HELLO!

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We're CIVICLAB, a nonprofit institute dedicated to advancing the practice of civic collaboration.

CIVICLAB teaches collaborative community teams how to better approach complex social problems by redesigning the way they work together. Since our founding in 2012, we have partnered with and served more than 300 communities across the country and have trained more than 14,000 leaders and community stakeholders.

It's important to know that we do not consider ourselves to be experts or consultants. Like you, we are practitioners, having formed and led many cross-sector collaboratives and initiatives focused on social challenges at the community, regional, and state levels.

The approach we take to our work is both unique and proven. We believe in one guiding idea: When it comes to community collaboration, *the process is the product.*

Our **Stakeholder Engagement Process** is a relationship-based, systems-building approach. It is rooted in the idea that when it comes to addressing a social problem, it's a systems thing, not a single thing. And the "system" is the way we have chosen to work together.

Every community has a process it uses to collaborate, whether it knows it or not. And before things can be made better, a group has to be able to see their process and understand it. As the adage says, if you can't describe what you are doing as a process, then you may not know what you are doing.

By teaching community teams how to redesign the way they relate to one another and work together, we help our partners build and lead social systems that better serve all people and improve the human condition.

THE CIVICLAB TEAM

JACK HESS
Co-Founder and
Executive Director

Educated to be an entrepreneur, a seasoned chamber of commerce executive, and a passionate believer in the idea that *"if it remains invisible, it remains unsolvable."*

JOHN BURNETT
Co-Founder

Experienced in organizational design and community development, team building, stakeholder engagement, and human relations focused on equity in society.

AMBER FISCHVOGT
Director

Experienced in business, community, and leadership development, and believes that transforming a community is ultimately about transforming relationships.


DAKOTA PAWLICKI
Director, Talent Hubs

Trained as a teacher, skilled in community mobilization, postsecondary education and philanthropy, focused on systems change through multi-sector partnership.

CIVICLAB

"Architecture is something you can see. You can't see a spirit or a temperament or a character, though, and there's an invisible part of this community that I'm very proud of because, in a democracy, I think that the process is more important than the product."

—J. IRWIN MILLER, THE WASHINGTON POST, 1986
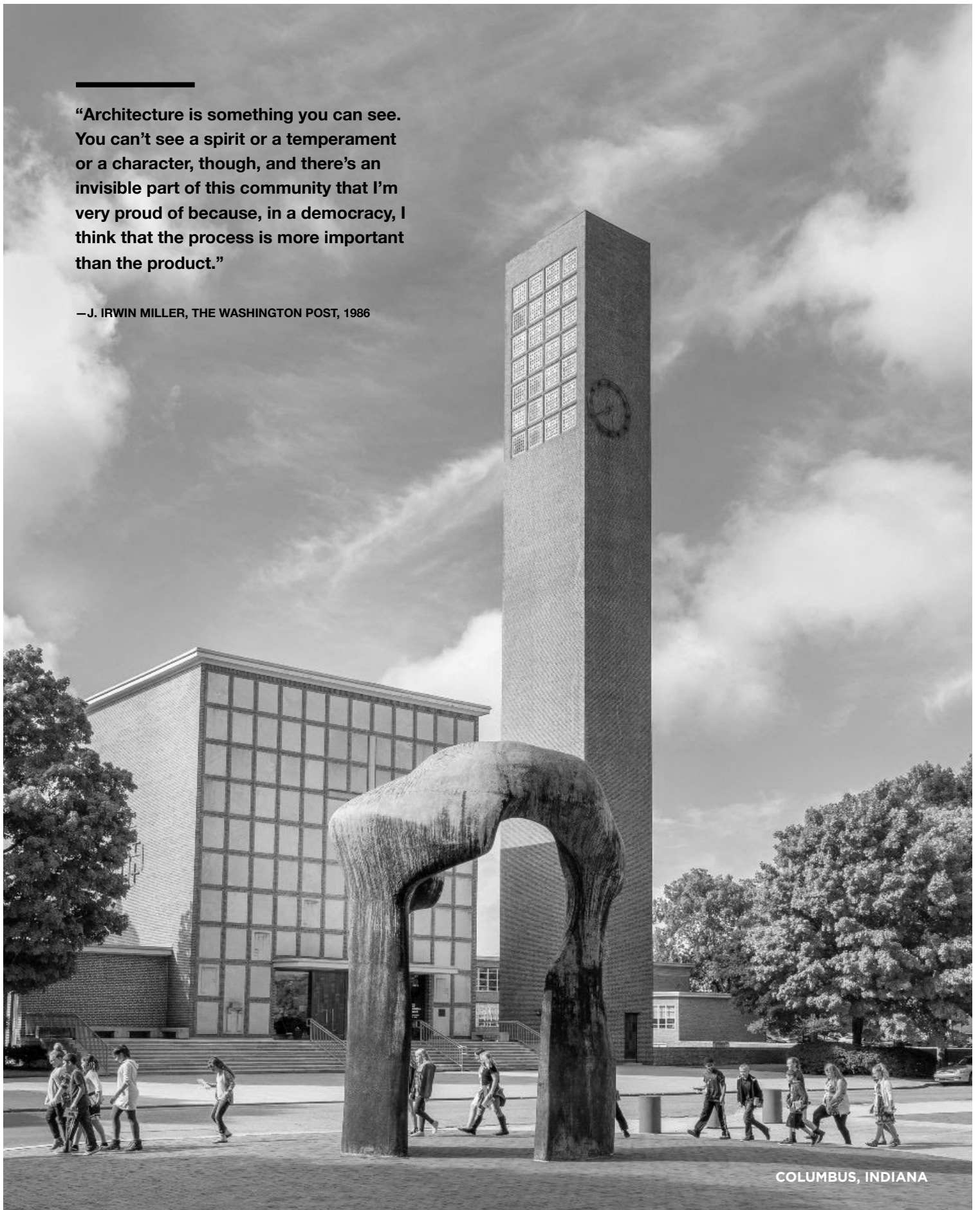
COLUMBUS, INDIANA

THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL FOR ART, ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

A LIVING LABORATORY FOR COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

"Columbus understood the principle of the Talent Dividend fifty years ago. Other cities should be studying the Columbus, Indiana example and taking good notes."

—AARON RENN, THE URBANOPHILE

Few places in America have had a more successful history of community collaboration and flourishing public-private partnerships than Columbus, Indiana. Columbus was charted as a city in 1864, and remained a steadily growing Midwestern town without much to distinguish itself from any other communities until the success of Cummins Engine Company, founded in 1919.

The company's leader, industrialist, arts patron, and civil rights activist, J. Irwin Miller, helped to champion the Cummins Architecture Program, one of the most successful public-private partnerships in the country, ultimately earning the city its title of *Athens of the Prairie*.
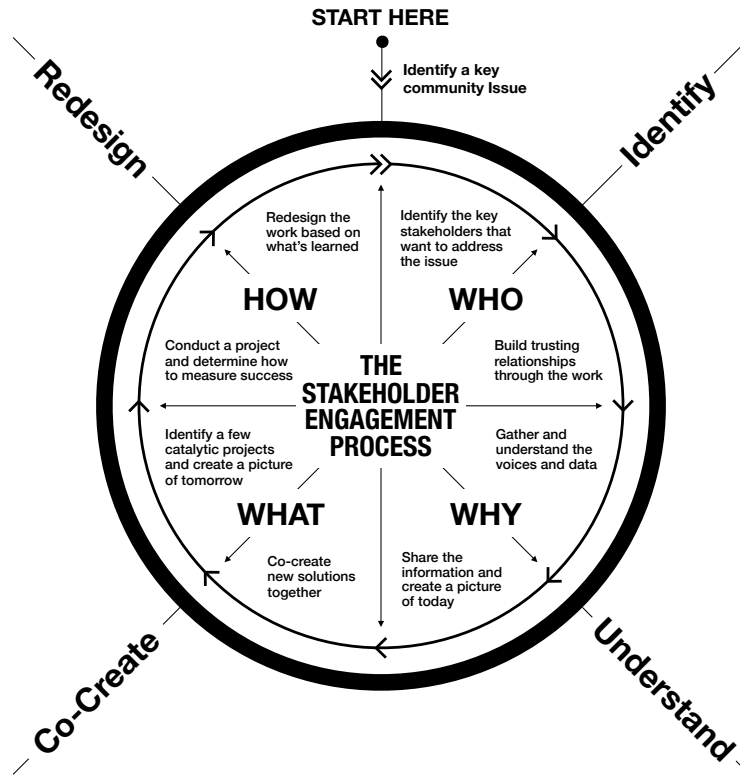
The partnership evolved in response to the post-war baby boom and the demand it created for new schools. At the same time, Cummins began having trouble recruiting engineers, who were fearful of relocating to a town without enough schools for their children. Cummins approached the school board about building a new school and offered to pay the architect's fees, to be chosen by the community from a list of five candidates prepared and provided by the company.

