

## New Tech:

## Challenges on the forefront of educational innovation

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*by Madison Silvert*



# New Tech:

## Challenges on the forefront of educational innovation



New Tech Network

On May 17, 2014 Owensboro Public Schools (OPS) affiliated with New Tech, an educational model with 133 schools in 25 states. Owensboro's New Tech program, the first in Kentucky, will be known as the Greater Owensboro Innovation Academy.

The New Tech model features notable innovations, including an emphasis on:

- project-based learning
- open classroom design
- team and cross disciplinary teaching
- corporate partnerships
- community support
- career readiness

The program will require a year of preparation and teacher training led by experienced New Tech professionals.

New Tech is not a program for the gifted, nor is it a special education program. Although selection is highly competitive, the student socioeconomic composition will parallel that of the general population.

One hundred students will be selected per year for the first four years. Thereafter, as freshman classes are added, the total student enrollment will cap at 400.

Students will be allowed to participate in Owensboro High School extracurricular activities – athletics, band, theater, foreign language club, yearbook, and so on – even though those activities will not be offered at the NewTech campus.

New Tech will be administered by the Owensboro Board of Education, an elected body that hires and supervises the OPS school superintendent, under the normal review and funding from the Kentucky Department of Education.

## What is project-based learning?

### Project-based learning and New Tech Network

At the heart of the New Tech approach, project-based learning is contextual, creative, and shared. Students collaborate on meaningful projects that require critical thinking, creativity, and communication in order for them to answer challenging questions or solve complex problems. By making learning relevant to them in this way, students see a purpose for mastering state-required skills and content concepts.

Students aren't just assessed on their understanding of academic content, but on their ability to successfully apply that content when solving authentic problems. Through this process, project-based learning gives students the opportunity to develop the real life skills required for success in today's world.

Students from Owensboro Independent Schools, Daviess County Public Schools, Hancock County Schools, McLean County Schools, Owensboro Catholic Schools, or Whitesville Trinity will attend New Tech. The school is a unique partnership among the school districts and one that New Tech finds intriguing in a region our size.

Applications for the Coordinator of New Tech will be accepted in Fall 2014. Based on the response and enthusiasm at an informational meeting held in June, this position will be highly sought-after.

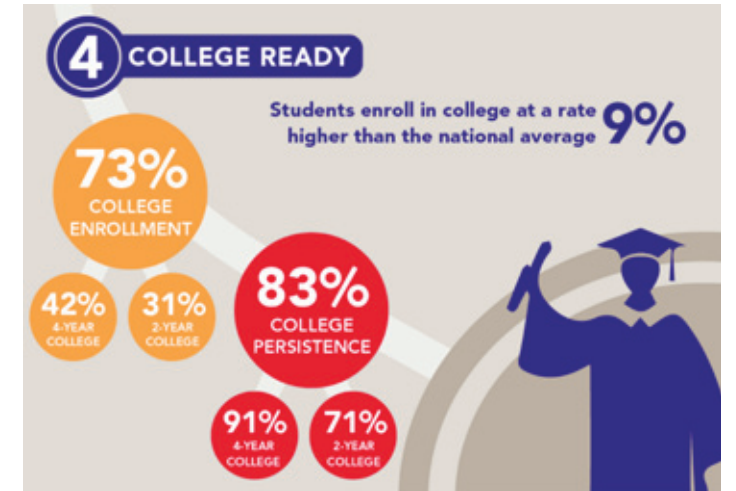
On a parallel track, teacher applications will be accepted and are expected to be highly competitive. Four to five teachers will be hired, but they will devote a year of training and preparation before they begin full immersion in the New Tech model.

Approximately 80 percent of teachers are expected to have a master's degree in their chosen field. They will be selected based on their enthusiasm for the New Tech model, capacity for innovation and teamwork, communication skills and adaptability to change as the program evolves.

Students who will enter the ninth grade in August 2015 may apply for admission into the first class of the New Tech program. An Enrollment Committee will review applications, letters of recommendation and other materials requested. The OPS Enrollment Committee will consist of the superintendent, two school board members, two faculty representatives, and two parent representatives.

