

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 An out of date waste water treatment plant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](#)
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.

