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# PUBLIC LIFE

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## Advocate

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A report on the 2010 “We the People” AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting®

#### **Restructuring downtown master plan implementation to maximize citizen participation**

#### **Building trust:**

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#### **Recycling: Which option makes the most sense?**

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#### **Congratulations... and thank you, to all the local candidates**

#### **A tribute to Ron Logsdon**

## Citizen perspectives on creating jobs and improving education

A report on the 2010 “We the People” AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting®

### **Determining the topics**

Facing a 9.3 percent local unemployment rate and the prospects of a sluggish economic recovery, a 20 percent increase in bankruptcies in the last four years, and average annual wages that are nearly 30 percent less than the national average...

It's not surprising that economic development was selected as a topic for our second “We the People” Town Meeting.

And considering that the percentage of adults in Daviess County with a baccalaureate degree is less than national and state averages, that there are 17 Kentucky counties with a higher education attainment level than Daviess County, and that a majority of local high school graduates are not ready for college or careers...

It made sense to expand our 2010 town meeting to include challenges in education as well.



“We the People” Town Meeting 2010 photos courtesy Phil Casper



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In this era when technology has leveled the global playing field, when our competitiveness hinges on knowledge and innovation, an effective economic development strategy is generally aligned with an effective education strategy.

### Building on progress

This is not to suggest that there are not achievements to celebrate. We have award-winning schools and programs – from Head Start to high school theater. More than 9,100 students are enrolled at local colleges and universities. More courses and degree programs are offered than ever. Many communities have challenges much greater than ours.

### An exercise in citizenship

Justice Louis Brandeis said, “The most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen.” In a healthy democracy, the public is informed, engaged and empowered to assume their role as active citizens. They delegate authority to elected representatives, but their voice is valued and their views are taken into consideration as laws and policies and budgets and programs and priorities are established for the common good.

On October 23, 300 residents of Owensboro-Daviess County devoted an entire Saturday to an exercise in citizenship. They listened, they learned, they agreed and disagreed, they remained civil and respectful, and they shared their perspectives.



### More than a public hearing

Once again, our foundation partnered with *AmericaSpeaks*, a Washington DC-based organization that has pioneered large scale electronic town meetings, at times involving multiple locations simultaneously linked by satellite.

The town meeting was unique in several ways:

- A considerable amount of information was shared through discussion guides, historical overviews, fact sheets, presentations and videos.

- Small group discussions were led by neutral discussion leaders.
- Recorders using laptop computers captured remarks from all the tables.
- Results were available instantly through individual key pad voting.

Since our first town meeting three years ago, the “We the People” database of supporters and volunteers has grown to more than 1,400 citizens.



### Who participated?

A diligent effort was made to attract participants who reflected the demographic profile of Owensboro-Daviess County.

We did well in attracting the comparable percentage of:

- men and women
- minorities
- senior citizens
- young people under 24 years of age
- city residents
- those with at least some college education

We fell short of our goal in terms of attracting:

- those between 35-44 years of age
- county residents
- those with a high school degree or less
- those who are unemployed

Participants were significantly better educated than the population: 52 percent had a college degree or more, compared with 19 percent of our county population.

About a third of our recent participants took part in our 2007 event.



**Why are the results valued?**

Officials and policymakers place a special value on these meetings for several reasons:

- We attracted a significant crowd, likely voters, who sacrificed an entire Saturday to contribute to community progress.
- During the town meeting, we saw a CEO sit across the table from a resident of a homeless shelter, a single mother share her story with a farmer, a civic leader react to the dreams of a student.
- Unlike public hearings, a few people did not dominate the discussions, the format was not intimidating to participants and the voice of all was valued.
- And unlike surveys and polls, participants had an opportunity to learn about the issues, benefit from the knowledge and experience of others around their table and the discussions occurring at the other tables before they were asked to come to judgment.

**A citizen vision**

So what happened during our 2010 town meeting? What were the results and recommendations?

Participants were asked to think boldly and imagine possibilities over the next 10 years.

In economic development, participants envisioned a thriving economy with dependable jobs, living wages and a high quality of life; an economy that capitalizes on growth industries: technology, life sciences, health care, and special opportunities such as distribution. Participants expressed strong support for existing employers and programs to help launch new businesses, such as the new business accelerator on Allen Street. They have high hopes for downtown.

In education, participants envisioned a community with high educational expectations and superior opportunities for every age: early childhood, K-12, vocational and higher education.

They recognized the importance of talented and dedicated teachers, caring and involved parents and a community with more college graduates.

**Goals and action steps**

Town meeting participants not only crafted a vision, they developed goals and practical action steps. Here are the top six:

**1. Educate for the real world...**with applications in agriculture, technology, health care and the arts.**To reach that goal, what has to happen?**

- We need business and education to team up to expose students to career options.
- We need to expand career services within the school systems.
- We need to cultivate future entrepreneurs at a young age.

**2. Create a business friendly environment...**to attract and retain businesses.**To reach that goal, what has to happen?**

- We need to streamline planning and zoning, but also improve understanding of planning, zoning and permitting.
- We need business and community leaders to have more input into education.
- We need to invest in economic development. For example:

Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation	\$596,000 budget
Greater Paducah Economic Development Council	\$1,400,000 budget

**3. Promote green industries...**be a national leader and create more jobs.**To reach that goal, what has to happen?**

- We need incentives for green business development.
- We need higher community standards for energy and environmental design.
- We need community partnerships to train workers in green technologies.

**4. Improve educational attainment****To reach that goal, what has to happen?**

- We need to assist non-traditional students with child care and flexible schedules.
- We need to reach out to the region where there are fewer educational resources
- We need incentives for businesses to assist with employee education.

