



Conversations about the Future
EDINBURGH
2013 Community Interviews

I. Johnson County Community Profile

Community Name: Edinburgh

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Demographics

- A. Population as of 2010: 4,480; consists of 1,760 households and 1,180 families
- B. Estimated Rate of Growth for the next 5 years: 1.9% in town and 2.1% within 10 minute drive
- C. Growth Indicators in past five years:
 - projected 2.7% gain in households
 - median age projected to remain near 36 years old
 - projected increase in employment of 4.8%
 - median household income projected to increase by 18.3%

Residential Development Projects in Planning or Consideration

- A. New construction limited since 2000; number of new construction, single-family residential building permits peaked in 2005; declined by 88% between 2005 and 2009.
- B. Prominent type of housing is owner occupied, single-family dwellings – 75% are owner occupied; 20% of housing is rental dispersed among single family and multi-family structures.
- C. Edinburgh has maintained steady home sales within its larger market and like other Indianapolis metro communities has not seen a pronounced decline in selling prices.

Commercial Development Projects in Planning or Consideration

- A. The Town of Edinburgh adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 2011 which serves as a guide for improvement and development.
- B. The plan sets forth policies for land use and establishes guidelines for new development.
- C. Edinburgh is using the plan to formulate new zoning and development code regulations.

- D. The Edinburgh Merchants Association promotes awareness and interest in the community by exploring ways to attract new businesses and by supporting existing business.

Community Bonds – History and Trajectory

- A. Edinburgh Wright-Hageman Public Library retired its bond in 2012.
- B. Edinburgh Community School Corporation has \$10,338.149 in bonds.
- C. The Town of Edinburgh has \$18,621,466 in bonds.

Community Tax Levies - 2012

- A. Blue River Township had a tax levy of \$61,864 for its General, Township Assistance, and Fire Assistance funds combined.
- B. Edinburgh-Wright Hageman Library had a levy of \$120,759 for its General and Debt Service Funds.
- C. Edinburgh Civil Town had a combined tax levy of \$1,855.063.
- D. Edinburgh Community School Corporation tax levy was \$1,599,150.

Roads and Highway Assessment

- A. Current Status – situated between Interstate 65 to the east and U.S. 31 to the west. I-65/U.S. 31 interchange located near the southern boundary of the town's planning area.
- B. Projects Scheduled – The town has limited ability to make improvements or control access to its roads as most are under the jurisdiction of the county or state highway departments.
- C. Projects in Discussion – The Comprehensive Plan calls for working with INDOT to explore alternatives for realigning S.R. 252 which crosses the county east to west and runs through the north side of the community. The possibility of a major connection between I-65 and the proposed I-69 could have an impact on Edinburgh.

Indicators of Commitment to Quality of Life

- A. Education
 - Edinburgh Community School Corporation maintains an Administrative building along with three public schools – East Side Elementary, Edinburgh Middle School, and Edinburgh High School.

B. Parks and Recreation

- Town-owned Aquatic Center and Sports Complex
- Irwin Park, Prosser Park, and Bryan Park
- Timbergate Golf Course
- Close proximity to Johnson County Park and Atterbury State Fish and Wildlife Area.

C. Cultural Venues

- Pixy Theatre
- Toner-Maley House
- Rick D. Wilson's Fine Arts Gallery

D. Public Gathering Spaces

- Town Hall
- Churches
- Eskew-Eaton Funeral Home
- Edinburgh Wright-Hageman Public Library
- Public meeting spaces at the Pixy Theatre, Edinburgh Premium Outlets, and surrounding hotels

E. Community Events

- Fourth of July Festival
- Battle of the Bands
- Community Summer Splash Pool Party
- Blue River Buzzard Festival
- Farmers' Market
- Fall Festival
- Art and Craft Fair
- Christmas Bazaar and Holiday of Lights

F. Volunteer Structures

- Edinburgh Fire Department
- Lions Club
- Beta Sigma Phi
- Tri Kappa

G. Libraries

- Edinburgh Wright-Hageman Public Library is located downtown in an 8,000 square foot building which was renovated in 1986 and again in 1996.

H. Others

- Historic Downtown Edinburgh
- Edinburgh Premium Outlets
- Exit 76 Antique Mall
- Camp Atterbury

Neighborhood Groups

- A. Antiques Group
- B. Lions Club
- C. Edinburgh Senior Center

Health, Wellness, and Security

A. Major Healthcare Providers

- Johnson Memorial Hospital and Columbus Regional Hospital provide hospital care to the area.
- Edinburgh Family Health Center
- PromptMed is an immediate care facility near Edinburgh Premium Outlets.

