

PUBLIC LIFE

January 2005 – Volume 2, Issue 1
Owensboro, Kentucky

Advocate



ONE COUNTY (ONE COMMUNITY?) THREE GOVERNMENTS

Examining options for Owensboro-
Whitesville-Daviess County Unification

About our Editorial Board



Rodney B. Berry

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



Dave Boeyink

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



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



Ed Staats

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

PUBLIC LIFE *Advocate*

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The Public Life Foundation of Owensboro will convene periodically citizens from all walks of life to identify public concerns and examine the impact of the *Public Life Advocate*. We welcome the participation of all on this Advisory Council. If you are interested in serving, please contact us.

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Shooting straight with the public



by Rodney Berry

A lingering sense of hypocrisy haunts me when I advocate openness. Some community nonprofit organizations with which I have been connected through the years have not always been models of openness and transparency. This is not to suggest malicious intent, but only to acknowledge that few leaders are willing to share records or open meetings unless legally obligated.

Almost always, this seems to backfire.

Leaders of these groups (often volunteers) may mean well. They may have nothing to gain personally from a position on a governing board. But whenever they represent an organization and operate in secret, it fuels criticism, deepens suspicion, and widens a chasm of distrust.

Local elected officials routinely meet in small groups to avoid open meetings requirements. Owensboro Medical Health System officials dissolved the public oversight entity and now agree to only one public meeting per year. Dozens of other local groups practice similar policies: Why bother with an adversarial press or hassle with an uninformed public if it's not required?

Well, maybe, because it is the right thing to do. Is it too much to ask (or insist?) that governments, public institutions, public corporations, and nonprofit organizations shoot straight with the public? Openness is all about shooting straight.

The collapses of Enron, Global Crossing, World Com, Adelphia, and Arthur Anderson – and the thousands of employees who lost their jobs and retirement incomes from these debacles – point to the tragic costs of closed corporations. A practice of openness in the Catholic Church would have eliminated decades of abuse protected by secrecy. Public universities, foundations, athletic programs, nonprofits, as well as governments have all resisted openness in practice and policy.

Openness is a central value of our foundation. Without openness and the

reliable information that is conveyed through its practice, citizens cannot engage in meaningful dialogue, come to responsible judgment, or contribute their energies and skills to community improvement.

The importance of openness transcends legal requirements and applications. Openness builds trust. It is a moral and ethical practice, essential for our democratic process at the local, state, national, and international levels.

To underscore its importance, the Public Life Foundation had been planning a statewide conference (for October 2004) to examine the theoretical and practical dimensions of openness, transparency, and the public interest. The event would have brought together corporate, government, nonprofit, academic, and media leaders to examine the need for, benefits from, and challenges inherent in practicing greater openness and transparency.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the conference was postponed. But as we re-evaluated our goals, we were increasingly convinced that a conference would not have the desired ripple effect or staying power of other initiatives. Consequently, we plan to devote foundation resources to develop presentation materials for elected officials and corporate leaders, perhaps a video documentary that can be shown in classrooms, perhaps a dialogue guide to be used by leadership groups, perhaps a special web site, perhaps an openness report card for communities and citizens to gauge their openness practices and policies.

As we develop materials and partner with other groups to expand the impact of this initiative, we will focus intently on ways to instill openness and transparency into the very fabric and soul of our own community. When openness characterizes us here, when it is valued and practiced by our institutions, organizations, and officials, we will build trust, expand collaboration, and bring forth the energy and ideas of more people – people from all walks of life – to make a difference... in their public life.

Contributors



Chad Gesser

Chad is Director of Institutional Research at Owensboro Community and Technical College. A graduate of Western Kentucky University, with bachelor's and master's degrees in sociology, he recently launched the Owensboro Blog to explore local issues and dynamics. Interesting stuff, handy links, rambling opinion, and some nice surprises for anyone interested in community life. Check it out: <http://owensboro.blogspot.com>

Chad is also founder of Owensboro's Conversations Cafe and is the incoming chair of Community Conversations, Inc.

Share *YOUR* vision for higher education in Owensboro-Daviess County

What are our community needs? What are our special opportunities? Working together, can our local colleges offer more than what they can individually?

- Learn about preliminary survey and interview responses
- Share your ideas
- Listen to what others have to say

Your input is important! Join us!

Public Forums

January 19, 2005 – 4:00 p.m.
Kentucky Wesleyan College
Rogers Hall, Winchester Center

January 20, 2005 – 11:15 a.m.
Brescia University
Campus Center, First Floor

January 20, 2005 – 4:00 p.m.
Owensboro Community
Board Room & Technical College
Administration Building

Sponsored by the Citizens Committee on Education as part of its Strategic Study on Higher Education



Education Advocates Seek Input

The Citizens Committee on Education wants citizens to help bring into focus a community vision for higher education in Owensboro-Daviess County – a strategic plan that transcends and integrates the institutional plans of Brescia University, Kentucky Wesleyan College, Owensboro Community and Technical College, and Western Kentucky University-Owensboro.

The community strategic higher education study will not only focus on *needs* (courses and degree programs that area employers and students want) but also *opportunities* (special programs that can give distinction to our colleges or attract more students from other areas). Special attention will be given to ways in which our institutions can work together to best prepare students for the jobs of the future.

Project consultant William Chance, Ph.D. solicited input from college administrators, faculty, students, plant managers and CEO's, professionals, small businesses, and the public at-large through interviews, direct mail surveys, and newspaper surveys.

During the fourth week of January, a series of community forums will be held to share the results of these interviews and surveys, to introduce elements of model programs, and to solicit additional input from the community.

This could be a pivotal community initiative. All citizens are urged to participate.

Caregivers Discuss Leadership and Advocacy Needs

On December 21, more than 20 social workers, agency leaders, and concerned citizens gathered to discuss the need to cultivate leadership among the poor of our community. The meeting was hosted by the Public Life Foundation.

Many, as front line caseworkers, shared day-to-day struggles of the poor as it relates to low pay employment, the need for additional education and training, child care,



Making a DIFFERENCE

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

— Margaret Mead

housing, health care, transportation, and more. Welfare reform, cutbacks in social services at the state and federal level, incarceration patterns, substance abuse, and other issues were discussed.

Participants stressed that the poor do not have an effective lobby. There is a need to initiate programs that empower the poor and enhance their voice. It was suggested that a broad-based coalition be formed to speak out for the poor and point to the impact that legislation, policies, or funding patterns have on the poor. The group expressed interest in being part of such a coalition and will convene again to explore that notion.

Immigration Forums Point Way to Improved Relations

This fall, nearly 100 individuals participated in eight study circles over a 90-day period to discuss how immigration affects our community and to identify ways in which concerns and opportunities can be addressed.

The project was directed by Community Conversations, Inc. in partnership with the Owensboro Human Relations Commission.

