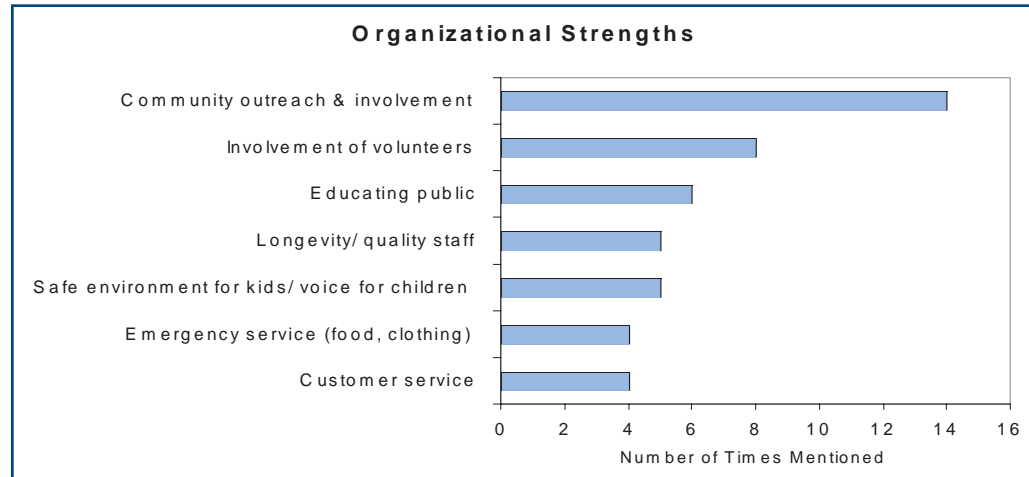
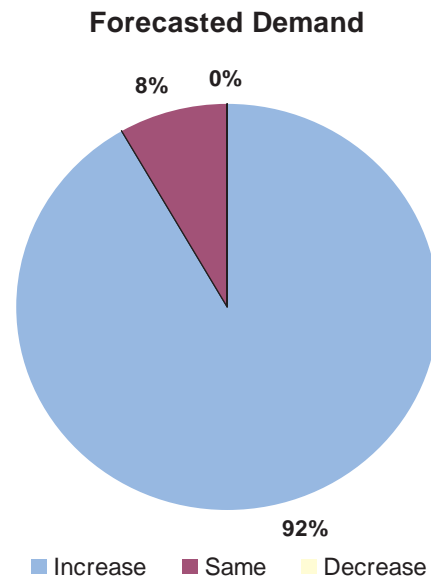


NOT-FOR-PROFIT GROUPS

- Most non-profit groups surveyed consider their outreach and involvement in the community as a strength.
- The involvement of volunteers, the organization's role in educating the public, and quality staff were frequently mentioned organizational strengths.



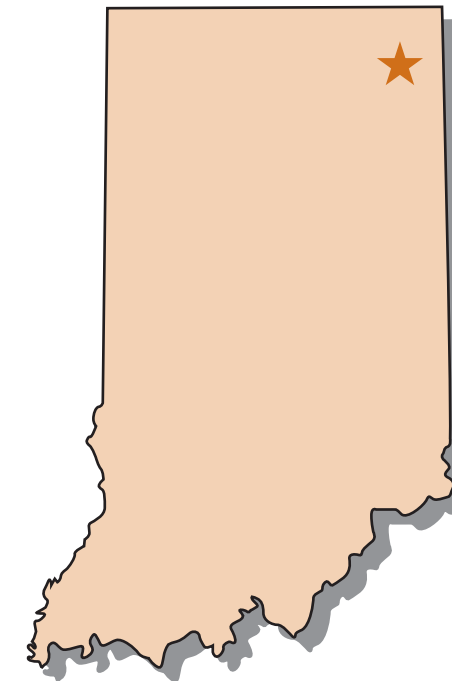
- Obtaining funding was by far the challenge mentioned most frequently by survey respondents, followed by recruiting volunteers.
- Organizational challenges were related to growth and increased demand for services.
- 40% of respondents attribute increased demand to welfare and social reform.
- Almost all respondents see increasing demand for their services over the next two years. None saw demand for their services decreasing.



