

Clearly Kosciusko: **a Plan for sustainability to support talent recruitment and retention**

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KOSCIUSKO TM

Introduction

- Clearly Kosciusko is a county-wide voice created in partnership between the Lilly Center for Lakes & Streams, Kosciusko County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce, and the Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation
- This project seeks to create a plan to sustain the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity by developing storytelling narratives that explain what is unique about the community, or what is “clearly” Kosciusko. These narratives are important to market the community for people to “live, learn, and earn” in Kosciusko County.

Status

- Clearly Kosciusko has been trademarked and can be licensed for use, but to date its usage is limited to fewer than 20 organizations.

Organization	Representation	Status
Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce	Non-profit	Active
Kosciusko Convention & Visitors Bureau	Non-profit	Active
Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation	Non-profit	Active
1Eighty Design	Technology	Active
Brian Peterson Real Estate Group	Real Estate	Active
City of Warsaw	Government	Active
Instrumental Machine & Development	Manufacturing	Active
Kosciusko County Community Foundation	Non-profit	Active
The Lab	Technology	Active
Luna Tech	Technology	Active
OrthoWorx	Non-profit	Active
Port Winona	Hospitality	Active
Syracuse-Wawasee Chamber of Commerce	Non-profit	Active
Warsaw Community Development Corporation	Non-profit	Active
Interra Credit Union	Financial	Pending
Lakeland Pier and Lift	Recreation	Pending
Clear Vision Media	Marketing	Pending
Lake City Skiers	Recreation	Pending

Road to One Million

- The 11-county Northeast Indiana region has adopted the Road to One Million regional development plan of placemaking investments that encourage talent recruitment and retention.
- Regional business and community leaders seek to increase the regional population to one million residents by 2031.
- Kosciusko County's share of the population increase is approximately 20,000 people, or a 25% increase in the current population.

Orthopedic Capital

- The City of Warsaw is known as the “Orthopedic Capital” and the region is home to nearly 18,000 jobs in orthopedic device and instrument manufacturing.
- In addition, the community is home to leading agribusiness and recreation businesses.
- Many of these companies recruit specialized talent from outside the community, including both national and international locations.
- Some have shifted work or established facilities elsewhere to overcome shortages in local workforce and/or challenges in recruitment.

Focus Group

- In mid-April, a focus group session was held using Zoom that attracted approximately thirty participants.
- An overview of the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity was followed by a discussion about future use of the Clearly Kosciusko brand by local organizations in support of talent recruitment and retention.
- Feedback generally focused on the quality of life amenities such as lakes and recreation, events and festivals, and restaurants that make Kosciusko County unique as a rural, Midwest community.
- Participants shared interest in amenities that might be associated with larger, urban communities, yet some of these amenities exist in Kosciusko County, suggesting better communication of what is already available.

Recommendations

- This whitepaper provides a series of recommendations to sustain the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity, to expand its usage throughout the community, and to position it to support talent recruitment and retention strategies.
- Recommendations are organized in three categories: visibility, experiences, and storytelling. Tasks, timeline, and budget are provided in order to ensure an initiative that is adaptive, scalable, and sustainable.
- Formation of a volunteer advisory board is recommended to provide ongoing input, feedback, and buy-in on the various proposed activities.

Visibility: Entrance Signage

- Funding is available to construct Clearly Kosciusko entrance signage for use by Kosciusko County municipalities.
- Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation can lead outreach to cities (2) and towns (10).
- Municipal contacts can coordinate INDOT permitting and sign installation.



Visibility: Brand Ambassadors

A group of water skiers performing a synchronized routine on a lake. The skiers are wearing blue and white uniforms and are holding poles connected by a rope. They are in a line, moving across the water, creating a large splash. The background is a bright, overcast sky.

- Ambassador organizations can provide visibility for the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity.
- One example is Lake City Skiers, an award-winning competitive water ski show team that competes nationally and hosts events locally.
- Member organizations and the proposed advisory board can be called-on to identify and reach out to prospective ambassadors.
- The project team contacted leadership of Lake City Skiers, who expressed interest in participating in Clearly Kosciusko.

