

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this report are indeed conclusive. But there will be much work needed to be successful with any effort involving Economic Development. Something that must be remembered when undertaking an Economic Development effort is that it is a long term effort. Significant groundwork and dedication must go into the long range planning and implementation. This whole process should be looked at in terms of decades and not months or necessarily years. It is also a learning process, with each mistake a lesson learned with each success more lessons learned.

St. Leon is in an enviable position in this undertaking. It has an open palate on which to paint its future. With a number of positive attributes in its portfolio and with a little patience, it should be able to positively affect its growth in a sustainable and continuous method.

Here we will cite the identified findings of the report:

Strengths

- The people living in St. Leon
- Its labor force
- More than adequate room for growth
- Excellent access to I-74 and Indiana Rt. 1
- Last mile Fiber connection for the whole community
- Adequate amounts of electricity and gas
- Strong labor attributes of productivity, turnover and absenteeism
- A commuting workforce
- Highly developable sites
- Willing Sellers of property
- Strong sense of Volunteerism in community
- Forward looking town leadership
- Significant access to outdoor recreation

While there are some problems with the Town of St. Leon, they should be looked at as opportunities for corrective action. Following is a list of those identified:

Weaknesses

- Non-growth mind set
- Small “p” politics
- Limited leadership resources
- Pay as you go attitude for utilities
- Infrastructure upgrades needed
- Improvement needed for Education needed in the community
- Interaction between Secondary and Higher Education and employers is needed
- Small number of workers found in the immediate vicinity
- Ingress and egress issues need to be rectified for both questioned properties
- Upgrade needed for utilities at both sites

Nothing there to keep youth in community
Limited Cultural or local recreational facilities
Needed retail, health and service businesses
Consistent process for generating revenue for the Town

Recommended remediation alternative for identified weaknesses:

- To rectify and change the No-growth philosophy, the Town should implement an education process to inform the residents of what Economic development is and is not. By doing this on a bi-annual or annual basis, much will be accomplished in removing the biases and non-truths about growth in general.
- By sitting down and discussing priorities and issues, much of the small “p” politics will be averted. While there will always be some, a regular meeting of the minds should go along way in keeping everyone focused on the critical issues confronting the community on a daily and yearly format.
- Training interested residents in leadership qualities could become a critical answer for many of the issues identified in this analysis. Those communities that embrace and promote involvement by the residents in the governing process typically have a good progression of strong leaders within the community. It may be appropriate to create a leadership program for the community linked with volunteerism that could generate new leadership within the community. Also the youth should be included in this venue.
- In order to be successful in the Economic Development venue it is necessary to be completely ready when a potential investor/company comes to the community. The old methodologies are no longer applicable and the infrastructure must be in place and with the correct specifications or the client will not consider the location. While there is a need to address the impact on the rest of the ratepayers, there also needs to be an understanding that this is an investment in the future of the community as a whole and could reduce future rate issues by expansion of the overall base of customers.
- As noted in the previous bullet point, industry has many opportunities afforded to them when they look for a site. Those that are ready typically receive the visit while those that aren’t are bypassed. Speed is the name of the game in this day and time, so it is critical that these services to the proposed sites be upgraded prior to the marketing of the sites. To pay for these improvements there are a number of ways to consider; Federal loans and grants (US EDA, USDA Rural Development, US DOT), State Loans and grants (OCRA, Indiana Dept. of Agriculture, IEDC Project Specific), Local loans or grants, partnership agreements to name a few.
- Education is of critical interest to business and industry as they consider future locations for their facilities. As a result a community must do everything it can to influence the success of its local educational institutions. The Town must reach out and aggressively communicate its concerns and offer its assistance to education in changing the trends, real or not, so that it can also be a strong ally in the Economic Development efforts.

- Education must also reach out to the local employers to discuss their current and future needs as it pertains to their future workforce. Dialogue must begin to enhance the skills of those leaving school directly into the workforce. This will also allow the school system better understand the specific needs of the community as a whole.
- There must be a long term plan on how to recruit new residents to the community in anticipation of jobs being created within the community. The Town should look at the areas where specific job skills that pertain to the targets and then identify approximately where they live and begin marketing the lifestyle found in St. Leon to those potential residents. It must also work with reputable developers and establish specific criteria and expectations on future subdivisions and housing projects to serve new residents.
- Both sites will have need of good access for the development of the properties. They will also need upgraded utilities to serve them of adequate volumes. There are a number of ways to pay for these improvements and will be addressed later in this document.
- The reason there is nothing to keep the youth in the community is that there is no vision or plan to create meaningful jobs and investment for them to come back to or to stay in the community. Job creation is the only realistic manner in which to keep youth in the community. There is also a need to provide basic services to these potential residents which also relates to jobs.
- Culture is in the eyes of the beholder. While many saw no cultural facilities locally they did identify them in the greater St. Leon area. This can be achieved but it will take time. As the community grows, opportunities will present themselves, and cultural and recreational activities will spring up. This is one of those long term efforts.
- Basic services are indeed needed in the community. The problem is that many of the businesses that provide many of these services have a specific process they use for the location of their facilities. St. Leon presently does not have the demographics to meet those thresholds established by the owners of those needed facilities. This will change as growth happens. There may also be an opportunity for local or regional entrepreneurs to fill the void with non-franchise linked ventures.
- There needs to be a process by which the Town can regularly increase revenues outside the gaming funds to operate the Town efficiently. Either by increasing the annual property tax levy by its maximum or by imposing additional fees for service. Another way to accomplish the expansion of resources is by encouraging enhanced volunteerism within the community on non-capital intensive activities.
- Private developers can also be an added partner in the proposed development on the St. Leon area. Partners such as Duke Energy, Hoosier Energy, Enhanced Telecommunications and Ohio Valley Gas can further assist in the overall development of the properties. Other potential partners could include building contractors such as Garmong Construction Services and Browning Construction when considering speculative buildings or similar types of projects.