A grassroots steering committee was established on December 2 to prioritize nearly 80 action ideas that emerged from the meetings. These included:

- language course (for immigrants as well as English-speaking residents)
- tutoring programs for immigrant children
- life skills instruction

- school programs
- mentoring programs
- translators for the workplace, clinics, health department, courts, etc.
- use of public access television
- leadership development programs within ethnic communities
- cultural and entertainment programs
- driver's license reform
- sports programs for immigrants
- youth reading programs
- "Welcome Wagon" program for immigrants
- Expansion of Sister Cities program
- multi-cultural community center

For more information, contact Project Coordinator Kathy Christie at 270/687-4630.

Responding to Tsunami Tragedy

Citizens concerned about the loss of life and devastation resulting from the tsunami in Asia gathered on January 11th to discuss community response options. The event was sponsored by Community Conversations and Beyond the Brim coffee shop, which donated 10 percent of all food and drink sales during the event to the relief effort.

Information and Attitudes on Second-hand Smoke

The Clean Indoor Air Task Force of the Green River Tobacco Control Coalition conducted an opinion poll in October to gauge community perceptions regarding second-hand smoke and its effects. Results will be released at 10:00 a.m. on January 27th at the Daviess County Health Center.

Unity Coalition Plans Activities

The Unity Coalition, a citizens group that, in 2002, effectively mobilized a community unity campaign in response to a KKK rally, recently adopted bylaws, elected officers and directors. The coalition works to enhance understanding, mutual respect, positive relations, social and economic justice among diverse racial and ethnic groups in our community.

In 2005, the coalition plans programs on unity in schools, immigration issues, minority leadership issues, religious tensions, and social service funding. These will include speakers, panels, and films followed by discussions.

THE ADVOCATE SALUTES...

Bob Darrell, Ph.D., multi-talented community leader, on the occasion of the naming of the Kentucky Wesleyan College Plus Center in his honor. The Plus Center integrates remedial instruction, career and personal counseling into a central student service.

Bob is Professor of English Emeritus from Kentucky Wesleyan College. He has been active in numerous community organizations, including the Citizens Committee on Education, Leadership Owensboro, Bring Back Baseball Committee, and the Urban-County Charter Commission. Bob is Parliamentarian for the Owensboro City Commission, an ordained Methodist minister, a Seeing Eye dog trainer,

and an avid cacti collector. He is active in several literary and discussion groups. He is a management consultant, author, editor, and poet.

Bob is a graduate of Lon Morris Junior College (A.A.), Hendrix College (A.B.), Southern Methodist University (M. Div.), and Vanderbilt University (Ph.D.). He has additional graduate studies at Drew University (ABD), New York University (M.A.), and Arizona University.

The *Advocate* extends hearty congratulations and sincere thanks to Bob for his diverse and impressive civic contributions.





Framing the Issue

ONE COUNTY (ONE COMMUNITY?) THREE GOVERNMENTS

Examining options for Owensboro-
Whitesville-Daviess County Unification

Issue Brief-Dialogue Guide

Tom Watson, Owensboro's new mayor, makes it clear: a "unity" initiative to consolidate city and county governments is his top priority. Judge-Executive Reid Haire joins in, pledges county involvement, and proposes a task force to study the issue.

What is the case for consolidation today? What are the concerns with our current government structure that many feel hold us back as a community? Is the current structure efficient? Is it fair? What are the options, the cost implications, the legitimate points made by all sides?

Have conditions changed since the unruly 1990 initiative? Has the mindset of the citizenry?

Consolidation can only happen if the people of Owensboro-Daviess County want it to happen. To help citizens come to an informed judgment, we present a summary of the issues, options, and points of view on this pivotal public issue.

Through extensive, respectful dialogue, perhaps the emerging exploration of "unification" will be a community building experience, instead of a divisive one.

That is our hope. That is our intent.

Let the dialogue begin.

By Rodney Berry, Public Life Foundation
Chad Gesser, Community Conversations

Framing the Issue: One County, Three Governments

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN: THE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE WITH CONSOLIDATION

Since the governments of Lexington and Fayette County, Kentucky consolidated in 1973, there has been sporadic, growing interest in a comparable restructuring in Owensboro-Daviess County. Community leaders pointed to consolidation as a means to increased efficiency, fairness, and economic development.

In 1987, the citizens group GOOD (Government Options for Owensboro-Daviess County) accumulated 1,951 signatures to require city and county governments to establish an Urban County Charter Commission. By law, the commission was obligated to prepare a proposal for a consolidated city-county government that would be decided through a voter referendum. It took the commission two and a half years to reach a consensus on such a document.

Early in the process, before a proposal was even crafted, an opposition group emerged: Citizens for BEST Government. Many citizens chose sides before there was public dialogue on the proposal. The *Messenger-Inquirer* was a relentless advocate. Owensboro Mayor David Adkisson and Daviess County Judge-Executive Buzz Norris both endorsed the proposal. However, opponents raised six times more money

than did supporters.

Bitter, deep-seated ill-will characterized the campaigns. Urban-rural tensions increased.

The debate was intensely divisive.

In November 1990, the referendum was defeated: 20,840 (72 percent) to 8,104 (28 percent).



**Sportsmen
AGAINST
MERGER**



**VOTE YES
MERGER
MEANS
PROGRESS**

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Things may have died down since the 1990 merger debacle, but a rancorous tone and an "us" versus "them" mentality continues to emerge around certain issues. In recent years, a modest poultry ordinance, a proposal to expand the occupational tax countywide, and a proposal to increase the public library tax were met with intense opposition from rural interests.

INCREMENTAL COLLABORATION AND CONSOLIDATION

Nonetheless, since the defeat of merger, Owensboro and Daviess County governments collaborated and consolidated various functions to maximize efficiency and plan for growth. This was reflected in the following initiatives:

- The Regional Water Resource Agency (established 1995)
- City-County Parks Master Plan (2001) (Departmental merger abandoned)
- Emergency management cooperation (Departmental merger abandoned)
- Police and fire cooperation
- Daviess County Public Library District (established in 1995)
- Metropolitan Planning Commission (established in 1970)
- Occupational tax collection agreement (proposed)

This kind of incremental city-county departmental restructuring and collaboration appears to be well-received by community leaders, city and county residents.

BOUNDARY AND JURISDICTION ISSUES

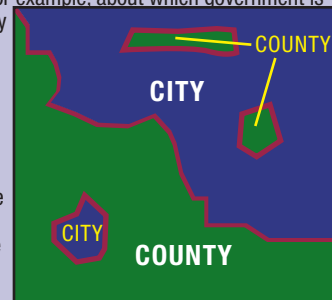
Unlike the fixed boundaries of city and county school districts, the city-county government line (city limits) changes as the city annexes properties. City government can annex contiguous land into the city limits when a developer or 75 percent of property owners in an area approve the annexation.

Pockets of county property within the city complicate the delivery of services and raise questions as to which government is responsible for various services. For example, should the city police department respond to a call in an area in which the residents do not pay city property taxes? Is it efficient for the city and county to build fire stations so close to one another?

