

Annual Report

2011



PUBLIC LIFE FOUNDATION OF OWENSBORO



Introduction



In 2011, the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro continued efforts to inform, engage and mobilize citizens to take a more meaningful role in public life. This can be of great value to participants directly, while it inherently leads to better community decisions and policies.

An essential part of that process is to provide reliable, balanced information. Much of this year was devoted to the Citistates study which included a 20-year update of the Peirce Report. The report, led by a veteran *New York Times* reporter and the Citistates CEO (who participated in the 1991 study) resulted from dozens of interviews over a five month period. The 40-page report included numerous recommendations related to economic growth, education, energy, livability and more. Some of those recommendations are already gaining traction.

The bullish report occurred during a national recession but at a time of bold public investments and significant physical changes to Owensboro's downtown riverfront. The foundation was called on to facilitate public participation in important decisions connected with the size and cost of the convention/ events center, the most ambitious component of the downtown plan.



The foundation brought attention to other public challenges and opportunities: Owensboro-Daviess County's funding of major public projects compared to other communities; state tax exemptions and the impact on state budget challenges, health care reform, environmental challenges and more.

Hundreds of citizens participated in our public forums, small group dialogue programs, various committees and task forces.

Information

Citistates Study

In 2011, the foundation retained Citistates (formerly the Neal Peirce Group) for a 20-year update and analysis of Owensboro-Daviess County. (The first study was commissioned by the *Messenger-Inquirer*.) The principal researchers and writers were veteran *New York Times* reporter Keith Schneider and Citistates CEO Curtis Johnson (who also participated in the 1991 study.)

Over a five month period, Citistates drew from dozens of interviews and released their report in three chapters during three public meetings: 1) Taking Stock: What Happened in 20 Years; 2) Underlying Big Decisions: An Owensboro Operating System that Works, Mostly; and 3) Next Up for Owensboro-Daviess County: Ideas and Investments That Stoke the Fires of Innovation. Chapter three included 12 recommendations.

The foundation has convened several meetings to facilitate community dialogue and implementation.

The Citistates report is available on the project website: www.civicpact.org.



WHAT'S DONE | A CIVIC PACT
WHAT'S NEXT |

Chapter One:
Taking Stock - What Happened in 20 Years

By Keith Schneider
Citistates Group



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Chapter Two:
Underlying Big Decisions, An Owensboro
Operating System That Works, Mostly

By Keith Schneider
Citistates Group



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Chapter Three:
Next Up for Owensboro and Daviess County:
A New Narrative That Stokes the Fires of Innovation

By Keith Schneider
Citistates Group

Public Life Advocate

The foundation published the following articles in the 2011 editions of the *Public Life Advocate*:

- *Town Meeting participants prioritize action steps.*
- *Downtown Events/Convention Center – Feb. 22 public meeting. Will Owensboro seize urban opportunities?*
- *The new health care reform law: What will it mean to Owensboro-Daviess County? A cost-benefit analysis.*
- *The state budget/tax reform gridlock: It's time to listen to the people.*

- Promoting, advancing the citizen role: 2010 Annual Report.
- Public forum participants support expanded downtown convention center plan.
- What's done, what's next: A civic pact. Citistates analyzes Owensboro-Daviess County.
- Doing it ourselves: When it comes to convention centers, arenas, arts centers and judicial centers, other Kentucky cities have relied much more on state funding.
- Exceptions for you, exceptions for me: Our state tax system is fraught with exemptions. Could a critical look at these special deals be a palatable approach toward fairness and a balanced budget?
- Toward a wiser public judgment: Excerpts from the new book by Daniel Yankelevich and Will Friedman



Public presentation on health care reform

The foundation sponsored a public presentation at Owensboro Community and Technical College on the proposed federal Affordable Care Act by a nonpartisan health care advocacy group, Kentucky Voices for Health.

