

PUBLIC LIFE

September 2005 – Volume 2, Issue 5
Owensboro, Kentucky

Advocate



What^{will work} along the riverfront?

What is our vision and strategy for private sector investment to complement the \$40 million infusion of federal funds? We examine several options.

Minority Role Models:
A Lifeline to Stability and Success

Ten Keys to an Energized Downtown

About our Editorial Board



Rodney B. Berry

Rodney is president of the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro. He joined the foundation in 2000 following twelve years with RiverPark (performing arts) Center. His volunteer and civic experience includes work in education, health care, youth, social services, tourism, and community development. He is a graduate of Western Kentucky University.



Dave Boeyink

Dave is Associate Professor of Journalism and Director of Media Studies, Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions, Indiana University. He holds a B.A. degree from Central College and an M.T.S. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. From 1978-87, he was Editorial Page Editor for the *Messenger-Inquirer*. He has published articles in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, *Newspaper Journal*, and *Journalism Quarterly*.



Fran Ellers

Fran works as a writer, editor, and communications consultant. She is a former reporter with the Louisville *Courier-Journal* and was a frequent panelist on Kentucky Educational Television's "Comment on Kentucky." Her clients include the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, University of Kentucky Center for Rural Health, and the Kentucky League of Cities.



John S. Hager

John established the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro in 1996 following the sale of the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer* to the Belo Corporation (Dallas, TX). A graduate of Princeton University and the University of Michigan College of Law, he was a practicing attorney for 19 years prior to returning to the family newspaper in 1973. He has been involved in numerous civic initiatives, including a lead role in the establishment of the Owensboro Community College. In 1996, the Kentucky Press Association honored him with its "most valuable member" award. He was named to the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame in 2002.



Ed Staats

Ed served The Associated Press for 41 years, as a reporter, editor and administrator in 10 AP offices, including the AP's headquarters in New York. He retired in mid-2002 ending a career that bridged the print, broadcast, cable, and online news businesses. At his retirement, he was in charge of AP's Kentucky operations, a position he had held since the mid-1980's. He is a member of the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame.

PUBLIC LIFE *Advocate*

Publisher	Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, Inc.
Editorial Board	Rodney Berry Dave Boeyink Fran Ellers John Hager Ed Staats
Editor	Rodney Berry
Executive Assistant	Kathy Strobel

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HOW TO CONTACT PLFO

Mail	Public Life Foundation of Owensboro 401 Frederica Street, B-203 Owensboro, Kentucky 42301
Email	info@plfo.org
FAX	270-685-6074
Phone	270-685-2652
Website	www.plfo.org

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Framing the Issue



What^{will work} along the riverfront?

What is our vision and strategy for private sector investment to complement the \$40 million infusion of federal funds? We examine several options.

by Rodney Berry

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As alluring as a \$40 million gift for our riverfront may be, if a substantial amount of private sector investment does not occur as a complement to the ambitious Riverfront Master Plan, or if incompatible private investments occur that impede the ability to appropriately develop the riverfront, the project will fall tragically short of its potential. What kind of private investment will best complement this astonishing public (taxpayer) investment? What has the best chance of success? What vision and strategy should our community embrace?

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Making sense of public input



by Rodney Berry

During a recent public meeting, City Commissioner Jim Glenn made it clear: He was opposed to any taxpayer support of a proposed stadium to attract a minor league baseball team to our community. He was even more adamant in his opposition to English Park as the stadium site.

Commissioner Glenn said his position was not a reflection of his personal views, but those of his constituents, who have firmly stated their opposition to the project and the English Park location.

This is encouraging and we commend the commissioner. Anytime a public official places a high value on the voice of the people – particularly everyday citizens who typically are not represented in circles of influence – that is a good thing. We would be well-served if more officials did the same.

Nonetheless, something is unsettling about this. Commissioner Glenn did not say how many citizens confronted him about the project or whether they appeared to understand the proposal before coming to judgment. Moreover, he did not place any value on other forms of citizen input that have come forth on the same proposal.

Perhaps the Bring Back Baseball Committee (of which I am a member) has not effectively communicated with the city commission in previous meetings and presentations. Perhaps Commissioner Glenn was unaware that

■ In January 2004, the BBB Committee retained a Louisville market research firm to conduct a telephone survey to gauge support for the baseball team-stadium project. Three hundred citizens participated and support for the project was remarkably strong. This was a credible, professional survey and the results should be valued.

■ In October 2004, the BBB Committee hosted an open meeting at English Park to share information and answer questions about the baseball project and a potential stadium at the park. Invitations were distributed door-to-door throughout the English Park neighborhood. Approximately 50 residents attended the meeting. The dialogue was healthy and respectful, setting the tone for workable approaches to resident con-

cerns if a portion of English Park is ever used for a stadium.

■ In the May 2005 edition of the *Public Life Advocate*, readers were invited to rank their preferences from six major community projects under consideration based on 25 criteria. The baseball stadium received the highest ranking of all the projects from the 115 citizens responding.

All three of these exercises represent good faith efforts to communicate and solicit feedback from our community on this project. Approximately 465 people participated – not a large number, but certainly not insignificant, and considerably more, I suspect,

than the number of citizens who communicated with any city commissioner about the project. Moreover, in these three exercises, citizen remarks were not impetuous. Citizens were not venting; they had an opportunity to learn about the project while coming to judgment.

It is difficult for public officials to make sense of various forms of citizen input. They must interpret conversations, presentations, notes, phone calls, letters to the editor, and rallies to determine if it represents a critical mass of public opinion. They must balance the results of polls and surveys with comments at public hearings, positions of interest groups, and chit chat over coffee at the local diner.

Officials can be placed in an even more thorny position if they suspect that the judgment of citizens is based on unreliable or inadequate information. Despite their best efforts to inform the public, they may be forced to make tough, unpopular decisions that threaten their political future.

Clearly, the public decision-making process and communication between public official and constituent is more of an art than a science. We need more leaders like Commissioner Glenn who are sensitive to the views of their constituents, but we also need officials who will educate the public, withhold judgment until they have all the facts and listen to as many people as possible. We need officials who will stay focused on the common good and not their next campaign.

In so doing, we will make better decisions and live up to the promise of our democratic process.

...we need officials who will educate the public, withhold judgment until they have all the facts and listen to as many people as possible.

Contributors

John Hall

"Downtown is the heart and heartbeat of our community. Its appearance and vitality says so much about the spirit and pride of our community," says John Hall, interim director of Downtown Owensboro, Inc.

John jumped right into community activities after accepting a position at the Owensboro Community College in 1992. His career in broadcasting, real estate development, cattle ranching, and government took him to Cincinnati, Kansas City, and Hopkinsville prior to settling here.

Now retired, he joins the technical team at RiverPark Center for major productions. He and his wife, Elaine, have two sons and four grandchildren.

Lydia Johnson



Reflecting on her piece on minority role models, Lydia acknowledges that it is important for minorities to see professionals they can relate to, but "we also need to redefine what it means to be an effective role model."

A former *Messenger-Inquirer* reporter (1999-2003) and currently Public Information and Outreach Director for Audubon Area Community Services, Lydia is a first-time contributor. A graduate of Western Kentucky University, she is enrolled in the graduate communications program at WKU.