Even though the New Tech student profile is comparable to that of the general public, typically graduates of the New Tech program exceed the average graduation rate by nine percent.

- 73 percent of New Tech students go on to college
- 42 percent go on to a four year college
- 31 percent go on to a two year college
- 83 percent of New Tech students persist in college, or go back after their first year.



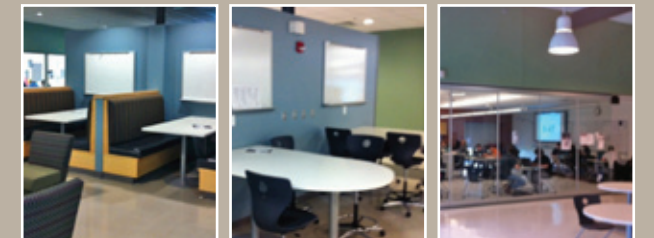
- 91 percent of New Tech students in a four year college continue after their first year
- 71 percent of New Tech students in a two year college continue after their first year

The New Tech program complements the work of other area school districts. New Tech is seen as more of a charter/magnet school model over a traditional program for gifted students (i.e., Gatton Academy for Math and Science at Western Kentucky University).

Other local school districts are participating in the Community Campus initiative, with its academies in science and engineering, biomedicine, entrepreneurship, and more. Community Campus will complement rather than compete with the New Tech program.

### Selecting a site for the New Tech program is a priority:

Every effort will be made to find an innovative, appealing physical structure and location. The optimal size of the school would be 25,000-30,000 square feet. Other New Tech sites around the country have used renovated warehouses, strip malls, etc. to provide the needed space.



For more detailed information about NewTech, visit [www.newtechnetwork.org](http://www.newtechnetwork.org)

#### Contact Information

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[nick.brake@owensboro.kyschools.us](mailto:nick.brake@owensboro.kyschools.us) ● 270-686-1000

*Note: In December, 2013 the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro awarded a \$433,000 grant to Owensboro Public Schools in support of the New Tech project. Grants have also been authorized for 2014 and 2015.*



# ATC Phase 2 = Skilled Trades Center

## Building a Case for the Future

by James S. Klauber, Ph.D

Since opening its doors, Owensboro Community and Technical College (OCTC) has educated more than 65,000 community members, making it the community's college. We are the leading training provider in our region for technical programs and skilled trades. This is significant, as 90 percent of our graduates continue to live, work, and raise families in the greater Owensboro region. To this end, OCTC students ARE the employees that fill the hiring needs of our local employers.

Now, as our economy becomes more knowledge-based than ever before, we are at a crossroads. New and growing industries require new technologies. We must be poised to serve the training needs of our local employers as well as future ones.

Unfortunately, due to space limitations, this is simply not possible today. OCTC is currently utilizing all available techni-

cal laboratory and shop space on our four campuses (Main, Southeastern, Downtown, and Hancock County Center). The need in technical and skilled trade areas is dire. OCTC can no longer expand existing or add new technical programs that are needed to drive economic development. As a result, the college's ability to meet the workforce needs of the community has been limited at a time when our region is experiencing strong economic growth with a robust demand

for jobs in technical and skilled trade areas.

ATC2 - Skilled Trades Center is the solution. It will enable OCTC to expand our training programs to meet the current and future workforce needs of our region, particularly in the areas of transportation technologies, advanced manufacturing, and skilled trades. A two-story building with a total of 50,000 gross square feet, yielding approximately 35,000 square feet of instructional space, it will house more training space than what is currently available in the Downtown and Southeastern campuses combined. The existing air conditioning technology (HVAC) and welding programs will be relocated to the ATC2 - Skilled Trades Center and expanded, providing students with an enhanced level of training that prepares them for the workforce upon graduation. To provide one example, OCTC currently lacks the space necessary for robotic and pipe welding trainers. We have addressed the need by offering a limited number of pipe welding courses at an off-campus location through a partnership with a local union. This, however, is not a long-term solution to meeting this critical local workforce need. The ATC2 - Skilled Trades Center is.

