Presentation of Findings

Hancock County

inclusity®

Our process

▶ Interviews and focus groups with many members of the community, such as:

- ▶ Young professionals
- ▶ Clergy
- ▶ School superintendent
- ▶ High school students
- ▶ Mayor
- ▶ Community leaders
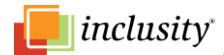
inclusity®

Presentation road map

Summarize the core ideas and common themes from our focus groups and interviews

Provide recommended actions to make Hancock County more inclusive

Together, these will provide a snapshot of the current state of the county and how to move forward to make it more inclusive and welcoming for all.

inclusity

Themes from interviews and focus groups

Three main areas:
Existing community culture
Potential benefits of inclusion
Role of leadership

inclusity

Existing Community Culture

County strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- ▶ Tight-knit
- ▶ Safe
- ▶ Focus on tradition
- ▶ Moving in right direction
- ▶ Great leadership
- ▶ Mental health support
- ▶ (Some) Open-mindedness

Weaknesses

- ▶ Strengths *are* weaknesses: difficult for people to break in
- ▶ Resistant to change
- ▶ Stereotypes common, tolerated
- ▶ Lack of accountability for bias
- ▶ Lack of city council diversity
- ▶ Segregation by social class
- ▶ Diversity is a "liberal" idea

inclusity

Existing Community Culture

What could make people be excluded?

- ▶ Described as only inclusive for white, Republican, Christian, older, heterosexual, middle/upper class individuals
- ▶ Who's out of the norm? People of Color, young people, LGBTQ+ people, and individuals with lower socioeconomic status
- ▶ Reactions to *Black Lives Matter* and LGBTQ+ Pride events have worsened the problem
- ▶ Unwelcoming signals also hurt, e.g., people driving through town displaying Confederate flags

inclusity

Existing Community Culture

Challenges facing the county

Immediate

- ▶ Safety and well-being of people in the community
- ▶ People from out-of-the-norm group feeling unsafe or threatened (particularly youth)
- ▶ It's currently very difficult to be a member of out-of-the-norm group

Long-term

- ▶ Lack of inclusion will have adverse effect on community
- ▶ Worry that Marathon, Cooper Tire, and Whirlpool will relocate
- ▶ Community is not making itself attractive to younger, single, or individuals of lower socioeconomic status
- ▶ Lack of access (transportation, affordable housing)

inclusity

Existing Community Culture

Things that already make people feel included

- ▶ The mayor herself
- ▶ Pride picnic
- ▶ Interest groups (e.g., gardening)
- ▶ DORA events
- ▶ Art community

inclusity

Existing Community Culture

"Does Hancock County welcome diversity?"

- ▶ Almost everyone: "No"
- ▶ Why not? Fear of change, emphasis on homogeneity, "1950s-era" discrimination
- ▶ A lot of resistance in community to diversity (e.g., efforts to cancel Pride)
- ▶ All out-of-the-norm people who have been accepted share two characteristics: high income and having an ally in the community
- ▶ People see increasing diversity as a threat (e.g., worrying that someone will take their children's place)

inclusity

Existing Community Culture

Intermediate summary

- ▶ Described as only inclusive for white, Republican, Christian, older, heterosexual, middle/upper class individuals
- ▶ Who's out of the norm? People of Color, young people, LGBTQ+ people, and lower social class individuals
- ▶ Reactions to *Black Lives Matter* and Pride events have worsened the problem
- ▶ Unwelcoming signals also hurt, e.g., people driving through town displaying Confederate flags

inclusity

Potential Benefits of Inclusion

Business case for inclusion

- ▶ Connected to the fear that the county's largest employers will leave if unable to recruit diverse talent
- ▶ People working in those businesses in a way confirmed fears: expressed need for more diversity and said they may have to leave
- ▶ Inclusion increases chances that the community will be able to grow and thrive in long term

inclusity

Potential Benefits of Inclusion

Interpersonal case for inclusion

- ▶ Some people expressed fatigue with business case (notably clergy), instead want to make a more moral case for inclusion
- ▶ Shift to focusing on "inclusion" could help to avoid reaction that accompanies using the term "diversity" in this community
- ▶ Some people mentioned wanting their friends to feel welcome

inclusity

Potential Benefits of Inclusion

Intermediate summary

▶ Again, heard the concern that failing to be inclusive will negatively impact community

▶ Business case was central for many individuals

▶ Personal benefit of wanting friends to feel welcome also emerged

inclusity

Role of Leadership

Who is responsible for making change?

▶ Some leaders said others are responsible, others said they are

▶ Common theme was **powerlessness:**

  ▶ Former group felt as though they were unable to do anything

  ▶ Latter group wanted to do more in general, but weren't sure what to do

▶ Sentiment that many community leaders are not interested or capable

inclusity

Role of Leadership

Appraisal of current leadership

▶ City Council was singled out as having a negative effect

inclusity

Role of Leadership

Appraisal of current leadership

▶ On the other hand, the mayor was described as having a positive influence, both making people feel welcome and making strides for the community

inclusity

Role of Leadership

How can we become more inclusive leaders?