The 2006 DeKalb County Community Assessment was developed by a partnership that included Carrie Matsel, Garrett-Keyser-Butler Community Head Start and Early Head Start Program; Kelly Dunham, DeKalb Memorial Hospital; Janelle Graber, Eckhart Public Library; Wendy Oberlin, DeKalb County Community Foundation; Judy Sorg, TerraFirma; and Marcy Yoder, United Way of DeKalb County. Funders of the project included DeKalb County Community Foundation, DeKalb Memorial Hospital, The Dekko Foundation, Drug Free DeKalb County, and United Way of DeKalb County.

A complete report of the 2006 DeKalb County Community Assessment is available to the public at each of the DeKalb County public libraries and the offices of the United Way of DeKalb County and the DeKalb County Community Foundation.

2006 DEKALB COUNTY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



Sponsored By:

DeKalb County Community Foundation
DeKalb Memorial Hospital
The Dekko Foundation
Drug Free DeKalb County
United Way of DeKalb County

2006 DEKALB COUNTY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The 2006 DeKalb County Community Assessment represents an overview of the socio-economic conditions of DeKalb County and the direction in which it is headed. The effort is in one way unique and in another, an extension of the 1996 and 2001 DeKalb County Community Assessments.

With primary assistance from Amy Davidoff, MarketVoice Consulting, and statistical assistance from Chris Cage, Indiana Research Service, Inc., the partnership refined the 2001 Assessment, attempting to provide an update of the county's strengths and needs, and reflecting trends across many facets of community life in DeKalb County. The assessment was conducted between June 15 and November 19, 2006.

Similar to past DeKalb County assessments, the primary areas of interest included:

- Overall Quality of Life
- Public Services
- Education and Childcare
- Social Services
- Health Services
- Arts and Recreation
- Nonprofit Organizations

Wherever possible, comparisons were made between the responses to 2006 and 2001 survey questions. The resulting information can provide one important part of the story in DeKalb County. Results can be used to initiate and inform conversations about the community, help policy makers make informed decisions, highlight positive trends, and identify negative trends early.

Overall, this assessment is to be used as a tool to help increase dialogue and elicit reaction and discussion in order to be successful. Many groups could use these findings: from businesses recruiting employees, to non-profit agencies planning services, to local government deciding on resource allocation, to coalitions addressing an area of need, to the general public increasing awareness of community strengths and challenges.

This report provides information, but no solutions. Its purpose is to spark community leaders and citizens to action based on an accurate understanding of current community conditions and trends.

APPROACH

- 262 DeKalb County residents responded to telephone and paper surveys.*
- 33 online surveys were collected from DeKalb County teens and pre-teens.
- 50 area not-for-profit organizations were surveyed by telephone.
- Two forums with a total of 32 opinion leaders were conducted to review the results and brainstorm solutions.

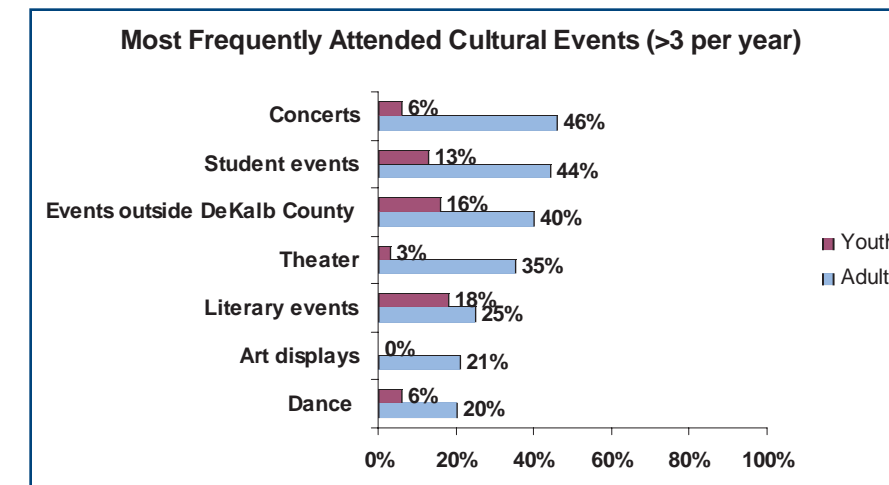
**262 is a statistically valid number of respondents for DeKalb County. If the survey was repeated 100 times, at least 90 times out of 100, results would represent the opinions of residents countywide.*