Experiences: Visitors Guide content

- Focus group participants indicated they would like more shopping and dining options, as well as more evening and weekend activities.
- Yet, relative to other rural communities, Kosciusko County already offers what seems like a greater amount and variety of these amenities.
- The Clearly Kosciusko brand can be utilized to communicate what experiences exist in the community.
- The Convention & Visitors Bureau has an award-winning visitors guide that describes many of these amenities.
- 1-2 page overviews about local shopping, the Warsaw food scene, things to do on nights and weekends, and outdoor recreation opportunities can be repurposed as standalone documents at the Clearly Kosciusko website.

Experiences: Dinner with K-County

- Also recommended is creating opportunities for transplants to the area to meet with and learn from one another.
- ‘Dinner with Indy’ series of Zoom-based dinner meetings events featured 10-dinners hosted, each hosted by two community leaders, that took place on the same evening in late-April.
- A playbook for these events can be developed from the ‘Dinner with Indy’ version and made available at the Clearly Kosciusko website for use by local businesses, organizations, and neighborhoods to plan their own ‘Dinner with K-County’ events.

Experiences: Dinner with K-County



PROGRAM GUIDE

Thanks so much for agreeing to take part in Dinner with Indy! Nothing brings together our community like great food and talking about our shared love of our city.

This guide provides a detailed overview of how to host and facilitate the event, with suggested event timing, discussion questions and tips.

The goal is to generate welcoming, open-ended, candid and fun conversations about the future of Indianapolis, while also providing a way for people to connect while we're socially distanced. We also are encouraging attendees to #BuyIndy from their favorite local restaurant, to show our support for the incredible community of entrepreneurs, chefs, bartenders and waitstaff who comprise our hospitality industry. Before we go any further, let's review the event structure and roles.

EVENT STRUCTURE

We're organizing ten virtual dinner parties, to take place simultaneously on **Thursday, April 30 | 6:30pm**.

Each dinner party is capped at twenty attendees, so if we fill our parties, we'll have 200 people talking about Indy at the same time (bicentennial, woo!).

Folks also have the option of organizing their own virtual dinner party with friends and family. They just need to share their contact information and we'll send them a pared down version of this discussion guide.

THIS EVENT IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY



ROLES

CO-FACILITATORS: Each party has two co-facilitators. The role of the co-facilitators is to get conversation flowing, ask interesting questions, and help connect people's thoughts and ideas. While the co-facilitators are a draw, most of the time their job is to get out of the way of conversation and let others talk, using questions and tips from this program guide. The co-facilitators are not presenters and not lecturers.

FACILITATION TIPS:

1. Be yourself and stay curious! Model the kind of inquisitive, casual and engaged behavior you want to see from participants. The vibe should feel like a great dinner party among smart friends, not a meeting or a classroom.
2. Ask open-ended questions that can be answered in a variety of ways. Avoid loaded questions.
3. Try to get the attendees to talk and respond to each other, not just to you.
4. Pay attention to how much you're talking; prioritize others' voices, not your own. Always turn the discussion back to what attendees think.
5. Allow people to opt out of answering questions. Not everyone needs to answer every prompt. Trust your instincts about when it's time to move on to a new question or idea.
6. Better to be over-prepared and only ask 4-5 questions, than force-march everyone through a long list.
7. Where appropriate, add your unique perspective, especially if it helps people get a glimpse of Indy "behind the scenes."

HOST: Each party has a host, representing one of the four presenting partner organizations. The host manages and monitors the tech side of things: allowing people into the group, muting folks with background noise, monitoring the chat (if using), and, if absolutely necessary, kicking out unruly guests. At the beginning of the party, the host will also welcome everyone to the event and share a bit about the partner organizations.

HOST TIPS:

1. Walk people through Zoom features (raising hands, chat, reaction emojis) that make it possible for people to signal that they have a question or comment.
2. It's okay to kick out unruly or spammer guests, especially if they've been warned.
3. Monitor the chat to see if folks have questions or comments and where possible, unmute them to let them ask questions verbally, rather than you reading the questions to the facilitators.