In some instances, to meet a need or take advantage of an opportunity, city government develops rural property that has not been annexed into the city. The construction of Southtown Boulevard and Southwest Football Park are examples.

City government can annex a road to establish a connection to property it wishes to annex. This raises questions, for example, about which government is responsible for clearing a tree from county property that falls across a city road.

In July 2005, county government will begin receiving revenue from an occupational and net profits tax. Since the county occupational tax rate is lower than the city's (.05 percent compared to 1.3 percent), some are concerned that the city and county will be rivals more than team players and attempt to influence the location of business and industry in order to attract the additional revenue.



Framing the Issue: One County, Three Governments

CURRENT STRUCTURE AND COMPARISONS

City and county governments are both alike and different. Their boundaries overlap. In some instances, staff responsibilities overlap. Services and taxation are inconsistent. Any consolidation effort would need to work through such issues and blend each government's legal responsibilities, system of taxation, range of services, and management cultures.

| | City of Owensboro | Daviess County |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Governance | Mayor 4 Commissioners | Judge-Executive 3 Commissioners |
| Terms | Mayor - 4 years 3 consecutive terms Commissioners - 2 years unlimited terms | Judge-Executive - 4 years unlimited terms Commissioners - 4 years unlimited terms |
| Elections | non-partisan city residents only vote | partisan city and county vote |
| FY 2004-05 Budget | \$51.8 million up 39% in 10 years | \$ 55.7 million Up 64% in 10 years* *The 2004-05 budget includes: solid waste fund, Kentucky Advance Revenue Program, federal grants, and proceeds from the sale of ODCH, Inc. (not included in the 1994-95 budget.) The tax rate has remained the same for 10 years. |
| Reserves | \$1.6 million | \$5 million |
| Debt | \$21.8 million | \$17.7 million |
| % Budget for Debt Service | 4% | 3% |
| CEO | City Manager | Judge-Executive |
| Staff | 426 full-time employees 107 part-time and temporary employees | 140 employees |
| Police | 109-member force | 73-member sheriff's dept. Deputies must also collect taxes, provide security for the courts, transport juveniles and inmates to detention facilities in other cities. Despite contributing \$1.4 million per year, county government has no control over the sheriff's department. |
| Jail | contract with county | 78 detention center staff 2004 subsidy: \$ 1 million Detention center deficits were the primary impetus behind the recent creation of a countywide occupational tax. |
| Fire | fully professional 5 stations 99 employees no extra fees | primarily volunteer 10 stations 16 paid, 300 volunteers fire dues |
| Parks and Recreation | 14 parks ice rink Sportscenter youth center golf course 2 swimming pools cultural facilities recreational programs | 2 county parks Whitesville park soccer complex (planned) |
| Landfill | contracts with county | operates landfill |
| Fee-for-Service | sanitation sewers (RWRA) water & electric (OMU) | sanitation sewers (RWRA) water (county) |
| Agency Support | \$ 1.5 million FY 04-05 | \$ 429 thousand FY 04-05 |
| Other Services | urban services | focus on rural services This is changing as county residents demand more services comparable to city residents. |
| Other Services/Facilities | transit system parking garage CD Program (federal) housing/building inspection engineering/streets | housing/building inspection engineering/streets |

Framing the Issue: One County, Three Governments

TAXATION ISSUES

City and county taxation is inconsistent and, some would say, unfair. Among the common complaints:

- City taxpayers contribute more than 60 percent of the local revenue for county government. Many citizens question whether they receive an equivalent amount of services in return.
- When city and county governments participate in various projects on a 50-50 basis, city taxpayers absorb more than 80 percent of the cost.
- County residents who work in the city pay an occupational tax to city government. Many question whether they receive an equivalent amount of services in return.
- Since county residents who work in the county do not pay city taxes, some question whether they should be able to use city parks without a fee.
- Since most county jail inmates are from the city, some say that city taxpayers should absorb a greater percentage of the cost to operate the facility.

Cities-counties in our region that have...

ADOPTED MERGER

Lexington-Fayette County
Kentucky (1973)

Nashville-Davidson County
Tennessee (1962)

Indianapolis-Marion County
Indiana (1969) – no referendum
required

Louisville-Jefferson County
Kentucky (2003)

REJECTED MERGER

Bowling Green-Warren County
Kentucky (1990)

Frankfort-Franklin County
Kentucky (2004)

Georgetown-Scott County
Kentucky (1988)

From 1805-1990, voters approved 33 of 134 city-county consolidation proposals.
From 1990-1997, voters approved 4 of 17 city-county consolidation proposals.
No community that has merged has ever reverted back to separate governments.

TAX COMPARISONS

EXAMPLE USED:



\$50,000 gross family income

\$100,000 house

2 cars with a total value of \$20,000

IF YOU LIVE IN THE CITY OF OWENSBORO...

| | Occupational Tax | Property Tax | Total |
|------------------------------------|------------------|--|----------------|
| ...and work in the city, you pay | \$665 | \$168 to the County \$320 to the City | \$1,153 |
| ...and work in the county, you pay | \$225 | \$168 to the County \$320 to the City | \$713 |

IF YOU LIVE IN DAVIESS COUNTY (OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS)...

| | Occupational Tax | Property Tax | Total |
|------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| ...and work in the city, you pay | \$665 | \$168 to the County | \$833 |
| ...and work in the county, you pay | \$225 | \$168 to the County | \$393 |

Note: Taxes that support city and county government represent less than 20 percent of local taxes. Consolidation of city and county government would not affect local public school systems, health department, library, extension office, tourist commission, or other agencies supported by tax districts, state or federal taxes.

Framing the Issue: One County, Three Governments

OPTIONS: WHERE CAN WE GO FROM HERE?

Are there inequities in the current structure of city-county government? Are there inefficiencies? Is there a better way? What are the options?

1. RETAIN THE CURRENT STRUCTURE

| THOSE WHO SUPPORT | THOSE WHO OPPOSE |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Owensboro and Daviess County are among the most prosperous areas of the state. Our citizens enjoy a high quality of life. If there are legitimate issues of taxation, fairness, and efficiency, we can address them within the context of our current structure.■ Once county government begins to impose the occupational and net profits tax (after July 1, 2005), there will be less disparity between city and county taxpayers.■ County residents want, need, and deserve their own government that is responsive to rural concerns. If we merged, county government would be swallowed up by the city. There would be no voice for rural Daviess County.■ Rural Daviess Countians don’t want to support things like the RiverPark Center or an ice rink. They realize that they don’t get the same level of police and fire protection as city residents. They don’t mind as long as they don’t have to pay for more services.■ Big government is not always better government. Competition between the city and county will keep them both on their toes. One government would put too much power in the hands of a few.■ The 1990 merger debate was too bitter and divisive. No one wants to go through that again. There is no public outcry for change.■ Consolidation is too complicated. It would not be worth the trouble to work through all the difference in services and taxes from one district to another. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Of course county residents don’t want to change the structure: They get such a great deal. City taxpayers are picking up the majority of the cost of their government.■ We are one community. We should have one government. “United we stand, divided we fall.”■ The county is no longer just a rural area with rural concerns. It is increasingly urbanized as residential and commercial growth occurs outside the city limits.■ Until we change, we will continue to have problems with overlapping boundaries and services. No one wants to see the city fire department not respond to a call because of some boundary problem.■ Clearly there is duplication of staff in city and county government. From road maintenance to parks, computer engineers to accountants, there are two departments and similar responsibilities assigned employees of the city and county. Two is more than one – more inefficient and more costly.■ Until we change, there will always be a lack of accountability. Officials will keep saying, “Well, that’s the city’s responsibility” or “...that’s a county problem.”■ When we have no clear chain of command, who does an industrial prospect go to get answers to questions about available land, incentives, or infrastructure? Who do they deal with? When we go to Frankfort or Washington, who speaks for the community? The mayor? The Judge-Executive? Under the current system, we can never have a unified voice. |