- We need more scholarship assistance if tuition continues to increase

**5. Attract and retain the best teachers...**those who are passionate and talented.

***To reach that goal, what has to happen?***

- We need better ways to evaluate and reward teachers and, when necessary, terminate ineffective teachers.
- We need to raise standards for teacher preparation.
- We need more resources in schools that have more disadvantaged and special needs students.
- We need citizens, business leaders, union leaders and others to engage in dialogue with teachers and bring life experiences to the classroom.
- We need continuous performance evaluations of teachers and administrators throughout their careers.

**6. Make quality preschool available to all children**

***To reach that goal, what has to happen?***

- We need all of our preschool centers to be accredited.
- We need preschool to be affordable for all families.
- We need to learn from other successful community models.

These goals and action steps were developed by the 300 participants in the “We the People” Town Meeting on October 23rd. The recommendations came forth from more than 30 table discussions in which hundreds of ideas were suggested.

**Many intriguing ideas**

Some comments and recommendations that did not bubble up frequently are intriguing as well. Here is a sampling:

**In economic development, participants said:**

- We need a business ombudsman and a one-stop resource center for business development and concerns.
- Let’s form a business roundtable that meets routinely with workforce development agencies and vocational educators.
- Abandoned buildings, such as tobacco warehouses, should be reused. The business incubator on Allen Street is a good example of what can be done.
- Let’s create research and development labs.
- Lower the occupational tax.
- City-county cooperation is essential.
- Bluegrass music could be to Owensboro what country music is to Nashville.
- We have to have government officials with high ethical standards who believe in open dialogue.
- Programs like the Reality Fair and financial literacy are important to offer students at a young age.

- We need an Amtrack station.
- We need quicker, environmentally friendly mass transit.
- We need to promote local foods and a farmer’s market pavilion (not just a designated parking lot).
- It’s time for curbside recycling not just to reduce waste going to the landfill, but for business and research possibilities.
- We need to find a way to pursue alternative energy in an area where coal interests are so strong.
- The newspaper needs a regular column on “green” topics.
- We need to enforce littering fines.
- We need to expand and promote our bike paths.

**In education, participants offered these ideas and comments:**

- We need to make completion of the 13th and 14th year a minimum standard for students in our community.
- More degrees need to be offered.
- Let’s add a professional school: perhaps law, medicine, pharmacy, engineering? (Paducah established an engineering school in 1997.)
- We have 9,000 college students but Owensboro does not seem like a college town.
- We need to increase the number of instructional days.
- We need an education “think tank” or task force that focuses on teacher training, recruitment and retention.
- We must reverse the cycle of generational poverty.
- Our Head Start program is great and reaches 60 percent of those who qualify; we need the other 40 percent enrolled.
- No one should be allowed to dropout of high school until they are 18.
- We need to combat truancy.
- We should equalize school taxes to eliminate the incentive to move or build in the county.
- Other cities have allowed people to “round up” their utility bills and apply that money to scholarships.
- How about an education resource center not affiliated with any institution with information about scholarships, ACT prep courses and aptitude tests?
- We need more job shadowing, internships and career days.
- A downtown elementary school could enhance the master plan and generate more residential development downtown that would also increase the city school tax base.
- For every birth at Owensboro Medical Health System, establish a 529 savings plan for college or vocational training that can only be used after the child graduates from high school.

Lots of great ideas from people from all walks of life. Of course, some of these suggestions would require additional resources. But many may not. These ideas underscore the interest in these issues and the creativity that can come forth from the people.

### Surprises

In a time when there appears to be public disapproval of an expanded government role, there didn't seem to be much reluctance to support incentives for business development or more state money for education.

There was strong interest in green technologies, driven not only by environmental and health concerns, but by economic opportunities with solar, wind, geothermal, etc.

Participants were not ready to give up on manufacturing, but they also appeared to understand that fundamental global and economic changes are upon us.

### A community challenge

The report warrants further study and interpretation. But something should be stressed: These are community goals. We expect many of the participants to stay involved, but it will take a community response to effectively address these challenges.

Dozens of institutions and organizations are already involved in efforts to improve economic development and education, so there may not be a need to establish new groups. However, citizens can challenge officials to embrace these goals and consider these actions. Certainly citizens who invested time and energy at the town meeting will be pushing for action.

That's not to say that town meeting participants don't also have responsibilities of their own. At the conclusion of the meeting, participants made their own public service pledge. Some made verbal commitments, and all were asked to fill out a post card that will be mailed to their home to remind them of what they pledged to do.

### Civic engagement and decision making

Participation in an event like this is inherently valuable. For some, the experience can be transformative. The "We the People" Town Meeting is another demonstration of how civic engagement is working its way into the fabric of our community.

Citizens expect to have an opportunity to have a voice in major decisions before they are made, and community leaders are gaining an appreciation for the collective, common sense wisdom of the people.

This brings to mind a story of an English scientist who visited a livestock fair in 1906. Visitors were asked to guess the weight of an ox after it had been slaughtered and dressed. There were 787 visitors. Not one guessed the correct weight of 1,198 pounds, but the average of all the guesses came to 1,197. The collective wisdom of the people.

Thomas Jefferson said that if we think people are not enlightened enough to exercise control of the ultimate powers of society, the remedy is not to take power from them, but to inform their judgment with education.

