

FIELD TOUR NOTES: Milford, 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 Ken Long, Milford Town Council, and Tricia Gall, Milford Clerk Treasurer, at the Milford Town Hall to discuss the Town of Milford's existing conditions, aspirations, and overall needs. James Turnwald, Stephanie Overbey, Katie Clark, Scott Siefker and Alec Poremen were in attendance from the project team.

General Considerations:

- The Town of Milford has a population of approximately 1,747 residents.
- Wastewater system improvements were completed within the last five years.
- The Town is currently working on a process that will validate the Town's upcoming water audit and develop an asset management plan for both water and wastewater systems. Following the completion of those items, the Town will then apply for a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development to study Milford's drinking water system.
- Milford leaders are focused on identifying local needs and priorities as a part of this process.

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- The area historically was home to migrant workers on local farms. Over time, Milford became the permanent home for these individuals which has increased the local heritage and diversity.
- Milford would like to tap into these different demographic/ cultural groups to assist in decision making.
- A 2015 Emergency Services study recommended that a new facility be built.
- EMS services within the Town are contracted with Lutheran Health Network as part of a multi-township agreement.
- Milford is within the Wawasee School Corporation. Milford has its own elementary school, located at the intersection of Emeline Street and Elm Street. Middle School and High School facilities are located outside of Milford.

Aspirations:

- The Town aspires to provide increased pedestrian/ bicycle connectivity to Waubee Lake and the park space located along the lake edge. The Town hoped to use the K21 recreation grant as a local match for the Next Level Connections application.
- There could be future outdoor recreation opportunities at Waubee Lake, but the first goal is to provide better access to the area. Once people can get there, the Town will work to identify appropriate facilities and recreational needs.
- The Town would like to increase the activity within the community building. Since the Town is paying to maintain the facility, they are interested in finding new ways to use it for various community events/ programs.

Strengths/Opportunities:

- There is existing park space which is maintained by the Town at Waubee Lake which is southeast of the Town limits.
- CTB Inc., is a primary employer within the Town. CTB Inc. is located along Higbee Street, north of Syracuse Street.
- Lakeland Rehabilitation and Healthcare vacated their facility near 4th Street and Elm Street in 2018-2019. The Town is currently working with Kosciusko County Economic Development Corporation (KEDCO) to identify potential developers to utilize the site for senior living apartments.
- The extension of CR 1300 west, to SR 15 is an active project. This extension would provide safety benefits to travelers, provide for a separate crossing at the railroad and improve EMS response times within the area. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2022. A combination of funding from the Indiana Department of Transportation's Local Trax Rail Overpass Program and county money will pay for the project.
- There are ongoing housing initiatives underway within the Town.

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- The most recent development is North Park which includes approximately 90 homes. This area currently includes homes that are outside of the Town boundary. Annexation of these homes into the Milford boundary has been discussed.
- There is a memorandum of understanding between the Town of Milford and the KEDCO which is intended to incentivize the development of workforce house in the area. Both the Milford Town Council and KEDCO will be contributing \$25,000 to secure local sites and begin the design/ development process.
- Local utility systems do have capacity to accommodate additional homes and users.
- A prime development opportunity is the Bear Industrial Park located at CR 1300 N and Old SR 15. The area is included within an existing TIF district. The TIF district expires in 2026. The Town anticipates the CR 1300 extension will make this property more marketable.
- The Town has several institutions (religious affiliations, non-profits etc.) that are able to reach broad demographics. There are multiple ways to engage with people throughout the community.
- The Papers, a local business establishment, is a good Town partner.
- The Town features Harvest with Heart which is a non-profit focused on improving the health and well-being of the community through food choices and availability. Harvest with a Heart offers a charitable garden market and food pantry for the community. The pantry, is operated by the Milford First Brethren Church as of January 2021.
- CTB Inc. could become a stronger community partner in the future.

Weaknesses/ Threats:

- Currently the Town has a park superintendent, but no parks board. This could limit their ability to apply for and receive recreation specific funds.
- Based on current wastewater rates, the Town is only able to maintain service and is unable to tackle larger maintenance needs.
- The existing community building does need ongoing maintenance and upkeep. Finding new ways to offset costs could be helpful.
- The Town Street Department currently oversees streets, water utilities, and parks. With the number of systems and tasks to oversee, maintenance and upkeep is the primary focus.
- Local company (CTB Inc.) leadership used to live in Town. Now that they have left, the relationships with Town leaders are not as strong.