



Conversations about the Future
WHITE RIVER TOWNSHIP
2013 Community Interviews

I. Johnson County Community Profile

Community Name: Center Grove

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Demographics

Population as of 2010: 42,181 (unincorporated WRT about 35,000)

Residential Development Projects in Planning or Consideration

- A. Investors have purchased land on Paddock Road, north of Olive Branch Road, to develop an addition. This had previously been purchased but then was left undeveloped.
- B. Hickory Stick Addition off of Smokey Row Road is filling up well and Kensington Grove, off of Stones Crossing road, is doing well.

Commercial Development Projects in Planning or Consideration

- A. A Wal-Mart store is planned for State Road 135 just south of Smith Valley Road beside the Home Depot. This is actually in the city of Greenwood.
- B. A St. Francis Medical Center was in the plans for Fairview and Bluff Roads but it has been tabled. This would have been Immediate Care and doctors' offices.

Community Bonds – History and Trajectory

- A. The Center Grove School Corporation will be taking on a \$42 million building program in the next year -- the amount they can spend without having to go to referendum.

Community Tax Levies

- A. Center Grove Community School Corporation - November 2, 2010
\$0.15 on each \$100 of assessed value
Results: Failed

Roads and Highway Assessment

- A. Whiteland Road Corridor
Johnson County has already begun work on an \$8 million plan for widening Whiteland Road which began in August 2012 and will continue throughout 2013. This project is another step to provide a

better east-west route across Johnson County by connecting State Road 135 to State Road 37. This will help by improving the flow of traffic. Widening the lanes will also give the county an option to later expand the road to four lanes if need be. In addition to this, the county will build a roundabout at the intersection of Whiteland Road and Morgantown Road. The money borrowed for the project will be repaid with wheel tax money.

B. County Road 144 and Whiteland Road

A new roundabout has been constructed at County Road 144 and Whiteland Road and was opened to traffic on Wednesday, November 21st, 2012. The county received a federal grant to pay for most of the \$1.5 million cost.

C. I-69 Evansville to Indianapolis Corridor: Section 6

The new stretch of Interstate 69 beginning in Evansville and ending on the south side of Indianapolis began construction on July 16th, 2008. The more than \$1.5 billion project is being funded by the state and federal government. The goal for this project is attracting new business and manufacturing ventures, thus creating new employment opportunities for southern Indiana communities. Johnson County is included in Section 6 of the I-69 Evansville to Indianapolis corridor, which will incorporate Indiana State Road 37. This section covers 26 miles and starts at Martinsville and ends at I-465. Once completed, the increased traffic flow may bring in more business for the Center Grove area. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) is currently conducting environmental studies in this area. It is not known at this time when construction on SR-37 in Section 6 will begin. Possible interchanges in White River Township are State Road 144, Smith Valley Road and County Line Road.

Indicators of Commitment to Quality of Life

A. Education

- Public education in the Center Grove area is overseen by the Center Grove Community School Corporation.
- Center Grove schools have a 90% graduation rate.
- School Superintendent: Richard A. Arkonoff
- Pre-schools
 - A minimum of 17 private pre-schools serve the Center Grove area.
- Elementary schools
 - There are five public elementary schools serving grades K-5.

- There are six private schools serving the elementary grades. One serves grades K-3, the others serve grades K-5.
- Middle Schools
 - There are two public Middle Schools in the Center Grove area.
 - There are four private schools that serve through grade 8.
- High Schools
 - There is one traditional public high school and one public career center serving high school students in the Center Grove area.
 - There are two private schools that accommodate high school students, one serving through grade 11, and the other through grade 12.
 - Public School pupils

High school– Center Grove	9-12	2,300
Middle schools	7-8	1,800
Elementary schools	K-6	3,300

- Special Needs
 - All of the traditional public schools within the Center Grove area accommodate students with special needs in grades K-12. Depending on grade level, special needs education may include essential skills, life skills, transitional academics, and inclusion.
 - Special Services of Johnson County supports special needs classes at all local school districts and oversees the Earlywood Academic Center for students with special needs.
 - Dr. Pamela Wright is the Executive Director for Johnson County Special Services.
 - The Applied Behavioral Center for Autism located in the Center Grove area is an educational center geared specifically for students on the Autism Spectrum.
- Post-secondary Education
 - There are 4 colleges with a presence in Greenwood that are accessible to students in the Center Grove area.
 - Ivy Tech Community College hosts classes in the Center Grove High School building.

- IUPUI has a Greenwood Learning Center.
- Indiana Wesleyan University has a Greenwood Education and Conference Center.
- The Indiana Baptist College is located on the northern part of the Center Grove area.
- Depending on individual needs or requirements, the Center Grove area has a variety of educational opportunities for instruction in areas such as dance, martial arts, art, driver's education, gymnastics, etc.

