

FIELD TOUR NOTES: Winona Lake, Indiana

Overview

The information discussed during the field tour has been organized into four key categories to allow for easy review and comparison between communities. The categories are defined below:

General Considerations:

A portion of the information discussed during the field tour meetings was to provide general information the community, the history and the residents living and working within the area. Items that could not be included in the three categories below have been accounted for in this General Considerations category.

Aspirations:

Aspirations are the goals/ objectives/ projects that the community hopes to achieve during or after this planning process.

Strengths/ Opportunities:

Strengths are internal, positive attributes of your department and/or system. These are things that are within your control. Opportunities are external factors in your environment that are likely to contribute to your success.

Weaknesses/ Threats:

Weaknesses are negative factors that detract from your strengths. These are things that you might need to improve on to be competitive. Threats are external factors that you have no control over. You may want to consider putting in place contingency plans for dealing with them as/ if they occur.

Summary

On Friday, February 26, 2021 members of the project team met with Craig Allebach (Town manager) at the Light Rail Cafe to discuss Leesburg's existing conditions, aspirations, strengths, and overall needs. James Turnwald, Stephanie Overbey, Katie Clark, Scott Siefker and Alec Pormen were in attendance from the project team.

General Considerations:

- The Town of Winona Lake has a population of approximately 4,910 residents.
- Winona Lake recently completed a new comprehensive plan in partnership with MACOG, which has spurred major projects within the community.
- The Town maintains a fairly constant population year-round, there is not a large summer crowd living in Town.
- The community could be broken down into the 'Big Three:' Winona Lake, The Village, and Grace College.

FIELD TOUR SUMMARY DOCUMENT

- The Town is working with Warsaw on a number of projects including a roundabout at the main intersection between Warsaw and Winona Lake (Kings Highway and Argonne Road), and the Argonne Road Corridor Beautification Project.
- There is an organization, Tracey's Trails, who help give kids in multiple communities the opportunity to use trails by providing bikes and biking gear.

Aspirations:

- Finish the creation of an ice rink/pavilion that can be used for multiple types of events throughout the year. The pavilion will be a very large building that can open on three sides and support year-round programming. This project will cost \$6.5 million, with \$1.5 million coming from grant money through the K21 Health Foundation.
- Town wants to create new festivals that can occur on a monthly basis instead of being once a year.
- Develop the current Raccoon Run area as a new "Town Center", which can become a new destination on the east side of the community and hold multiple amenities for residents. A future public input session will be held to better determine what features/ amenities are desired for this area.
- There is a need to provide regional trail connections between all communities within the county, but there is currently no master plan to guide efforts.

Strengths/Opportunities:

- Over 2020 the Town worked through the creation of a new residential TIF near the golf courses on the southeast side of Town. Raccoon Run golf course has been bought and will become a new housing development for single-family homes (138 units), this will be part of the new residential TIF.
- The Raccoon Run residential redevelopment project will also take advantage of the new fiber to the home initiative offered by Kosciusko County REMC.
- Stonehenge golf course has been acquired by the CDC and is working with groups to revitalize and redevelop the building and course.
- The Town's Parks Board is creating a 5-Year Parks Master Plan which will include expanded programming for pedestrian and bike paths within the community.
- Multiple festivals throughout the year including:
 - Fat and Skinny Tire Festival in May (largest event)
 - Art Fair in June (80 to 100 vendors)
 - Fourth of July
- Grace College is a major anchor for the community, recent years have held record number of students. Grace College assist in putting a focus on arts/ concerts within the community.

FIELD TOUR SUMMARY DOCUMENT

- The Town has multiple greenways that connect to Warsaw and will eventually connect with areas within the county. This includes regionally recognized mountain bike trails.
- Winona Lake serves as a regional destination for recreational opportunities.

Weaknesses/ Threats:

- The Town is having issues with expanding water services, the utility company want \$11.3 million for the expansion and the Town does not believe that number is accurate/fair.
- Most houses within the community are selling well over the market value, which may make it difficult for young families to move to Winona Lake.
- Grace College enrollment had been declining, but 2020 had the second highest enrollment for freshmen which totaled 459 students. The total student population is 1,901 students.