it is the only place they have ever known. Some of these respondents lamented that if they would move, it would be because of employment. When the air park was fully operational, many farmers and part-time workers made extra money and acquired health insurance through air park employment. With the departure of DHL, many people who are rooted in the Clinton

County community are finding high competition for unskilled labor positions and insufficient skillsets for the highly-technical positions that are available in greater abundance in the area. A plan for future development that accounts for these challenges would focus on bridging the divide between curricula in local education systems and skill needs of local businesses. Without greater accessibility to proper training for local industries, Stayers might find themselves underemployed in Wilmington/Clinton County and local employers will continue to feel the need to go outside the local talent pool in order to recruit qualified employees.

The second group of young people consists of Leavers, who spent a large portion of their lives learning and growing in Wilmington or Clinton County, but eventually left to pursue opportunity elsewhere. This group is particularly complex because it is made up of people with very divergent sentiments toward the local area, different levels of sustained connection to the community, and a variety of reasons for leaving. Given our quantitative data that suggests that people who are disappointed and lacking strong feelings of connection to the community are significantly more likely to leave, we would not necessarily promote efforts to woo the cynical segment of the Leaver population back to the area. Instead, plans for future development geared toward Leavers might consider ways to engage local youth at critical times of decision-making (in high school, during college, and especially at the end of college programs). By embedding local youth in lasting networks, even if they still decide to leave, they might be transformed into eventual Returners rather than Leavers for life.

The third group, Returners, have left the area in the past and for one reason or another chose to come back to their hometown. These individuals have experienced life in another community, and their return to Wilmington/Clinton County is tinted by that experience. They bring with them knowledge of other models of community life, which either deepen their appreciation for the ways things happen locally or open their minds to possibilities that exist if local residents choose to do things differently. Because members of this group have already decided to return, planning for future development focused on this group should think about how to better retain these members. Since Returners have spent some time away from home, their social networks may need some repair. Efforts geared toward connecting these young people to existing networks and providing resources to support their career efforts might make their transition home an easier one and encourage other homesick Leavers to come back.

Finally, great opportunities exist for making Wilmington/Clinton County more welcoming to Outsiders who are already finding their way into the community. Most of these Outsiders have moved to the area because they or their significant other found local employment. However, the perceived lack of industry variety and high competition for jobs means that few dual-career families report full employment for both individuals. As members of our focus group indicated, full-time employment leads to stronger identification with an organization, which helps to situate individuals in a larger network of belonging in the community.

Aside from spousal employment issues, Outsiders were most likely to comment on the tension felt between experiencing the close-knit community as both a value and a barrier to entry. The prevalence of tradition and local knowledge means that many area assets are not widely advertised or clearly marked with signs to guide newcomers, visitors, or other people unfamiliar with tacit rules. Several Outsiders commented that they do not even know where to go to get linked in to the "right" communication networks. Again, the importance of feeling connected cannot be underemphasized. As our quantitative analysis suggests, people who experience a lack in this regard are 11 times more likely than their satisfied peers to leave the area in the next five years. A plan for future development should consider how to help Outsiders gain access to information and resources more quickly upon their arrival to the area, so they might develop stronger social bonds within the community.

Overall, we were struck by the overwhelming passion with which participants spoke of Wilmington and Clinton County. If young people did not care about the future of this area, they would not have taken the time and effort to voice their opinions, hopes, and frustrations. We hope that our presentation of findings and reflections for future steps are useful to leaders in Wilmington and Clinton County and can help spark new ideas for moving forward with the economic development and growth of these communities.

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please read the following carefully.

Throughout this survey, you are asked to reflect on your opinions and experiences related to the Wilmington community. Here, "community" refers to the entire collection of people and places that make up the city.

1. How important is it to you to feel a sense of community with members of the Wilmington community?

- ◯ Prefer not to be part of this community
- ◯ Not important at all
- ◯ Not very important
- ◯ Somewhat important
- ◯ Very important
- ◯ Essential

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Please only select one response per item.

2. The following statements concern how you feel about Wilmington.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I can get what I need in this community.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel like a member of this community.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have a say about what goes on in this community.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel connected to this community.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
People in this community are good at influencing each other.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
This community helps me fulfill my needs.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have a good bond with others in this community.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I belong in this community.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Please indicate your current behaviors toward volunteering. Please only select one response per item.

