

FIELD TOUR NOTES: Leesburg, 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 Christina Archer, Town Council Vice President and Mike Searfoss, Clerk Treasurer, at the Town Hall building 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 Leesburg has a population of approximately 776 residents.
- The Town has recently joined the Area Plan Commission, although some residents pushed back against the decision.
- Leesburg has its own sewer system, which is maintained by the Town. The wastewater is sent to the Warsaw plant. It is likely able to accommodate additional capacity.
- The Lions Club building currently acts as the Town's community building, it can fit around 100 people and is rented for \$75.

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- Leesburg still has not yet used/decided on a project for the K21 funds they are receiving from the sale of the hospital, although they do have specific connectivity projects in mind.
- The Town has a program where they reimburse a property owner up to 50% of the cost if they wish to redo their sidewalks.
- Stormwater currently is directed to the floodplain just north of Town. The floodplain makes developing this portion of land difficult.
- Leesburg has made use of the Community Crossings Grant program previously to help maintain roads.
- Leesburg is within the Warsaw School Corporation. Within Leesburg Town limits there is no elementary school. Leesburg elementary school sits just outside of the boundary at the intersection of Old SR 15 and Armstrong Road. Middle School and High School facilities are located outside of Pierceton.

Aspirations:

- There is a desire to increase the availability of childcare. Currently there are only two, licensed options within the Town. Both options available are private home facilities.
- There is a desire to increase the availability of affordable/ workforce housing options, including senior living.
- There is a desire to provide a new playground within the center of Town. Currently there is no play equipment located within the Town.
- The Town does want to preserve their own identity and be recognized as a place separate from Warsaw.
- The Town would like to see the creation of a library.

Strengths/Opportunities:

- There is a lot located east of the Maple Leaf Farms building that could be developed, but access is limited. The area is owned by several individuals, some owners would like to see this developed while some seem reluctant to sell the property.
- The Town's baseball fields were donated by the school when they left the old building. The building is now owned and home to Maple Leaf Farms. They maintain the ball fields now and offer them to the community for public use.
- There is an old John Deer building just south of Town which could be put on sewer. This property could be redeveloped into a senior/child center. The John Deer facility recently relocated to US 30.
- The 4H is very prevalent in Leesburg, with over 100 boys and girls actively participating.
- Maple Leaf Farms is a large supporter of the Town and national supplier of duck related products. They employ about 100 people from the surrounding region. Most employees do not live in Leesburg.

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- Maple Leaf Farms offers opportunities related to the expansion of agritourism. The business already offers tours and classes to interested visitors.
- Leesburg is the oldest Town within the county and has a small downtown historic district, which includes an original brick road (Van Buren Street).
- The Town owns land to the north and along Old SR 15, offering opportunities for new development.
- Leesburg has fire service through the township and EMS (contracted through local hospital).

Weaknesses/ Threats:

- Leesburg has a Dollar Store but is lacking any formal grocery store. There used to be a locally owned store downtown.
- The Town has industrial gravel pits to the south and active farm land on all other sides, land locking the community.
- Although the downtown buildings upper floors have remained occupied, they do not have proper fire egress. The Town would like to identify a feasible solution and potential funding options for egress improvements.
- Areas along SR 15 north of Town are in a floodplain and undevelopable.
- The only playground area is at the new elementary building, located on the south east side of Town at the intersection of Old SR 15 and Armstrong Road. While the play equipment is an asset for the community, the concern is that children wanting to access the area must cross the railroad tracks and Old SR 15, which can be dangerous.
- Not all streets in Town have sidewalks.
- Sewer maintenance is an issue due to its age, much of the infrastructure is over 100 years old and needs replacing or high levels of maintenance. Since the system was installed at the same time, the equipment is aging at the same rate, making repairs and maintenance difficult to manage. The Town is currently working with a private group on how to repair the pipes in alleys without having to dig up entire sections.
- The Town does not currently have their own police department/ service. This is currently contracted through the County sheriff's department.
- SR 15 can become very busy during morning and evening commutes.
- The existing railroad line, which runs along Old SR 15 has a high amount of traffic which makes it difficult to cross.
- There is no local water service within Leesburg. Residents and businesses use wells for water service. In the past some locations have shown contaminants within the water, this makes future well locations difficult.