

## Past, Present, and the Future ~

### *How a small community has turned obstacles into assets*

So, how does a community of 3,000 people turn a myriad of monumental obstacles into assets. They utilize smart, consistent leadership to set and achieve goals. I started observing the Town of Sheridan on their path from obstacles to assets in 2011. I never would have dreamt the progress the town would make in less than 10 years. Like most small towns funding infrastructure work is hard to do. Big City problems on a small Town budget. Decades of budget shortfalls make big time changes difficult. So, what does a small Town do? They get off their island, leverage their assets, and partner with others more proficient than themselves to help change their weaknesses into strengths.



Just to name a few challenges I saw in 2011:

1. Severe flooding over 40% of the town
2. An out of date waste water treatment plant
3. An aging water distribution system
4. Severe utility rate hikes needed to upgrade the aging infrastructure
5. Crumbling roadways
6. Flatlined commercial, industrial and residential development

So, what does a small Town do when facing these significant issues? The leaders lace up their boots and get to work with their potential partners and local community. From what I've observed, the Town of Sheridan is now saturated in positive momentum. It appears to be like a snowball only getting bigger and faster as it goes downhill. A few of the highlights I've personally observed:

1. They implemented a stormwater utility to fund work for stormwater infrastructure improvements specifically intended to reduce flooding.
2. They teamed with the USDA, Hamilton County, and OCRA to find funding mechanisms to address their most significant flooding issue.
  - a. [Project Summary – See Next Page](#)
3. They sold their water and wastewater utilities and gained Indiana American Water as a corporate partner in the process.
  - a. This partnership has allowed utility rates to remain relatively stable and will allow Indiana American Water to do what they do best, manage utilities.
4. The Town committed itself to financing roadway improvements through the INDOT CCMG grant program.
  - a. To date, nearly 50% of the road miles within the Town have been upgraded. The most in need were completed first.
5. The Town has begun partnering with INDOT to upgrade the major highways in Town.
  - a. Good planning during the stormwater upgrades (ITEM #2 above) by the Hamilton County Surveyor's Office has given the new highway infrastructure an adequate stormwater outlet which it never would have had before.
6. The Town worked with developers on a renovation plan to turn the old and abandoned Adams Township school into apartments.
  - a. <http://www.handincorporated.org/former-adams-township-school-in-sheridan-to-be-redeveloped-into-apartments/>
7. The Town has reformatted and digitally updated its Zoning Ordinance making it easier for the public and developers to know the rules they intend to enforce.
8. The Town has obtained Shovel Ready Certification for its Countryside Industrial Park
  - a. [https://properties.zoomprospector.com/statein/property/4100-West-236th-Street-\(SR-47\)-Sheridan-Indiana/3E19FC44-151E-4CDB-BD35-6E515999E67B](https://properties.zoomprospector.com/statein/property/4100-West-236th-Street-(SR-47)-Sheridan-Indiana/3E19FC44-151E-4CDB-BD35-6E515999E67B)
9. The Town is working with developers on a 300-lot residential subdivision. The first new subdivision in over a decade.
10. The Town has worked with volunteers to fund welcome signs to the Town.
11. With the help of Westfield and Hamilton County, the Monon Trail has been extended into Town.
  - a. It will only be a matter of time before the Town leaders tie it into the historic downtown.



With the results focused and forward-thinking leadership the Town of Sheridan has, as well as the abundance of community pride and volunteerism, the future appears very bright. I look forward to seeing where they are in another 10 years. Keep up the Great work! I hope other small communities can utilize some of these same tactics to turn obstacles into assets.



# Brief History of the Hamilton County & Town of Sheridan Stormwater Project

On June 20, 2011 a torrential downpour occurred in Sheridan Indiana. Flooding occurred throughout town, but was most intense on the eastern side of town known as the Symons and Krause Watershed. The Town of Sheridan and other concerned citizens contacted the Hamilton County Surveyor’s office and Drainage Board for help with the consistent flooding issues that were being experienced.



In 2011 Banning Engineering, P.C. was contracted by the Hamilton County Drainage Board and Surveyor’s office to provide a watershed study for the Symons and Krause regulated drain watershed. This watershed serves over 40% of the residents of the Town of Sheridan. Several dozens of businesses and homes have been affected by flooding due to outdated and undersized infrastructure.