Some expressed willingness to give up some control, change leadership criteria

Some, especially youth, wanted more responsibility and voice for young people

Many wanted to see more role modeling, "walking the talk"

Lack of tools for becoming better inclusive leaders

More intention around inclusion efforts and safe spaces

inclusity

Role of Leadership

Intermediate summary

▶ Almost all leaders we talk to want to play a bigger role, but in some way or another feel powerless

▶ Most lack knowledge, action steps, and courage

▶ Some leaders are out in the front and others lag behind

inclusity

Other thoughts on these data

▶ Heard a lot about "older, white, Republican men" but talked to almost none

▶ In terms of the "inclusion staircase," Hancock County is at one of the lower steps. This means:

  ▶ People here are less likely to be moved by academic discussion (e.g., learning about institutional oppression or microaggressions)

  ▶ People here are more likely to be moved by personal experiences and perspectives of people who they know and trust

inclusity

Recommended actions

Being very exhaustive: actions that vary both in difficulty and who would be responsible for implementation. Based around needs identified in research.

inclusity

Needs to Address

Make diversity less threatening

Advocate for those in Hancock County

Make the county more attractive to newcomers

Ask big businesses to lead

Diversify the leadership

Accessibility

Deal with discrimination effectively

inclusity

Make diversity less threatening

Many are resistant to change and bristle at term "diversity." Scientists refer to this as "symbolic threat," a belief that values are at risk. These actions reduce symbolic threat through reassurance.

▶ Create a media campaign featuring stories of pillars of the community from a variety of backgrounds and cross-group friendships. Shows the community is already diverse. Tagline: "We are Hancock County."

▶ Get community to shift from "diversity" to "belonging"

▶ Shift from focusing on bringing new people in to sharing Hancock County's culture with others. Boosts pride in the community and makes the existing culture central.

▶ Consider implementing this shift in a marketing campaign. Show people from various backgrounds sharing what they love about the community. Tagline: "Our community is exceptional. Let's share it."

inclusity

Advocate for those in Hancock County

Out of the norm individuals are likely to succeed if they have (1) wealth and (2) an ally. The latter of these is changeable.

▶ Establish "buddy" programs connecting people from different groups

  ▶ In high school: connect incoming first-years with juniors/seniors to meet with a few times in their first semester

  ▶ In community: pair incoming residents with people well-established in community, ask them to meet a few times in the following months

▶ Again, feature cross-group friendships in media, which sets a new norm

▶ Support and establish new groups around shared interests (e.g., woodworking, ballroom dance), reach everyone with marketing

inclusity

Make the county attractive to newcomers

In addition to making the community more receptive to diversity and inclusion, the county also has to get people from outside to move there

▶ Create a one-page document employers can attach to job offers featuring benefits of living in the community

▶ Update city/county website and keep up to date with information for new residents. Include photos of people from different groups

▶ Again, create page linking people to houses for sale and rentals

inclusity

Ask big business to lead

People know the major employers play a big role here. Because the employers want diversity, they can be leveraged to assist these efforts

▶ As part of "Let's share it" campaign, feature business leaders and ask them to comment on the benefit of diversity to the community

▶ Recruit leaders in these businesses to assist in community inclusion efforts (e.g., adding them to task forces and committees)

▶ Learn about internal D&I efforts within these companies and consider whether these can be replicated elsewhere in the community (e.g., equivalent to ERGs in schools)

inclusity®

Diversify the leadership

Some key stakeholders in the community are impediments to inclusion. In our democratic system, we can work to change the leadership.

▶ Make structural changes to City Council to make membership more accessible (e.g., meeting times)

▶ Discuss possibility of running for office with individuals from underrepresented groups on council

▶ Identify other community leadership opportunities not requiring political campaigning (e.g., committees, advisory councils)

inclusity®

Accessibility

Concept came up in multiple forms, from straightforward (e.g., neutral meeting spaces) to more complex (e.g., access for low-SES people)

▶ Publicize and make it easier to reserve existing meeting spaces

▶ Explore options for new community meeting spaces

▶ Change time of City Council meetings

▶ Explore options for increasing accessibility downtown (e.g., bus, bike)

▶ Create a housing page compiling real estate and rental listings

▶ Try to attract developers of affordable housing (partner with Marathon, Whirlpool, Cooper Tire, or the university)

inclusity

Deal with discrimination effectively

Seeing bias incidents go unaddressed fuels an exclusive culture. When we fail to sanction these actions, we passively endorse them.

▶ Work with law enforcement to identify and prosecute hate crimes and discrimination

▶ Provide bystander intervention training to community members, particularly those on the "front lines" (e.g., teachers, police)

▶ Provide simple tools community members can use to interrupt bias when it occurs (e.g., pamphlet). Sets a norm of intervening.

inclusity

Questions and discussion