In 1999, Lydia was one of 16 journalists selected for a six-week fellowship with the Poynter Institute of Media Studies. She also received a Kentucky Press Association award for investigative reporting in 2000 and a fellowship from the National Press Foundation in 2001.

Chad Gesser



Director of Institutional Research at Owensboro Community and Technical College, Chad founded the local Conversations Café chapter and owensboro.blogspot.com. His latest project is a health care web site to track local-regional conditions and trends.



Letters

Kentuckians must unite for the common good

When I skimmed up the latest edition of the *Public Life Advocate* – the publication of the Public Life Foundation in Owensboro – I never dreamed I'd see an article about Perry County.

Sitting in my office in Hazard, in a building constructed on a mountaintop removal site, I honestly didn't think anyone west of Glasgow gave a second thought to issues so personal, paradoxical and profound to Southeastern Kentucky as surface mining. Of all the information included in this astonishing publication, the most important was Editor Rodney Berry's plea, in his column, for better communication and a greater willingness to understand the point of view of others.

To that extent, he and I share the same mission. The University of Kentucky Center of Excellence in Rural Health's mission is to improve the lives of rural Kentuckians by improving their health. Health is tied to employment, and employment stabilizes housing, food and other health habits while providing access to health care with employer-paid health insurance. At the same time, stable, life-sustaining employment is tied to educational attainment. In rural Kentucky the chain of health, stable employment and education is consistently broken. The pain of poverty, ignorance and sickness is keenly felt and is not diminished because its victims live in a county across the state.

A long history of innovation in rural health care, as well as political opportunity, placed our center in Hazard back in 1990. Because our headquarters is in Hazard, some assume that our primary purpose is to help people in Hazard, occasionally in the larger Kentucky River basin, periodically in the Big Sandy and Cumberland Valley and never west of U.S. 27.

The single fact that is most difficult to

communicate is that the experience of people in Hazard has application for those living in Benton, Russellville and Hartford. Often when I meet with officials west of the great I-65 divide, they volunteer: "You know, we have poor people in Western Kentucky, too."

Yes, I know. I covered the six counties that surround Warren County for the *Bowling Green* paper, and later worked in Ohio and Hancock counties for the *Messenger-Inquirer*. I remember one particular night when the ambulance service in Edmonson County was in crisis. The fiscal court and a roomful of angry citizens worked for hours to try to patch together their failing emergency service, and finally one old farmer took off his cap, flipped it over and said, "Here, let's just start taking up money. Right now."

Dr. Thomas Clark, the state historian, isn't with us any more, but if he were here, I know what he'd say. I heard him talk years ago at a meeting of Leadership Kentucky. The paradox of Kentucky was its inability to seize opportunity, be progressive, speak affirmatively at the critical moments in history, he said. Much of this is because of Kentucky's history of weak governors, which is because our state is so divided by county and regional factions that they will not unite for the common good.

Our center has done some good work in the west. But we could do better work if there were more Rodney Berrys, public servants who know that important things, the things that belong to the ages, are our responsibility. That includes a commitment to our common good.

Judy Owens
Director, University of Kentucky Center of Excellence in Rural Health

In rural Kentucky the chain of health, stable employment and education is consistently broken. The pain of poverty, ignorance and sickness is keenly felt and is not diminished because its victims live in a county across the state.

Public Life Advocate Advisory Council Members

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Owensboro Community and Technical College

Lee Denham, Executive Director
Green River District Health Department

Bill Dixon, Executive Director
Owensboro Human Relations Commission

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Metropolitan Planning Commission

John Edge, President
First Security Bank

Cornelia J. Glenn, Ed.D.
Professor of Teacher Education
Owensboro Community and Technical College

Ralph Kunze, Retired
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Larraine Lauter, OSU, Founder
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Cate Lauzon, Advocate
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Hugh Moore, Retired Attorney
Moore, Malone & Safreed

Nilesh Sangoi, Controller
Ramada Inn & Days Inn

Madison Silvert, Attorney
Thacker, Thacker, Bickel and Hodskins

Linda Wahl, Program Director
Building Stronger Families



What^{will work} along the riverfront?

by Rodney Berry

As alluring as a \$40 million gift for our riverfront may be, if a substantial amount of private sector investment does not occur as a complement to the ambitious Riverfront Master Plan, or if incompatible private investments occur that impede the ability to appropriately develop the riverfront, the project will fall tragically short of its potential.

What kind of private investment will best complement this astonishing public (taxpayer) investment? What has the best chance of success? What vision and strategy should our community embrace?

We examine several options.

Framing the Issue: What will work along the riverfront?



Key properties along Veteran's Boulevard and Smothers Park benefit from river views and close proximity to a parking garage.

BACKGROUND

Bringing Dollars Home

The recent announcement that Kentucky's U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell tacked an additional \$40 million onto a federal highway bill for Owensboro's Riverfront Master Plan is a pivotal event in the history of our community. Seldom have officials been able to bring home to Owensboro-Daviess County our proportionate share of state or federal tax dollars – whether for roads, higher education, or community amenities. Notwithstanding questions of misplaced priorities or our unintentional contribution to the federal deficit, this is a time to be appreciative and to focus on how we can maximize the impact of the grant.

A Transforming Development

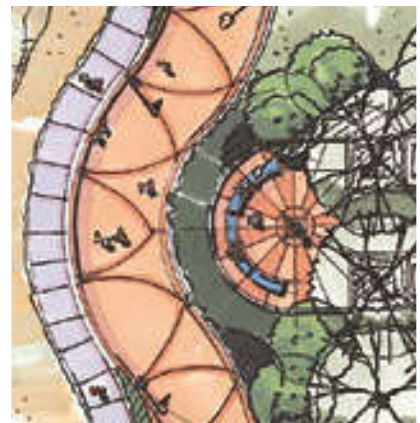
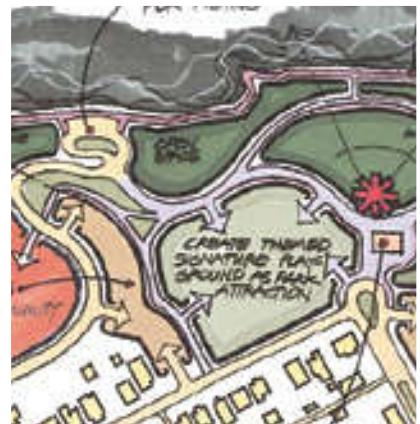
The riverfront master plan will transform our Ohio River waterfront, add vitality and distinction to the “picture window” of our community. With a dramatic expansion of park space, overlooks, fountains, and more, the new riverfront will be characterized by delightful “people places” for all to enjoy. It will visually and functionally link the handsome treatments of the BB&T Plaza at RiverPark Center with the McConnell Plaza contiguous to the Executive Inn. It will provide the pedestrian connector to English Park that was such a popular recommendation of citizens who participated in numerous workshops and hearings on the downtown plan.

Appropriate Private Investments Are Essential

As alluring as all this may be, if a substantial amount of private sector investment does not occur as a complement to the public improvements, or if incompatible private investments occur that impede the ability to appropriately develop the riverfront, the project will fall tragically short of its potential.

Assessing Our Options

So what will work along the riverfront – particularly in the area between RiverPark Center and the Executive Inn? What thematic development options are most promising? What will the market support or what has the greatest potential to create its own market? What are the obstacles toward development? And through it all, how do we ensure that the public interest be served?