B. Community/Public Health Events

- None list

C. Safety and Security Issues and Perceptions

- Edinburgh Fire and Rescue is a volunteer fire department protecting 35 square miles in the corner of Johnson, Shelby, and Bartholomew counties and including service to the outlet mall. The Fire Department operates a 24-hour BLS service utilizing two ambulances and firefighters trained to the EMT level.
- The Edinburgh Police force is computerized with laptops installed in the police cars. It is part of the Johnson County Consortium and is online with the Indiana Data Communication System. The force is strained by responsibility for not only the town of Edinburgh but also for the surrounding areas. Ongoing development at the I-65 interchange has added an urban influence on crime rates and the nature of criminal activity.

II. Historic Perspectives

A. First Settlement in Johnson County

Edinburgh is situated in the corner of three contiguous counties – Johnson, Shelby, and Bartholomew. The town was platted in 1822 and was incorporated in 1853. It is seen as a close-knit small town with a hardworking blue collar populace. It was once the “Veneer Capital of the World.” The central commercial district and two adjoining districts, the Toner District and the South Walnut District, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

B. Natural Disasters of 2008

A tornado on June 3rd, 2008, followed by major flooding on June 8th caused extensive damage within the community of Edinburgh. Both disasters brought together town residents and citizens from the surrounding areas wanting to help. Most of the area has been physically recovered. There is an ongoing need to build an infrastructure to protect homes and businesses, including separation of storm and waste water.

C. Slow Recovery from Economic Downturn of 2008

Hard hit by the economic downturn and the recession, Edinburgh is experiencing a much slower recovery than many area communities.

D. Benefits of the Edinburgh Premium Outlets

Opening in the early 1990’s, the outlet mall is a driving economic force in the area providing employment in retail shops, restaurants, motels, and hotels. The mall and the Exit 76 Antique Mall are major tourist attractions, providing shopping and entertainment opportunities to local residents and visitors.

E. Influence of Camp Atterbury

Used during WWII as a European Theater staging camp, Atterbury is today one of the largest U.S. points for deployment of National Guard to the war fronts in Iraq and Afghanistan. It also serves as a training center for civilian contractors and for homeland security units. Activity, both positive and negative, is mirrored in the community by what is happening at Atterbury. Specifically, while the base offers employment for area residents and military

personnel eat and shop locally, the police department sees an increase in criminal activity.

III. Current Facts

A. "Centers of the Community"

Both the Edinburgh Community School Corporation (ECSC) and the Edinburgh Wright-Hageman Public Library are seen as community hubs. Educators are very aware of the fact that after parents, teachers and coaches have the most influence on the lives of children. School officials are especially concerned about the negative impact a dysfunctional family life has on their students and are working to make improvements. The Library meets the basic educational needs of the community while serving as a center for lifelong learning and entertainment.

B. Community has Embraced Technology

The town, school corporation, and library were early adopters of technology. The library and the schools both have access to the Internet and police cruisers are equipped with laptops. ECSC provides laptops to students in grades 6-12 using grant money. Textbooks are rare for this age group and over 50% of book budgets are being expended on electronic books.

C. Schools and Government Make Do With Less

Budget constraints due to reduced funding are causing the school corporation, library, and town government to be more creative. Leaders are concerned about the long term effects these constraints will have on the morale of staff and students. Additionally, there always looms the possibility of having to reduce services.

D. Outlook for Business and Manufacturing is Varied

Atterbury and the Edinburgh Premium Outlets attract three million visitors to the Edinburgh community each year, and while business generated by the two entities is healthy, downtown revitalization has stalled. The town is challenged to set development guidelines for the Town's historic districts and properties. Many of the industries have an international market focus with former factory buildings in town being bought for warehousing purposes. The

manufacturing industry finds it hard to attract the skilled workers it needs for the jobs that are being created.

E. Post Office Sees Increases

Although technology is having a negative impact on postal services nationwide, the rural nature of Edinburgh causes concerns about identity theft. As a result, many residents have rented postal boxes. The post office handles all mail and packages for Edinburgh as well as Camp Atterbury.

IV. Patterns and Themes

A. Community Planning is “Key to Growth”

Policies and standards, as outlined in the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, are critical if the historical areas are going to thrive. Residents and community leaders would like to see potential tourism taken more seriously and to have a Visitors Center built. There is an ongoing concern that there is a disconnect between the town and the outlet mall and the industrial park. New local businesses are needed to replace industrial businesses that have been lost in recent years. Affordable housing, for both working and middle-class families/individuals, is critical in order to facilitate stable residential growth.