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

- Respondents were proportional to county's residential population.
- More female respondents than male in 2006 compared to 2001.
- More respondents between the ages of 45 - 64 yrs. in 2006 compared to 2001.
- Nearly 25% of respondents have children at home, a decrease from 40% in 2001.
- More respondents had high school diplomas, fewer with Master's degrees in 2006 compared to 2001.

ARTS AND RECREATION

- 35% of respondents said the availability of recreational activities was excellent or very good.
- 23% of respondents said the availability of cultural activities was excellent or very good.
- DeKalb County residents are most likely to have attended a concert, student event, or a cultural event outside the county within the past year.
- Schools and churches are the most frequently used local venues.
- Survey respondents believe older adults have the greatest need for additional recreational activity options. The perceived availability of recreational opportunities has improved since 2001, however.

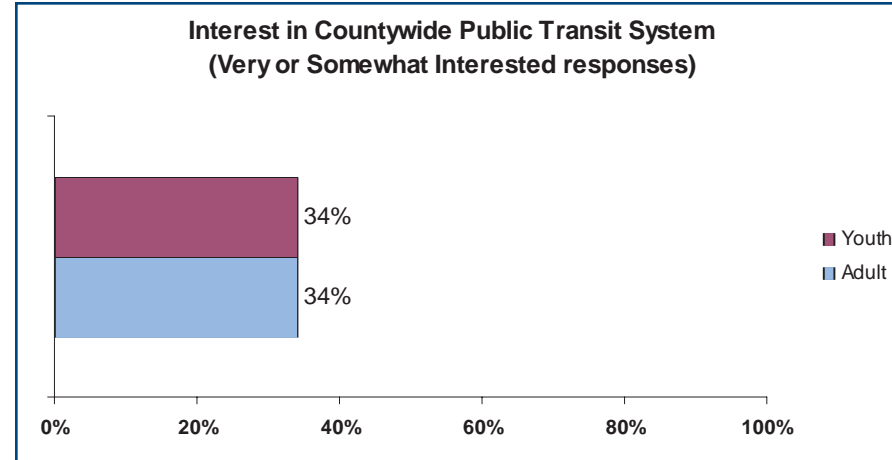


ACTION STEPS RECOMMENDED BY COMMUNITY FORUMS

- Get more specific information on youth recreation needs.
- Increase public and school awareness of arts/recreation resources.
- Identify funding and volunteer resources.
- Develop solutions to transportation issues for youths and seniors.
- Increase youth interest/awareness of arts through local school programs.
- Develop more safe places for teens to socialize and play in addition to the YMCA and DeKalb County Community Youth Center.

SOCIAL SERVICES

- DeKalb County residents have a fairly negative impression of area social services overall. However, individual aspects of social services have significantly higher ratings this year.
- Ratings were significantly higher for food/clothing banks meeting needs, older adults' access to services, knowledge of non-profit resources, and knowledge of government resources.
- Greatest barriers appear to be lack of awareness of available services and the time required to receive help.
- Respondents believe personal or transportation issues, the stigma of "charity," and perceived lackluster agency performance also prevent people from taking advantage of applicable social services.
- 34% of adult and youth respondents say they are very or somewhat likely to use a countywide public transit system.



