



2007

ANNUAL REPORT



“A Year of Engagement”

In his State of the County address, Daviess County Judge-Executive Reid Haire referred to 2007 as “a year of engagement.” Central to that observation was the unprecedented public assembly made possible by our foundation, other generous sponsors and a host of committed volunteers who organized the “We the People” AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting on November 10.

Partnering with AmericaSpeaks, we introduced an ambitious new form of participatory democracy that enhanced the town meeting concept with modern technology to more effectively capture the views and recommendations of participants. The result: an unprecedented exercise in citizenship and public deliberation.

Also in 2007, the foundation raised questions and facilitated public participation in what proved to be a controversial proposal for a tax increment financing (TIF) and arena-convention center proposal for Highway 54.

Following our process of information → deliberation → action, we

- published articles and issue briefs
- held forums, panels discussions, focus group idea sharing sessions
- supported citizen groups with coaching, training, foundation research and grants

Consequently, more people have been alerted to problems and intrigued with possibilities. More have listened and learned and gained respect for people from other walks of life. More feel empowered and are rolling up their sleeves, getting involved and making a difference.



Information

Published Articles and Issue Briefs (2007)

“We the People” 21st Century Town Meeting Participant Guide

- [A Community Committed to Education and Learning](#)
- [A Region of Opportunity and Appeal](#)
- [A Uniquely Green and Clean Environment](#)
- [A Healthy and Caring Community](#)
- [A Government for the 21st Century](#)

Health Care

- [Update on local health care costs, by Fran Ellers](#)
- [Questions on OMHS building plans and site selection](#)
- [Health care transparency](#)
- Re-publication of healthcare articles

Education

- Re-publication of misc. education articles
- [Mixed emotions on county school expansion](#)
- [Education to build the economy, by Judy Jones Owens](#)

Downtown/Urban Redevelopment

- [Need for an urban investment strategy](#)
- [Are we missing opportunities with minor league baseball?](#)
- [Issue Brief/Dialogue Guide: Where should we build the arena?](#)
- [Smith-Werner building highlights Main Street](#)
- [Urban garden worth replicating](#)
- [Issue brief/dialogue guide: Saving the Executive Inn](#)
- [Results of Executive Inn forum](#)
- [Issue Brief/Dialogue Guide: What now for Downtown and the Riverfront?](#)

Community Development and Appeal

- [Reasons to be bullish on Owensboro-Daviess County](#)
- [What will it take to bring young people back to our community?](#)
- [Ice arena decision reveals flawed site selection process](#)
- Advertisement (full-page) raising questions regarding Gateway Commons proposal
- Compilation of pros and cons on Gateway Commons proposal

Government and Taxation

- [Comments on city-county tax issues debate](#)
- [Candidates for Governor: Listen to Daviess Countians \(state budget\)](#)

Openness and Transparency

- [Need to keep the public in the loop](#)

Arts

- [Mystery festival: whodunit?](#)
- [Museum poised for bluegrass music growth](#)



Dialogue & Deliberation

“We the People” AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting

- 650 participants (7 hours on a Saturday)
- Participation reflected demographic profile
- 67 table discussions led by trained facilitators
- Laptop computers used to capture comments
- Trained “Theme Team” analyzed, sorted and re-presented key options for voting on individual keypads
- 60 volunteers served on planning committees over six months
- Services included breakfast and lunch, transportation, child care, translation, signing for the deaf and large print materials
- Five community goals examined in discussion periods
- Preliminary Report distributed as participants left the town meeting
- Final Report includes detail analysis
- Five work groups established for follow-up implementation

Fran Ellers – report for the University of Kentucky on PLFO and public deliberation

“Saving the Executive Inn” (public forum)

“What now for downtown and the riverfront?”

(online questionnaire accompanied issue brief)

“Kids that don’t have a chance” (focus group)

Sample activities of groups supported by the foundation:

- Citizens Committee on Education: Adult Literacy Issues and Challenges, Cheryl King Ph.D.
- Citizens Health Care Advocates: Community education and dialogue on health care issues such as autism, mental health, senior citizen care and grandparents who raise their grandchildren.
- PRIDE Visioning Exercise: Aesthetic appeal opportunities and challenges for Frederica Street
- Owensboro Area World Affairs Council: Community dialogue at lectures, panels and films
- Steve Austin, Bluegrass Tomorrow: Case Studies on Downtown Redevelopment



Action

The foundation provided staff assistance, financial support, advisory services, training, grant research, meeting space, filing, phone and mail service, database management and more to:

- Citizens Committee on Education
- Citizens Health Care Advocates
- Coalition for the Poor
- Goodfellows Club
- Owensboro Area World Affairs Council
- PRIDE
- Unity Coalition
- ad hoc task forces (e.g., youth dental care, prenatal care)

Citizen Action Resource Center

The foundation developed a conceptual model and is collaborating with other potential supporters to develop a facility and service for nonprofit organizations and an incubator program for emerging citizen groups.

“We the People” Work Groups

The foundation helped organize and continues to support the efforts of five citizen groups that were formed following the town meeting:

- A Community Committed to Education and Learning
- A Region of Opportunity and Appeal
- A Uniquely Green and Clean Community
- A Healthy and Caring Community
- A Government for the 21st Century

About the Foundation

Founders

John and Marjorie Hager (1996)

Mission

The Public Life Foundation facilitates broad and meaningful citizen participation in community decisions and public policy.

Values

We value the voice and concerns of all, particularly those who are poor and marginalized. We attempt to empower citizens from all walks of life through an open, just and democratic process. We promote stewardship, volunteerism and a community that solves problems by overcoming divisions between rich and poor, black and white, urban and rural, liberal and conservative.

Foundation Endowment

\$ 8.9 million (December, 2007)

Legal Status

Private, nonprofit 501(c)3 operating foundation

Officers

Sally Wood	Chair/Treasurer
Rodney Berry	President
Kathy Strobel	Secretary

Board of Directors

Denny Alford	Marjorie Hager
Susie Alford	Stewart Hager
Rodney Berry	Yolla Hager
Dave Boeyink, Ph.D.	Bill Speciale
Bruce Hager	Sally Wood
Lia Hager	

Staff

Rodney Berry	President
Beverly Mills	Project Manager
Liz Seibert	Project Manager
Kathy Strobel	Office Manager

Public Life Foundation of Owensboro
401 Frederica Street, B-203
Owensboro, Kentucky 42401
270/685-2652
www.plfo.org