3. Currently I...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Volunteer with a political group	○	○	○	○	○
Volunteer for a campaign	○	○	○	○	○
Volunteer for a political official	○	○	○	○	○
Volunteer for a community group	○	○	○	○	○
Volunteer at local charity	○	○	○	○	○
Volunteer for an environmental group	○	○	○	○	○
Volunteer for a religious group	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate the importance of each factor listed below by selecting a response ranging from "not important at all" to "essential." Please only select one response per item.

4. In determining where to live, how important to you are the following economic aspects of a community?

	Not important at all	Not very important	Somewhat important	Very important	Essential
Availability of local job opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
Range of industries (types of businesses in the region)	○	○	○	○	○
Average household income	○	○	○	○	○
Availability of affordable housing	○	○	○	○	○
Tax rates	○	○	○	○	○
Cost of living	○	○	○	○	○
Educational opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
Other:	○	○	○	○	○

5. In determining where to work, how important to you are the following aspects of a job environment?

Please rank your choices from 1-7, where 1 indicates the most important factor and 7 indicates the least important factor. Please use each number only once.

_____ Daycare for dependents
_____ Flexible work hours
_____ Health benefits
_____ Industry (type of business)
_____ Job title
_____ Salary
_____ Other

Please indicate the importance of each factor listed below by selecting a response ranging from "not important at all" to "essential." Please only select one response per item.

6. In determining where to live, how important to you are the following social aspects of a community?

	Not important at all	Not very important	Somewhat important	Very important	Essential
Friendliness of neighbors	○	○	○	○	○
Proximity to extended family	○	○	○	○	○
Feeling safe	○	○	○	○	○
Diversity of local residents	○	○	○	○	○
Recreational opportunities for single adults	○	○	○	○	○
Recreational opportunities for families	○	○	○	○	○
Volunteer opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
Local arts	○	○	○	○	○
Local music	○	○	○	○	○
Local shopping opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
Local dining opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
Availability of particular religious institutions	○	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate the importance of each factor listed below by selecting a response ranging from "not important at all" to "essential." Please only select one response per item.

7. In determining where to live, how important to you are the following physical aspects of a community?

	Not important at all	Not very important	Somewhat important	Very important	Essential
Air quality	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Minimal noise downtown (car, bus, construction)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Direct access to major interstate highways	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Quality of trails/bike paths	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Quality of sidewalks	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Road quality	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Availability of public transportation	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Quality of public parks	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Quality of downtown buildings	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Availability of historic homes on the market	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Availability of new housing developments on the market	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Other:	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate the importance of each factor listed below by selecting a response ranging from "not important at all" to "essential." Please only select one response per item.

8. When deciding where to shop, how important are the following details to you?

	Not important at all	Not very important	Somewhat important	Very important	Essential
Located in Clinton County	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Locally owned	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Cost of products available	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Quality of products available	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Variety of products available	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Other:	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate the importance of each factor listed below by selecting a response ranging from "not important at all" to "essential." Please only select one response per item.

9. When deciding where to eat when you go out for dinner, how important are the following details to you?

	Not important at all	Not very important	Somewhat important	Very important	Essential
Located in Clinton County	○	○	○	○	○
Locally owned	○	○	○	○	○
Cost of meals available	○	○	○	○	○
Quality of meals available	○	○	○	○	○
Variety of meal options available	○	○	○	○	○
Option to drink alcohol with your meal	○	○	○	○	○
Availability of locally-produced ingredients	○	○	○	○	○
Availability of vegetarian options	○	○	○	○	○
Availability of vegan options	○	○	○	○	○
Other:	○	○	○	○	○

10. Why would you choose to live in Wilmington or Clinton County? Write your response in the box below.

11. Why would you choose to live somewhere other than Wilmington or Clinton County? Please write your response in the box below.

12. Where do you think the city of Wilmington should be directing its money and resources to better develop the city for the future? Please write your response in the box below.

