



Sullivan County Board of Tourism Strategic Recommendations

BUS 401 | Fall 2020
Senior Business Experience

Maureen Casile
Department of Management, information Systems, and Business Education

This report represents original student work and recommendations prepared by students in the Indiana State University Sustainable City Program for the City of Sullivan. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from Indiana State University. All information provided is not subject to publication.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to acknowledge and thank the Sullivan County Tourism Commission for making this project possible. We would like to thank the Executive Directory, Brandy Wolfe, for her assistance and contributions that were instrumental to the entire project.

Brandy Wolfe, *Sullivan County Tourism Commission*

ABOUT SC

The Sustainable Cities (SC) Program is an experiential learning partnership focusing on sustainability and cities in Indiana. Disciplines across the institution are tasked with addressing sustainability issues in a specific community by integrating these into experiential projects for ISU students. These problems range from strategic planning recommendations to community needs assessment, to understanding the impacts of waste strategies, and to mapping trail systems, and many other issues.

This is a year-long partnership, in which students and faculty in courses collaborate with one specific community partner on these projects. Communities throughout Indiana have leaders who want to make real change. These leaders are passionate about moving their cities forward into the future, but are often limited by lack of resources, staff, and budget.

The SC Program utilizes the innovation and energy of students and faculty to provide ideas that will address these issues. This relationship reinforces and strengthens our Indiana communities.

Each ISU course and community partner will produce tangible and relevant outcomes for the community partner while providing ISU students with real world project completion. This report serves as this outcome.

SC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Nancy Rogers, Ph.D., Vice President for University Engagement

Greg Bierly, Ph.D., Dean of the Honors College

Heather Dalton-Miklozek, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Community Engagement

Daniel Pigg, Director of the Business Engagement Center

Garrett Hurley, Interim Sustainability Coordinator

ABOUT SULLIVAN, IN

Sullivan, IN is the county seat of Sullivan County and serves as a hub for the towns of Carlisle, Dugger, Farmersburg, Hymera, Merom, and Shelburn. Sullivan, IN was founded in 1853 and became the county seat. The total city limits is 1.88 square miles, but there are more residents living outside of this area that contribute to the community of Sullivan. Today, Sullivan has the largest estimated population as an incorporated town in Sullivan County.

Sullivan faces many similar social, environmental, and economic challenges to other rural Hoosier towns and others that are unique to the city itself. There are approximately 8,500 people available for the labor force in Sullivan County. Since 2009, the unemployment rate has steadily decreased in the county. There's approximately 2,500 people that live in Sullivan but work in other counties. Some of the major employers in Sullivan are Raybestos Powertrain LLC, Hoosier Energy Emergency, Peabody Energy Corp., Sullivan County Community Hospital, and Raybestos Products Co.

A common thought among Sullivan community members is that students that go to college graduate and don't return to Sullivan. The highest degree attainment of folks 25 and older in Sullivan County is a high school diploma. Trade programs and certifications are a community concern from folks.

Sullivan has a vast history and many points of interest in the community. The Sullivan County Public Library is one of 1,679 libraries designated as a Carnegie library. The Sullivan Civic Center was recently renovated to provide a central location for community member sin Sullivan. The Heart of Sullivan is a civic organization that hosts many large events throughout the year. One of the largest events hosted in Sullivan is the Sullivan Annual Rotary Corn Festival.

This community is full of potential and is being led through a strategic plan intended to bolster its standing for Hoosiers. The ISU Sustainable Cities program intends to help reach that potential.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....7

Introduction.....8

Demographics.....9

Survey.....11

Punch Card.....12

Conclusion.....13

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sullivan County Tourism Commission set forth the objective to identify strategies for increasing tourism year-round in Sullivan County and Sullivan. The BUS 401 course students were placed in three groups and set to provide end deliverables of these strategies. The demographics of the population underscored some important populations to target with identified strategies of surveying and a punch card system.

INTRODUCTION

The Sullivan County Tourism Commission identified an increasing need to bring folks into the county to utilize all recreation opportunities. Senior Business Experience (BUS 401) is a capstone course in the Scott College of Business that integrated this project into the course.