2. EXPAND COLLABORATION

| THOSE WHO SUPPORT | THOSE WHO OPPOSE |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Rather than tackle a comprehensive consolidation, we should combine departments as needed or appropriate. RWRA and the public library are examples of city-county consolidation that could be applied to other departments when warranted.■ We can also expand partnerships and joint ventures between the city and county. There does not have to be a competitive environment. We can present a stronger front with two leaders standing together rather than one.■ In some cases (as with the 911 project), it actually costs more to consolidate two systems into one. By considering consolidation on an incremental basis, we would have the flexibility to do what is prudent one department at a time.■ As with the city-county parks master plan, it sometimes makes sense to collaborate without consolidating. We can plan together but manage separately. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ This option seems to just postpone the inevitable.■ The example of RWRA makes a stronger case for consolidation, not a weaker one. It made good sense to consolidate our sewer districts for planning purposes, for efficiency, and better services. It will make good sense to consolidate the others.■ The city-county parks master plan was a step in the right direction, but it fell short of its potential. There is still far too much overlap and duplication in these two departments. Collaboration is a good thing, but without consolidation, there will still be turf protection and inefficiency.■ Collaboration, coordination, and partnerships sound good, but leaders come and go. Personalities change. Partisan politics can complicate working relationships.■ Despite good faith efforts to work together, unless a fee-based system or special tax district is established for a department, city and county collaboration retains the current tax system, which is inconsistent and unfair to many citizens. |

Framing the Issue: One County, Three Governments

3. CONSOLIDATE

| THOSE WHO SUPPORT | THOSE WHO OPPOSE |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Consolidation is an opportunity for Owensboro and Daviess County, an opportunity to enhance our image as a progressive city and to gain a competitive edge. Our community needs every advantage possible to attract investment, jobs, and outstanding citizens to our community.■ The most successful communities that are held up as models of progress and growth are those that have consolidated city and county governments. In our area: Lexington, Nashville, Indianapolis, and most recently, Louisville. Consolidation is frequently rejected by voters, but no city and county government that has merged has ever reverted to its previous separate governments.■ In an instant, our population would jump to nearly 100,000. This would not only bring more prominence to our community, it would get the attention of more retailers, distributors, entertainment promoters, and businesses looking for a concentrated workforce.■ With consolidation, we are one community with one voice. It would strengthen our presence and effectiveness in dealing with Frankfort, Washington, industrial prospects, and more.■ Consolidation would streamline government services and the regulatory process. Duplicate positions could be eliminated and facilities could be shared. Purchasing power would bring additional savings.■ Consolidation provides an opportunity to establish a fresh, fair, and equitable system of taxation based on services received, rather than the location of one's home or place of employment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The cost of government frequently increases after consolidation. Savings are not significant. Government inevitably finds a way to expand.■ A consolidated government is a bigger government that is not as close to the people. The rural constituents would be dominated by the city interests.■ Even if taxes are reduced for city residents, taxes will increase dramatically for rural residents, but key services (e.g., police, fire) in the county will never be comparable to the services provided in the city.■ If consolidation were such a good thing, why have most communities rejected it?■ There is nothing magical about an artificial jump in population. What does it really matter if we are the third largest city in the state?■ Under consolidation, too much power will be in the control of one elected official. Two governments provide checks and balances. |

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Tax fairness, efficiency of services, and a community with a united voice are among the points made in support of consolidation. Do you think these are legitimate points or concerns?

What are your impressions of the options presented to address these issues and concerns? Do you have a preferred option, and why? Are there better options for dealing with these issues?

Do you acknowledge that those with opposing views have legitimate points?

Many views on consolidation are not based on fact but on rumor or speculation. What can be done to assist the public in understanding the facts?

What points can we agree on? Can we find common ground?

Why were citizens so reluctant to support consolidation in 1990? Do you think there is a different attitude today?

What can be done to foster civil dialogue on consolidation and avoid the ill-will that characterized the 1990 initiative?

Excerpts from research and writings on consolidated government:

"The larger the new consolidated jurisdiction, the less opportunity for savings, according to research. However, in smaller consolidated jurisdictions of 350,000 or smaller, savings is likely."

"Kansas City/Wyandotte County, Kansas consolidated government (pop. 158,000) set goals for reduction of per capita expenditures by 8 percent over five years. (They achieved) 6.5 percent reduction over five years."

"...hard data has yet to show that real (economic development) increases have occurred purely due to restructuring. However, it avoids duplication and the "bidding wars" that typically take place between cities."

"Citizens who are well-informed about local government, vote in local elections and can name their local representatives are more supportive of consolidation than citizens who don't vote in local elections and who are not familiar with local leaders."

Source: www.unifiedgovernment.org

"The major consequence of city-county consolidation in Louisville is likely to be a more internally cohesive regime."

Suburbs Without Cities

Urban Affairs Review

H.V. Savitch and Ronald K. Vogel

Framing the Issue: One County, Three Governments

1987 URBAN COUNTY CHARTER COMMISSION

Morton J. Holbrook, Chairman
Glenn Duncan, Vice Chairman
Ann M. Kincheloe, Secretary
John Marksberry, Treasurer

| | |
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| Olive Burroughs | Jeff S. Oldham |
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| Louis Reid Haire | Luther Pittman |
| Max S. Hartz | Mike Riney |
| Rod Kuegel | Dean Stanley |
| Thomas C. Laswell, Jr. | C. Waitman Taylor, Jr. |
| Ronald L. Logsdon | Shirley Trunnell |
| Mark Luckett | Beverly H. Wathen |
| Walter Matthis | Ronnie Wells |
| Ben O'Bryan | |

Key Elements of the 1990 Merger Proposal:

- One Elected CEO for Owensboro-Daviess County
 - Nine-member Council:
 - ◆ CEO (partisan), 4-year term
 - ◆ 5 district representatives (non-partisan), 4-year term
 - ◆ 3 at-large representatives (partisan), 4-year term
 - Full, Partial, and General Service Districts with taxes based on the level of services provided
 - Countywide Department of Public Safety headed by Chief of Police
 - Continuation of volunteer fire department program in rural areas
 - Establishment of Urban County Utility and Sewer Commissions
 - Authority to impose countywide occupational and net profits tax
- Note: The merger proposal did not include any hunting restrictions.*

HOW COULD OUR COMMUNITY MOVE FORWARD WITH CONSIDERATION OF CITY-COUNTY CONSOLIDATION?