ACTION STEPS RECOMMENDED BY COMMUNITY FORUMS

- Increase/improve communication with potential clients, targeting food bank, St. Martin's Healthcare, laundromats, stores, churches, and courts.
- Develop new resident information packet that includes social service organization information and access points.
- Implement "service of the week" discussions with food bank and clinic clients to build awareness.
- Identify ways to provide low-cost transportation throughout the county.

HEALTH SERVICES

- County residents rate health care as not very affordable, although 90% reported having health insurance.
- The most prevalent diseases are linked to age and lifestyle.
- Fewer smokers do so at home compared to 2001, 65% compared to 99%.
- Just over half (51%) of those who drink fit the definition of a binge drinker (5+ drinks/day for 5+ days/month).
- Few respondents who smoke or drink reported participating in cessation programs.

ACTION STEPS RECOMMENDED BY COMMUNITY FORUMS

- Look for new ways to effectively communicate health information.
- Continue to roll out no-smoking rules/legislation.
- Encourage physicians to motivate residents to improve health practices.
- Encourage use of fitness/wellness programs through incentives and increased awareness of program availability.
- Have more health services provided by groups who can go to where problems exist rather than single locations.

2006 COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Priority Area	Issues Identified Through 2006 Assessment
Public Services	Rural residents' expectations of fire protection and library service are higher than the levels of service provided.
Education	Overcrowding, too much emphasis on ISTEP, need for retraining and remedial classes for adults.
Social Services	Low awareness of services available; perceived need for social services has increased.
Health	No significant improvement in general health overall; alcohol abuse among older people.
Arts and Recreation	Accessibility, affordability for youth and seniors.

Individuals who participated in the community forum identified the following needs that underlie all priority areas:

- Better and more efficient use of existing resources
- Better communications
- Greater collaboration among stakeholders
- More funding or alternative funding

Individuals participating in the community forum identified a core group of collaboration partners that exist within the county. They believe that the ability of these organizations to work together effectively will determine DeKalb County's ability to thrive in the future. These organizations include:

- County, township, and city officials
- Schools
- United Way of DeKalb County
- Businesses
- DeKalb County Community Foundation

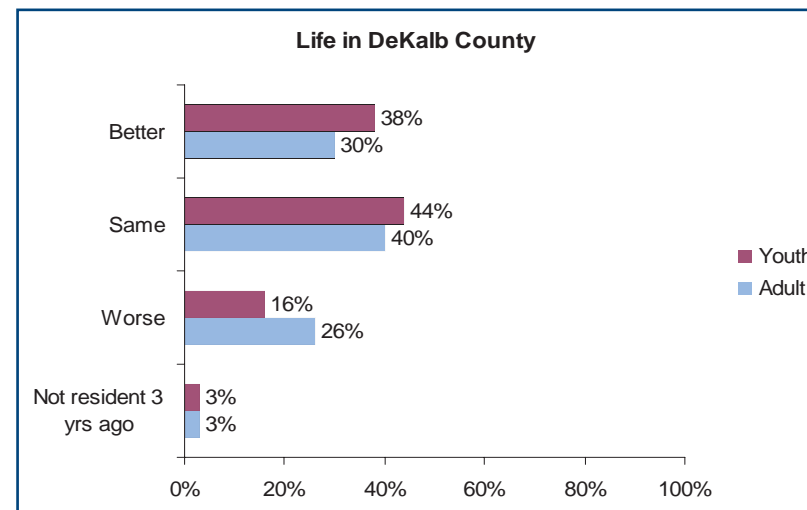
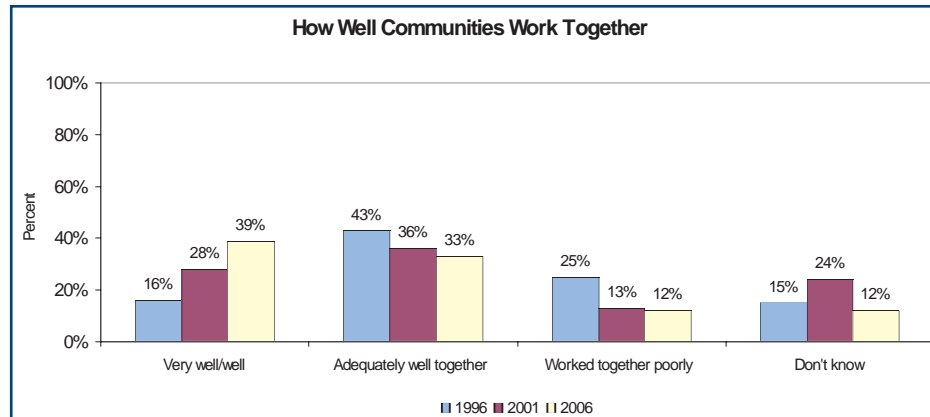
LOOKING BACK ON 2001 ASSESSMENT PRIORITIES