In 2012 Banning Engineering, Hamilton County Surveyor’s Office, and the Town of Sheridan worked together to gather data, and conduct public information gathering sessions. A watershed plan was being developed to lessen the flooding impacts in town and downstream of town.

In 2013 the watershed study was completed with significant landowner input. Several informational meetings were held, where residents learned and were educated on the complexities of watershed and stormwater management. A letter of map revision through FEMA was completed for Symons ditch the primary outlet for stormwater in the watershed. A critical residential structure downstream of town was noted to be within the floodway. The watershed study outlined two different scenarios for implementation of the overall plan. The second, less expensive, scenario was chosen that purchased the critical residential structure. Elimination of this severely at risk structure is estimated to save the watershed master plan over \$800,000.

To date several projects within the watershed plan are completed:

Project 3 eliminated a poorly constructed inverted crown roadway through a subdivision just north of the Town of Sheridan. Stormwater historically travelled in the middle of the road and froze during the winter making the roadway impassible with 6 to 12 inches of ice at times. The project involved installation of a 30 inch mainline storm sewer and associated 12 inch branches to catch stormwater and provide access and elevation for installation of side ditches along the roadway. The project was funded using the regulated drain reconstruction assessment process, and a significant lump sum payment from the County Highway Department to pay for the roadway upgrades. Even though the project cost the residents a significant amount of money, they were extremely happy to see it installed. Several times workers on the project received fresh baked cookies as appreciation. The project has been tested several times and is working as designed.

Most significantly, the Krause regulated drain reconstruction has begun. The ground required for the project, a ditch and retention basin, was purchased by Hamilton County in 2017. The Hamilton County Drainage Board reconstruction project is being implanted in a 3 phase approach to facilitate other construction activities by the town while finalizing funding. The highlight of the project is that it is funded by a loan through, a first of its kind in the nation, stormwater capacity fee. The United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD) administers this loan. It allows a town or city (in this case the Town of Sheridan) to purchase a stormwater capacity fee from a downstream municipality (in this case the Hamilton County Drainage Board). The capacity fee will allow the upstream municipality to pay for the upgrades to the downstream stormwater infrastructure located outside its municipal boundaries. The beauty of this loan program is the 40 year term at a very low interest rate. This rate and term will allow the Town of Sheridan to pay back the loan without a negative impact on their year to year cash flow as opposed to the substantial decrease in cash flow when utilizing the standard 20-year municipal bond.

Currently, Phase 1 of the Krause reconstruction has been completed and Phases 2 and 3 will be constructed through 2019.

While working with the County to facilitate the USDA Stormwater Capacity Loan, the Town of Sheridan also was working with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) to obtain a stormwater grant. The Town received notice they were awarded funding on July 21<sup>st</sup> 2016. Construction for the town upgrades will be completed by July of 2018. While being sized to reduce flooding, much of the proposed piping is perforated to also lower the ground water table. This will reduce infiltration into the sanitary sewer system. Additionally, several direct connections between storm and sanitary sewers were removed with the project. The Town has already noticed substantial improvement with the increased capacity of the drains installed. The benefit for the landowners once fully completed will be a storm system that has 5 times the capacity of the existing infrastructure all the while slowing water within the retention basin to safely discharge it downstream.

For over 5 years during the study and subsequent project implementation, the Town and County have worked together extensively. Regular meetings have been held to update project progress and brainstorm funding options. The Town has implemented a stormwater utility fee and is using it to fund their portion of the work and pay back the USDA RD loan. The County Drainage Board has loaned money to the Town while their funds build. Under the guidance of the Surveyor’s office the watershed plan has remained on track and moved forward as funds become available. The holistic plan, once fully completed, will benefit all of the residents within the watershed. The plan is an excellent example of how working together municipalities can complete projects together and fund them in innovative ways. The final benefit is much larger than either would have been able to complete on their own. In addition, having worked with staff at USDA RD on this innovative funding approach we are hopeful that other small communities and counties can use the “stormwater capacity fee” to help bridge municipal boundaries and fund projects that will address their respective stormwater flooding issues.