SOCIAL MEDIA AMBASSADOR: We've invited social influencers to live-tweet or Instagram story each conversation. Their role is to share out quotes, discussion prompts and other tidbits from the conversation. This amplifies the conversation and helps capture what happened. While the tweeter may answer questions and talk at times, most of the time they will probably be busy typing!

ATTENDEE: These are our party guests! They're here to connect, have a great conversation and learn something new. One of the big goals of the program is to get attendees talking and listening to each other, not just back and forth with the co-facilitators.



Storytelling: Lake Life Magazine

- Focus group participants indicated the 'Clearly Kosciusko' brand identity does not yet communicate what is unique about Kosciusko County.
- In addition to partnering with the CVB to repurpose content from the visitors guide, it is also possible to partner with organizations like The Papers to repurpose content from publications like their Lake Life Magazine.
- Case studies and articles can be posted at the Clearly Kosciusko website and utilized by employers in talent recruitment and retention to 'fill in' the story of what makes the community unique.

Storytelling: Lake Life Magazine



Porch rocking and looking at the lake is the perfect way to wind down — in these POLYWOOD Adirondack rocking chairs with a pop of color, adding a little drama.



Anyone familiar with the Rassi family knows this: these Kosciusko County natives emit a collective, admirable, emanating strength.

Energized by lake life, invested in spirituality, and fueled with entrepreneurial inquisitiveness, this family focuses wherever their hearts may lead — be it their Lake Wassene home, the lake community, their faith — or their Adirondack invention we've all grown to adore.

Doug Rassi and his wife, Kristen, are an collaborative couple as they come. Doug is the creative visionary and unofficial aesthetics extraordinaire, and Kristen? She's the logistics expert who is queen of organization and function. Kristen makes everything "work," putting all in its place and keeping everything

(and everyone) moving as should be. And with six children (Sean, Chad, Michelle, Danielle, Josie, Douglas) and 10 grandchildren, her work is no small familial feat. "Kristen makes our house a home," Doug said, "I can feel the love when I come through the doors."

And their living lake home, or "barn" as Doug refers to it, built by T.J. Jackson Construction, Inc. is the ideal heavenly haven for this faith-based, adventuresome, entrepreneurial family.

LakeLife Magazine? Welcome to the Rassi home.

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LAKE LIFE + HEALTHY LIVING

Those familiar with lake life treasure opportunities that arise at the lake — like building friendships, offering space for the soul — and, most certainly, strengthening the core of family. It's much of what we all celebrate in lake life, and it transforms a picturesque, euphoric dream to a visual of reality. It's the view Doug and Kristen Rassi see daily. And they know the promise it holds for each upcoming season: more memories made with family and friends.

"Relational bonds are formed through experience, and the lake provides experiential adventures," said Doug. "Whether it's boating, towed behind the boat, kids in the water or simply hanging out on the pier, it's a destination the

whole family wants to come to, and be a part of."

But it isn't just summer moments that hold the Rassi heartstrings. It's the change of seasons. The tweak in atmosphere. Living year-round at the lake in their chosen, cherished lifestyle. "Although most people are familiar with the lake during the summer with all of its activity, when the pier comes out in October, peace and serenity are the new normal... serene on a calm, uninhabited Wassene is a spiritual experience," Doug said. "Then the holidays come with all of its busyness... with family and friends. And shortly thereafter, the frozen lake seems to lock down time and space for the winter... There is something deeply special about living by water that is soothing to the soul."

THE HOME

And to house such depths of appreciation, this modern craftsman home illustrates a balance of simplicity while making a grand statement. And its layout? "It exemplifies lake life," Doug said. Truly under the attentive direction of Brad Jackson, CEO of T.J. Jackson, Brad delivered the precise vision for which his clients had hoped. "I loved working with Brad Jackson, a true man of integrity," Doug said. "His reputation for delivery and execution is second to none."

Both specifically to cater to both the family's needs and passions, the Rassi house defines a custom home. From the state-of-the-art in-home spa to the gorgeous in-house apartment, exercise yoga studio, grandchildren's play room, music room, lounge, gathering area, bedroom lifts, offices, and even a hidden room at the home's peak (a perfect escape to pray, according to Kristen), the home has a plethora of hidden and apparent gems.