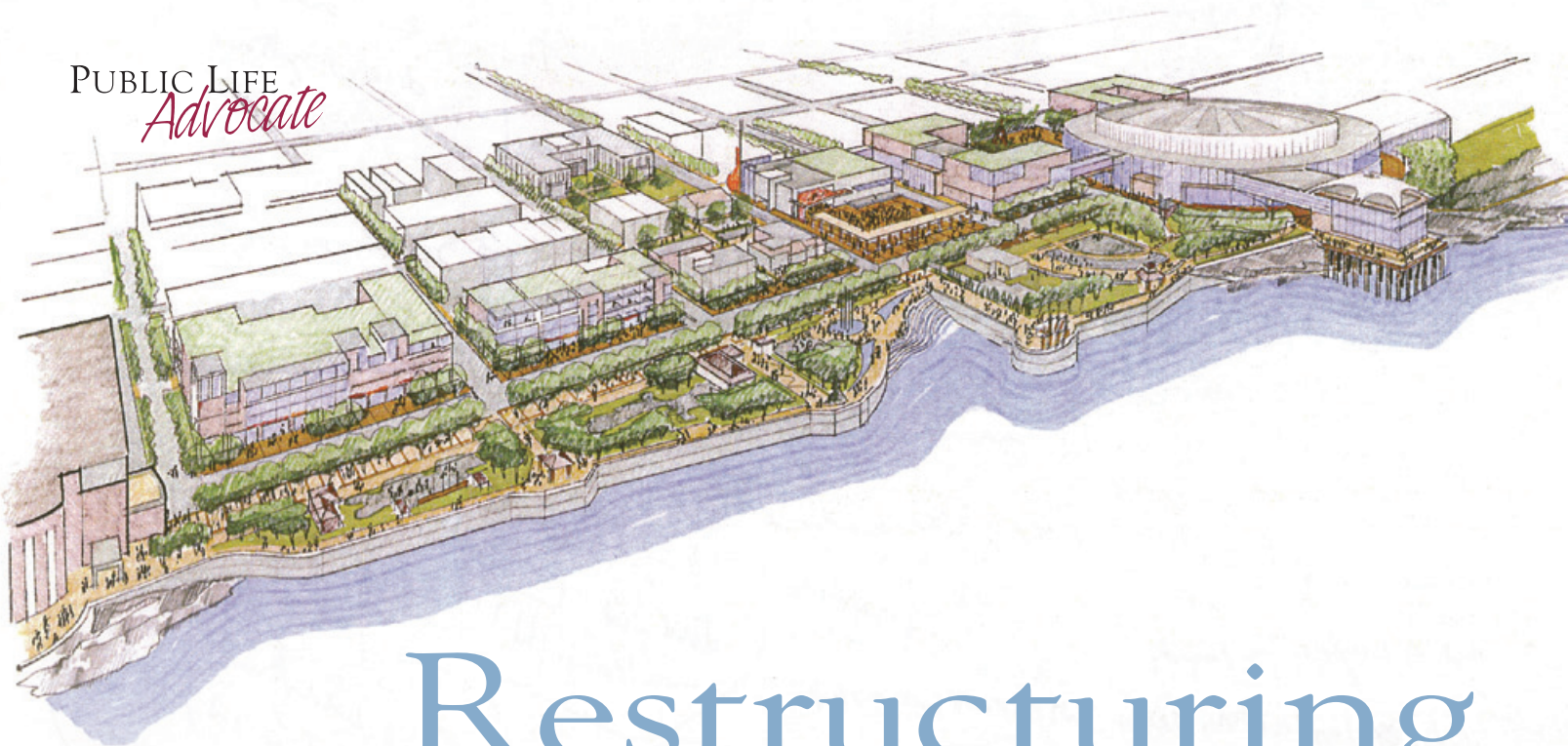
Where will participatory democracy be in five years, ten years with laptops and iPads and Facebook and who knows what in our future? Someone in Costa Rica watched our town meeting on a webcast. Scores of people tweeted through the meeting. Volunteer table facilitators traveled from other states at their own expense to assist us with the town meeting.



Word is getting around about what we are doing in Owensboro-Daviess County. There was an observer here from New Hampshire. The state education secretary drove down from Frankfort to observe our town meeting. Several statewide groups have contacted us; they're interested in organizing comparable town meetings in cities across Kentucky to examine state budget challenges.

High tech seems to be where things are going, but high touch – that is, sitting across the table and engaging in face-to-face dialogue – may have more value than ever. It helps officials understand the views of their informed constituents. It helps us gain empathy for one another. It helps us build a sense of community. It helps us ignite a spark of citizenship that can last a lifetime.





# Restructuring

## DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

### to maximize citizen participation

Despite the extensive construction underway in downtown Owensboro, the implementation of the master plan is in its infancy. The downtown plan consists of more than \$100 million in public sector investments intended to stimulate even more private sector investments. A convention center and hotel, the redevelopment of the Executive Inn property, street improvements, expanded parks and plazas, mixed-use projects and more are in store. Each will involve a set of decisions – decisions that warrant open and transparent information sharing and public dialogue.

To this point, some decisions regarding downtown have been characterized by openness and transparency; others have not. When officials have not engaged the community effectively, citizens have become increasingly confused and suspicious. It is time to learn from these experiences and restructure the downtown decision making process so that citizens can be kept informed, have their questions answered, and be allowed to have a meaningful role in this ambitious array of community projects.

### **Citizens have participated in downtown projects...**

**Riverfront improvements.** When the \$40 million federal government earmark for the Owensboro riverfront was announced by Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell more than 10 years ago, there was a conscious effort to engage the public in the riverfront plan. PRIDE, a community group that promotes aesthetic improvements,

held the first public workshop, designed and moderated by Henry Sanoff Ph.D., Professor of Architecture at North Carolina State University and author of the book, *Community Participation Methods in Design and Planning*.

