

FIELD TOUR NOTES: Syracuse, 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 Tuesday, February 23, 2021 members of the project team met with Mike Noe, Town Manager and Renea Salyer, Executive Director of the Syracuse- Wawasee Chamber of Commerce, at the Syracuse Town Hall to discuss the Town of Syracuse's existing conditions, aspirations, and overall needs. James Turnwald, Stephanie Overbey, Katie Clark, Scott Siefker and Alec Poremien were in attendance from the project team.

General Considerations:

- The Syracuse has a population of approximately 2,881 residents.
- The Town of Syracuse promotes the Syracuse 6 & 13 Technology Park which is in Elkhart County. The Town provides water and wastewater services to the area. Additional incentives are provided through the Town of Syracuse including \$1,000 grant for every job created up to \$10,000, and waived water and sewer tap fees.
- Fire service is provided through Turkey Creek Fire Territory. The Town provides funds to the department.

FIELD TOUR SUMMARY DOCUMENT

- The Town does have a current comprehensive plan, however it provided too big of picture. The Town would like to see some more specific guidance on next steps.
- Syracuse is working to establish an affiliate of the Main Street organization.
- The seasonal (summer) population of Syracuse grows from approximately 3,000 to 20,000. Most homes along the lake are owner occupied seasonal homes primarily in the summer.
- There is one grocery store, Neighborhood Fresh, located along Huntington Street, south of Pickwick Drive.
- The area is known for their restaurants and has over 30 options available.
- The Town has an established 'riverfront district' that spans the uptown and village area.
- The Town has largely been operating independently of the County. While there is an independent spirit/ culture, officials would like to partner more with the County and find ways to move forward together.
- This process should get the buy in from seasonal residents. Tapping into the lake conservancy areas could be a way to get these residents engaged in the process.

Aspirations:

- The former Syracuse Elementary School could be redeveloped into apartments and a commercial kitchen. The Town, and appropriate developers/ partners, are working through options and agreements.
- The Town hopes to finalize additional placemaking projects including benches, planters, crosswalks, and murals within Uptown. An Placemaking Taskforce does exist.
- The existing movie theatre located in Uptown is currently for sale. The art community in Syracuse would like to see this become an Arts Center for the community.
- The property behind the library has been purchase by the library. There is interest in potentially establishing a business incubator here at this location.
- There is an opportunity to potentially annex in the property where the Brookepoint Inn/Resort is located.

Strengths/Opportunities:

- The Town has undertaken and is continually planning for new beautification and placemaking initiatives within Uptown and the Village.
- The Village portion of Town does not have a lot of vacancies which is a strength, however this is also a weakness because it can limit growth and expansion within the area.
- Polywood, an outdoor furniture manufacturer, is currently expanding and is committed to staying in the area for the foreseeable future. Their site located at Maple Street and Brooklyn Street is expanding into the former ball field property.

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- The former Rinker building located along Chicago Street, east of Syracuse Webster Road is available for redevelopment.
- The area behind the former Shopko building is approximately 10 acres and could be available for development. Potentially this area could be used for housing.
- There is water/ wastewater capacity available.
- There are approximately 12 miles of trails within Syracuse, and the Town would like to continue to grow their system.
- Syracuse has strong, established TIF districts. These districts fund new infrastructure.
- There is a public beach area along the northwestern edge of Lake Wawasee. Additionally, the Town has seven properties they maintain offering a variety of recreational opportunities.

Weaknesses/ Threats:

- The Town would like to expand housing options but is currently looking for land to develop on. The Town is partnering with the Kosciusko County Economic Development Corporation (KEDCO) to find property.
- The Rinker production facility located along Chicago Street closed in 2020. The closure resulted in the elimination of 120 jobs.
- Shopko, formally located along SR 13, south of Countyline Road closed in 2019. The property is available for redevelopment.
- The seasonal housing market within Syracuse creates an inflated market, with high selling prices. This makes it difficult for individuals to purchase a home in the area.
- The Town needs additional daycare options. There was a large facility in Town but there was a fire, and the establishment was unable to reopen.