The Polis Center at IUPUI

**What we do**
We collaborate to create innovative place-based solutions that lead to healthier and more resilient communities.

**How we do it**
We create actionable information, develop creative collaborations, do place-based research, and employ technology effectively to enhance the capacity of communities to respond meaningfully to change.

**More about us**
As a self-funded research unit of the IU School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI, our approach is practical, applied, and entrepreneurial. We work collaboratively and often serve as the nexus among diverse community-based organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, arts and cultural organizations, businesses, charitable endowments, and faith-based organizations. We are committed to linking university and community expertise and to the smart use of advanced technologies to help solve problems and help communities take advantage of opportunities.

Geospatial technologies, especially GIS, are our preferred technical tools because of their unique ability to integrate and visualize information by location. We use these tools to develop and analyze data for communities and then involve local experts in helping to understand what the results mean. In doing so, we help communities for more productive decision-making.

In all of the sectors in which we work, we have earned a national reputation as a dynamic urban-centered, learning environment with highly professional staff who excel in partnerships, real-world application, and winning solutions for the communities.
We developed the IndyVitals (https://indyvitals.org/) dashboard to monitor neighborhood change. IndyVitals won the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA) Exemplary Systems in Government Award in 2017 (http://www.urisa.org/awards/exemplary-systems-in-government/).

We link SAVI’s community information with clinical information from the Indiana Network of Patient Care to better understand population health.

We integrate SAVI’s community data with data about domestic violence victims and perpetrators in Marion County, thereby helping the Domestic Violence Network and its collaborators gain new insights for program planning and policy development (http://dvnconnect.org/).

Through our Spirit & Place programming (http://spiritandplace.org/), we strengthen communities through creative collaborations among the arts, humanities and religion. The initiative serves as a catalyst for civic engagement and enduring change through people-centered community engagement and year-round activities that spark connections and build bridges.

We’ve created neutral public spaces for civic conversations on difficult topics and have created events that offer new windows of understanding. Our grassroots model has led to unusual partnerships, such as one among Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women, as well as the creation of new institutions for Indianapolis. In addition to an annual, themed 10-day fall festival, we offer year-round programming including a community-based conversation on race, as well as forums on issues related to gentrification and equity, among others.

We are collaborating on a major IU initiative, “Indiana Prepared for Environmental Change,” that seeks to understand how environmental changes will affect the citizens and culture of mitigation planning for Indiana counties and other areas across the Midwest. (https://eri.iu.edu/)

We train practitioners at FEMA’s Emergency Management Institute and elsewhere around the nation (https://training.fema.gov/emi.aspx). We have facilitated the design and instruction of over two dozen courses in flood, earthquake, and hurricane risk assessment, disaster operations, and data management.

We support the activities of the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS), a congressionally-authorized organization with the public interest mission to facilitate advances in building science and technology to make them more resilient. Kevin Mickey is current chair of the Institute’s Multihazard Mitigation Council (MMC), which has completed an update of its landmark 2005 Mitigation Saves study to determine the current cost effectiveness of mitigation actions. It discovered $4 in cost savings for every $1 spent on mitigation. (https://www.floods.org/PDF/MMC_Volume1_FindingsConclusionsRecommendations.pdf)

We build capacity in hundreds of federal, state and local jurisdictions across the nation through the development of disaster mitigation plans as well as tools and processes to support these activities.

**Our community informatics area has developed the nation’s earliest, largest, and most comprehensive system (http://www.savi.org/) that integrates data from over 30 providers to provide an interactive, in-depth look at the Indianapolis MSA at scales from census tracts and neighborhoods to the region at large.**

We are helping Central Indiana develop a data-informed culture and to use data more effectively. For example, we are supporting United Way of Central Indiana and its nonprofit network by integrating data from all agencies in the network to understand impact.