*Citizens are more likely to embrace something that they help create.*

The design firm EDSA incorporated the results from this workshop in its design process and held additional meetings with students, stakeholders and interested citizens.

**The people's vision.** The 600 participants in the 2007 "We the People" Town Meeting challenged community leaders to "transform" downtown Owensboro. To a great extent, the town meeting was the impetus for the adoption of the

downtown master plan, including the public sector investment that was central to it.

The master planning process was administered by Gateway Consulting, a Texas firm that has pioneered the "placemaking" planning concept. Jennifer Wright, project manager of the We the People Town Meeting and Shelly Nichols, project manager of We the People Town Meeting implementation, developed and managed the public participation dimension of this planning process.

The plan involved hundreds of citizens. They reacted to plans and designs in focus group and stakeholder meetings, community workshops, and other public meetings. There appeared to be widespread community support for the plan.

**The future of the Executive Inn property.** When the Executive Inn property was acquired, several hundred citizens participated in a special “We the People” community workshop to bring into focus a community vision for that property.

Currently volunteers serve on several committees connected with the downtown plan:

**Downtown Development Commission (DDC)** The DDC is essentially a sounding board that receives occasional updates from Downtown Development Director, Fred Reeves. In June 2007, prior to the hiring of the Gateway firm, the DDC developed a report and recommendations that were helpful in the placemaking master planning process.

**Downtown Events Center Steering Committee** Volunteers with experience in construction, tourism and entertainment serve on this committee. They supervised site selection, the architectural Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process and the recommendation of an architect for the events center project. They also supervised a market study and site analysis conducted by CityVisions, a Louisville consulting firm.

This committee will continue to supervise the largest of the planned downtown projects.

**Owensboro-Daviess County Industrial Development Authority (IDA)** The IDA is the legal mechanism used in the financing of the events center and other public sector projects. The IDA will be used until the events center is developed and transferred to the city.

**Owensboro Historic Preservation Board** This group, staffed by architect Nathan Nunley, administers the Downtown Design Guidelines including façade restoration, signage and other design issues.

**Cultural Organizations Review Panel** A study group directed to develop recommendations to stabilize and sustain local cultural organizations.

## But citizens have not had a significant role in several important decisions

### Public opinion started to shift

Until a master plan was developed, cost estimates could not have been prepared. Once a plan was adopted with a price tag, officials could examine various financing options. Anytime a tax increase is suggested, there is inevitable opposition.

## THE PLAN

### What projects comprise the downtown plan?

#### Projects funded primarily by the federal government

- Riverfront improvements
  - RiverPark Center Patio\* \$3.1 million
  - McConnell Plaza\* \$4.9 million
  - English Park Boat Ramp and Improvements\* \$5.5 million
  - River Wall \$36.1 million
- Audubon Transit Facility and Parking Garage\* \$6.4 million  
(An additional \$885,000 from Audubon Area Community Services)

#### Projects funded by county government

- Convention Center \$20 million est.

#### Projects funded by city government

- Land acquisition and demolition of Executive Inn\* \$6.6 million
- Purchase of State office building\* \$1.1 million
- Convention Center (balance) \$7 million (est.)
- Riverfront Crossing/Smother's Park/Veteran's Blvd. \$30.5 million
- Street and Sidewalk Improvements
  - Second Street \$2.5 million
  - Frederica Street \$2.5 million
  - River Wall \$4.5 million

#### Projects funded by the private sector

- Master Plan\* \$142,000
- RiverPark Center patio\* (BB&T Foundation) \$1.0 million
- Hotel – Hampton Suites (Malcolm Bryant Corp.) \$20 million est.
- Larry Conder\* \$2 million
- Other property owner investments\* \$950,000
- Business owner investments\* \$225,000
- Announced projects  
(First Security Bank and Red Pixel Studios) to be determined

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<b>Funded by the federal government</b>	<b>\$56.0 million</b>
<b>Funded by county government</b>	<b>\$20.0 million</b>
<b>Funded by city government</b>	<b>\$54.7 million</b>
<b>Funded by the private sector</b>	<b>\$24.3 million</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$155 million</b>

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#### Future projects under consideration

Estimates to be determined

Bluegrass Center  
Farmer's Market Pavilion  
Arts Academy  
Street car  
Parking  
Private sector → offices, retail shops, residences, services  
restaurants, entertainment, hotel  
redevelopment of Executive Inn property

\* completed projects

## As decisions are made about downtown, citizens from all walks of life deserve to have a place at the table.

However, this opposition could have been softened had a cost-benefit analysis been prepared and distributed widely throughout the community.

### Citizens were *not* given an opportunity to participate in a meaningful way in:

- **Project financing.** Beyond the mandated public hearings, citizens were not given an opportunity to participate in the deliberations connected with the financing of the master plan. The option of financing the city's \$80 million portion of the plan with an increase in the insurance tax over an increase in the property tax or occupational tax may have been the most appropriate tool, but the issue became contentious when many citizens concluded that this critical decision was made before there was an opportunity for meaningful public dialogue and deliberations.
- **Traffic changes.** ENTRAN, the transportation firm that studied options for converting Second Street to a more "pedestrian friendly" street, held two mandated public meetings. However, the firm's recommendations were essentially set and public participation was perfunctory.

Recently officials have challenged the need to follow ENTRAN's recommendations. This has confused and agitated the public even more.

- **Architect selection.** The Downtown Events Center Steering Committee led the task of soliciting requests for qualifications, reviewing submissions and making a recommendation to city and county governments for the architect to be retained for the events center project. By all accounts committee members managed this process admirably.