Series on OMHS

The foundation continued to work with freelance journalist Steve Higgs to research and prepare a retrospective series of articles that traced the history of Owensboro Medical Health System from its origins as a German hospital, to a city-county public institution, through the merger with Our Lady of Mercy Hospital, the buyout of the Mercy partner, the conversion from a public hospital to a private nonprofit hospital (and the implications on openness and transparency), plans for the new hospital and existing campus, and more.

This comprehensive report is still in progress.

Public Dialogue & Deliberation

Downtown Convention Center Forums

At the request of Mayor Payne, the foundation conducted three public forums to examine issues associated with the proposed expansion of the new downtown convention center. The forums attracted more than 500 people and involved presentations by the city manager, project architects, construction managers and other consultants. The foundation joined city government to help organize and promote the forums. Following the events, the foundation prepared, analyzed and reported on the outcomes: comments made by forum participants and those reflected in post-forum questionnaires.

Convention Center Public Forum Questionnaire

1. The proposed convention center is
 the right size
 too large and should be scaled back
 too small and should be expanded

2. The increase in the local insurance tax is dedicated to the funding of approximately \$80 million for various downtown projects, including a convention center. Additional funds are needed. I prefer to:
 Use existing city resources or revenues
 Scale back the size of the convention center
 Scale back other components of the downtown plan
 Allow additional funds to be generated as a result of the downtown plan as we can reasonably afford - if the plan allows it

3. On a scale of 1 - 5 being the most favorable, rate your impressions of the proposed convention center(s):

Location	1	2	3	4	5
Size					
Appearance/Design					
Line of the waterfront					
Cost					
Impact on tourism and conventions					
Impact on the rest of downtown					
Impact on economic development					
Impact on community pride					
Impact on community image					

4. Other comments: _____

Demographic Information
 City of Owensboro resident
 Owensboro resident (outside the city)

Male Female

Age: 18-24 25-34 35-44 45+

Public Forum: A Nation in Debt

The foundation conducted a public forum using materials developed by the National Issues Forum. Approximately 50 citizens participated from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. They examined three options and 18 strategies for improving the financial condition of our nation, including the consequences of the various options and strategies. Before leaving, participants completed a questionnaire, also prepared by NIF. Results were made available publicly to the media, forum participants, public officials, and NIF as part of this nationwide exercise in public dialogue and deliberation.

A Nation in Debt: How Can We Pay the Bills?

FORUM RESULTS

Format
 Participants were randomly assigned seats to improve the likelihood that they would be exposed to diverse perspectives. Following the introductory and general info, participants watched a video that brought on the key points included in the issue booklet. Each table featured a trained facilitator and a scribe. There were three discussion periods associated with each topic, strategies and tradeoffs. This was followed by an open forum and polling through the use of electronic options. When the forum concluded, participants were handed an action checklist that listed ways for them to continue to learn. There were sample resources including contact sheets as well as how to contact elected officials to share their views.

Who participated?
 Fifty local residents participated in the dialogue and deliberation. 43 participated in the polling.
 Sixty-four percent of the participants were male. 36 percent were female.
 Only two percent of the participants were under 30 years of age. Forty-eight percent were 30 or older, and 45 percent were between 40 and 60. Seven percent were between 70 and 80 years of age.
 Fifty-two percent of the participants live in the city of Owensboro. Forty percent live in Daviess County outside Owensboro. Sixteen percent live outside the county.

Source of information
 Participants received an issue booklet that provided background material, facts, trends, and three options for addressing the issue. With each option, six strategies and tradeoffs were included. The booklet - and the video complement - were prepared by the National Issues Forum. A graphic, background, and other information through the financial support of the Kettering Foundation.

Statewide Town Meeting

The Commonwealth of Kentucky faces growing obligations, a structural deficit, and a biennial budget process that is mired in partisan and philosophical gridlock. The state legislature may find common ground and political courage to overcome these differences if legislators have access to the perspectives and conclusions of well-informed citizens on this issue.

Consequently, the foundation convened and encouraged leading philanthropic organizations in Kentucky to support a statewide town meeting on Kentucky state budget challenges. We introduced the AmericaSpeaks methodology as an option, and assisted in the preparation of proposals for some of the largest charitable entities in the state.

