

COMMUNITY ATTRIBUTES STUDY: WARSAW, INDIANA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a significant relationship between local economic growth and feelings of passion and loyalty among community residents.

- Soul of the Community 2010, James L. Knight Foundation



Warsaw, Indiana is in the enviable position of being home to an orthopedics and medical device cluster. The vitality of this cluster is dependent on multiple factors and contributors, both internal and external. In a global economy that offers opportunities to be anywhere in the world, how does Warsaw, Indiana continue to create an environment in which this cluster will thrive, and continue to spur innovation and entrepreneurship and a place and quality of life that will attract and retain the diverse and creative talent and skilled workforce that the orthopedic and medical device cluster requires?

As part of OrthoWorx's mission to help parlay community assets that both support and rely upon the orthopedic sector in Warsaw, Indiana, this Warsaw based industry, community, and education initiative commissioned Ball State University's Building Better Communities to assess the community's perception of its assets and opportunities to ensure the future stability and growth of both the community and the orthopedic industry in Warsaw.

The study's scope encompasses the identification of community attributes most highly valued by employees of the orthopedic cluster and community leaders and residents, and focuses on identifying what those attributes are and what gaps exist when compared to those that are desired. Asset "quilting" connects the dots, sees the glass as half full rather than half empty, allows for creative engagement, and provides steps for bridging gaps to create a place rich in talent and ideas, physical and cultural amenities, and people.

Conversations and interviews with over sixty community and business leaders, elected officials, young professionals, and residents of the area were used to narrow the field of inquiry for a survey that was made available to the employees of Warsaw's three large orthopedic manufacturers. Of the 1,196 individuals who responded to the on-line survey, 896 submitted their responses. Common community attributes and opportunities identified through the study are listed below.

Quality of Place and Life: Warsaw provides a quiet and slower pace of living at a moderate cost that appeals to many of its citizens. The orthopedic and medical device companies foster an influx of individuals and families to Warsaw from larger communities, some of who face challenges in adjusting to a slower paced environment, creating a desire for more amenities and access to third places to gather, quality education for their families and themselves, year-round recreational opportunities, and a welcoming community that embraces those choosing to make Warsaw their home. Attraction and retention of young and new talent intrinsic to the orthopedic and medical device cluster's success relies upon the community's vision for the future and its willingness to address the challenges and opportunities that accompany change in its social, cultural, and economic fiber.

Education: Quality education at all levels is a cornerstone of community economic development. Business and K-20 education providers have an opportunity to collaborate in identifying the needs of the economy and the community and to design education curricula at all levels that result in an educated and skilled workforce that contribute to the orthopedic cluster's competitive edge and employment in a