However, the committee could have allowed the public to review and comment on the proposals, or at least the finalists. Local taxpayers are paying for the new events center; they should have a voice in the selection of the firm that will be determining the design of one of the most important public buildings in our community.

## Citizens with leadership roles in the downtown master plan

### Downtown Development Corporation

Overall advisory group used as a sounding board. Fred Reeves, Downtown Development Director, reports to the group routinely.

#### Members:

Terry Woodward, Chair  
Phil Clark  
Keith Free  
Shannon Meyer  
Abby Shelton

Rodney Berry  
Gene Clemons  
Chris Love  
Nate Pagan  
Mike Wallace

**Appointed by:** Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corp., city and the old Downtown Owensboro, Inc.

**Reports to:** No direct report

**Meetings:** 12:00 p.m. Third Thursday (or when called)

### Downtown Events Center Steering Committee

Oversees the planning, design, construction and operations planning for the events/convention center.

#### Members:

Judge Executive Reid Haire  
David Johnson  
Larry Maglinger  
Mike Riney

Mike Horn  
Sally Knight Barker  
Mayor Ron Payne

**Appointed by:** Owensboro City Commission and Daviess County Fiscal Court

**Reports to:** Owensboro-Daviess County Industrial Development Authority

**Meetings:** Scheduled 4th Wednesday every month and as needed

### Owensboro-Daviess County Industrial Development Authority

Has final authority over the convention center project under an interlocal agreement to be drawn up between Daviess County Fiscal Court, the Owensboro City Commission and the Industrial Development Authority, whose members are appointed by the two governing bodies. Downtown Events Center Steering Committee reports to this body.

#### Members:

Bill Parrish, Chair  
County Judge Executive Reid Haire  
Mayor Ron Payne

Susan Free  
John Kazlauskas  
Tony Sook

**Appointed by:** Three members appointed by the Mayor and three appointed by the County Judge Executive Owensboro City Commission and Daviess County Fiscal Court

**Reports to:**

**Meetings:** 4th Thursday of each month, City Hall Room 406, 10:00 a.m.



- **Developer proposals and incentive package.** Following a Request for Proposal process, The Malcolm Bryant Corporation was selected as the developer of the hotel that will attach to the new events center. The proposals from all the developers should have been made public. Likewise, the incentive package should have been deliberated in public.

## More public participation is warranted

Given its size and scope, it is time to re-affirm that citizens should be the driving force in the implementation of the downtown master plan:

- Additional committees should be formed, and citizens from diverse walks of life should be invited to serve on these committees.
- Every major decision should involve an opportunity for public dialogue and deliberation.
- And all meetings of these groups should be open meetings – whether or not required by law.

Moreover, the following steps would enhance public participation and confidence in the implementation of the downtown master plan:

### Downtown Development Commission (DDC)\*

- The role and authority of the DDC should be clarified.
- Other committees should report to this commission.

### Downtown Events Center Committee\*

- As the committee faces major decisions, the options under consideration should be presented and the public should be invited to share impressions and recommendations.

### Stakeholders Committee

- Form a committee to ensure that the ideas and concerns of individuals and organizations that have made investments in downtown or that will be directly affected by the downtown plan receive proper consideration.
- This could include: downtown property owners, downtown businesses and tenants, facilities and groups that cater to visitors and tourists, etc.

### Cultural Organizations Review Panel\* → Arts Committee

- Since the arts have such an important role in downtown and may have an even greater role in the future, establish an arts committee to ensure that the downtown master plan facilitates the health and sustainability of all the arts: Art Guild, International Bluegrass Music Museum, Owensboro Dance Theater, Owensboro Museum of Fine Art, Owensboro Museum of Science

## Citizens with leadership roles in the downtown master plan (continued)

### **Owensboro Historic Preservation Board**

Administers the Downtown Design Guidelines connected with façade treatments, signage and more. Works with Nathan Nunley, city architect.

#### **Members:**

Ted Lolly, Chair  
Ed Allen  
Jack Braden

Gary Adams  
Terry Blake  
Kim Johnson

**Appointed by:** Mayor and approved by City Commission

**Reports to:** Mayor and City Commission

**Meetings:** None at present

### **Cultural Organization Review Panel**

Ad hoc study group directed to study several cultural and arts agencies and make recommendations to advance the sustainability of various community arts and cultural organizations and facilities.

#### **Members:**

Helen Mountjoy, Chair  
Sara Hemingway  
Robin Mercer

Martha Clark  
Scott McCain  
Jerry Morris

**Appointed by:** Owensboro City Commission

**Reports to:** Owensboro City Commission

**Meetings:** Preparing recommendations report; regular meetings concluded

## Consultants

### **EDSA (design firm)**

- Riverfront
- Riverfront Crossing
- Street-sidewalk improvements

### **Gateway Consulting**

- Master Plan

### **ENTRAN**

- Transportation planning

### **Trahan Architects**

- Convention center architectural firm

### **CityVisions**

- Convention center site plan, market study
- Redevelopment plan for Executive Inn property

## Local Staff

Fred Reeves, Downtown Development Director

Nathan Nunley, architect

Ted Lolley, structural engineer (riverfront)

and History, Owensboro Symphony Orchestra, RiverPark Center, Theater Workshop, Back Alley Players, college and high school arts organizations, emerging organizations and others.

- The Cultural Organizations Review Panel could transition into such a role.

#### **Traffic and Parking Committee**

- Establish a committee as a public sounding board and liaison with stakeholders as it relates to “calming” or redirecting traffic, making downtown more pedestrian friendly, or adding parking for the public and downtown workers.