B. Parks and Recreation

- Independence Park
- Center Grove Lassie League
- Center Grove Trails, Inc.
- Bluff Creek Golf Course
- Orchard Golf Center
- Walnut Ridge Golf Club
- Hickory Stick Golf Club

C. Cultural Venues

- Local Schools (see Education section)
- Center Grove Theatre
- Churches
- Johnson County Public Library – White River Branch

D. Public Gathering Spaces

- Dye's Walk Country Club
- Royal Oak Country Club
- Mount Pleasant Christian Church Community Life Center
- Community Church of Greenwood's The Gathering Place
- Other area churches
- Johnson County Public Library – White River Branch

E. Community Events

- Center Grove Community Fair
- Strawberry Festival
- Saints Francis and Clare Annual Fall Festival
- Center Grove Rocks the Park II: Grovestock
- Toast of the Town
- Smith Valley Baptist Church Annual Community Hog Roast and Concert
- Corporate Cup Challenge

- Theater, Music, Sports at Local Schools

F. Volunteer Structures

There are a number of volunteer opportunities in the Center Grove area. A sampling of those available includes:

- Care Food Pantry
- Midwest Search Dogs
- AARP Foundation Tax-Aide (county wide)
- Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Central Indiana (county wide)
- Johnson County Youth Connections (county wide)
- Jumpstart Mentoring (county wide)
- Humane Society of Johnson County (county wide)
- Girl Scouts & Boy Scouts – troop leaders (county wide)
- Johnson County Public Library – White River Branch

G. Libraries

- There is one public library located in the Center Grove area, the White River Branch of the Johnson County Public Library.
- As the White River Branch is part of a countywide library system, Center Grove patrons have access to materials from all four branches.
- Through Interlibrary loan, JCPL members also have access to materials from libraries in other districts.
- The Center Grove High School library and media center sells annual passes to local residents who would like to access and download electronic books from the school's collection.

Neighborhood Groups

There are over 100 defined Center Grove neighborhoods, many with governing Home Owners Associations and other community groups.

Health, Wellness, and Security

- A. Major healthcare providers in the Greenwood and Center Grove area include Community Hospital South, Franciscan St. Francis Health, Kindred Hospital and the soon-to-be-open Stones Crossing Health Pavilion, an extension of Community Health Network and Johnson Memorial Hospital. Nursing homes include Hearth at Stones Crossing, Country Charm, Greenwood Meadows and Greenwood Village South. Valle Vista provides behavioral health services.

IU Health Network had planned a medical campus facility at the corner of Whiteland Road and St. Road 135 which was put on hold because of the economy.

The Franciscan Alliance and Community Health Network offer classes, seminars and support groups covering numerous health and wellness topics on a regular basis at offsite locations. Some of these programs have already been presented at library branches as well. St. Francis hosted a mini holiday health fair at Greenwood Park Mall this past year, Greenwood Family Chiropractic sponsored a Wellness Health Fair, and the Southside Holistic Family Health Fair occurred nearby on US 135. American Senior Communities sponsors a Senior and Family Health Fair (closest location being Greenwood Meadows). OASIS also provides health, exercise and wellness classes and currently operates out of the Greenwood United Methodist Church.

- B.** Current safety and security issues include a rise in theft rates and residential burglaries in White River Township. There is more of a need for patrolled neighborhoods and neighborhood watches; police services are provided by the Johnson County Sheriff's Office. In light of recent school shootings, school safety is also an increased priority. Police coverage of unincorporated roads/township is less than in other areas. Safety conditions on roads are poor due to pot-holes and traffic. The new Wal-Mart proposed off US 135 and Smith Valley Road will directly impact traffic patterns near the library.

II. Historic Perspectives

- A.** Economic and population growth, then plateau
Ten years ago, the area was booming with new growth (businesses, population). When the economy slowed down five years ago, so did growth in the Center Grove area—the growth “plateaued.” However, evidence of new growth is now peeking through, again.
- B.** Rural to suburban
In the past, the Center Grove area was very rural with a good amount of farmland. The area has become more developed over the years and is now largely suburban with a great deal of commerce.
- C.** Efforts to reorganize White River Township overturned
A few years ago, the White River Township took some steps to reorganize themselves in order to provide more services to the county. Taxpayers did not want this, and elected an entirely new Board with

the intent that they would stop these efforts. They did, and now the Board's focus is solely on cemeteries and poor relief.