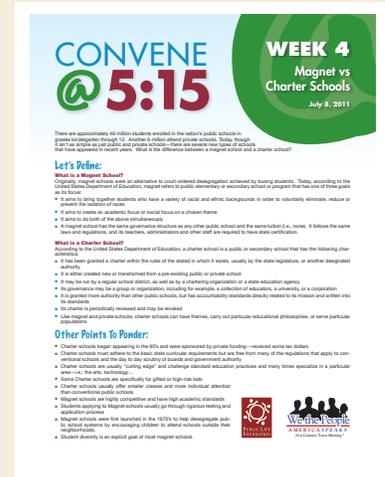
Unfortunately, the funding was not secured and there are no current plans for any statewide town meetings.

Health care focus groups (Amy Watts)

The foundation convened a local, diverse focus group for a discussion on health care access issues with Dr. Amy Watts through the Rural Health Initiative conducted by the University of Kentucky Center for Health Management and Research.

“Convene @ 5:15”

The foundation also conducted a series of small, informal group discussions on current topics: urban living, predatory lenders, air quality, magnet and charter schools. The “Conversation Café” format was used. The groups were typically small but the dialogue was robust.



Action

We the People

Many participants in the 2007 and 2010 “We the People” AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meetings® remain involved and informed. Several groups were organized and are still in place:

Citizens for Good Government Initiatives include:

- Leadership dinner with elected officials featuring talks on openness and transparency
- Openness and Transparency Pledge
- Candidates Forum
- How to Run for Office workshop

Region of Opportunity Team (ROOT) Initiatives include:

- Co-sponsored several public forums connected with the downtown plan.
- Sponsored a public presentation by Ed Riney, Owensboro Riverport President/CEO (when public officials were considering selling the Riverport).
- Supported Bicycle Owensboro effort.

Environmental Impact Council Initiatives include:

- Researched recycling programs in other cities
- Proposed curbside recycling to local governments

Interagency (Education and Health Task Force) Initiatives include:

- Holding regular information sharing sessions with local agency representatives.

Community Dental Clinic

The foundation was instrumental in establishing the clinic. President Rodney Berry is the former Board Chair and continues to serve on the Board of Directors. The clinic has served more than 5,300 patients since opening in August 2011.

Logsdon Center in President's Place (Nonprofit Resource Center)

The foundation continues to support efforts to establish a nonprofit resource center in space set aside by Audubon Area Community Services in its President's Place senior housing facility. Approximately \$200,000 needs to be raised to equip and furnish the center.

The foundation has helped define the mission and role of the center, held focus groups to solicit impressions and ideas from the nonprofit community, developed fundraising materials, and more.

Networking

Foundation President serves on local and state boards and committees, including: Lawrence and Augusta Hager Educational Foundation, Healthy Horizons, Regional Health Oversight Committee, WKU-O Advisory Committee, Friedell Committee, Kentucky Voices for Health, and more.

Office Manager Kathy Strobel serves on the Goodfellows Club Board of Directors. Shelly Nichols, Director of Civic Engagement for the foundation, serves on the Boy's and Girl's Club Board of Directors and is a graduate of Emerge Owensboro.

Sponsorships

The foundation occasionally supports local events as a sponsor: Human Relations Commission, NAACP, Go Green Conference, Health Needs Assessment, and others.

Administration

Foundation Assets

As of Dec. 31, 2011 foundation assets totaled \$7.3 million.

Operating Foundation

PLFO is an operating foundation (as opposed to a grantmaking entity.)

Operating Budget

In 2011, the foundation devoted \$485,500 to its programs, projects, operating overhead and staff.

Staff

Rodney Berry, President
Kathy Strobel, Office Manager and Board Secretary
Shelly Nichols, Director of Civic Engagement
Sharon Hagerman, Assistant to Mr. Hager (Founder)

Board of Directors

Sally Wood, Co-Chair	Bruce Hager, Co-Chair
Susie Alford, Treasurer	Stewart Hager
William Speciale	Rodney Berry