1. File a petition with the Daviess County Clerk containing 20 percent of the number of county residents voting in the previous election. 42,160 Daviess Countians voted in the November 2004 election (20%: 8,432).
2. Daviess County Fiscal Court, City of Owensboro, and the City of Whitesville could adopt an ordinance calling for the establishment of an Urban-County Charter Commission.

Note: The Urban-County Commission would be comprised of 20 to 40 citizens: County appointments (55 percent of the membership); City appointments (45 percent of the membership); County Judge-Executive would be its chairman and a voting member.

LEARN MORE

Kentucky League of Cities

Sylvia Lovely
Executive Director/CEO
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National Associations of Counties

Larry Naake
Executive Director
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Washington, DC 20001
202/393-6226
lnaake@naco.org

What does smart growth "really" mean?

By Anthony Downs
Foresight, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2001

Counties find success in consolidation

By M. Mindy Moretti
http://www.naco.org/Content/ContentGroups/Publications1/County_News1/20035/6-2-03

Citizen satisfaction with local governance: A test of individual, jurisdictional, and city-specific explanations

By Ruth Hoogland DeHoog, David Lowery, William E. Lyons
Journal of Politics
Vol. 52, No. 3, August 1990

A reassessment of city/county consolidation: economic development impacts

By Richard C. Feiock and Jered B. Carr
State and Local Government Review
Fall 1997

SHARE VIEWS

Daviess County Fiscal Court

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Mayor Tom Watson
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GET INVOLVED

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Kathy Christie, Executive Director
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Chamber of Commerce

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The *Public Life Advocate* extends a special thanks to J. T. Fulkerson, Director of Finance for the City of Owensboro, Tony Sook, Director of Finance for the Daviess County Fiscal Court, and City Attorney David Fowler for their assistance in providing information and illustrations included in this Issue Brief-Dialogue Guide.



CITIZENS EMBRACE COMMUNITY VISION

PRIDE WORKSHOPS EXAMINE 29 CONCEPTS

For more than three years, local citizens have mobilized in impressive fashion to promote higher standards and greater public input in matters that affect the aesthetic appeal of our community. PRIDE, now 500 members strong, has become a force to be reckoned with.

Consider the following:

- Owensboro-Daviess County taxpayers foot the bill for public buildings such as the courthouse, judicial center, post office, OMU headquarters, state office building, public library, schools... but through the years, the public has had little or no voice in the location or design of those buildings.

- Owensboro-Daviess County taxpayers foot the bill for roads, ramps and intersections, utilities, and parks... but, through the years, officials typically have made decisions about removing trees or paving over landscaped medians, installing overhead utilities, or adding buildings in parks without any guidelines embraced by the public.

- To a great extent, the image and vitality of Owensboro-Daviess County is defined by its architecture and the appearance of its commercial districts and neighborhoods... yet there has never been a mechanism in place through which the public could convey its preferences to businesses, property owners, and developers.

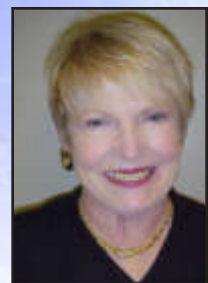
...that is, until PRIDE was established.

PRIDE (Public Responsibility in Designing our Environment) is not another garden club: PRIDE is a grass roots organization of people from all walks of life who embrace a comprehensive approach to aesthetic enhancements through citizen involvement.

PRIDE came together in 2001 to facilitate public dialogue on the riverfront master plan. Hundreds of interested citizens, stakeholders, and students jumped in to share ideas and concerns. Since then, PRIDE has not come up for air: tackling tough issues, appearing at hearings, challenging community leaders to do better.

"PRIDE members unabashedly plants flowers, but we also meet

with Wal-Mart officials to encourage a higher design standard for a new store and more landscaping than is required by ordinance," said Susie Tyler, President. "We sit down with state highway officials to push for green medians, tree-lined boulevards, and more attractive fencing. We participate in work sessions with the architect of the proposed public library. And we also like to celebrate successes: a property owner who restores or tastefully adapts a charming old building; OMU for placing utilities underground; or city government for enhancing the entrance by the downtown bridge," she added.



Susie Tyler, President

PRIDE reminds citizens and leaders that we have choices. There are communities that have subdued commercial signs, attractive shopping centers, beautiful and bustling downtowns, and distinctive public art. PRIDE raises expectations: "If other cities can do it, why can't we?" asks Annie Kincheloe, a PRIDE leader.

In spring 2004, PRIDE concluded an ambitious series of 20 "Crafting a Vision for Community Design" workshops. All events were advertised and open to the public. The workshops attracted nearly 400 citizens: business owners, civic groups, seniors, students, and others. Participants were introduced to possibilities, examined tradeoffs, and shared their level of support for 29 design concepts suggested by citizens or identified from other communities.

The workshops examined the following concepts:

Citizens Embrace Community Vision

1. WELCOMING WELCOME SIGNS

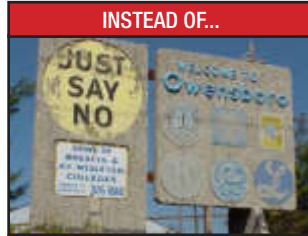
99 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“New and well-designed welcome signs are placed at our community entrances and are part of an overall graphics program.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Develop attractive welcome sign prototype, replace current signs incrementally

INSTEAD OF...



ENVISION...



2. A NEW COMMUNITY ENTRANCE

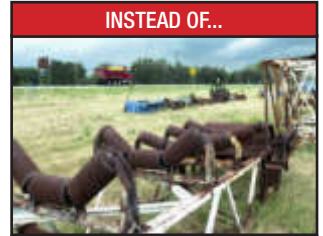
97 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Our entrance from the new bridge makes a unique and beautiful impression on visitors.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Develop design plan for public right-of-way, establish design guidelines and incentives for private property along the new entranceway

INSTEAD OF...



ENVISION...



3. GREEN MEDIANS

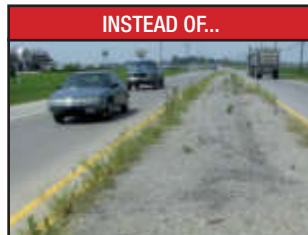
97 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Medians will be green whenever possible. Many will have trees and flowers. Over the years, we will create more green spaces, not remove them.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Target medians, develop design plans, recruit sponsors, establish maintenance plan

INSTEAD OF...



