

FIELD TOUR NOTES: Mentone, 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, March 5, 2021 members of the project team met with Tim Croy, Town Council and Mentone Chamber of Commerce, at the Mentone Town Hall to discuss the Town of Mentone's existing conditions, aspirations, and overall needs. James Turnwald, Katie Clark, Scott Siefker and Alec Pormen were in attendance from the project team.

General Considerations:

- Mentone, population of 1,000, is the self-proclaimed "Egg Basket of the Midwest" because of the prolific commercial egg production near the area. Every June the Town hosts the Mentone Egg Festival, complete with a parade, flea market, craft vendors, food and live entertainment.
- Lawrence D. Bell Aircraft Museum – honoring the town's favorite son, American Industrialist and founder of the Bell Aircraft Corporation is located in Mentone. Each year you can attend the fly-in event, Rotors Over Mentone.
- The Bell Memorial Public Library is the local lending library in the community which also offers Senior Center programming at the facility.

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- Downtown occupancy is currently at or near 100%, with a variety of good and services, including a local grocery store and hardware store, present in the central business district. The local chamber of commerce is highly active in promoting local businesses.
- NIPSCO owns the street lights throughout the community.
- The Town has not applied for nor received any Community Crossing grant funding, although they have received some funding for improving handicap crossings.
- The Town provides both water and sewage and has recently upgraded their treatment plant, with room for additional capacity. Each resident has their own septic tank which was purchased from the Town. The local elementary school is the dominant utility user.
- They are in the Tippecanoe Valley school district, and have the Mentone Elementary School in the community, which has remained at solid enrollment numbers.
- Majority of the Town residents either work in Nappanee or Zimmer Biomet in Warsaw, IN.
- Public Safety: three local townships support the volunteer fire department. EMS is also volunteer with 2 trucks; Town Marshal and two officers provide police protection. Current police vehicle fleet is okay.

Aspirations:

- There is a desire to have improvements made to Mentzer Memorial Park.
- Adjacent to Mentone Elementary School is a parcel that could be developed as a small environmental park with walking trails around the wetland. This project has been identified as a potential K21 grant funding opportunities.
- There is a desire to continue and invest in the street and sidewalk enhancement program throughout downtown and adjacent neighborhoods as well as to Mentzer Memorial Park.
- There is currently a physician's office in Mentone, affiliated with Lutheran Hospital network. There is a potential new dentist practice opening in the community in 2021.

Strengths/Opportunities:

- The housing market in Mentone is strong, with very few current residential properties for sale.
- The Mentone Youth League has a facility that can be rented. The Bell Library offers limited availability to their space and the meeting room in Town Hall is part of the Fire Station and used primarily for Town functions. There is no other community center in Town, so there is a potential need for such as space.
- Community programming includes the annual Egg Festival during the first week of June; Rotors over Mentone festival the first weekend of September, as well as a seasonal farmers market.
- Habitat for Humanity is currently working in the community, and has two additional housing units being planned for construction.

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- The Garden Courts Apartments for seniors is always at capacity with a wait list. It is available for residents 55 and older and offers 25 apartment units. There is a demand for additional senior housing in the area.
- There is a strong Amish population nearby that comes regularly to Mentone for goods and services. Accommodations for buggy traffic need to be considered with any physical enhancement program for the streets, parking and sidewalks.
- The Town offers a 50% rebate to local residents who improve sidewalks on their property.
- The Town facility is available for Town employees (including fire, police and EMS) to rent.
- There is a local Farmers Market that is held on Saturdays in the lot across from the Town building. This event also features a craft/ antique fair multiple times a year.
- The community, along with money from an estate, funded the construction of the Town building.

Weaknesses/ Threats:

- The Bell Library did offer a children's daycare in their facility when it first opened, but that has since closed and there is no other available child care in Town currently.
- There are currently three properties that have been identified as blighted by the Kosciusko County Department of Health, and are in need of being condemned.
- Mentone does not have a formal Main Street organization.
- Local parks do need improvements including general maintenance and playground equipment upgrades.
- There is no licensed daycare facility in Town. Options that do exist are priced high, which makes it difficult for both parents to work.