- Strengthen government leadership's ability to plan for the impact of industrial and residential change.
- Provide more affordable recreation for youth and older adults, along with increased numbers of artistic and cultural opportunities.
- Increase awareness of social services available and how to access them.
- Improve air quality.
- Increase the amount of vocational training offered by DeKalb County schools.
- Improve funding for animal control and care.
- Plan for growth in ethnic diversity in county residents.

Priority Area	Key Actions Taken Since 2001
Public Services	Improved fire protection in Auburn; county's public libraries are working together to provide countywide service.
Education	School buildings improved; increased emphasis on ISTEP; training grants for employers; additional English as a New Language and GED (General Equivalency Development Test) Preparation classes; increased emphasis on early literacy.
Social Services	211 services added; greater collaboration between agencies; two additional food banks opened.
Health	More no-smoking education; St. Martin's Healthcare opened; DeKalb Memorial Hospital offers wellness programs.
Arts and Recreation	Garrett Community YMCA; NCG Cinema in Auburn; St. Mark Memorial Park in St. Joe; DeKalb County Outdoor Theater in development; Rieke Park in development.

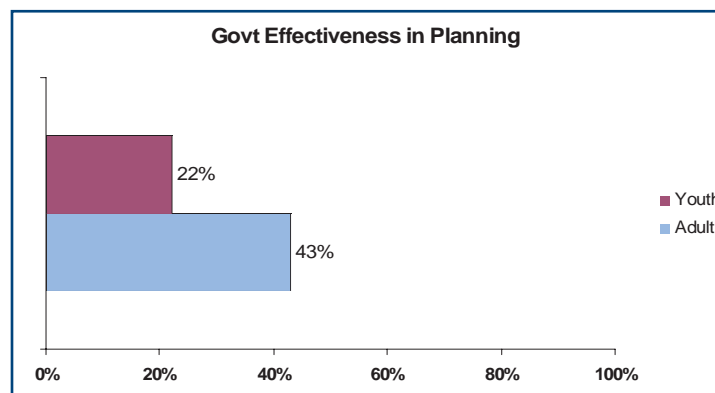
2006 OVERALL ASSESSMENT SURVEY - GENERAL

- Residents continue to believe county communities are working together more effectively for the benefit of the entire area than in the past.



- Most residents believe life in the county is the same or better than three years ago. However, over 25% believe life is worse, primarily due to economic uncertainty. Youth are less likely to say DeKalb County is worse than three years ago and more likely to say DeKalb County is the same.