Framing the Issue: What will work along the riverfront?

Option 1: An eclectic mix of projects, driven by the marketplace



With \$40 million of public sector leadership, we should have confidence that private investment will follow. Under this option, property owners and developers would be allowed to seize opportunities and take risks. They (and their lenders) would determine if there is a need for retail, housing, restaurants, offices, hotels or entertainment establishments. Government would stay out of their business.

In a public workshop hosted by PRIDE to determine citizen preferences for developments and uses along Veteran's Boulevard between the Executive Inn and RiverPark Center, participants favored first floor restaurants, sidewalk cafe's, shops and boutiques, bookstores, upscale bars, coffee shops, and other complementary uses. Offices, residential, and hotel uses were recommended for upper floors. This option suggests that the marketplace can respond to such preferences.

THOSE WHO ENDORSE THIS APPROACH MAY SAY...

- This is an opportunity to demonstrate the initiative and ingenuity that can come from the private sector once a significant public sector investment is made.
- The area does not need to be precisely planned. It is perfectly fine for a law office to be next to a restaurant or a veteran's club. A healthy mix of infill development between what is already located on Veteran's Boulevard provides ample opportunities for property owners and developers to improve the area.
- Through the new Overlay District, there are already restrictions placed on first floor uses of new development along Veteran's Boulevard. These provide all the protections necessary.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS APPROACH MAY SAY...

- With such an enormous public (taxpayer) investment, is it appropriate to take a chance that the area will be developed properly by the private sector?
- We are faced with a unique opportunity. How this area is developed will shape the image of our community for decades. We need to do it right and not simply allow anything to happen.
- The riverfront improvements will not change the fact that there is meager demand for retail, office, and other commercial uses. To make projects feasible, it takes more than a few people who say they would like to see sidewalk cafe's and boutiques in the area.
- Parking is a problem.
- Traffic counts along Veteran's Boulevard cannot compete with other locations.
- A hodgepodge of development will lack design consistency.
- This approach sets the stage for land speculators and obstructionists to exploit circumstances and impede significant development projects.

Framing the Issue: What will work along the riverfront?

Option 2: A selected comprehensive commercial development plan



Under this option, a public/quasi-public development authority would acquire (or option) and control as much property along Veteran's Boulevard (from RiverPark Center to the Executive Inn) as possible, including the state building parking lot and perhaps key tracts beyond Veteran's Boulevard. Developers would be advised of the construction schedule of riverfront improvements. Goals and guidelines for the commercial development would be established and proposals would be solicited from developers.

PROPOSALS FROM DEVELOPERS COULD INCLUDE:

- Development Plan:
 - office space
 - retail shops
 - hotel rooms
 - apartment/condominium units
 - restaurants, etc.
- Preliminary tenant mix
- Preliminary site and design plan
- Requirements of a public sector partner, for example:
 - parking
 - tax abatement
 - improvements to adjoining public plaza
 - maintenance of public space

THOSE WHO ENDORSE THIS APPROACH MAY SAY...

- This approach would lead to a larger, more significant private investment.
- Larger developers that generally by-pass Owensboro would be attracted to the project because of its scale.
- The proposed development would be selected by the community (through the development authority) based on what best serves the public interest: economic impact, design appeal, compatibility with the riverfront improvements, expectations of public sector partners, jobs, and future tax revenues.
- If the development authority does not select any of the proposals, we would be no worse off than before.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS APPROACH MAY SAY...

- A single developer should not receive exclusive development privileges to some of our community's most important commercial properties.
- To complete such a plan, most developers would expect generous incentives.
- Because of the fanfare connected with the \$40 million federal grant and the Riverfront Master Plan, it will be extremely difficult to acquire property along Veteran's Boulevard.
- It will be costly to acquire/option property along the riverfront, and taxpayers could be left with the land if developers do not come forward.

Framing the Issue: What will work along the riverfront?

Option 3: A selected tourism development project



Because our market may not be strong enough to attract significant traditional commercial development along the riverfront, this option suggests that we package a distinctive tourism project along Veteran's Boulevard between our two arts and entertainment anchors – RiverPark Center and the Executive Inn.

Three thematic approaches warrant closer examination:

A. A Vibrant Entertainment Complex

By building upon the success of Fridays After Five and entertainment featured on the McConnell Plaza near the Executive Inn, a vibrant entertainment cluster could be created along our riverfront. On available properties between the two anchors, an eclectic cluster of entertainment venues could feature popular dance music, country, jazz, blues, comedy club, cinema center, and more. Bluegrass music could be reintroduced at Woodward's in the International Bluegrass Music Museum.

A few additional restaurants could be sprinkled amidst the entertainment venues. Our riverfront could be to Owensboro what Beale Street is to Memphis, the Riverwalk is to San Antonio, or Fourth Street LIVE is becoming to Louisville.



THOSE WHO ENDORSE THIS APPROACH MAY SAY...

- This is a natural strategy that builds upon successes and existing entertainment anchors.
- An entertainment complex could be built through a selected proposal from a single developer or through incentives and individual entrepreneurship.
- The riverfront provides a uniquely appealing setting for this kind of activity.
- An entertainment complex within walking distance of the Executive Inn would increase our ability to attract conventions.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS APPROACH MAY SAY...

- There is not enough property available in the area and too many incompatible uses that would take away from the vitality of an entertainment district.
- Unless it is tourist-driven, our market is not large enough to support such a development.

Framing the Issue: What will work along the riverfront?

Option 3: A selected tourism development project



B. A Prestigious Center of the Arts

This option suggests that Owensboro has a unique opportunity to become the Stratford, Ontario of MidAmerica. In this 53rd year, Stratford's Shakespeare Festival will attract 700,000 tourists to 18 plays presented in four venues in this Canadian city of 30,000 people.

In the short term, facilities at RiverPark Center, Executive Inn, Theatre Workshop, Goldie's, and Owensboro High School could be used. For an even more appealing attraction, we could build a cluster of several new performance venues between RiverPark and the Executive Inn within walking distance of one another along our riverfront.

We could feature Shakespeare, musicals, dramas, a revival of Josiah!, an original musical revue based on river tunes or the life of Bill Monroe, and much more.



THOSE WHO ENDORSE THIS APPROACH MAY SAY...

- The cultural tourist is the most desirable type of traveler: more money to spend, respectful hotel guests, appreciative of fine restaurants, etc.
- We are already blessed with available facilities, a unique and delightful setting, and skilled personnel to produce high quality theater.
- The tourist traffic generated by the productions would fill hotel rooms, attract conventions, support restaurants and retail shops in our downtown and throughout our community.
- A fine arts festival would be a natural for such an area, and it would complement RiverPark Center's new youth academy and the Center's reputation for launching new touring musicals.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS APPROACH MAY SAY...

- Construction of additional performance venues would be cost prohibitive; we are still paying for the ones we have.
- These kinds of facilities and programs almost always require significant subsidies – perhaps indefinitely.
- There is not enough available land along the riverfront for the performance venues and parking that would be needed to create such a complex.

Framing the Issue: What will work along the riverfront?

Option 3: A selected tourism development project



C. A Re-Created Historic Rivertown

Attractions that preserve and celebrate our history and cultural heritage are important and increasingly popular. In our area – from Harrodsburg and Boonesboro, to New Harmony, Silver Dollar City, and Nashville, Indiana – tourists continue to be drawn to attractions that enable them to step back in time and gain a sense of what it was like to live in a different era.