B. Desire for New Town Image

Several individuals expressed a desire to see a transition from the image of Edinburgh as “a tough town” to “a nice safe desirable place to live.” While there are many residents who are upstanding and charitable citizens, these individuals appear to be a unsung portion of the residents. In a desire for community beautification, there is hope that more citizens will take pride in the care of their individual homes and that the recent landscaping improvements made in town, and at the southern gateway on U.S. 31, can be expanded, especially along S.R 252. A new police chief was recently hired to help strengthen the local police force and to instill the concept of community policing. He has instituted training on combating drug-related crime.

C. Increased Awareness of Those in Need

Although the Lions Club offers assistance to all ages, there is need for better services for the senior population and for families. The schools are working on promoting a greater community awareness of the needs-based services that are available in the area and hoping to remove the negative stigma associated with such need. The perception is that personal agendas and preoccupation with individual rights, at the expense of community needs, has been detrimental to the area's health and growth. A change in the cultural climate to a more altruistic, cooperative mindset is necessary and desired.

D. Rich Opportunity for Development

The ease of access to large metropolitan areas, such as Indianapolis and Louisville, through the interstate system and the railroads, as well as the availability of affordable land gives Edinburgh a great deal of commercial value. The town owns all of its own utilities, which is seen as a unique asset to residential and commercial growth.

V. Emerging Insights

A. Communication is Key to Community Improvement

In order to see growth and development, communication between all pertinent organizations must continue to expand and improve.

B. Collaborations and Partnerships Are Key to the Future

As organizations and government agencies are expected to "do more with less," collaborations and partnerships between them will become increasingly important.

C. The Local Library is a Gateway to the Voice of the Community

The Edinburgh Wright-Hageman Library serves as the community center and has the potential for expanding its sphere of influence. The town's history is kept at the library and could be digitized for safe-keeping and ease of access. The suggestion was made that the library could become the town's disaster shelter as it is already a designated site in the county's disaster preparedness plan.

D. Technology Training Will Be Necessary

Emerging technologies will mean continuous training for a wide variety of the community residents. Use of social media, eReaders, iPads, and other technologies will continue to grow, and community organizations will need to adapt to using these technologies.

E. Children are the Hope for the Future

Kids were repeatedly cited as being the “positive energy” in the Edinburgh community.

F. Public Education About Taxes and Spending is Needed

A general understanding of where tax money goes and the beneficial services received as a result of taxing is needed. Services are often thought to be “free” when in actuality they are paid for with tax money (library services included). There is a trend to automatically consider all taxing as bad. In order to move past this, better communication of the services received from tax money would be beneficial.

VI. Provocative Possibilities

A. Collaboration With Schools and Community Leaders

The library can collaborate with the schools in many ways. We heard requests for technology and research training for kids and teachers, that the library provide someplace for kids to go during the upcoming extended school breaks, that we place a list of our databases directly on the school website, and that we provide an opportunity for teachers to earn continuing education credits (through guest speakers). Community leaders asked for help in educating parents about the role of a stable family life in the health of the community. The library could offer classes on child development, raising teens, financial planning, etc. Businesses and social service agencies asked for help educating the public on the Affordable Care Act and the concept of Health Exchanges.

B. Exploring New Marketing Options

The Trafalgar and Franklin Branch could aim to reach the schools more directly with their program publicity. Publicity about programs at the Edinburgh Library could be distributed in the JCPL branches.

A library kiosk at the mall could be used to provide outreach services and information.

C. Library Message: "What the Library Can Do For You"

The library needs to spread its message to non-users. Education about how tax money is used to benefit a large population of library users would be helpful. Community members, overall, do not seem to be familiar with what JCPL offers.

D. Evaluate Old Policies

Many children can no longer use the library due to large fines on their cards. Programs for reducing and eliminating fines could be explored. There is real confusion for residents on the boundaries of JCPL and the Edinburgh Wright-Hageman Library. The libraries could sign an interagency agreement that would allow for reciprocal borrowing between the two libraries.

E. Exploring Options for Branches

Having learned that the town of Edinburgh owns the Edinburgh library building, the responsibility of the physical plant has been shifted to the town. This may be a model for other library systems to consider.

VII. Illustrative Highlights

A. Edinburgh wants to be seen as a "neat little town with potential, "front porch community," and a "community of hardworking people."

B. Core values of the community should include a strong work ethic, faith, and family.

C. There are many old families in the community with a strong sense of history. Some of them may be hesitant or resistant to changes.

D. "Creating Our Legacy, Every Child, Every Day"

This school motto illustrates the feeling of ECSC. Twice a week in each school, everyone, including administration, takes a 30 minute

break to read. The corporation operates on a need to share basis instead of a need to know basis.

- E. A better community is the result of better services for the needy, more accessibility to technology, affordable health care for everyone, and better awareness of how improving the quality of a child's family life improves the accomplishments of the child.
- F. The beautiful mansions built during the 1800's are a unique feature of the community and are unlike the architecture in any of the surrounding communities.