The interior decor maintains a beautiful balance of ease, simplicity and yet elegance. "We like simple decor that is large, easy to process and easy to live with," Doug said. And this shines brilliantly true with lighting as well. Many of us know that light fixtures add aesthetics, in addition to function. And in the Rassi home, the impact of gorgeous lighting is a profound design element. Doug knew this and chose accordingly. "The lights came from Restoration Hardware and Wabash Electric (editor note: Wabash Electric is now named Kenedell Lighting Center)... I think lights are a great place to add a little bling," Doug said. "They're probably the No. 1 noticed and commented-on design touch of our home."

And as with all lake homes, the view is among the highest of priorities. The positioning of the Rassi home on its property offers gorgeous water views out every window. "It feels very interactive with the water," Doug said.

FAITH ROCKS AT RASSI'S

As two solid passions within the Rassi family — faith and music — their home reflects both on an energized level. A full musical set up, complete with mall glass to maximize acoustics, makes up much

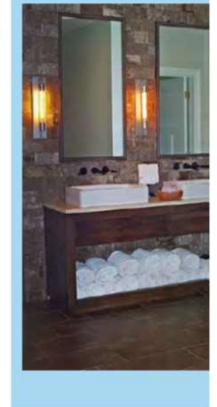
of the home's second level. "My love for guitars and drums go way back," Doug said. "What teenager in the '70s didn't want to be a rock star?" However, playing rock music in Doug's childhood home was not allowed, so it wasn't until years later when his home was truly rocked. "When I married, Kristen said I could have guitars and motorcycles and all those things... No wonder I love her so much!"

"Relational bonds are formed through experience, and the lake provides experiential adventure."

Then came children for Doug and Kristen, and a "spiritual awakening" of sorts for Doug. "Once I started playing Jesus music, all of a sudden I could play and sing! Yeah, seriously," he said. "All of my kids were able to play guitars, drums, keyboards, and sing... they seemed to just naturally be able to do it. Some had lessons, others just picked up the instruments and started playing. It led to a special season of life."

Special indeed. The full band set up? Was utilized routinely by the Rassi's youth-led church, who held weekly meetings at the Rassi home. "The kids would come to our house to rehearse... their music worship time would go on for hours. We fed a lot of kids! Now I'm watching my little grandkids come into the music room..."

Just as lake seasons come and go, it's the memories and moments we hold onto as one year closes and another opens. So it is with lake homes as generations pass and families grow. It's the collections of moments that weave tightly together into the unbreakable bond of a rockier family at this Rassi Retreat. 🌊



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Storytelling: Instagram lookbooks

- Finally, Clearly Kosciusko already employs hashtags that feed into an Instagram wall at the Clearly Kosciusko website, which provides an opportunity to assemble and repurpose that content for visual storytelling.
- An Instagram competition to solicit photographs around questions such as “What is your favorite restaurant experience?” could generate visual content to develop one or more lookbooks.
- This content will help to provide visual storytelling that can be used for talent recruitment and retention, completes the recommendations to fill in the narrative of ‘what is’ Clearly Kosciusko, and represents a proposed ‘halo’ project to utilize the \$1,000 cash prize to jumpstart this initiative.

Storytelling: Instagram lookbooks



Summary

- In conclusion, this proposal outlines a strategy to sustain the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity and to develop content under the headings of visibility, experiences, and storytelling so that the brand can be utilized to support talent recruitment and retention.
- \$1,000 cash prize will be used to develop the lookbook project to jumpstart this initiative
- The lookbook and other materials will generate content that describes what is 'clearly' unique about Kosciusko County to support talent recruitment and retention.

An aerial photograph showing a large, interconnected lake system. The water is a deep blue-grey color. The surrounding land is a mix of green fields, dense forests, and some residential or commercial buildings. The overall scene is a rural or semi-rural landscape. The word "QUESTIONS?" is overlaid in large, bold, black capital letters in the center of the image.

QUESTIONS?

CLEARLY

THANK YOU!

KOSCIUSKO™