This course has rich history with integrating projects for strategic recommendations and planning. In this eight-week course, students are given the chance to integrate business concepts into real-world issues. It seemed like the perfect opportunity to pair with the Sullivan County Tourism Commission.

The Sullivan County Tourism Commission identified an increasing need to bring folks into the county to utilize all recreation opportunities. Sullivan is the “Home of Outdoor Recreation” with over 26,000 acres of publicly accessible recreational grounds. In the entirety of Sullivan County, there is Sullivan County Park & Lake, Redbird SRA, Waapaahsiki Siippiwi Mound Historical Park, Shakamak State Park, Greene-Sullivan State Forest, Sullivan Elks Golf Course, Fairbanks Landing Fish & Wildlife, Merom Bluff Park, Maumee Riding Park, and more. There are

also many indoor attractions such as the Sullivan County Public Library. All of these great opportunities are greatly underutilized by potential tourists and even community members. They are greatly utilized during peak recreation seasons. However, one key need is increasing year-round use of opportunities.

Students in BUS 401 were presented with this dynamic problem from the Executive Director of the Tourism Commission, Brandy Wolfe. They were asked to examine this issue like a business concern and make recommendations that would help. Brandy and the course instructor worked to create end-goals of long-range planning recommendations from students by having final presentations and a packet outlining their information.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The population in Sullivan County and Sullivan has steadily decreased each year since 2010. Approximately 53.74% of the population identifies as male and 46.26% of the population identifies as female. There is a relatively older population in Sullivan County with 29-59 age range having the majority of people, and 55-59 being the highest percentage of the population. The marital status of this population was also examined. Approximately 8197 in the population were married, and 5285 were never married. The rest of the population was widowed, divorced, separated or not able to marry.

	Estimate	Estimated %
Under 5 years	1050	5.1
5 to 9 years	1150	5.5
10 to 14 years	1224	5.9
15 to 19 years	1209	5.8
20 to 24 years	1283	6.2
25 to 29 years	1436	6.9
30 to 34 years	1334	6.4
35 to 39 years	1415	6.8
40 to 44 years	1364	6.6
45 to 49 years	1447	7.0
50 to 54 years	1557	7.5
55 to 59 years	1747	8.4
60 to 64 years	1083	5.2
65 to 69 years	1139	5.5
70 to 74 years	907	4.4
75 to 79 years	622	3.0
80 to 84 years	358	1.7
85 years and older	467	2.2

Figure 1. Sullivan County population by age

What does this population data indicate for tourism opportunities?

Families live here, but the children do not stay. They either go to college and leave or find other opportunities and do not come back.

What are the opportunities available?

The tourism opportunities in Sullivan County and Sullivan are related to outdoor recreation and indoor eateries. Students identified a large recreational hunting market in the area, and as an opportunity to attract tourists and industry to the area. There's a major roadway that leads next to Sullivan, IN and through Sullivan County that would be easy to catch the attention of people driving through.

What do the tourism opportunities mean for attracting people to Sullivan County?

The activities are targeted towards family-oriented percent of the population in the county and outside of the county. Therefore, efforts should be focused on the family. This also influences increased use by the current population of Sullivan and Sullivan County. The activities and opportunities are also more conducive to use by spouses of an older age. This is also represented in the current population.

Any efforts to attract more tourism into Sullivan County and Sullivan should be focused on the family unit and the older population, because that's what is reflected in the community and in the opportunities available.

SURVEY

The first recommendation is to put together a survey that could be offered at all community events and various other opportunities. This would help collect information about demographics of tourists and their reasoning for coming to Sullivan. A comprehensive and standardized survey would help create knowledge about event participation as well.

This suggested survey overviews demographic information related to potential participants in community events and asks questions related to their participation. These survey questions could easily be adapted to fit all tourist opportunities, such as outdoor recreation sites, local restaurants, and more.

Introducing a comprehensive and standardized survey would allow clear data about the habits of tourism in Sullivan County. The students identified three main ideas for any survey disseminated from the Tourism Commission. First, the survey should be offered in a paper format and/or

an online link. Depending on collection site, a paper format might have a higher completion rate from tourists at a community event. However, an online format would allow completion from any event at any time and would allow a singular collection site. Offering a survey to all tourists is critical for collecting data and using it to inform improvements. It also helps evaluate current target audiences and notice critical trends.