Another benefit is that moving these programs from their current locations will free up needed space to enhance the advanced transportation technologies initiative. In partnership with Cummins Crosspoint, the Kentucky Clean Fuels Coalition, and many other stakeholders, OCTC is expanding training in alternative fuels to prepare a new generation of employees for conventional hybrid, plug-in hybrid electric, and electric vehicle technologies; biodiesel, propane, ethanol, compressed natural gas, and liquefied natural gas; and fuel-cell vehicles. OCTC is the only community college in the country to offer training programs that address every fuel and alternative energy type, putting Owensboro at the forefront of cutting-edge, alternative fuels technology training.

To make the project a reality we will need your help! The Build Smart Initiative, passed by the Kentucky General Assembly earlier this year, requires colleges to raise one-quarter

Project goal	
OCTC student fees*	\$9 million
City of Owensboro	\$1 million
Daviess County	\$1 million
To be raised	\$2.5 million
Total Project Costs	\$13.5 million

\* Financed through an \$8/credit hour fee increase

of the total amount of the authorized project. While a \$12 million project was authorized for Owensboro (requiring a \$3 million match) the building is projected to cost about \$13.5 million. Thus, OCTC's goal is to raise \$4.5 million to ensure the completion of a facility that will meet our local economic development needs. OCTC is currently making plans to raise the additional funds. If you would like to be a part of this initiative, or receive more information about the project, contact our Institutional Advancement Office at 270.686.4502.



James S. Klauber, Ph.D. is president of Owensboro Community and Technical College.



# What's next for downtown?

## Citizens invited to share their vision



The City of Owensboro will soon embark on a Phase II Plan for downtown. The goal is to build upon the public and private successes that characterize Phase I of the “placemaking” plan.

Citizen participation was an important part of the first phase; it will be just as important as stakeholders, officials, and the general public share their vision for the future of this community focal point.

To contribute to that planning, design and development process, we present five geographic areas of focus, and within each area, some of the “Opportunity Sites.”

**Participants are invited to type their ideas and then click “submit” (Page 17)\*. The ideas will be tabulated and submitted to the consulting team, local officials and the public.**

*\*Note: If you are viewing the Advocate in your web browser, you must first save the PDF to your computer and view in Adobe Acrobat or Reader to submit your responses.*