Despite the popularity of such attractions, few historic rivertowns have been re-created on the banks of mighty rivers. A re-creation of Old Owensborough/Yellowbanks in conjunction with the improvements planned in and around Smother's Park could be a successful formula.

Through such a project, a cluster of buildings would resemble those from the mid- and late-1800's. There could be a replica of Bill Smother's cabin, flatboat construction and rides, trade demonstrations by coopers, blacksmiths, tanners, hostlers, sawyers, and other occupations that once characterized rivertowns. We could offer rides in paddle wheelers, Ames buggies, Owensboro Wagons, or streetcars on cobblestone streets. A few buffaloes could water as they once did in a gully where Frederica Street now exists. There could be a peddler on the street promoting elixirs, an old fashion saloon or opera house. Actors "in character" could roam about, sharing stories and portraying historic figures, such as Joseph Hamilton Daviess, our county's namesake.

THOSE WHO ENDORSE THIS APPROACH MAY SAY...

- This kind of wholesome, educational attraction would be popular with families, school groups, and senior citizen charter bus tours.
- This would be the only re-created historic rivertown along the Ohio River.
- The development may not be a money-maker; nevertheless, it could prove to be a worthwhile investment based on the economic impact of tourist spending on hotels, restaurants, retail, and other local businesses.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS APPROACH MAY SAY...

- There may not be enough available property for the attractions and parking.
- Such an attraction would be expensive to research, design, construct and manage. Private investors would be unlikely participants. State or federal funds would be needed to construct and operate the facility.
- Themed attractions run the risk of being trendy and short-lived.
- An historic rivertown would blend with our old downtown buildings, but would not blend with the design of the Riverfront Master Plan, Executive Inn, or RiverPark Center.

Framing the Issue: What will work along the riverfront?



Strategic Questions

- Can (or should) any of the \$40 million be set aside to facilitate the most appropriate kind of private investment to complement the public improvements?
- How should our community go about reaching a united direction on the development strategy for our riverfront? How do we ensure public oversight and citizen participation throughout the process?
- Should an independent consulting firm be retained to assess the potential of these and other options, including a cost-benefit analysis of each?
- How can the necessary property be acquired to develop the area appropriately?

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American Planning Association
www.planning.org

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www.edsaplan.com

Fourth Street LIVE! (Louisville)
www.4thstlive.com

The City of Stratford Ontario
www.city.stratford.on.ca/

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www.uli.org

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SHARE YOUR VIEWS

City of Owensboro
101 East Fourth Street
Owensboro, Kentucky 42303

Mayor Tom Watson
270/687-8561
mayor@owensboro.org

Commissioner Candance Brake
270/687-8565
brakecc@owensboro.org

Commissioner Charlie Castlen
270/685-8563
castlenca@owensboro.org

Commissioner Jim Glenn
270/685-8564
glennjh@owensboro.org

Commissioner Ron Payne
270/685-8566
paynerl@owensboro.org

City Manager Bob Whitmer
270/687-8558
whitmerrl@owensboro.org

Daviess County Fiscal Court
Daviess County Courthouse
P.O. Box 1716
Owensboro, Kentucky 42302
270/685-8424

County Judge-Executive
Reid Haire
rhaire@daviessky.org

Commissioner Jim Lambert
jlambert@daviessky.org

Commissioner Bruce Kunze
bkunze@daviessky.org

Commissioner Mike Riney
mriney@daviessky.org

Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission
101 East Fourth Street
Owensboro, KY 42303
270/687-8650
Gary Noffsinger, Director
noffsingergl@owensboro.org

GET INVOLVED

Downtown Owensboro, Inc.
101 East Second Street
Owensboro, Kentucky 42303
270/683-2060

PRIDE of Owensboro-Daviess County
401 Frederica Street, B203
Owensboro, KY 42301
270/685-2652
liz.seibert@plfo.com

Minority role models: a lifeline to stability & success

by Lydia Johnson

Frank Posey of Owensboro has had many role models. When he was a boy, Joe Lewis, Jackie Robinson and Nat King Cole caught his attention. As he got older, it was his mother and grandmother who taught him about life and what to expect growing up as an African-American in a small rural Kentucky town. As a young man, he would sit for hours and listen while a black doctor gave advice on hard lessons learned.

As a result, Posey, now 66, came to know how to react when a restaurant owner in Texas directed him to eat in the kitchen. He discovered life wasn't always fair, for example, when he was barred from swimming in a hotel's pool. His role models showed him that a person's honor and ethic are really all he has: Overcome obstacles and learn from the experience. Work hard to be somebody. Work harder to be the best.

"I can remember coming up as a young man, there were not a lot of black role models here," Posey said. "Banks and any place you had in business, it was hard in Owensboro to go in and see black people working there. But if you left Owensboro and went to a larger city, you would. You felt that there was no hope here for you, so you looked forward to growing up and leaving here."

Owensboro still lacks minority role models in many segments of the community – there are few African-American physicians, lawyers, and business owners. Part of the reason is the small number of African-Americans in Daviess County at only three percent. But is the community doing as much as it can to encourage minorities to live and work here?

Schools struggle to offer role models

That's a particularly critical question for Owensboro's young people, whether black or white.

"We need good role models for all of our kids," said Scott Hawkins, director of personnel for the Daviess County Public Schools. "They need to see a diverse teaching staff. They need to see that minorities can be successful no matter what the occupation."

At the beginning of the 2005-06 school year there were 10-15 minority teachers in the county schools, a number that Hawkins acknowledges is low. Recruiting more is difficult because of competition from districts in metropolitan areas such as Louisville and Nashville. Still, Hawkins regularly attends recruitment fairs, hosts receptions for potential faculty and maintains close ties with the local chapter of the NAACP as well as colleges to funnel more minorities into education and back into local schools.

The Owensboro Public School System has had representatives attend similar recruitment fairs, said Pat Ashley, assistant superintendent for instruction. She believes that all students benefit from a diverse teaching staff. African-American students will have role models who look like them, and white students will see successful people of color.

"That's why it's important for all kids to see diversity represented," she said.

At the postsecondary level, all Kentucky colleges and universities have programs to help minorities overcome obstacles that may keep them from obtaining a degree. One important element of these programs is role modeling.

Some students "may be the only African-American in the classroom," said Sherron Jackson, assistant vice president of equal opportunities and finance at the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. "They may have concerns and may feel the need to seek out advice on how to deal with an issue before it becomes a roadblock."

The Owensboro Community and Technical College has met its goal of four percent minority faculty, or six full-time faculty members. And it has seen a 70



Minority role models

percent increase in the number of African-American students since the fall 1999 semester. In 2004 there were 184 minorities out of a total 4,896 enrollees.

"We really want to create more of a culture where diversity is valued and people are attracted to this work environment," said Dr. Greg Labyak, dean of academic affairs.

That can be important, according to Shameka Neely, 24. Neely received encouragement and guidance through a program designed for African-American females at Western Kentucky University. She now is coordinator for minority recruitment at the university and understands from both the student and mentor perspectives the importance of having a role model with a similar history.

"So many times, especially the African-American males, they feel like they are not treated fairly," Neely said. "A lot of times, there are only two or three (African-Americans) in a classroom. If they aren't used to that, I think they close up. They just feel uncomfortable. Just being able to talk to someone about frustrations helps."