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4. TREES ALONG STREETS (AND EVERYWHERE ELSE)

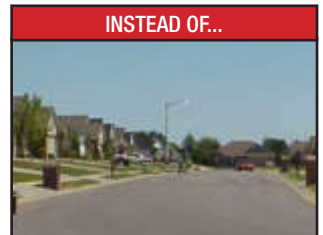
97 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Major boulevards are tree-lined, and every area of town has trees in abundance.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Prepare aerial inventory, promote public-private partnerships, provide property owner incentives

INSTEAD OF...



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5. SUBDUED SIGNS

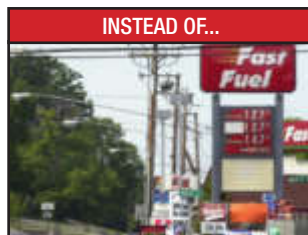
94 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Commercial signs in our community are of modest size at eye-level. They are surrounded by landscaping, and trees can grow above them.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Promote aesthetic advantage, provide incentives, establish sign ordinance

INSTEAD OF...



ENVISION...



6. ATTRACTIVE FENCES AND WALLS

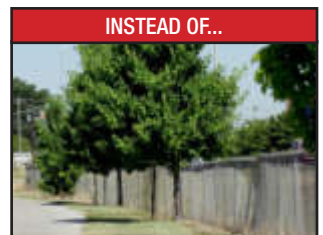
98 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Fences and walls bring beauty and distinction to our community. They blend with and enhance landscaping and surrounding properties.”

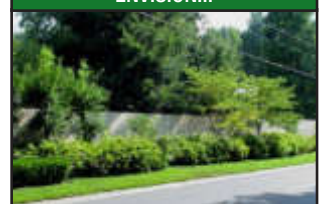
POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Involve citizens group in selection of fence and wall material

INSTEAD OF...



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Citizens Embrace Community Vision

7. A RING OF COLOR

96 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Our bypass will be abundant with grasses, groundcover, flowers, shrubs, and trees.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Develop plan, recruit sponsors, plant wildflowers along bypass and special beds at interchanges

INSTEAD OF...



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8. UNDERGROUND UTILITIES

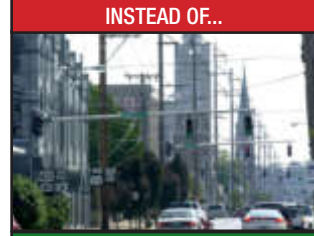
98 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“All major streets feature underground utilities.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Develop plan with OMU and utility companies, incremental conversion, encourage public-private partnerships

INSTEAD OF...



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9. SAFE AND PLEASANT PATHS

98 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“A network of paths leads to increased exercise, better health, and transportation alternatives for our community.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Expand and connect paths, promote public-private partnerships

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10. FESTIVE MARKETPLACE

91 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Our farmers market is a bustling community center that features growers, vendors, artists, entertainers, and more.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Establish a year-round marketplace facility (perhaps downtown)

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11. FREDERICA STREET SHOWCASE

95 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Frederica Street is our primary community boulevard and it is beautiful.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Develop design plan, property owner-developer incentives



12. A PAINTING PLAN

94 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Many buildings and groups of buildings come alive with creative color combinations.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Develop design plan, property owner incentives



13. DISTINCTIVE, APPEALING ARCHITECTURE

95 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Well-designed new construction and tasteful building restoration makes our city special. Clusters of shops, restaurants, and entertainment spots add life to our downtown and other areas.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES: Develop design objectives/guidelines, promote and provide incentives

INSTEAD OF...



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14. BEAUTIFUL WORKPLACES

96 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Our workplaces are well-planned and beautiful. Spending time in such places makes work more pleasant and productive.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Promote workplace design improvements, share examples and outcomes

INSTEAD OF...



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15. BUFFERING TRAFFIC AND OTHER THINGS

98 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Homes along busy streets or near unpleasant places are buffered by shrubbery, trees, earth berms, or walls. Dumpsters and other eyesores are screened.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Establish buffering/screening guidelines or ordinances

INSTEAD OF...



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16. NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY AND REVITALIZATION

98 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Neighborhoods take on their own character. People identify with and take pride in their neighborhood. Our older neighborhoods are popular places to live.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Develop community preservation goals, neighborhood design plans, incentives

INSTEAD OF...



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17. PRESERVING WOODED AREAS

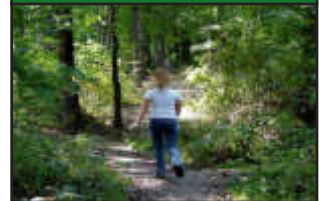
98 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“We value, protect, and preserve wooded areas whenever possible.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Promote importance, encourage public acquisition/controlled development of woodlands

ENVISION...



18. PUBLIC SQUARES WITH VITALITY

97 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Our public squares and pedestrian streets are safe and popular ‘people places.’ ”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Incorporate public squares and corresponding development plan into community planning

ENVISION...



19. BEAUTIFUL PARK BUILDINGS

99 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Our park buildings are carefully designed, blend with the natural environment, and are of similar architectural style within a given park.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Gradually renovate/replace incompatible structures, establish design control/review for proposed buildings

INSTEAD OF...



ENVISION...



Citizens Embrace Community Vision

20. ATTRACTIVE PUBLIC BENCHES

97 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Public benches are attractive, free of advertising and blend with other street furniture.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES: Gradually replace benches that have advertising, urge civic groups to find alternative fundraising projects



21. PUBLIC ART

97 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Public art – both traditional and abstract – is integrated into our community.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES: Encourage developers to devote a small portion of their project budget to public art, support Public Art Commission

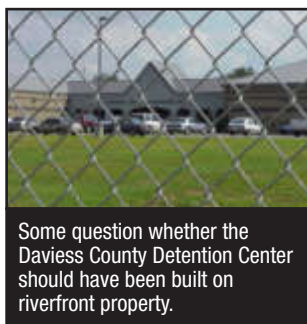


22. PUBLIC BUILDINGS IN THE RIGHT PLACE

96 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Locations for major public buildings are selected with care and objectivity.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES: Establish site selection committee, encourage citizen input, use site selection specialists as consultants for select projects



23. WELL-DESIGNED PUBLIC BUILDINGS

97 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Our public buildings are appealing, welcoming, and accommodating landmarks.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES: Establish architectural selection/review committee with design objectives from extensive public input; hold design competitions for major projects

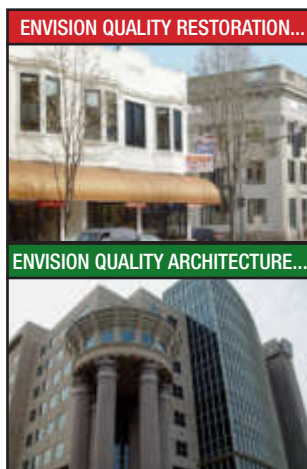


24. A PUBLIC VOICE IN DESIGN

94 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“We take pride in our architecture because public input into design is welcomed and valued.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES: Community design standards developed by architects, planners, developers, and citizens; for major public projects, direct architects to prepare several conceptual design options for public review

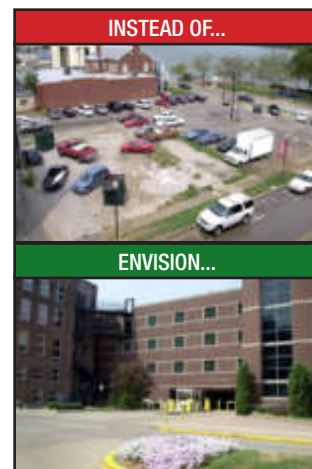


25. PARKING SHADED OR TUCKED BEHIND

95 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

“Parking is tucked behind and parking lots are green, cool and full of trees.”

