

# "E is for Everyone" Initiative Allows Evansville Region to Emphasize its Quality of Place

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Community leaders in Evansville, Indiana, understand that quality of place drives economic growth. Many in the community have worked behind the scenes to grow a vibrant and inclusive culture, but the public perception has not caught up to the reality of life in Evansville today.

Stakeholders got together to figure out how to bring attention to the positive momentum happening in the region and launched the community branding initiative, "e is for everyone."

The initiative's mission is to "create a platform where everyone can connect with someone or something new, find a way to contribute to the community, and celebrate together what makes (the Evansville region) great," according to [eisforeveryone.com](http://eisforeveryone.com).

The community branding initiative by the Evansville region looks to correct the public's perception of the region by highlighting the diverse population, interesting facts about the city, and its burgeoning food scene.

The initiative also is a tool government and community leaders can leverage for economic development. An area with a positive or high quality of life and positive quality of place is attractive to businesses looking to locate a new headquarters, open a factory, or expand an existing location because a high quality of life and place are attractive to its current and potential workers.

Municipalities can emphasize their geographic location next to a river or mountains, pedestrian trails and bike lanes, annual festivals and fairs.

Educated workers, especially younger professionals, highly value working and living in an area that is inclusive and diverse. They want affordable housing, good schools, good restaurants and neighborhoods that are walkable to the city center or other activities. They also value community involvement opportunities and parks and recreational activities.

Quality of life is the fourth-most important factor related to site selection, according to respondents to the 32nd annual Corporate Survey produced by Area Development Magazine, who are corporate executive readers of the publication. In fact, its importance is growing. Last year, quality of life ranked 10th in importance by corporate executive readers.

Highly talented and in-demand workers will be sought after by many companies and have their pick of where to live. States that want to attract and retain talent and keep recent college graduates from moving out-of-state for a job must look at their communities' quality of place.

The state of Indiana created the Indiana Regional Cities initiative to help communities across the state transform their regions and become a destination for talent. The idea is that the regions selected in Indiana will develop positive and unique national brands. By concentrating on continuously improving quality of place as well as traditional economic development efforts, these regions will become magnets for educated, highly sought-after workers. Some of the

quality of place projects include community and real estate development, health initiatives, technology improvements, and outdoor and recreational activities.

Southwest Indiana is part of the initiative's first phase, which will receive \$42 million to support regional development plants. Indiana's Great Southwest Plan includes a medical research center in downtown Evansville and updates to the Evansville Regional Airport. Southwest Indiana projects have been submitted and approved representing over \$90 million in public funding; \$29.9 million in Regional Cities funding; \$26.6 other public funding; and, \$403.9 private investment for a grand total of \$550,947,873 investment spread throughout the four-county region.

Investing in developing quality of place pays off for communities. Two University of Maryland professors released in 2015 their study on local happiness and firm behavior and found that firms in happy places invest more. The authors found a clear association between firm investment – especially in research and development – and average happiness levels. Their measure of happiness was average reported life satisfaction at the metropolitan statistical area level.

"[T]he well-being literature suggests that not only do things like better health and jobs make people happier, but that happier people are also more likely to be healthy and to make investments in the labor market and in their own futures. We see that it extends to corporate decisions-making," the authors wrote in an article for Brookings Institute.

Bingham Greenebaum Doll LLP is proud to be a part of the "e is for everyone" initiative in Evansville with our very own "e".

## Your Key Contacts



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