III. Current Facts

- A. Center Grove schools cutting degreed librarians
The Center Grove Elementary schools and Middle schools will no longer have masters-degreed librarians in their media centers. They will be managed by para-professionals. The only MLS librarian in the system will be at the High School.
- B. Center Grove schools will provide iPads to large number of students
Thanks to a grant, the Center Grove schools will provide an iPad to every High School student in their system beginning next school year (2013-14). They already provide iPads to lower elementary grades. The need for training and maintenance will become an issue, and the need for White River Branch staff to be familiar with these devices will be crucial.
- C. Center Grove School improvements
Center Grove Schools will be spending \$42 million on school improvements over the next few years. They will spend \$10M each on two elementary schools, \$4M on safety upgrades to school entrances, and \$20M on remodeling the High School (this includes a new library).
- D. Higher income families moving from North to South
The northern part of the Center Grove area used to see the highest incomes. Now those families are moving further south, in the direction of Bargersville. This means that the population to the north is using more apartments rather than houses. There is also some effect on the schools, with more assistance needed for low income students to the north of the county.
- E. White River Township has uncertain future
Both Bargersville and Greenwood have at some point expressed interest in annexing White River Township. This could have a major impact on the township's tax dollars. Some in the area feel that the only solution for maintaining control of where the area's tax money goes is to make White River into its own town.
- F. Sixty-five percent of Center Grove households do not have children
Because of the growing number of empty nesters and the fact that couples are waiting longer to have children—or choosing to not have them at all—there is a lower percentage of families with children in the area now.

IV. Patterns and Themes

- A. Customer Service more important than ever
Businesses and other organizations are finding that providing excellent customer service and making themselves stand out from the crowd are more important than ever in today's economy. When people have less money and time to spend, there is more competition to keep their business.
- B. Community resistant to tax increases
The area did not pass a referendum for Center Grove Schools a few years ago, and did not pass the library referendum. They elected the current White River Township Board with the goal of overturning its reorganization and keeping taxes down.
- C. More services for less tax dollars
Agencies and organizations in White River Township—local government, schools, and even the library—are seeing demand for more free services. At the same time, these agencies are receiving less tax money with which to provide these services.
- D. Technology is developing and spreading rapidly
Technology is being adopted in all walks of the Center Grove community at a rapid pace. School children will be using iPads at school every day, library patrons are using more e-book readers, and social media becomes more and more important to businesses and organizations in attracting customers/members.
- E. Schools want to collaborate with library
We received several suggestions on ways that the library could collaborate with the schools, from technology and database sharing to curriculum support. This is on the forefront of everyone's minds because of the MLS librarian cuts at the schools.

V. Emerging Insights

- A. Schools serve as uniting force
Because the Center Grove area doesn't have its own town center, the schools serve as something that the community can rally around and use as a 'gathering place.'
- B. Collaborations and partnerships will be key
As organizations and government agencies are expected to do "more with less," collaborations and partnerships between them will become increasingly important.

- C. Technology training will be necessary
Emerging technologies will mean continuous training for a wide swath of the community. Use of social media, e-readers, iPads, and other technologies will continue to grow and community organizations will need to adapt to using these technologies.
- D. Kids are a hope for the future
Kids were repeatedly cited as being the 'positive energy' in the Center Grove community. They were described as service oriented, involved, and smart, amongst other things. They are and will continue to be a driving and influential force in the community.
- F. Public education about taxes and spending 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 books and services are amongst these). There is a trend to automatically consider all taxing as bad; we need to better communicate the beneficial services the public receives for their money.

VI. Provocative Possibilities

- A. Library may need to expand services in Bargersville area
As the population of White River Township continues to grow southward, there may be a need for library services closer to Bargersville. Non-traditional, creative options may need to be looked into in order to provide services to this area with minimal cost.
- B. Collaboration with Center Grove Schools
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, new 2-week Fall and Spring Breaks; that we place a list of our databases directly on the school website; and that we provide an opportunity for the teachers to earn continuing education credits (by bringing in speakers).
- C. Library should look at new marketing options
The White River Branch could aim to reach the schools more directly with their program publicity. Other methods of marketing and publicity should also be looked at in order to increase our outreach.
- D. "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 also be helpful. Community members do not seem well-versed on what we offer.

E. The library needs to re-think old policies

A few people interviewed mentioned fines, and one said they had heard kids say that their parents won't take them to the library because they owe fines. Perhaps it is time to re-think old policies and consider new options like amnesty days for Children's fines, reducing fines on movies, and other ideas that give us a more 'forgiving' and friendly appearance. It was also mentioned that we need a more relaxing, comfortable atmosphere "like a bookstore." We could allow food, offer a coffee station or vending machines, etc.

VII. Illustrative Highlights

- A. The library needs to know what business it is in. They need to change with the times. If the railroads had thought of themselves as being in the transportation business instead of the railroad business, we might have airlines named Santa Fe or Nickel Plate.

B. *Partnerships!*

- C. There is a great sense that the Center Grove area is "home." People are involved in school, church, and community activities and invested in holding on to small town values with access to big city amenities.



- D. "I like libraries—I take my kids to the library!"



- E. Libraries will need to take over for bookstores and provide a comfortable place for people to spend time. They need to feel welcome.