



Mercer County: Better Together

Success through collaboration.

#MCBT

Public Forums Launch Grassroots Community Development

Mercer County, IL – May 22nd, 2017 – Community engagement efforts continue for Mercer County’s emerging community and economic development entity, Mercer County: Better Together (MCBT). Since mid-February MCBT has conducted a series of community forums across Mercer County, giving residents the opportunity to share their visions, hopes, concerns and ideas for their future. Throughout its first year MCBT has worked to understand who county residents are, hear their unique stories and learn why they have chosen Mercer County as their home. During the middle stage of the forum schedule, the smallest and largest of Mercer County’s populations were represented.

MCBT community forums are structured around the completion of a community survey, followed by small group discussion. This format provides attendees the greatest opportunity for engagement with their friends and neighbors.

On March 23rd, a crowd of 37 attendees participated in a forum at the Eliza Community Center. Those present represented portions of the Eliza, Duncan and New Boston township areas.

On April 6th, the Aledo community held the fifth forum of the series at the St. Catherine Parish Hall. Nearly 20 area residents attended the event, each interacting with MCBT for the very first time. “The information gathered will help us prioritize issues that are important to our community,” said Aledo Community Representative Tarah Sipes. “The forum allowed us to hear from people who had not yet been involved in the process.”

On April 20th, focus shifted to the Matherville/Preemption area, where 23 area residents gathered to discuss community vitality at the Preemption United Methodist Church. Attendees represented Preemption, Perryton and Richland Grove townships.

On May 3rd, 23 Seaton area residents participated in a community forum held at the former Seaton Bank building. Attendees represented the Village of Seaton, as well as unincorporated areas in Abington, Millersburg and Ohio Grove townships. “The forum brought our community together to learn more about MCBT,” said former Seaton Village Board President Bob Springer. “I was thrilled with the turnout, and I think folks are seeing that they have a direct impact on their future.”

Finally, on May 17th, 15 North Henderson area residents conducted deep discussions on how to add vitality to the community they love. “Our village has become a bedroom community over the years, and many people do not know who their neighbors are,” said North Henderson Village Board President Carol Rogers. “MCBT has given us a much-needed opportunity to work together to improve the quality of life in North Henderson. By working together, we can make our community a place where people will want to raise their families.”

Responses to all community survey and small group questions are compiled by MCBT, and will be used in the next phase of the process from July-September. Through mid-June, MCBT will continue to hold forums in each of Mercer County’s eleven population centers.

Plan to attend the forum in your community. All forums begin at 6pm.

KEITHSBURG – Wednesday, May 31st – Keithsburg First Christian Church

NEW WINDSOR – Wednesday, June 7th – New Windsor Presbyterian Church

NEW BOSTON – Wednesday, June 14th – New Boston Community Center

The Mercer County: Better Together planning process is being supported with funds from the Looser-Flake Charitable Foundation, as well as Mercer County, communities, businesses and individuals. For more information on these forums or the Mercer County: Better Together initiative, contact Project Coordinator Kyle McEwen.

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