The targeting identified in this report is based on the types of activities both residents and other business owners determined would be a good fit for the community. Additional data was included in the determinations as well, including type and volumes of utility capacities, proximity to markets and labor pools. These facts and a clear understanding of industry and business needs, lead to the identification of the identified targets. Also once this information has been organized into marketing materials there should be great thought as to where and how the data should be disseminated. The types of marketing that should take place, who should do it and the frequency of contact, are all critical factors that should be discussed and considered in great detail.

Sites

Both sites are unique and have different potential uses. The Lobenstein Property is suited best for use as a retail/service related activity. The suggested use would be general retail, restaurants, motels and other service related activities. These may include medical services, general offices among many other uses. The greatest issues for this site include primary access (which should come off of Indiana Rt. 1) and adequate and appropriately sized utilities to and into the property. The Kinnett Consulting Group advises that these development factors be given significant consideration and merit during any subsequent property evaluation process, as the necessary utility upgrades are estimated to cost around \$900,000 and the purchase of an access right-of-way must be included (additionally). It should be also understood that if the Town chooses to pursue the property it has specific guidelines that it must follow to make an acquisition which includes appraisal of the property by at least two independent appraisers (The Kinnett Consulting Group recommends MAI Qualified appraisers).

The Stenger property is best suited for an Industrial Park. Because of its location, and proximity to I-74 it could be easily be designed to meet the needs of many different types of industry. These would include the identified targets in manufacturing as well as the heavy office style use such as Backoffice, Teleservices, R & D, and Fulfillment and Distribution facilities. The greatest issues for this site are that of utility upgrades. In order to meet the needs of industry, both water and sewer facilities need to be expanded and gas needs to be brought to the property. This will be expensive for the community in that the identified cost depending on which sewer plan is adopted will be between \$3.124 – 3.274 million. As a result of these necessary improvements and their associated costs, the Kinnett Consulting Group advises that these development factors be given significant consideration and merit during any subsequent property evaluation process. It should also be reiterated that if the Town chooses to pursue this property, it has specific guidelines that it must follow to make an acquisition which includes appraisal of the property by at least two independent appraisers (The Kinnett Consulting Group recommends MAI Qualified appraisers).

Both properties again have different potential uses and should be looked at independently of each other. The Town should consider where their resources should best be utilized. There have been discussions concerning where the Town might obtain finances to obtain one or both of the properties identified in this report. Our research has provided a number of different locations that funding might be obtained. The first two are with the Federal Government; the Economic Development Administration and USDA both of which have funded the acquisition of properties for uses as industrial and business parks. Both have provisions that if properties are sold to the private sector that they agencies would have their funds returned to them at the time of sale. Any profit and all taxes would stay with the community.

There are no programs at the State level that would provide for loans or grants for communities to purchase property. However, TIF District funds can be used to fund property acquisition as well as some, if not all, of the infrastructure improvements. The other sources identified include issuing a municipal bond and paying for it on a yearly basis. Also by partnering with either the Dearborn County Redevelopment Commission, the City of Lawrenceburg (revenue sharing agreement) and/or the Lawrenceburg Conservancy District (loan or joint venture sharing of revenues) potential financial resources could be made available. Each of these has plusses and some minuses attached to them. The good news is that there are interested groups in Dearborn County, the State of Indiana and the Federal Government willing to work with the Town of St. Leon.

An additional recommendation for consideration is the construction of a spec building on one of the properties in consideration. This could be financed through the same entities at the local level. The benefit of such a venture is that the building would be roughly 60% complete and this helps a potential buyer cut time frame when they are interested in making a location decision. It can also be a carrot to bring in other clients that may not prefer the building but would still consider a location and build their own building in the community. It has been used by many communities as a significant marketing tool. It should be realized that entering into this type of venture involves some risk in that there must be carrying cost to cover the structure during the marketing time period. However it can pay dividends in the long run.