The strength in this survey recommendation is doubled if you were to combine it with the second recommendation.

PUNCH CARD

A potential draw for tourism is some sort of punch-card or stamp passport system for all opportunities around Sullivan and Sullivan County. The recommended punch card system from this group designated outdoor recreation activities and indoor eatery locations as potential stops. This could also be broadened out to any other destination and/or community events.

The basics of the punch card recommendation includes:

1. Each location included has a special “punch” or marker for that location to use
2. The timeline would be at the start of whatever season specified (i.e. beginning of year or beginning of summer)
3. There needs to be a prize. The group suggested a periodical or one-time lottery for a big prize and a smaller prize for every individual finisher (ex. Coupon for business or one-time park pass)

The group suggests an actual physical punch card or chosen method, because it fits with the intended populations. While most folks are likely to have a smart phone that could access an app or the internet, it creates a barrier for folks that are more likely to use a physical system. These physical cards could be distributed at state-wide events to draw tourism from other parts of Indiana. It could also be distributed at community events, park entrances, and the locations on the punch cards.

One item that was not determined is where and when tourists would turn in the punch card.

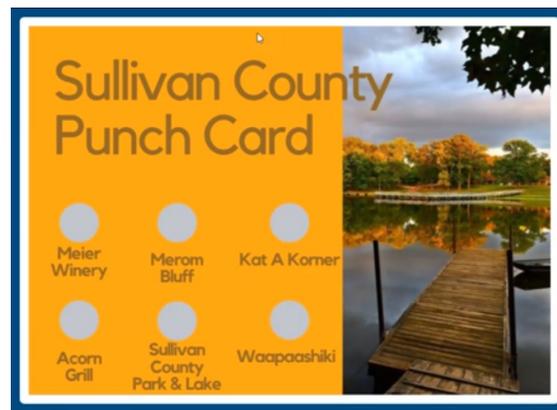


Figure 1. Example punch card.

There is sufficient reason to think that combining both a survey system with the punch card would be extremely beneficial for measuring success of the program and determining reasons for tourism. This could be in the form of a link, QR code, or physical survey when they turn in the punch card. This system would work to bring everyone to Sullivan and reinforce local community member participation in tourism opportunities

CONCLUSION

Attending to the current population in Sullivan and Sullivan County for participation in all tourism strategies. There is a lack of opportunities for younger populations interested in activities such as night clubs, music venues, etc. Therefore, attracting a population for the opportunities present needs to be the focus in all strategies and efforts.

The following themes were present in all recommendations:

1. Increasing efforts to focus on families and older population for tourism
2. Bolstering local community participation in opportunities available

The groups recommended proactive strategies for increasing tourism from outsiders and for the local community. The survey will allow for appropriate capture of data and information about tourism habits. This can help influence further strategies. The punch card system is a great recommendation to involve local community members and increase participation in the opportunities available for tourism. It will be important to attend to the dissemination sites of the punch card and the collection methods. It is recommended that these two efforts be combined together to accurately gauge participation while encouraging it.

APPENDIX A.

Survey

**adapted from student's online survey with all questions reflecting their exact wording*

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Gender | Other |
| Male | 5. Would you recommend us to a friend? |
| Female | Yes |
| Other | No |
| 2. What is your race? | Maybe |
| White | 6. How many times have you visited Sullivan County? |
| Black | 1 |
| Hispanic | 2-3 |
| Asian | 4-5 |
| Other | 6-10 |
| 3. What age are you? | 11-higher |
| 10-20 | 7. Are you enjoying your time here? |
| 21-30 | Yes |
| 31-40 | No |
| 41-50 | 8. Would you come back? |
| 51-older | Yes |
| 4. What brought you to Sullivan County? | No |
| Tourism | 9. Are you from Sullivan County? |
| Family | Yes |
| Work | No |
| Pleasure | |

APPENDIX B.

Team Presentation Links

[Team 1: Punch Card](#)

[Team 2: Survey](#)

[Team 3: Demographic Data](#)