Modernist architect, Harry Weese, was hired and the Lillian C. Schmitt Elementary School opened in 1957. It was a tremendous success, both architecturally and educationally. In the following years, the partnership expanded, paying the architect's design fees for new publicly-funded buildings constructed. More than seventy modern buildings compose the built-environment of the city including works from world-class architects such as I.M. Pei, Cesar Pelli, Eero Saarinen, Deborah Berke, Richard Meier, Gunnar Birkerts, Robert Stern, and Robert Venturi.

To ensure that what was happening inside of its school buildings was on par with the same level of excellence found on the outside, Columbus formed the Community Education Coalition in 1997. Leveraging the same collaborative process used to shape the community's built-environment, which came to be known as *"The Columbus Way,"* the coalition founded a cross-sector partnership to build a learning system aligned with the region's economic strengths and unique quality of place.

Today, Columbus is considered to be one of the best communities of its size in the nation, ranking exceptionally well both educationally and economically. Wanting to build and improve further on its collaborative strengths and process, the community founded CIVICLAB in 2012. Led by a team of pragmatic practitioners, the nonprofit institute creates the tools and frameworks that form the underlying foundation for the practice of community collaboration.

START HERE

Identify a key community Issue

Redesign

Identify

Redesign the work based on what's learned

Identify the key stakeholders that want to address the issue

HOW

WHO

Conduct a project and determine how to measure success

Build trusting relationships through the work

THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Identify a few catalytic projects and create a picture of tomorrow

Gather and understand the voices and data

WHAT

WHY

Co-create new solutions together

Share the information and create a picture of today

Co-Create

Understand

THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS LAB

Mastering the principles and practices of community collaboration

The **Stakeholder Engagement Process Lab** teaches a relationship-based, systems-building approach to address complex social problems.

When it comes to community collaboration, the process is the product. The outcomes we experience are only as good as the underlying process itself. That's because the most significant leverage point in any change effort is the quality of the engagement process the stakeholders use to redesign the way they relate to one another and work together.

This lab presents the fundamental principles, practices, tools, and frameworks for engaging cross-sector stakeholders in the process of collaboration to improve the human condition.

THE SYSTEMS-BUILDING DESIGN LAB

How to design, build and lead social systems that better serve all people

The **Systems-Building Design Lab** teaches collaborative community teams how to dissolve social problems by redesigning the underlying system and shaping the conditions that caused the problem in the first place.

A community issue is not any one thing, but a tangled knot of different kinds of interacting problems. What's required is not a single solution, but an ecosystem of interrelated approaches for managing, solving, and dissolving the various types of problems that exist. It's a systems thing, not a single thing.

This lab helps a diverse group of stakeholders see that they are part of something bigger than themselves. And it presents how they can redesign their collective work together to make it act more like a system, ultimately achieving a state of "systemness."

LET'S GO!

We're anxious to get started, so let's talk about
the next steps to building our partnership.

The **CIVICLAB** team is looking forward to learning more about your community and your team's collaborative work and aspirations.

In contrast to the typical "customer-supplier" relationship that so often gets formed in the community consulting space, we would like to propose that we build our relationship in the spirit of a true partnership.

As a first step, we will be scheduling a conference call to further introduce ourselves and begin learning about what and how your team may want to improve.

From there, we will co-design with your team a custom learning lab that best develops your community's distinctive capacity.

In the meantime, we thought we would share some guiding principles that we have found useful in our work, shaping who we've become.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ‣ It's a systems thing, not a single thing.

- ‣ Transforming a system is ultimately about building and transforming relationships.

- ‣ Improving the system is everyone's responsibility; and responsibility precedes accountability.

- ‣ When it comes to community collaboration, the process *is* the product.

- ‣ If it remains invisible, then it remains unsolvable.

- ‣ It's better to dissolve a problem than solve it.

- ‣ It's our values and relationships that create scarcity, not the lack of resources.

- ‣ A system cannot be controlled, but it can be re-designed.

- ‣ Smart small, think big, aim high.

NEED TO CONTACT US?

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QUESTIONS

**IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE,
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