

Welcoming Community III



-----Your Voice Is Key

Since 2004, Heritage Fund has conducted three Welcoming Community surveys in an effort to address the question: *What can we do to make Columbus an attractive place to live and work?*

Welcoming Community I (2004) - The Original Survey

The first Welcoming Community survey found that our community was perceived as welcoming by most people but not by groups such as:

- **People outside the traditional mainstream (racial minorities, LGBTQ community)**
- **Young people**
- **Newcomers**

Welcoming Community II (2011) - Measuring Change

The second Welcoming Community survey found that perceptions in the community had improved, but it also showed the community had increased expectations around our ability to be welcoming and inclusive. Strategies for improvement were created in the following areas:

- **Community Diversity**
- **Access to Information**
- **Communication**
- **Community Leadership Development**
- **Healthy Lifestyles and Environmental Sustainability**
- **Newcomers**
- **Entertainment/Arts District**

Welcoming Community III (2018) - Continuous Improvement

As a follow-up to the 2004 and 2011 surveys, Heritage Fund is pleased to again lead the effort to assess the welcoming nature of Columbus as a place people want to live and work. **Welcoming Community III** focused on the same areas of interest from past surveys: access to information, inclusivity, friendliness and ability to get involved, access to arts and cultural activities, equal opportunity and fair treatment for all, and pride and community leadership. The survey was completed online and in hard copy by over 1,770 individuals who live and/or work in Bartholomew County.



HERITAGE FUND

The Community Foundation of Bartholomew County

Welcoming Community III

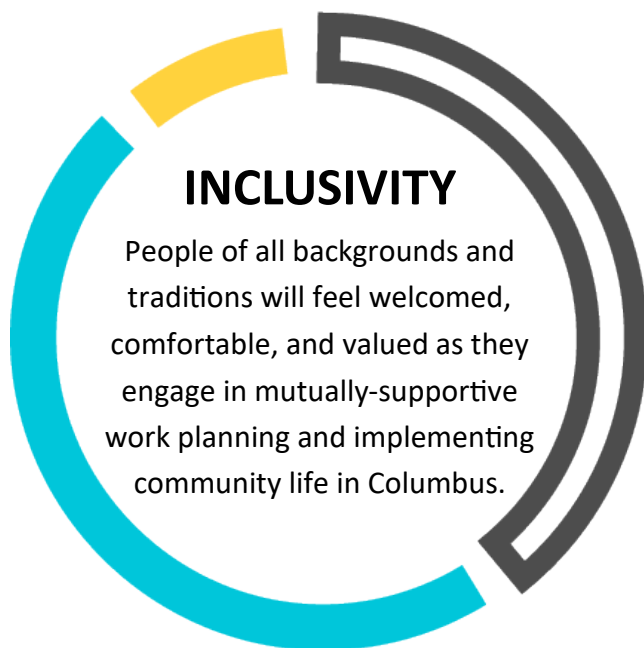
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Key Survey Findings:

- Results showed overall improvement, though it was noted that Columbus as a whole is unevenly welcoming, particularly as it relates to those in lower socioeconomic classes, racial and ethnic minorities, and the LGBTQIA population.
- All minority racial / ethnic groups rated community inclusion below average overall, though the Hispanic population noted levels of perceived inclusivity and equality higher than any of the other minority groups.
- Access to information continues to be the area where the community desires the most improvement. Community members note a need for a common community calendar and access to community information in a timelier manner.

Survey Themes and Goal Statements:

Survey analysis was completed by a group of community members and Heritage Fund staff and board members. The committee developed the following survey themes to guide our continuous improvement efforts to become a more welcoming community. Each theme includes a community goal statement and an explanation of the survey results behind the theme.



What did the survey say?

Improvements made in diversity and inclusion are threatened by increasing polarization based on a wide range of factors such as socio-economic status, political association, culture, and length of residency in Columbus. Several survey respondents noted that being diverse is not the same as being inclusive and many marginalized groups highlighted problems in the community.

Welcoming Community III

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ENTERTAINMENT

People of all backgrounds and traditions will feel there are a variety of entertainment options for them and their families.

What did the survey say?

Nearly all agree there is a great deal to do in Columbus but many feel that the current entertainment offerings do not appeal to them. Single individuals and those 21-39 years of age rated questions regarding entertainment the lowest. Several community members indicated a desire for more performing arts and theatre and large events that bring the whole community together.

What did the survey say?

It is difficult for some people to actively participate in the community both civically and socially. While people generally find the community to be friendly, survey results highlighted increasing divisiveness based on a broad range of characteristics as a reason many find it challenging to get involved.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

People of all backgrounds and traditions will feel encouraged to and knowledgeable about how to participate and engage in the civic life of Columbus.

What did the survey say?

The ability to access information about the community continues to be a challenge specifically related to civic life, community initiatives, and entertainment. Community members noted that while many organizations and city entities have websites and use social media it can be overwhelming because there is not a central, comprehensive location for community information.



ACCESS TO INFORMATION

People of all backgrounds and traditions will be able to access community information related to the civic and social life of Columbus.

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What did the survey say?

Challenges to livability in Columbus pointed to insufficient safe and affordable housing, transportation hardships, and safety concerns. The theme of livability is new for 2018 and highlights feedback regarding ways Columbus can improve to better meet the needs of residents.

“For Columbus to be a good community...each of its citizens has an important role to play.”

- J. Irwin Miller

It takes us all working together to achieve the goals outlined here. We must start conversations, ask important questions, and take action to continuously improve. As a community, we have made great progress already! As a result of past surveys, Columbus benefits from organizations such as Columbus Young Professionals, CAMEO and diversity councils within our education systems. Columbus has also seen the development of downtown community spaces, collective giving opportunities, and the investment of over \$100,000 in Heritage Fund grants to support Welcoming Community initiatives.

Join Heritage Fund as we continue to make our community more welcoming. Discuss these results within your organization and with your friends and family. Consider what you can do as an individual or in collaboration with others to make improvements in our community.

Your voice was key in evaluating the welcoming factor of our community and now we need your voice again!



Additional information about Welcoming Community III can be found on the Heritage Fund website at www.heritagefundbc.org/welcoming.