

# Community Heart & Soul®

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**Name of CHS Project/City, State:** McComb Region Heart & Soul, McComb & Hoytville, OH

**Population:** 1,956

**Challenge:** Revitalizing downtown, railroad expansion, and divides between the residents of McComb and Hoytville

**Focus:** Economic development and bridging divides

**Key Tool:** Utilizing the Community Network Analysis process

**Brief Description/Summary of Community:**

McComb is a village in Hancock County in Northwest Ohio. It is located just 15 minutes from Findlay, which offers shopping, restaurants, and a university, creating a great deal of competition for retailers based in McComb.

The McComb local school system is a K-12 grade school. The school is represented by its mascot, a black panther, and the colors red and black. School pride is very important in McComb.

**McComb Region Heart & Soul “By the Numbers”:**

- 4,500 stories collected
- 1,500 people engaged
- 125+ summit attendees
- 800 + Facebook followers
- 25+ news articles
- 2,100+ volunteer hours
- 15 core members
- 2 Community Heart & Soul Champions

**Local Condition:**

In 2013, school consolidation between McComb and Hoytville, and a failed railroad terminal expansion project, combined to create a tense environment in McComb. With the loss of a major retailer, 16 buildings in downtown McComb remained vacant. The buildings needed renovation and significant work to attract new businesses to fill the vacancies and create local jobs. The Findlay Hancock Community Foundation wanted to work with small towns in their service area and partnered with Community Heart & Soul to create a grant opportunity. McComb applied for and received the first Heart & Soul award in this competitive process.

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## Volunteer and Community Response:

The community created the McComb Region Heart & Soul team and hired a project coordinator to manage the project. The team's focused on engagement with the community, discovering new neighborhoods, and talking with as many residents as possible. After gathering stories from residents, McComb Region Heart & Soul held *Mondays in McComb* to discuss the findings from these stories and to create action ideas. McComb Region Heart & Soul also held two summits, with over 100 people attending, to create the Heart & Soul Action Plan.

## Heart & Soul Outcomes:

- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes were created at a local church.
- The Cookie Fest, a long-time beloved festival, was revived to the delight of many.
- With a grant from AARP, the largest grant given by Ohio AARP at that time, the community was able to enjoy new playground equipment designed so that any child, regardless of ability or physical limitation, could play.
- The stewardship team created a sports equipment exchange for both junior high and high school athletes. Families whose children outgrew everything from uniforms to athletic shoes or gently used sports equipment could bring these items to the school district and swap them with others, giving low income families the opportunity to outfit their children without concern over cost.
- A new bus stop was added in Hoytville, helping to bridge the divide.
- When they learned that McComb budget cuts meant Christmas decorations would be discontinued, the local Rotary raised money to purchase and install Christmas lights throughout the community.
- The McComb Library continues to add programs for youth and adults – based off both the Heart & Soul Statements and the stories shared.