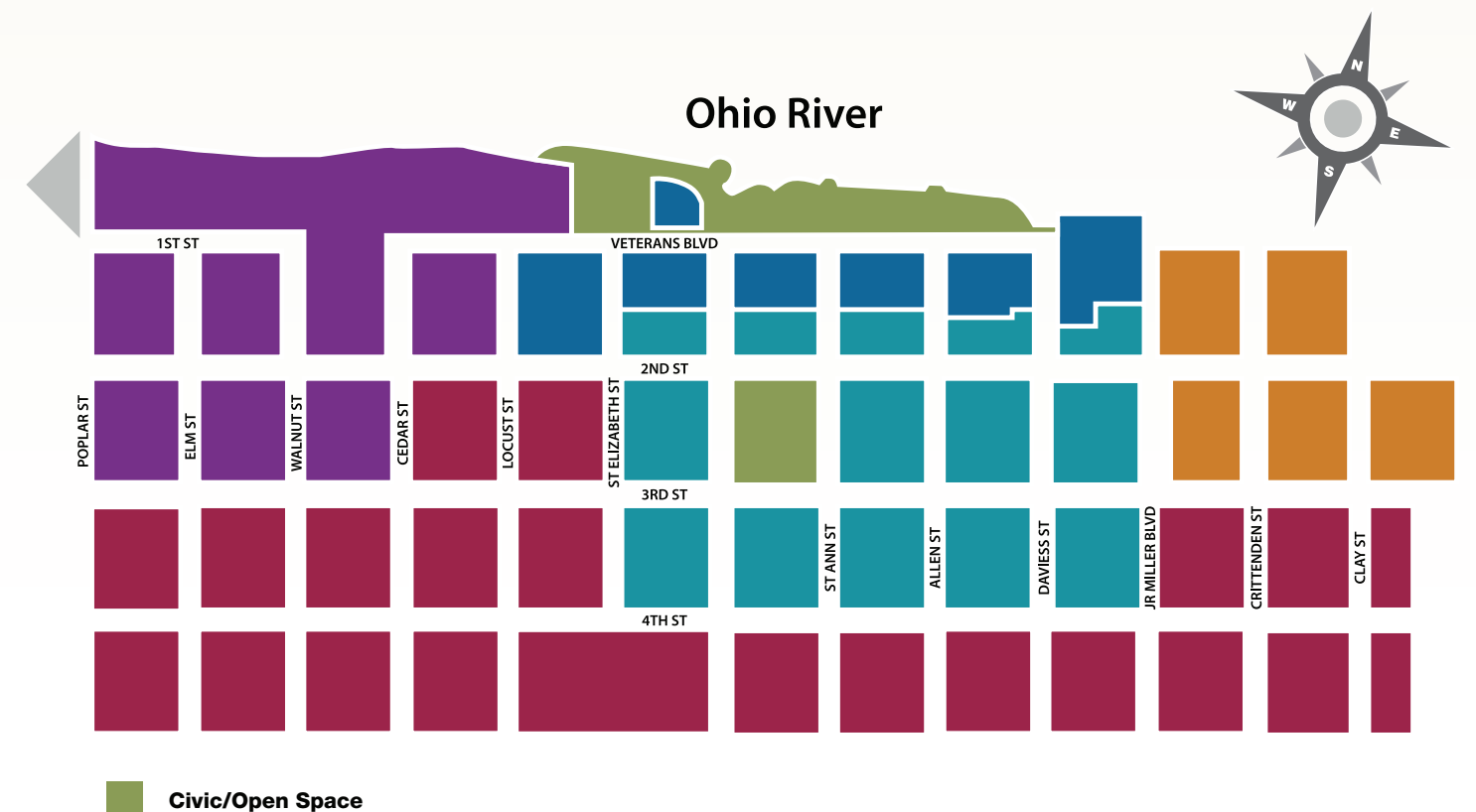
**Riverfront**

**Downtown Core**

**Fringe (West)**

**Fringe (Central)**

**Fringe (East)**



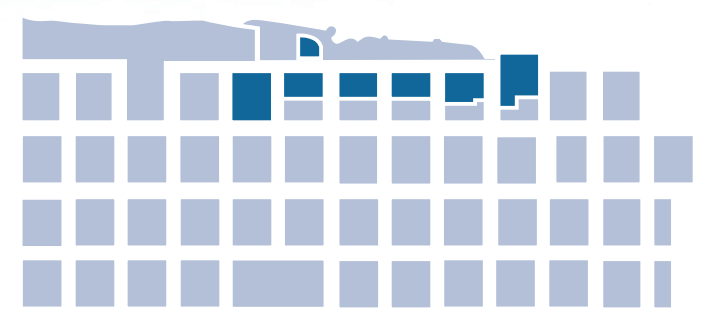


## Your ideas for the riverfront



To begin typing your ideas, please click anywhere within this box.

## Area 1: Riverfront Opportunity Sites & Uses



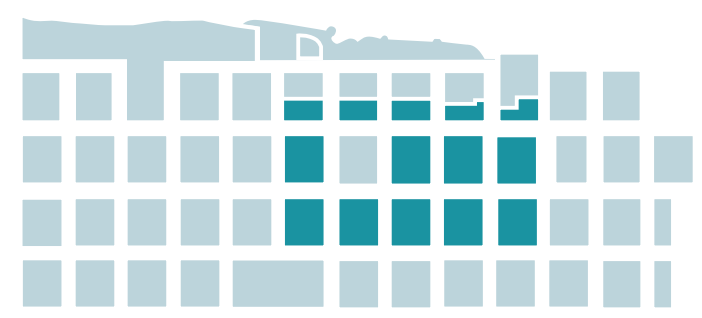


## Your ideas for the downtown core



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## Area 2: Downtown Core Opportunity Sites & Uses