Private sector also has challenges

Beyond schools and universities, many firms in small communities find it challenging to recruit African-American professionals. Rural areas are often training grounds for the professionals who spend a couple years working in their field and then are hired away to larger cities with higher-paying jobs and more amenities.

What would it take to keep them in Owensboro?

"You have to give them a reason that they can come into the community and financially prosper beyond the school teachers' level," said Howard Bailey, assistant vice president for student affairs and highest ranking African American administrative official at Western Kentucky University. "You will have to go out and recruit. The law firms are going to have to bite the bullet and pay them more. A black kid from Owensboro has got to say there's a black attorney in my town."

At the same time, communities may also need to consider other amenities that may attract and retain professional minorities. "In our economic times, any individual that is considered a limited commodity will cost you more," Jackson added. "If the local community embraces that individual and that individual can participate in that local community, then that may be what holds them there. The intangible can be just as important in holding that person in the community."

Where are other role models?

It's common to think of role modeling in terms of national minority "success stories" such as Oprah Winfrey, Bill Cosby or Michael Jordan. But family and the community should produce the primary crop of role models, according to the book "Launching Our Black Children for Success" by Dr. Joyce A. Ladner, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C.

Other studies suggest that mentors do not necessarily have to be of the same ethnicity or even gender. It is more important for mentors to show sincere interest and to build a mutually benefiting relationship with the youth they are mentoring, according to the study Mentoring and Relational Mutuality: Protégés' Perspectives published in the Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development in Spring 2002.

Posey agrees with that definition of a role model. When he wanted more than a production job at Green River Steel in Owensboro during the 1960s, he sought help from a white coworker who was an electrician. Day or night, the friend helped Posey learn the trade. Posey became the first African-American electrician at the plant and retired 37 years later.

"There was feedback between the both of us," Posey said. "He taught me about electricity, and I taught him about life."



Undergraduate Enrollment/4-year Universities				
	White	African American	Hispanic	Pacific Islander/Asian
1990	70,384	4,583	277	579
1995	65,701	5,118	428	851
2004	67,926	5,796	687	1,112

Graduate Enrollment/4-year Universities				
	White	African American	Hispanic	Pacific Islander/Asian
1990	11,694	393	51	103
1995	12,516	615	65	172
2004	13,172	869	136	233

Enrollment Community Colleges				
	White	African American	Hispanic	Pacific Islander/Asian
1990	36,897	2,318	157	241
1995	38,046	3,036	299	399
2004	60,527	5,529	811	500

Degrees Conferred/4-year Universities				
1990				
	White	African American	Hispanic	Pacific Islander/Asian
Associate's	907	47	4	1
Bachelor's	7,746	324	38	56
Master's	2,320	73	15	16
PHD	89	1	0	0

1995				
	White	African American	Hispanic	Pacific Islander/Asian
Associate's	1,069	50	2	9
Bachelor's	8,893	452	36	93
Master's	2,674	104	12	28
PHD	108	4	3	3

2004				
	White	African American	Hispanic	Pacific Islander/Asian
Associate's	866	53	15	4
Bachelor's	9,975	684	77	137
Master's	3,547	214	31	67
PHD	120	15	3	7

Associate Degrees Conferred Community College System				
	White	African American	Hispanic	Pacific Islander/Asian
1990	2,467	112	5	14
1995	3,383	147	16	15
2004	4,571	285	46	40



Ten keys to an *energized* downtown

On a parallel track with the riverfront plan, we need an effective, comprehensive downtown revitalization strategy, and resources to administer it.

by John Hall

As a downtown resident and lifelong downtown advocate, it is gratifying to observe the progress occurring in downtown Owensboro and the prospects of even more exciting possibilities.

With unprecedented (\$40 million) federal government support for the riverfront and major new anchors targeted for downtown, these are exciting times for our community. But some past efforts to develop downtown have fallen short, and good things don't always happen automatically. So while we rally around a new vision, we must also stay focused on incremental steps to improve our central business district, the heart of our community, our downtown.

Furthermore, we must recognize that to administer such a program and maximize the ensuing public sector investment, we need more than voluntary membership contributions. We need support from city and county government at a level that is comparable to communities our size across Kentucky.

I suggest ten areas of focus:



1. Development (private sector)

Attracting investment to downtown is difficult. Land is sometimes hard to assemble (and expensive), parking is a challenge, and the market is sporadic for office space, retail, and more. To attract more private investment, we need a well-funded mechanism to attract downtown developers the way our Economic Development Corporation attracts investments to our industrial parks.

We also need anchors. We are delighted that Southern Star Gas Pipeline, Atmos Energy, and U.S. Mortgage have major office facilities in Owensboro-Daviess County, but we would have preferred that they be downtown. The visual impact and employee support of nearby businesses would have been a tremendous boost to downtown.

Ten keys to an energized downtown



(early rendering of proposed new public library)

2. Development (public/nonprofit sector)

Certainly every project cannot locate downtown, but all major public buildings or offices should. Every time an OMU, post office, police station, or Social Security office leaves downtown, it pulls customers from restaurants, gift shops, pharmacies, and newsstands.

The new public library would have been a fabulous addition to downtown. Let's hope the arena, baseball stadium, ice rink, International Center, Commerce Center, and other future community projects will make the greatest impact possible by locating downtown or near downtown.

And when we design a major new community building, let's insist on high standards. Allow the public an opportunity to react to several prototypes. Citizens may prefer a more attractive building even if it costs more.



3. Restoration

We salute those who have adorned our community with a restored Breedenbach Building, Newberry-Wile Building, Thacker law office, the cluster of preserved buildings on East Second Street, among many others. But we also scratch our heads when we see beautiful old buildings treated inappropriately with barn wood, stucco, or aluminum siding, or when they are neglected and allowed to deteriorate.

Downtown Design Guidelines have been adopted by both city and county governments, but the guidelines must be enforced, and we need to provide incentives to assist property owners in following them. The pay-back to the public: higher property values; fewer vacancies; a more appealing community image.

Occasionally, government has an opportunity to set the standard. We commend Daviess County Fiscal Court for preserving and restoring the Smith-Werner Building on Second Street, and encourage them to do the same with properties they own close by on St. Ann Street.



4. Infill development

Downtown was once characterized by a tight cluster of buildings. As buildings have come down, they have been replaced by small parking lots or vacant properties. And many buildings that still remain contain offices, wholesale businesses, and storage that dilute the street life of our downtown.

We need to encourage infill development that complements the scale and design of downtown and uses of space that restore the vitality that was once so unique and appealing about our downtown.

Rather than park a few cars or create holes in our streetscape, let's build appropriately designed buildings or add gardens, plazas, art, and street vendors. Where there are underused parking lots in and around downtown, let's do what it takes to attract townhouses, offices, or mixed-use developments.



5. Upper floor residential

Many downtown buildings were designed for retail on the lower level and living quarters for the business owner on the upper floor. With just a few exceptions, our downtown has not seen upper floor conversions to residential. Other cities have had success with this; why can't we?

Likewise, many cities have had great success adapting former industrial and warehouse buildings for loft apartments or condominiums. These are often among the most popular living quarters in these cities and key to attracting young professionals back to downtown areas.