#### **Historic Preservation Board\* → Design Committee**

- Expand the role of the Historic Preservation Board to monitor broader design issues with regard to new construction, renovations, restorations, façade treatments, signage, usage connected with the overlay district, etc.
- The committee could also focus on the location and design of green space, plazas and sidewalk bump-outs, street furniture, signage, and more.

#### **Business Development Committee**

- Form a committee to develop a tenant mix plan and pro-active strategy to attract target businesses to downtown: restaurants, retail, services and more – new businesses, businesses to relocate or expand to downtown.

#### **Financial Reporting Committee**

- Form a committee to supervise quarterly disclosures of revenue and expenses associated with the downtown master plan: design, administration, consultants, construction, change orders, budget amendments and more.

#### **Public Information Committee**

- Establish a committee to keep the public informed of the implementation of the downtown master plan: public forums, website, public access television, blog/newsletter, newspaper column or insert, tours, etc.

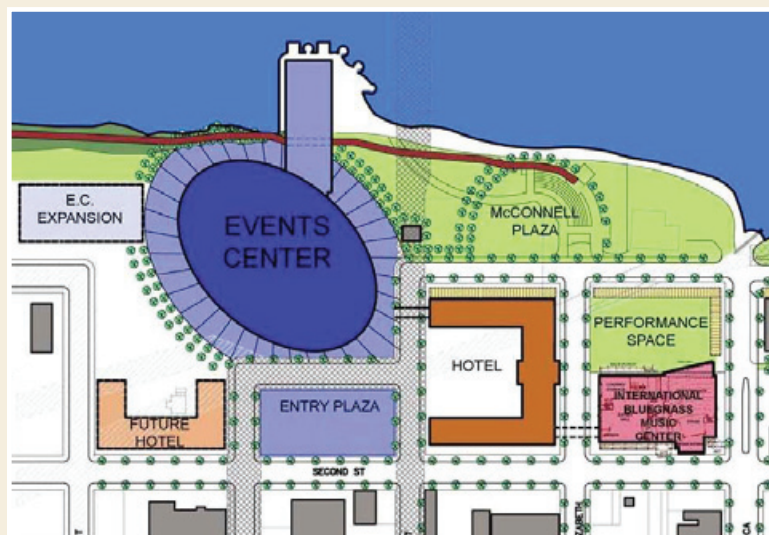
Such a committee structure would require administrative attention to convene meetings, prepare agendas, etc. Each committee will need a responsible chair, co-chair and recording secretary. An extra effort should be made to attract committee members whose skills and interests complement the work of the committee. It should be stressed to prospective committee members that they are expected to commit to attendance and to making this a top civic priority.

Committee meetings should be held at locations and times that are convenient for the general public. Forums, workshops or other tools to engage the community need to occur as well. All meetings and events should be promoted widely and be open to the public.

It may make sense to combine some of these committees, but the current structure does not allow ample opportunities for the public to monitor the projects and participate as is warranted.

Considering the financial pressures facing governments at all levels and the financial pressures facing taxpayers in our community as a result of the lingering national recession, it is more important than ever for the citizens of Owensboro-Daviess County to understand how their money is being spent on the downtown master plan and the benefits from that investment.

\* established committees





# Building Trust

Ten things officials of governments, public agencies and major private nonprofit organizations can do to build trust and confidence of the people

1. Stop the secrecy.

Open the process. Even if public meetings are not mandated, set a higher standard and establish a policy that all meetings connected with your organization are to be open.

2. Make participation as convenient as possible.

If we are serious about valuing public participation, then we need to make an effort to hold meetings at convenient times and locations for most people.

3. Be sensitive to stakeholders.

Make sure that there has been an assessment of the impact of a project, decision or policy on those individuals and organizations that could be directly affected by it.

4. Involve citizens in substantive matters.

It's one thing to ask citizens to develop a vision; it's something else for them to wrestle with the cost and tradeoffs. The public needs to understand the options, costs, consequences, the shades of gray involved in difficult decisions.

5. Make public dialogue part of the routine process.

Every major community project should have a citizens committee connected to it to work in liaison with and advise officials and policymakers. When it comes to major decisions, public dialogue and deliberation should also be routine procedure.

6. Level with the public.

When there are complications – for example:  
...When the environmental problems associated with the state building property made it problematic to demolish the building – we should shoot straight with the public.  
...If there are legitimate reasons why traffic doesn't have to be changed on Second Street despite an earlier recommendation that it was essential to make the street more pedestrian friendly, take time to explain that to the public.

7. Value the voice of all.

Citizens can tell when officials are really interested in what they have to say. Take time to listen to people – people from all walks of life – before the decision is made.

8. Welcome questions.

When citizens raise legitimate questions and concerns, they deserve an honest response. So often these citizens are inappropriately branded as uninformed, biased, or troublemakers.

9. Be decisive, open-minded.

Have the courage to make unpopular decisions, to be thick-skinned and stand up for what you believe is right. But also be willing to change your mind after you've heard all the facts and understood various perspectives.

10. Serve the common good.

Serving the public interest is more important than doing favors for friends, family, or other private or personal interests. Protecting the public interest is more important than protecting and sustaining an organization.



# RECYCLING: Which option makes the most sense?

Imagine newspapers, plastic, cardboard, glass and aluminum cans stacked 18 feet high (about two stories) covering the football field at Owensboro High School's Rash Stadium. That amount of recyclable materials could be diverted from the Daviess County Landfill annually – if we had curbside recycling in Owensboro-Daviess County, according to Steve Janson of Resource Recycling.

This estimate is based on the volume generated from Bowling Green and Warren County. That community's curbside program collects 4.6 million pounds of recyclable materials each year.