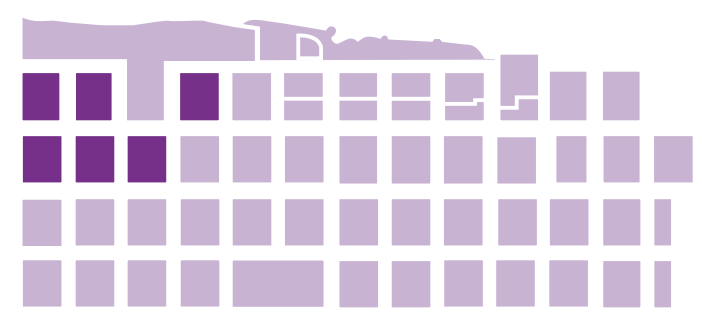


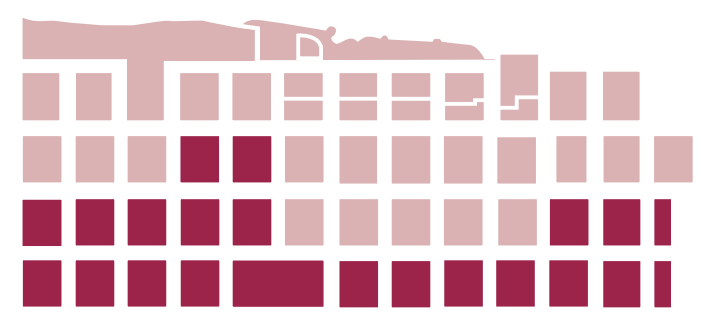
## Your ideas for the fringe (west)



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## Area 3: Fringe (West) Opportunity Sites & Uses





## Area 4: Fringe (Central) Opportunity Sites & Uses

## Your ideas for the fringe (central)



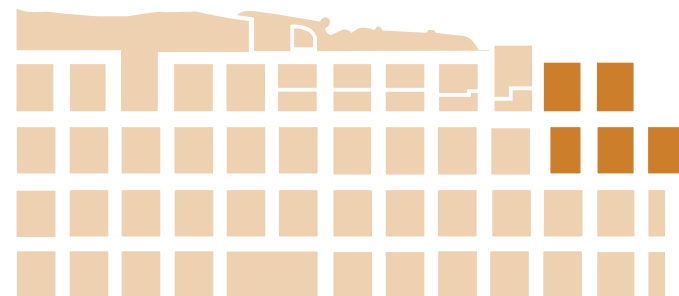
To begin typing your ideas, please click anywhere within this box.





## Area 5: Fringe (East)

### Opportunity Sites & Uses



## Your ideas for the fringe (east)

To begin typing your ideas, please click anywhere within this box.

### Additional comments:

[Click here to submit your ideas.](#)

# People's Square now available for public discourse

With the completion of People's Square on the courthouse lawn, public discourse in Owensboro-Daviess County will have a more attractive and prominent location.

The facility was built with under \$20,000 in county funds and \$15,000 in private funds – funds leftover from contributors to a community tribute to the John and Larry Hager families in 2009. The square will accommodate speeches, forums, debates, rallies, demonstrations, concerts and more.

The facility was designed by architect Terry Blake – at no charge – and it features Indiana limestone that was used as the exterior material when the courthouse was built 50 years ago.



# Coalition continues to break records



The Green River Asset Building Coalition continues to attract and serve record breaking numbers of low-income families. In 2014, 4,533 tax returns were prepared free of charge by 125 volunteers at 15 sites in seven counties. This led to \$2.2 million in Earned Income Tax Credits and \$5.8 million in total refunds

This year's numbers reflect an increase of nearly 15 percent.

Hat's off to all the volunteers and to Keith Sanders, executive director of the Lawrence and Augusta Hager Educational Foundation, who recruited and coordinated the training and placement of the volunteers.

# Economic Development is Your Job

## How We All Can Play Our Part

by Madison Silvert

I have been in economic development now for almost seven years, first working with start-up businesses, and for the past year with new and existing industries. If there is one thing that I have learned in that time, it is that we too often believe that economic development is purely the work of the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation or the work of elected officials. The truth of the matter is, economic development is the job of every single citizen, no matter how young or old, no matter how influential or marginalized. The challenges and opportunities of our community are far too great for any one organization or person to overcome or accomplish on their own. We must meet these challenges and opportunities together as a community.