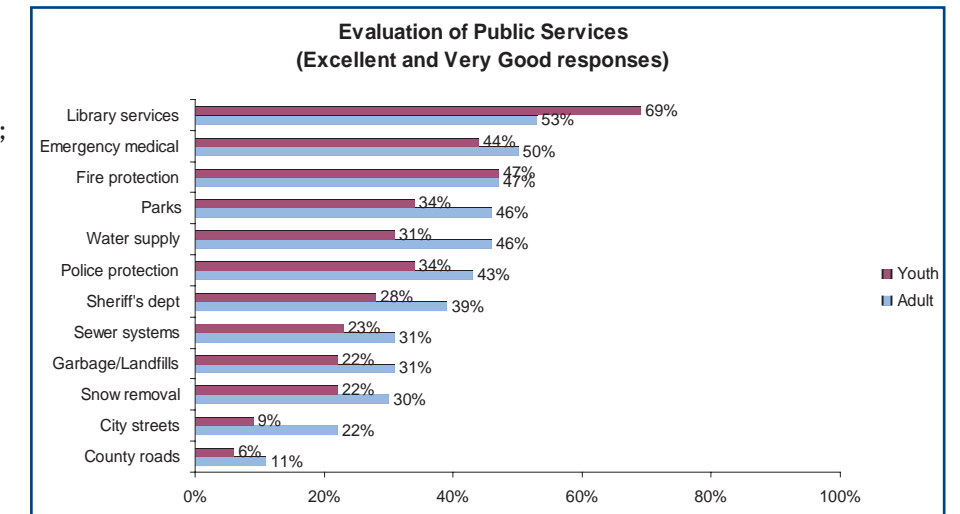
- Perceived government effectiveness in planning for change has decreased significantly.



- Nearly 20% of respondents have been affected by company closings. Families with children appear to have been the most affected by economic and social changes within the region.
- Unemployment in 2006 is three times higher than it was in 2001.
- Awareness of social services is still low, although perceptions of program effectiveness are more positive than in 2001.

DEKALB COUNTY PUBLIC SERVICES

- Perceived effectiveness of fire protection has decreased significantly since 2001 assessment; especially true among rural residents.
- The number of excellent and very good ratings of library services has dropped from 60% in 2001 to 53% in 2006.
- Citizens see improvement in parks, sewer systems, and street maintenance.

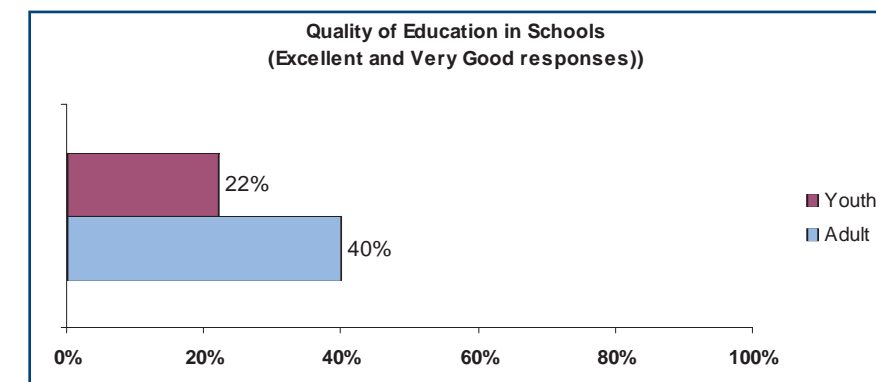


ACTION STEPS RECOMMENDED BY COMMUNITY FORUMS

- Library - Publicize ways county residents obtain library cards; work to expand library service into townships.
- Police and fire - Continue joint training initiatives, set up fire/EMS districts to improve response time outside of Auburn; make public more aware of shared training.
- Water/Sewer/Streets - Upgrade area sewer systems; schedule maintenance work more effectively.
- Parks - Improve access by implementing connecting trail system.

EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

- Nearly 25% of respondents have children at home, a decrease from 2001.
- Almost 30% of the respondents with children have a child in day care.
- Forty percent of respondents rated DeKalb public schools as excellent or very good; similar to 2001 rating. Positive ratings were linked to favorable school contacts. Negative ratings addressed low test scores and overcrowding.
- The most frequently mentioned adult education needs concern retraining and remedial classes.



ACTION STEPS RECOMMENDED BY COMMUNITY FORUMS

- Increase variety of vocational options offered by schools.
- Make sure primary educational focus is on challenge, not maintaining the status quo.
- Improve adult education/training by increasing communications among businesses, educational/job training service providers, and consumers.
- Revise school curriculum to be more relevant/hands on for students.
- Establish community projects to help schools reach out to meet Hispanic/other ethnic group needs.