The interest in expanded recycling was the top recommendation from more than 600 participants in the 2007 "We the People" AmericaSpeaks town meeting. Subsequently, a group of town meeting participants formed the Environmental Impact Council (EIC) that researched the issue further and concluded that our community needs a curbside recycling program.

Currently there is one recycling drop-off station in the city (West Seventh Street) and none in the county.

Many other Kentucky cities have curbside recycling programs, including: Henderson, Louisville, Lexington, Bowling Green and Frankfort.

Costs range from zero in Louisville (where there is no designated fee associated with the service, covered through property taxes) to \$4.50 per month in Lexington. The average cost is approximately \$5.00 per month. The service costs \$2.15 per month in Bowling Green with weekly pick-up.

Owensboro City Manager Bill Parrish projects that it would cost approximately a million dollars per year for the City to provide a curbside service. According to Parrish, the current \$12 per month sanitation fee would need to be increased to \$16 per month. That assumes that the City would not draw from its \$10 million sanitation reserve fund to offset all or part of the monthly fees.

EIC advocates have encouraged city and/or county governments to request proposals from prospective private vendors. Specifications would need to be prepared so that proposals can be compared fairly and accurately.

## **According to advocates (such as [recycling-revolution.com](http://recycling-revolution.com)), recycling:**

- reduces fees that go to the landfill
- creates jobs (for every job created in collecting recyclables, 26 jobs are created to process materials and manufacture them into other products)
- saves businesses millions of dollars
- saves 17 trees for every ton of recycled paper
- saves enough energy from one recycled glass bottle to light a bulb for four hours
- reduces water and air pollution (including greenhouse gases)
- saves energy and reduces our reliance on foreign oil
- prevents habitat destruction when there is less logging

Local governments participate in the "Cool Cities" and "Cool Counties" programs whereby they pledge to adopt environmentally sensitive policies. Establishing curbside recycling is compatible with those program goals.

## **Opponents of curbside recycling say that:**

- the benefits are exaggerated
- taxpayers have an investment in the landfill and it should be used
- our landfill can meet our needs for decades
- new products and techniques have eliminated many of the environmental concerns
- it is not fair for those who do not recycle to have to pay for it
- government should step aside and let the private sector provide these services

The private sector is responding to the need in a limited way. B & J Sanitation offers bi-weekly curbside recycling services to customers on their sanitation routes for \$4.00 per month and for \$10.00 per month to those outside their routes.



There appears to be widespread appeal for curbside recycling. The hesitation centers around the potential added costs and the potential need to make it mandatory.

### What are the options?

1. Leave the service as it is and allow the private sector to meet the needs of the marketplace.
2. Increase the drop-off locations to make recycling more convenient for more people, particularly our senior population.
3. Add curbside service
  - a. through a mandatory fee for all, whether or not one recycles
  - b. whose cost is absorbed by city and/or county government with no additional or designated fee connected with the service
  - c. by providing incentives to enable private vendors to expand to curbside service

The public has expressed support for not only expanded recycling, but a curbside service. During the lingering downturn in the economy, any additional fee would not be popular.

- **What is the best option?**
- **What are we willing to pay?**
- **Would other public services or facilities suffer?**
- **Is there any downside to seeking proposals from private vendors?**
- **What are your views?**

### Share your views:

Owensboro Mayor Ron Payne | [mayor@owensboro.org](mailto:mayor@owensboro.org)

City Commissioner Roger Stacy | [stacyrl@owensboro.org](mailto:stacyrl@owensboro.org) (Jan. 2011)

City Commissioner Pam Smith-Wright | [smith-wrightpl@owensboro.org](mailto:smith-wrightpl@owensboro.org) (Jan. 2011)

City Commissioner David Johnson | [johnsondl@owensboro.org](mailto:johnsondl@owensboro.org)

City Commissioner Jeff Sandford | [sanfordjs@owensboro.org](mailto:sanfordjs@owensboro.org) (Jan. 2011)

Daviess County Judge-Executive Al Mattingly | [amattingly@daviessky.org](mailto:amattingly@daviessky.org) (Jan. 2011)

County Commissioner Charlie Castlen | [ccastlen@daviessky.org](mailto:ccastlen@daviessky.org) (Jan. 2011)

County Commissioner Jim Lambert | [jlambert@daviessky.org](mailto:jlambert@daviessky.org)

County Commissioner George Wathen | [gwathen@daviessky.org](mailto:gwathen@daviessky.org) (Jan. 2011)

Environmental Impact Council | [shelly.nichols@plfo.org](mailto:shelly.nichols@plfo.org)

Sierra Club | Aloma Dew [dew@sierraclub.org](mailto:dew@sierraclub.org) | Ben Taylor [benataylor@earthlink.net](mailto:benataylor@earthlink.net)

## What next for Ben Hawes Park?

Ben Hawes Park has had a mercurial past. Originally a 298 acre city park acquired in 1962, by 1964 it featured Owensboro-Daviess County's first 18-hole and Par-3 public golf courses. Hawes Park also featured a playground, softball field, tennis court, hiking trail and an archery range.

In 1974, in one of his final acts as Governor of Kentucky, Owensboro native Wendell Ford announced that Ben Hawes Park would be incorporated into the state parks system and enhanced with a lodge, camping facilities, horseback trails, cabins and other features that typified other state parks. Moreover, additional property acquisition was in the plan, and Hawes Park was to be the first state park located on the Ohio River.

When Julian Carroll assumed the position of governor following Ford's election to the U.S. Senate, Ford's ambitious plans were put on hold – indefinitely.