Ten keys to an energized downtown



6. Public improvements

We have seen some splendid public improvements downtown in recent years: the RiverPark/BB&T and Executive Inn/McConnell Plazas; underground utilities and period lighting; brick pavers added to sidewalks; new benches and trash containers at Smother's Park. New attractive bus stops were suggested recently.

To supplement the riverfront plan, we need to incrementally expand these public improvements, add wider sidewalks for cafes and vendors, bury utility lines, install period street and storefront signs, build new medians, increase landscaping, and more. It would make sense to have all this designed by one firm to ensure consistency.

Steps to calm or reroute traffic, especially truck through-traffic, could be integrated into such a plan.



7. Business development

An updated master plan for downtown should include specific types of businesses that could be successful downtown. This could include specialty shops or restaurants that have not yet located in Owensboro or that could add a downtown location, plus special opportunities: riverboat, floating restaurant, or the use of Yellowbanks Island.

As we market our downtown to prospective tenants, we could provide an up-to-date list of available properties, square footage, building condition, parking, etc. Perhaps incentives could be developed to help lure the most appealing businesses downtown.

In addition to filling available spaces, if we could document that there is tenant interest in downtown beyond the space available, developers would be enticed to build more commercial space in the area.



8. Linkage with Brescia

Brescia University's close proximity to downtown is an asset we need to explore and exploit. The Brescia community would welcome a more vibrant downtown to enhance its student life; downtown Owensboro should benefit from the concentration of students, faculty, and administrators nearby.

Perhaps this synergetic relationship could be enhanced through design (e.g., banners, lighting) and a food court or commercial strip featuring pizza, bar, jazz club, coffeeshop, or bookstore.



9. Cultural anchors

Our downtown's future is intrinsically linked to the success of RiverPark Center, Owensboro Area Museum of Science and History, International Bluegrass Music Museum, Owensboro Symphony Orchestra, and to a lesser extent, Theatre Workshop of Owensboro and the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art, all of which are located in or near downtown.

When these organizations are financially solvent, they are better positioned to develop programs to serve the community and attract tourists: arts camps, fiddling contests, Octoberfests, touring exhibits, syndicated bluegrass music production, and more.

And to think even more ambitiously, imagine what an IMAX Theater in our science and history museum would do for downtown, or a year-round performing arts school connected with RiverPark Center and the symphony?

Ten keys to an energized downtown



10. Riverfront

Because of the mighty Ohio River, a settlement grew up around Bill Smeathers (Smothers) cabin. Now, 200 years later, we are refocusing our redevelopment efforts in this same area. As the \$40 million plan comes together – park expansion, overlooks, performance spaces, fountains, and more – there will be renewed interest in water sports, festivals, and other river activities.

This return to the river will shape a new visual image of our community, attract investment, support businesses, and create jobs for many years to come.



A properly funded mechanism

Tackling a few of these areas, let alone ten, is a challenging notion, but one that underscores the many possibilities for downtown Owensboro. Good things have happened in our downtown, and will continue to happen, but more good things will happen if we provide the resources to pursue these possibilities aggressively.

To make all this work, Downtown Owensboro, Inc. needs a full-time professional executive director and support staff. DOI's membership (more than 200) provides a valuable base, but to lift DOI to an effective administrative level, additional financial support from city and county government is essential. The local government support DOI receives currently is the lowest of any comparable city in Kentucky.

DOI needs the capacity to maintain a downtown database, coordinate planning, option property, retain designers, issue requests for proposals, and aggressively seek downtown tenants and developers.

Public facilities and services are already in place downtown and in our more established neighborhoods surrounding it. It is sound public policy to redevelop this area and reduce costly expansion of roads, sewers, fire and police protection, parks, and more into rural and suburban areas.

Comparisons of Kentucky Downtown Improvement Organizations

City	Annual Budget
Louisville	\$1,290,000
Lexington	474,000
Covington	120,000
Somerset	311,451
Paducah	127,600
Henderson	125,000
Bowling Green	124,500
Scottsville	120,000
Shelbyville	114,060
London	100,000
Owensboro	94,000

City	Annual City-County Government Allocation
Louisville	unavailable
Lexington	\$223,000 plus office, overhead
Covington	62,000 plus office, administrative support
Somerset	125,236
Shelbyville	104,060
London	100,000
Bowling Green	83,000
Maysville	75,000
Paducah	65,000
Frankfort	52,500
Georgetown	51,600
Cadiz	50,000
Newport	44,000
Henderson	43,500
Winchester	42,500
Glasgow	41,000
Elizabethtown	40,000
Nicholasville	40,000
Horse Cave	38,868
Barbourville	38,000
Williamstown	37,000
Wilmore	36,000
Stanford	35,008
Augusta	35,000
Versailles	35,000
Mt. Sterling	34,818
Ft. Thomas	33,600
Ashland	32,000
Owensboro	30,250

Source: Kentucky Heritage Council

City	City-County Government Per Capita Spending on Downtown Improvement Associations
Winchester	\$25.00
London	17.37
Somerset	11.39
Shelbyville	8.67
Mt. Sterling	6.48
Morehead	3.33
Pikeville	3.08
Glasgow	2.93
Georgetown	2.71
Paducah	2.47
Newport	2.32
Ft. Thomas	2.04
Frankfort	1.94
Henderson	1.67
Bowling Green	1.66
Elizabethtown	1.60
Ashland	1.42
Murray	.99
Owensboro	.56

Note: Local government support for Owensboro's downtown improvement organization was the lowest of 43 communities listed.

Source: Downtown Owensboro, Inc.



Citizens Speak... LEADERS RESPOND

Citizens Encourage Additional Forums on Unification



Six months ago, the Public Life Foundation conducted a forum on the issues surrounding the unification of Owensboro and Daviess County governments. Unification is currently under study by a task force appointed by the Owensboro Mayor and Daviess County Judge-Executive.

Participants were introduced to the basic structure of local government and the reasons why there continues to be an interest in unification: tax inequities, duplication of services, inefficiencies; costs, increased bureaucracy, diluted leadership voice, etc.

During the forum, participants examined advantages and disadvantages of three options to address these issues: 1. retain the current structure, 2. expand collaboration among local governments and departments, 3. consolidate local governments.

Following the forum, participants completed a questionnaire. *One hundred percent* of the participants indicated that...

- the forum helped them understand the unification issues and choices facing our community
- the forum helped them gain a greater understanding of other points of view
- others should participate in a similar forum
- forums such as this should be held throughout the period that the city-county task force is doing its work (rather than wait until the task force completes its work)
- the information was clear and easy to understand, fair and balanced

All but one participant indicated that forums such as this will reduce the divisiveness that characterized the 1990 city-county government merger initiative.

* * *

On several occasions, the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro has offered to conduct additional community forums on behalf of the unification task force. The task force has not responded, but during a recent meeting, task force members acknowledged the need for citizen participation in the process. A "study circle" approach was recommended and is under consideration.

Summaries of the February 28 forum are available at the Public Life Foundation: 270/685-2652.

MINORITY ROLE MODELS

continued from page 14

The men remain friends to this day.

For Owensboro resident Norma Avila-Brown, however, having a role model with the same Latino heritage was vital. She arrived in this country six years ago with a master's degree in early childhood education and after running her own preschool in Mexico. But those credentials were not enough to stave off the questions that arose when she became a supervisor at one place she worked (not her current employer).