On July 17th, this community will embark on a year of planning-- a bold initiative to meet four of our greatest challenges head-on, and prepare a road map for the next fifty years. These great challenges are in the areas of education, health & wellness, transportation & place, and energy. They are significant building blocks for our economy, and deserve our complete attention so that we can remain competitive now and in the future. While all of these issues are complex and will take decades to fully achieve sustainable solutions, I want to concentrate on two issues upon which we as individuals can have the greatest impact.

One of the most significant challenges for this community is educational attainment. Depending on the data source, about 19 percent of adults in the Owensboro metropolitan area have a Bachelor's Degree or higher. This is in compari-

son to about 21 percent in Kentucky or about 28.5 percent in the United States.

First, let me tell you the purely economic reason why this is such a problem. Every month, I spend a significant amount of time traveling outside of Owensboro to market our community, not only to businesses considering an expansion or relocation, but also to a select group of consultants that help companies make location decisions. They are called "Site Selectors." It is the job of these professionals to quickly and efficiently find the absolute best fit for a company's relocation or expansion. They typically start with a number of criteria developed in consultation with the client company. Among the criteria are typically land cost, tax climate, quality of life, building availability, and, increasingly the most important factor, the overall quality of the workforce.

Workforce quality is much greater than simply the education of the workforce itself, but education is a consistently excellent indicator, and an easy way for Site Selectors to separate the wheat from the chaff. In a business where time may be short, and the possible communities for the location of a project are vast, educational attainment is a simple way for these professionals to quickly remove a community from their list. It isn't fair. It isn't the whole picture of our community. But it is fast. It is efficient, and, like it or not, it is holding us back.

I'm often told that an educated workforce is a "chicken or the egg problem." I am told that we don't have enough em-

ployers that require or value degreed professionals, and therefore, few people want to take on the expense of an associate's or bachelor's degree. The problem is, this type of thinking perpetuates our problem, leaving Owensboro with a bachelor's attainment rate almost ten percent under the national average. None of us can control the criteria or the thought process of a Site Selector, but we can control our own educational destinies. If an education is the chicken, and jobs are the egg, I choose the chicken. The jobs will follow.

If education is the foundational problem of our workforce, then health and wellness is the cornerstone. As your mother would say, "at least you have your health." Unfortunately, in Kentucky's case, we can't really say this, and, without our health, our education will only get us so far. In Kentucky, we have higher rates of every cancer except prostate, according to the Centers for Disease Control. We rank ninth in the nation in obesity. Let that sink in. We are the most obese nation in the world, and in this nation, we are the ninth most obese state. With obesity comes diabetes, and we don't do much better there, ranking twelfth. Overall, the United Health Foundation ranks us forty-seventh in the nation for overall health status. Simply put, we are one of the most unhealthy workforces in the civilized world.

This fact has a similar effect on a Site Selector as that of educational attainment. When they are trying to find a workforce that is dependable, one that isn't going to cost their client millions in worker's compensation claims or lost medical leave time, a Site Selector has 46 healthier states to review before they look at Kentucky. Therefore, if we are going to overcome this bias against the Bluegrass State, we need to set one important and achievable goal. We need to

"... if we are going to overcome this bias against the Bluegrass State, we need to set one important and achievable goal. We need to be the healthiest community in Kentucky, and we need to be the healthiest community in the Southeast. Only then will we begin to reach our true economic potential."

be the healthiest community in Kentucky, and we need to be the healthiest community in the Southeast. Only then will we begin to reach our true economic potential.

This goal of a healthier and better educated workforce is achievable, but first we must make a plan. It won't be easy, and it will take a considerable amount of time and care to develop a plan that is useful. However, unlike problems that face so many other com-

munities, these are problems that can be overcome simply by our population making a few choices. These changes start with us as individuals, and require the commitment of our entire community to encourage us as we transform ourselves into something greater — a greater Owensboro.



## Madison Silvert

Madison Silvert is the President and CEO of the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation. He is a graduate of Centre College and the Brandeis School of Law at the University of Louisville. He was the first Vice President of Entrepreneurship and High Tech Development where he developed the eMerging Ventures Center for Innovation and then the Centre for Business and Research. He is also an Urban Planner and a certified planner with the American Institute of Certified Planners. He and his wife, Amy, have three children: Emma, Lilly and John Crawford.