Through the years, the state parks department made improvements, but Hawes Park never measured up to the expectations of the community.

Through various governors, state parks and tourism leaders, Hawes Park struggled to identify its niche. A wave pool was suggested. A coal mine replica. Fleeting ideas that failed to gain momentum.

In 1990, a citizen task force and the University of Kentucky recommended another plan. Their proposal was well-conceived, ambitious yet attainable over time. The plan included:

- Campgrounds (Owensboro had none and the closest facility was at Diamond Lake Resort 15 miles west of Owensboro.)
- Fishing lake

- Cottages
- Meeting facility
- Marina at Little Hurricane Island
- Open Range Horseback Riding
- Additional property acquisition and parking

The plan was well-received but, with limited state funding, the plan was not implemented.

In 2001, the Owensboro-Daviess County Tourist Commission proposed another development plan for Hawes Park that included many of the previous features, plus a coal mine museum, lodge, mountain bike trails, and more.

Subsequently, a gift from Sara McNulty was the impetus for the state's acquisition of additional acreage to expand Hawes Park. Hiking trails have been added on that property.

In 2010, state government agreed to sell the state office building in downtown Owensboro in exchange for the City of Owensboro taking ownership of Hawes Park.

- Where might Hawes Park fit into the city parks master plan?
- What ideas from previous efforts and studies still have merit?
- What has been learned from other communities? Are there now new and better ideas to consider?
- What features and facilities should be added?
- Should the city purchase more property?
- Would there be value in the property being developed and managed cooperatively with the county parks department?

## Congratulations... and thank you, to all local candidates

As an organization that promotes civic involvement, we express our sincere thanks to all those who offered their service to our community by running for elected office.

Compared with state and national elections, the recent local campaigns were civil and substantive. Congratulations... and thanks to all.

### **Owensboro City Commissioner**

Harold Jewell	David L. Johnson
James Lacy Kamuf	John Kazlauskas
Jim Lott	Jeff Sanford
Pamela L. Smith-Wright	Roger Stacy

### **Daviess County Attorney**

Claud Porter

### **Daviess County Clerk**

David "Oz" Osborne

### **Constable**

B. Ray Westerfield, Central	David Allen Underhill, East
Pat O'Bryan, West	Paul E. Westerfield, West

### **Coroner**

Jeff Jones

### **Daviess County Commissioner**

Charlie Castlen, Central	Michael W. Koger, Central
Jim Lambert, East	James R "Jim" O'Brien, East
John Warren, West	George L. C. Wathen, West

### **Daviess County Surveyor**

Paul G. Cecil

### **Daviess County School Board**

Mike Clark, #1	Randall E. King, #2
Alben B. Shockley, #2	David A. Walden, #2
Merritt Bates-Thomas, #5	

### **District Court Judge**

Patrick T Flaherty, Division II  
Lisa Payne Jones, Division I  
David Payne, Division II  
Daniel "Nick" Burlew, Division III

### **Jailer**

C. Scott Norris	David Osborne
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### **Justice of the Peace**

Philip D Newsock, Central	Linda Reed Perry, East
Paul G. Moore, West	Christopher A. Saalwaechter, East

### **Daviess County Judge Executive**

Bruce Kunze  
Al Mattingly Jr.

### **Owensboro School Board**

John D. Blaney	Nancy E. Eskridge
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### **Property Valuation Administrator**

Sandy Dawdy	Steve Marksberry
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### **Daviess County Sheriff**

Keith Cain

### **Soil and Water Conservation District**

Guy Hardy	Mark Irby
Jeff M. Rice	Wallace Taylor

### **State Representative**

Paul Estep, District 14	John Arnold, District 7
Jim Gooch, District 12	Ben Boarman, District 13
Jim Glenn, District 13	Tommy Thompson, District 14
Dwight Butler, District 18	

### **State Senator District 8**

David Boswell	Joe Bowen
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### **U.S. Congress**

Brett Guthrie	Eddie Marksberry
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### **Whitesville Commissioner**

Jonathan H. Baker	Greg Beyke
John O. "Bud" Boarman	Joseph Buddy Mattingly
Patsy Mayfield	

### **Whitesville Mayor**

Mike Nugent





## *Ronald Lee Logsdon*

Ron Logsdon, a dear friend and avid supporter of our work at the Public Life Foundation, died Saturday, December 18, 2010.

Ron was the ultimate gentlemen, a man of faith, a diligent scholar, a tireless advocate for the poor and marginalized, and a remarkably effective administrator.

Over 39 years, Ron developed Audubon Area Community Services (AACS) from a four-county agency with a million dollar budget and a staff of 65 to a \$50 million organization and a staff of 900 serving 34 counties in 2001.

Under Ron's leadership, AACS administered an array of facilities and services: from Head Start to transportation, low-income housing to substance abuse, child care management and licensing to Stephen Covey personal growth training, a new downtown parking garage to a planned nonprofit resource center, and much more.

Ron had a knack for seizing opportunities and finding a way to make good things happen.

He had a keen interest in public dialogue and deliberation, participating in task forces with the Kettering Foundation, the board of directors of Community Conversations, and as a "Theme Team" member in the 2007 and 2010 "We the People" AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meetings.

He was a graduate of Leadership Owensboro and Leadership Kentucky, an active leader in the Blue Ridge Institute for Southern Community Service Executives, president of the Southeastern Association of Community Action Agencies, an officer in the Investigators Club, a monthly host of the foreign film club, a respected genealogist (including his authorship of the Hager family history prepared for a community tribute to the Hager family in 2009).

Ron touched so many lives and made a remarkable contribution in his 67 years.

*He will be remembered, but he cannot be replaced.*