Demographic Information:

13. Sex/Gender:

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Transgender
- ○ Prefer not to answer

14. Age: _____

15. Occupation: _____

16. Religious affiliation:

- ○ Christian
- ○ Jewish
- ○ Muslim
- ○ Hindu
- ○ Buddhist
- ○ Atheist
- ○ Agnostic
- ○ Other: _____

17. Please choose the political ideology that best describes you:

- ○ Extremely Liberal
- ○ Liberal
- ○ Moderate
- ○ Conservative
- ○ Extremely Conservative

18. Please indicate the category that best describes your current relationship status:

- ○ Single
- ○ Dating
- ○ Co-habitating
- ○ Married
- ○ Separated
- ○ Divorced
- ○ Widowed
- ○ Other _____

19. Please select the number of children in the following age groups that currently live in your household.

	0	1	2	3	4	5 or more
Under 5 years old	○	○	○	○	○	○
6 - 11 years old	○	○	○	○	○	○
12 - 14 years old	○	○	○	○	○	○
15 - 18 years old	○	○	○	○	○	○

20. Please select the highest level of education you have completed.

   - ❍ Less than high school
   - ❍ High school/GED
   - ❍ Some college (no degree awarded)
   - ❍ 2-year degree (Associate's)
   - ❍ Currently pursuing a 4-year degree (BA, BS)
   - ❍ 4-year degree (BA, BS)
   - ❍ Master's degree
   - ❍ Doctoral degree
   - ❍ Professional degree (MD, JD)

21. Do you currently live in Clinton County?

   - ❍ Yes
   - ❍ No

22. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, please select the township or municipality from the list below that best describes where in Clinton County you currently live:

   - ❍ Adams
   - ❍ Blanchester
   - ❍ Chester
   - ❍ Clark
   - ❍ Clarksville
   - ❍ Green
   - ❍ Jefferson
   - ❍ Liberty
   - ❍ Martinsville
   - ❍ New Vienna
   - ❍ Richland
   - ❍ Sabina
   - ❍ Union
   - ❍ Vernon
   - ❍ Washington
   - ❍ Wilmington
   - ❍ Not listed

23. Do you anticipate living in Clinton County for the next five years?

   - ❍ Yes
   - ❍ No
   - ❍ Uncertain

24. Please select the statements below that best describe your current employment situation.

Check all that apply.

- ❑ I work in Clinton County
- ❑ I work outside of Clinton County
- ❑ I attend school in Clinton County
- ❑ I attend school outside of Clinton County
- ❑ I am not currently working or attending school

25. Please describe your current living situation.

- ○ Rent
- ○ Own
- ○ Live with family or friends
- ○ Other _____

26. Please describe your housing plans for the next five years.

- ○ No plans for change
- ○ Start renting in Clinton County
- ○ Start renting outside of Clinton County
- ○ Remodel existing home
- ○ Purchase existing home
- ○ Purchase or build new in Clinton County
- ○ Purchase or build new outside of Clinton County
- ○ Leave Clinton County
- ○ Other _____

27. Are you interested in participating in a facilitated focus group discussion about future developments in Wilmington?

- ○ Yes, I would like to be contacted to participate in a focus group discussion.
- ○ No, thank you.

If yes, please provide your contact information below (email address and/or telephone number)

Name_____

Email address_____

Telephone number _____

Thank you very much for participating in our research.

Appendix B: Focus Group Interview Protocol

I. Warm-Up Questions
How long have you lived in Wilmington/Clinton County (CC)?
- How did you come to be in Wilmington/CC in the first place?
- How did you find yourself in your current position in the community?
What do you do to be engaged in the community?
- What does it mean to you to be engaged?

II. Problem Identification
What do you dislike about Wilmington?
- What specific places, events, or traditions alienate young people in Wilmington/CC?
- When or where might young people feel unwelcome or out of place in Wilmington/CC?
Why might you choose to live somewhere other than Wilmington or Clinton County?
What problems do you see for attracting or retaining young people in this area?

III. Appreciative Inquiry
What do you like about Wilmington/CC?
- What specific places, events, or traditions bring people together in Wilmington/CC?
- What specific Wilmington/CC places, events, or traditions are meaningful or important to you?
Why might you choose to live in Wilmington or Clinton County?
Where are other places that you think you would enjoy living?
- What do you like about those places?

IV. Proposals for Future Development
What would you like to see in Wilmington that doesn't currently exist?

What existing features would you like to see improved or expanded?

What existing features would you like to see minimized or eliminated altogether?

Some towns become known for certain things (like being destinations for outdoors activities, shopping, sports, or culture). What should Wilmington be known for in an ideal future?

V. Closing Questions
What stands out to you as significant or especially meaningful from today's discussion?

Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you think would help us understand the problems and possibilities you see for attracting and retaining young people in this area?

Would you like to ask us anything?