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES: Incentives (e.g., complimentary landscape plans, discounts for plants and trees) for businesses who screen parking and whose landscaping exceeds minimum requirements; strong landscape ordinance



Citizens Embrace Community Vision

26. A NEAT AND CLEAN COMMUNITY

100 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

"Ours is a spotless community that takes pride in how it looks."

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Neighborhood clean-up days, media/educational campaigns, fines for littering, property maintenance codes



curbside litter

27. OUTDOOR LIGHTING THAT HIGHLIGHTS ART, ARCHITECTURE, NATURAL FEATURES, AND NEIGHBORHOODS

95 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

"Our city is a showcase of light."

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Prepare visual examples and cost estimates; encourage property owner compliance; offer incentives



Tapscott's Corner

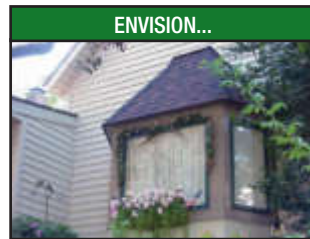
28. FEATURES EVERYONE LIKES

97 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

"Our homes, neighborhoods, and public spaces are uniquely appealing, rich in features that stand the test of time."

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Promote features (e.g., quaint courtyards, window flower boxes, trellises, banners, wrought iron, brick walkways, etc.) through neighborhood associations; incorporate features into parks and public spaces; encourage developers to incorporate these features



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29. TREASURED PLACES

99 PERCENT OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS EMBRACED THE VISION:

"We preserve, celebrate, and develop treasured places that are uniquely Owensboro-Daviess County."

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES:

Establish/bolster groups to preserve and protect treasured places (e.g., sassafras tree, dogwood-azalea trail, historic homes and sites, etc.)



DOGWOOD TRAIL



SASSAFRASS TREE

"We wanted balance in our workshop participants," said Kate Higdon, who served as PRIDE's executive director during that period. "We no doubt attracted citizens who have a strong interest in appearance issues, but the public was invited and we did our best to get the word out. Participation was much better than what you typically see at public hearings, and each participant had to devote a couple of hours of focused attention at the workshops. It was a good faith effort to educate citizens from all walks of life about design options and to gauge community response," she said.

"We presented and discussed the negatives as well: cost, maintenance, the pros and cons of regulation. The workshops reinforced the fact that most citizens want to live in a beautiful place," she said.

Committee members juggle



The workshops reinforced the fact that most citizens want to live in a beautiful place.

- Kate Higdon

several projects at a time, but as a result of a recommendation from its blue-ribbon Advisory Committee, PRIDE has prioritized a few key projects, including its most ambitious: a design plan for two prominent community gateways – the entrance from the Natcher Bridge and the entrance from the airport along West Parrish Avenue.

Dozens of suggestions have already emerged from several work sessions under the direction of Nathan Nunley, retired architect and project manager, and Morgan C. McIlwain, planner-landscape architect from Lexington. The next work session will be Tuesday, January 25, 5:00 p.m. at the Daviess County Government Operations Center, 2620 Highway 81. The public is invited. Reservations are requested at PRIDE@plfo.org or 685-2652, extension 12.

A low-angle, close-up photograph of the Statue of Liberty's torch and crown against a clear blue sky. The torch is held high, and the crown's spikes are visible. The lighting is bright, casting shadows on the statue's surface.

IS OUR DEMOCRACY THREATENED?

A report of the Task Force on Inequality and American
Democracy of the American Political Science Association

The Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, formed under the auspices of the 14,000-member American Political Science Association, was charged to review and assess the health and functioning of U.S. democracy in a time of rising inequality. The task force carefully surveyed the evidence about three important, interlinked areas of concern: citizen participation, government responsiveness, and patterns of public policy-making and their consequences.

The following are excerpts from the task force report:

...for the people of

The poor speak with a whisper

"Generations of Americans have worked to equalize citizen voice across the lines of income, race, and gender. Today, however, the voices of American citizens are raised and heard unequally. The privileged participate more than others and are increasingly well organized to press their demands on government. Public officials, in turn, are much more responsive to the privileged than to average citizens and the least affluent. Citizens with lower or moderate incomes speak with a whisper that is lost on the ears of inattentive government officials, while the advantaged roar with a clarity and consistency that policy-makers readily hear and routinely follow."

Need for democratic renewal

"The scourge of overt discrimination against African Americans and women has been replaced by a more subtle but potent threat – the growing concentration of the country's wealth and income in the hands of the few. Progress toward realizing America's democratic process can surely be revived. But to counter current trends that undermine inclusion and fairness, we must work together for democratic renewal. Failure to take urgent and concerted steps to expand political participation and enhance democratic responsiveness – and failure to use democratic means creatively to temper rising social disparities – will surely endanger our longstanding democratic ideals at home and undermine our country's efforts to spread the hope of equal citizenship abroad."

The affluent vote, the poor do not

"Nearly nine out of 10 individuals in families with incomes over \$75,000 reported voting in presidential elections while only half of those in families with incomes under \$15,000 reported voting."

"Compared with the half of Americans who vote in presidential elections, much smaller proportions take part in more demanding and costly activities such as making a financial contribution to politicians, working in an electoral campaign, getting in touch with a public official, getting involved in an organization that takes political stands, or taking part in a protest or demonstration."

Wealth and political influence

"As wealth and income have become more concentrated and the flow of money into elections has grown, campaign contributions give the affluent a means to express their voice that is unavailable to most citizens. This aggravates inequalities of political voice."

"Political voice is also unequal because Americans who are very active in politics often have more intense or extreme views than average citizens who participate less or only sporadically."

"Members of Congress allocate discretionary government funds to more narrowly sliced segments of their districts, heightening the reward to the organized at the expense of citizens who do not vote, contribute, or otherwise participate in American politics."

"Recent research strikingly documents that the votes of U.S. senators far more closely correspond with the policy preferences of each senator's rich constituents than with the preferences of the senator's less-privileged constituents."

Programs helped to equalize voice

"Through much of U.S. history, our government has responded to the life circumstances of ordinary Americans by enacting major policies to spread opportunities and provide security to millions of individuals and families. Public education, Social Security and Medicare, the G.I. Bill, home-mortgage programs, certain farm programs, and many other efforts have enhanced the quality of life for millions of Americans. ...these broadly inclusive government programs also encouraged ordinary citizens to become more active participants in our democracy – they helped equalize the voice of citizens in the halls of government."