"American people ask why you are my supervisor if you are from Mexico," Brown said. But two local relatives, a cardiologist and pathologist, advised her to hang in there.

"They teach me first to be patient," she said. "The culture and

everything is completely different here. The process for hiring. The process for finding a job."

"It's very important for minorities to have a role model," she added. "And if that role model is from the same country or from the same minority group, it's better."

Regardless of the race or ethnicity, Ladner advises communities to seek out positive role models who will take an interest in helping others, particularly youth. Many will offer help if just asked. She also encourages anyone seeking role models to monitor the news for stories of successful minorities to share with youth.

Otherwise, children and adults alike will suffer when they don't see that all people can be successful, regardless of the color of their skin. ■



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER Public AGENDA

Meetings, hearings, and forums open to the public. Please contact us if your organization would like its events listed by calling 685-2652 or sending an email to info@plfo.org. (Meetings are subject to change.)

Important Upcoming Public Meetings

SEPTEMBER

1 Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce Rooster Booster Breakfast
7:30 a.m.
Guest speaker: Dave Adkisson, President, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
Executive Inn

6 Community Conversations, Inc.
6:00 p.m.
Community Forum
"Meth in Daviess County"
Presenters: Joe Castlen, Daviess County District Judge; Keith Cain, Daviess County Sheriff; John Kazlauskas, Owensboro Police Chief, Cathy Lamar, Audubon Area Community Services Director
Daviess County Public Library Auditorium

15 Citizens Health Care Advocates
5:30 p.m.
Program: "Caring for the Uninsured"
Presentation by Rodney Berry, President, Public Life Foundation of Owensboro
Green River District Health Department
Bedford Walker Community Room

20 Owensboro Area World Affairs Council
7:00 p.m.
Presentation by Tamara Quinn, Director of School Partners
Program for Spirit of America
Kentucky Wesleyan College Winchester Center, Rogers Hall

Citizens Committee on Education

8:30 a.m.
Press conference: Release of "Charting A New Course: Higher Education in Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky", An examination of higher education needs in the Owensboro/Daviess County Kentucky area
Founders Room, RiverPark Center

22 PRIDE of Owensboro-Daviess County
5:00 p.m.
Program: "Roundtable Discussion with Vilma and Zev Buffman on the occasion of their second anniversary in Owensboro"
Owensboro-Daviess County Tourist Commission

OCTOBER

13 Citizens Health Care Advocates
5:30 p.m.
Program: "Daviess County Project Life Saver and 911 Services"
Presentation by Keith Cain, Daviess County Sheriff and Paul Nave, 911 Administrator
Green River District Health Department
Bedford Walker Community Room

14 Owensboro Area World Affairs Council
7:00 p.m.
Presentation by Stephen Cohen, Russian scholar, author and TV commentator
Location to be announced

Regularly Scheduled Public Meetings

Meeting Dates and Times Subject to Change

Citizens Health Care Advocates
Second Thursday each month
5:30 p.m.
GRDHD, Bedford-Walker Community Room

Daviess County Board of Education
Third Thursday each month
6:00 p.m.
1622 Southeastern Parkway

Daviess County Fiscal Court
First and Third Thursday each month
4:00 p.m.
Daviess County Courthouse

Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce "Rooster Booster" Breakfast
First Thursday each month
7:30 a.m.
Executive Inn

Green River Health Council
Second Tuesday every other month (Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec)
10:00 a.m.
GRADD

continued on pg. 22

The TRACKER

DATA OF INTEREST



Compiled by
Chad M. Gesser

This edition of The Tracker features comparative data related to global economic development. As Owensboro-Daviess County weighs economic development strategies, data indicators offer insight into international challenges.

■ In 2002-2003, the under five mortality rate for the United States was eight per 1,000. The same rate in Israel was six, and in the West Bank-Gaza the rate was 24.

■ Using the nutritional status of children under five years of age in the United States as the baseline in 2002-2003, 47 percent of children in Ethiopia were considered malnourished, 35 percent in Pakistan, 34 percent in Vietnam, 10 percent in Nicaragua, zero percent in Germany, and zero percent in France.

■ The incidence of tuberculosis per 100,000 in 2003 in the United States was five. In Spain the rate was 27, in Somalia 411, in Sweden four, in Iraq 157, in Costa Rica 15, and 102 in China.

■ Life expectancy at birth in 2003 for the United States was 77 years of age. In the United Kingdom, the expectancy was 77, in Singapore 78, in Rwanda 39, in Peru 70, 77 in Cuba, 42 in Burundi, and 69 in Brazil.

■ In 2002-2003, the ratio of female to male enrollments in primary and secondary school in the United States was 100:100. In Venezuela the ratio was 104:100, in India 80:100, in Niger 69:100, and in the United Kingdom 116:100.

■ The percent of total seats in national parliaments filled by females in 2004 was 14 percent in the United States, 25 percent in Uganda, 45 percent in Sweden, seven percent in Nigeria, 23 percent in Mexico, seven percent in Kenya, and 12 percent in Italy.

■ The unemployment rate for ages 15-24 in 2002 in the United States was 12 percent. In Argentina the rate was 32 percent, 36 percent in Colombia, five percent Austria, 26 percent in Greece, 29 percent in Panama, and 44 percent in South Africa.

■ In 2003, the net percent of gross national income attributed to assistance in the developing world by the United States was .1 percent. The percent of giving by Denmark was .8 percent. Canada, Japan, Portugal, and New Zealand, portioned .2 percent of their gross national income to the developing world.

This Index and other items of interest can be found at The Owensboro Blog: <http://owensboro.blogspot.com>



Citizen Action UPDATE

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

To submit updates on citizen action: 685-2652 or info@plfo.org.

Bring Back Baseball Committee

Bruce Brubaker, Chair

bbrubaker@champion-ford.com

- contributing \$10,000 toward a feasibility study (to be included in a feasibility study of downtown arena)
- hosted a trip to an Evansville Otters game, met with team management and Frontier League officials

The Citizens Committee on Education

Marianne Smith Edge, Co-Chair

msedge@smithedge.com

Forrest Roberts, Co-Chair

robrook@adelphia.net

- planning the release of a community strategic higher education study
- making presentations, broadening the base of support for "The Learning Community," a program to instill a higher value of education and lifelong learning into the fabric of community life
- tracking data and trends connected with city-county school district disparities
- subcommittees are examining a report on high achieving high schools, drop-out rates, and developing a parental involvement pamphlet

Citizens Health Care Advocates

Dale Taylor, Chair

dalet@www.com

Meetings: Second Thursday of each month, 5:30 p.m., Green River District Health Department

- conducted roundtable discussion as part of "Covering the Uninsured Week"
- featured panel of physician's assistants
- featured a program on the "Building Stronger Families" program
- sponsored a booth at the Latino Festival
- adopted "Five Fields of Focus" for 2005:
 - access to health care
 - healthy lifestyles
 - governmental affairs
 - health care costs
 - organizational development
- supporting efforts to reduce second-hand smoke exposure
- CHCA now has 115 members and 550 attendees and participants at meetings
- meetings are broadcast on OCTV

Coalition for the Poor

Contact: Nancy Keeton, Keith Sanders, and Sharon Sharp (Steering Committee); c/o Public Life Foundation, 401 Frederica Street, Owensboro, KY 42301 (685-2652)

Next Meeting: November 21, noon, First Christian Church

- building a network of citizens who are concerned

about the plight of the poor

- sharing information and concerns regarding the impact that government social program cuts have on the poor
- interested in leadership development programs that empower the poor

Goodfellows Club

Bruce Kunze, President

bkunze1@aol.com

- attracted 95 participants and raised \$2,500 in annual benefit tennis tournament
- convened youth service providers to discuss community needs
- concluded successful 2004 "Roll Call" campaign, raising \$97,000
- contributed funds for winter coats, shoes and clothing for more than 1,000 children in the 2004-05 school year

Owensboro Area World Affairs Council

Stephanie Curran

curranp@bellsouth.net

Board meetings: Fourth Thursday, 7:00 a.m., Kentucky Wesleyan College

- sponsored lecture, "The European Union: Does it Matter?" by Morton Holbrook III, U.S. State Department
- planning the following programs:
 - humanitarian Tamara Quinn (September 20)
 - Russian scholar Stephen Cohen and *The Nation* magazine editor Katrina vanden Heuvel (October 14)
 - Patterson School of Diplomacy director John Stempel (November 10 or 11)
 - International Election Consultant George Russell (February 7).

PRIDE

Susie Tyler, President

grand.view@adelphia.net

- developing master plan on new community entrances from the Natcher Bridge and West Parrish Avenue from the airport
- planted wildflower garden on East Fourth Street
- committee developing a plan to enhance street medians

Unity Coalition

David Kelly, President

davak@bellsouth.net

- featured Bill Dixon of the Owensboro Human Relations Commission
- featured Jana Beth Francis on "Mix it Up, a program to enhance race-ethnic relations in our schools"
- featured Sister Lorraine Lauter, MISAS founder, on immigration issues

Making a Difference



GERMANTOWN PLAN PROVING SUCCESSFUL

The steady improvements in the Germantown neighborhood are demonstrating that older neighborhoods plagued by deteriorating housing conditions, reduced home ownership, substance abuse and crime can indeed be redeveloped through planning, citizen input, and re-investment. New homes, tasteful renovations, more single-family residences, higher property values-tax base, engaged neighborhood associations, and public improvements (sidewalks, retaining walls, streetlights, parks, etc.) increasingly characterize the area.

We salute the planners, designers, and citizen advisory committee members associated with the City of Owensboro Office of Community Development.

SMOKE-FREE PROPOSAL GAINS MOMENTUM

In recent months, O-DC Smoke Free, a group of citizens concerned about high local rates of tobacco-related illness and disease, has shared medical research, surveyed the public, interviewed restaurant/bar owners, and examined ordinances adopted by other communities to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.

The group's thorough and persistent efforts have been lauded by local officials, health care leaders, and business owners. Consequently, the O-DC Smoke Free proposal for a Clean Air Ordinance is receiving serious consideration by the Owensboro City Commission and the Daviess County Fiscal Court.

The Bluegrass Institute, a Bowling Green-based public policy group, opposes such ordinances in favor of better signage to inform citizens of smoking policies in businesses open to the public and mandatory smoking policies to inform and protect employees in the workplace.

ONE IMPROVEMENT AT A TIME

The appearance and vitality of our downtown is important to community pride, image, and our sense of place. Incremental improvements, such as those made recently to the Breedenbach Building, are delightful and encouraging. Hat's off to those responsible: Mike Wallace and his colleagues at Media Works.

NEW HEALTH WEB SITE AVAILABLE

A new web site provides a regular focus on data and indicators associated with health care issues. Developed by Chad Gesser, H.O.P.E. (Healthy Owensboro: Progress and Evaluation - www.octc.kctcs.edu/ir/hope/) will develop baseline data, regularly update the community health report card, and track other data released by local, state, and federal health agencies and research institutes. Chad is Director of Institutional Research for the Owensboro Community and Technical College.

Public AGENDA, cont.

Neighborhood Alliance Meetings

Apollo Area Alliance

Fourth Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Apollo Heights Baptist Church.

Audubon Bon Harbor Area Alliance

Second Monday each month
6:30 p.m.
Audubon Church of the Nazarene

Dogwood Azalea Neighborhood Alliance

Third Thursday each month
5:30 p.m.
Daviess County Public Library

Dugan Best Neighborhood Alliance

Fourth Tuesday each month
6:00 p.m.
Dugan Best Recreation Center

Hillcrest Area Alliance

Second Tuesday each month
6:30 p.m.
Daviess County High School Media Center

Midtown East Neighborhood Alliance

First Thursday each month
5:00 p.m.
Buena Vista Baptist Church

Northwest Neighborhood Alliance

Fourth Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Foust Elementary School Media Center

Old Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance

Second Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Wendell Foster Center Administration Building Boardroom

Seven Hills Neighborhood Alliance

First Thursday each month
7:00 p.m.
Trinity United Methodist Church

Shifley-York Neighborhood Alliance

Second Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Lewis Lane Baptist Church

Southeast Alliance

Second Thursday each month
6:30 p.m.
Newton Parrish Elementary School

Wesleyan-Shawnee Neighborhood Alliance

Fourth Tuesday each month
6 p.m.
Kentucky Wesleyan College, Winchester Center

Owensboro Board of Education

Fourth Thursday each month
4:30 p.m.
Boardroom

Owensboro City Commission

First and Third Tuesday each month
5:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro-Daviess County Regional Airport

Third Monday of each month
4:30 p.m.
Airport terminal building conference room

Owensboro Historic Preservation Board & Downtown Design Review Commission

Fourth Wednesday each month
5:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro Housing Authority

Fourth Thursday each month
11:30 a.m.
2161 E. 19th St.

Owensboro Metropolitan Board of Adjustment

First Thursday each month
6:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission

Second Thursday each month
6:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro Riverport Authority

Fourth Friday each month
12:00 p.m.
1771 River Road

Owensboro Utility Commission

Third Thursday each month
4:00 p.m.
2070 Tamarack Rd., Third floor board room

Preservation Alliance of Owensboro-Daviess County, Inc.

First Friday every other month (Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec)
12:00 p.m.
Campbell Club

RWRA

Third Monday each month (except January, Fourth Monday)
3:30 p.m.
RWRA, 1722 Pleasant Valley Road

Tobacco Control Coalition

Fourth Wednesday each month
11:30 a.m.
GRDHD

Tourism & Convention Bureau

Third Thursday each month
7:45 a.m.
215 E. Second St.

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

The *Public Life Advocate*, published bi-monthly, is committed to be a trusted resource of information and analysis of public concerns and community issues. The *Advocate* is a community-driven publication, grounded in a commitment to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, Inc. is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c) operating foundation (not a grant-making entity) founded in 1996 by John and Marjorie Hager. Mr. Hager is the former owner, editor, and publisher of the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*.

The foundation fosters broad, meaningful citizen participation in community decisions and public policy. We believe that open, accessible, and trustful institutions are essential to an enlightened and engaged citizenry and the democratic process.

Foundation activities are driven by the importance that people attach to issues. We are committed to the people's agenda. To assist citizens in solving problems and seizing opportunities, we facilitate a process of information > deliberation > action.



*"I knew of no safe
depository of the ultimate
powers of society but the
people themselves; and if
we think them not
enlightened enough to
exercise their control with
a wholesome discretion,
the remedy is not to take
it from them, but to inform
their discretion by education."*

Thomas Jefferson