"Social Security has encouraged participation by low- and moderate-income seniors, which means that the elderly are less subject to the skew in favor of the affluent and better educated than generally characterizes

political participation in the United States."

"...the historic accomplishments of the 'rights revolution' are now threatened by widening economic and political inequalities."

"The nation's current campaign to expand democracy abroad should be a bugle call at home to make the birthright of all Americans – equal voice and influence in the affairs of government – more of a reality than it is today."

A government responsive to all

"We challenge our fellow citizens to join with us in a vigorous campaign to expand participation and make our government responsive to the many, rather than the privileged few."

For the full report: <http://www.apsanet.org/inequality/index.cfm>

For other APSA materials on public issues: <http://www.politicalscience.org>

TASK FORCE ON INEQUALITY AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Lawrence Jacobs, Chair
University of Minnesota

Ben Barber
University of Maryland

Larry Bartels
Princeton University

Michael Dawson
Harvard University

Morris Fiorina
Stanford University

Jacob Hacker
Yale University

Rodney Hero
Notre Dame University

Hugh Heclo
George Mason University

Claire Jean Kim
University of California, Irvine

Suzanne Mettler
Syracuse University

Benjamin Page
Northwestern University

Dianne Pinderhughes
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

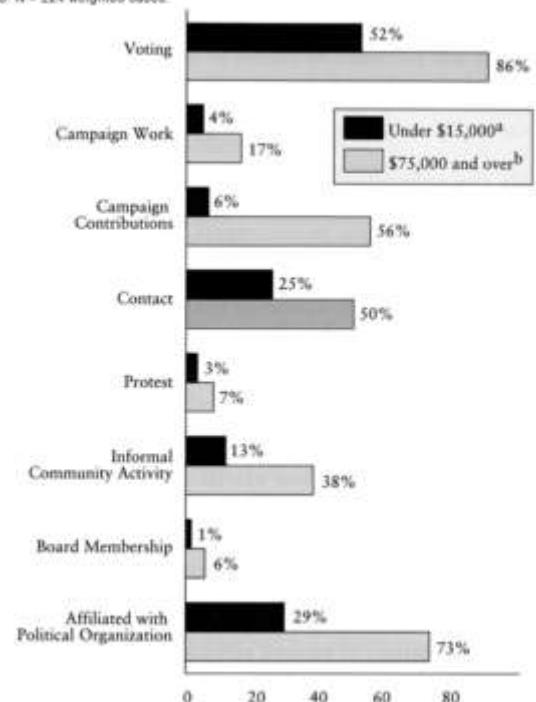
Kay Lehman Schlozman
Boston College

Theda Skocpol
Harvard University

Sidney Verba
Harvard University

Figure 2. Percentage Active in Various Activities: High and Low Income Groups

a. N = 483 weighted cases.
b. N = 224 weighted cases.



Source: 1990 Citizen Participation Study. See Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) figure 7.2, p. 190.



Citizens Speak: LEADERS RESPOND

Judge rules in favor of citizens group, library tax referendum averted. New library postponed indefinitely. Haire offers expansion plan.

On September 21, 2004 a citizens group, led by former Daviess County Commissioner Gary Boswell, presented petitions with 6,600 names to Daviess County Clerk Mike Libs protesting the 1.6 cent (per \$100,000 assessed valuation) property tax increase to 7.1 cents adopted by the Daviess County Public Library Board of Trustees on August 9th. (On September 7, 2004 the library board lowered the rate by .5 cents to 6.6 cents.)

The proposed 1.1 cent increase is equivalent to \$10.10 on a \$100,000 house. It reflects a 20 percent increase over the 2003 rate. Any increase over four percent is subject to recall.

Boswell's group requested that the tax proposal be placed on the November 2 election ballot. Mike Libs refused since the petitions were submitted after August 10, the state deadline for placing items on the November ballot.

Boswell's group cited another law allowing citizens 45 days after a tax increase is approved to petition for a recall. The petition was submitted 43 days after the library board approved the tax rate.

On October 1, Boswell's group filed suit against the library tax district. They asked Daviess Circuit Judge Tom Castlen to determine which law should supersede the other.

On December 2, Judge Castlen ruled in favor of the citizens group.

On December 15, the library board reduced the property tax rate to 5.7 cents, thus making a recall election unnecessary. As a result, they postponed indefinitely the construction of a new facility since the new tax rate would not generate the funds necessary to finance the project.

On January 6, Daviess County Judge-Executive Reid Haire recommended a \$6 million renovation-expansion plan that could be financed using library tax increases already in place.



Without additional revenue from a proposed library tax increase, plans for a new Frederica Street facility (above) have been postponed indefinitely.



JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH Public AGENDA

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

JANUARY

- 17 Daviess County Fiscal Court**
4:00 p.m.
Court House
- Owensboro Daviess County Regional Airport Board**
4:30 p.m.
Airport Conference Room
- RWRA**
3:30 p.m.
1722 Pleasant Valley Road
- 18 Owensboro Board of Education Luncheon**
12:00 p.m.
Foust Elementary School (Contact: Maxine Walker 686-1000)
601 Foust Avenue
- Owensboro City Commission**
5:00 p.m.
City Hall, 4th floor
- Owensboro Tourism & Convention Bureau**
7:45 a.m.
215 E. 2nd Street
- 19 Daviess County Public Library Board**
5:00 p.m.
Library boardroom
- 20 Daviess County Board of Education**
6:00 p.m.
1622 Southeastern Parkway
- Daviess County Fiscal Court**
4:00 p.m.
Court House
- Owensboro Board of Education**
4:30 p.m.
Boardroom
- Owensboro Utility Commission Board**
4:00 p.m.
OMU, 2070 Tamarack Road
- 25 Mayor's Awards for Excellence Ceremony**
6:00 p.m.
City Hall, City Commission Chambers
- Owensboro Board of Education Luncheon**
12:00 p.m.
Central Office (Contact: Maxine Walker 686-1000)
1335 W. 11th Street

- PRIDE Final Corridor Workshop**
5:00 p.m.
Daviess County Government Operations Center
2620 Highway 81 (Reservations: 685-2652 ext. 12)
- 26 Owensboro Historic Preservation Board and Downtown Design Review Commission**
5:00 p.m.
City Hall, Community Development Office
- Tobacco Control Coalition for Green River District**
11:30 a.m.
GRDHD
- 27 Owensboro Board of Education**
4:30 p.m.
1335 W. 11th Street
- Owensboro Housing Authority**
11:30 a.m. (Contact: Maxine Walker 686-1000)
2161 E. 19th Street
- 28 Owensboro Riverport Authority Board**
12:00 p.m.
1771 River Road

FEBRUARY

- 1 Green River Area Council on Aging**
10:00 a.m.
GRADD
- Owensboro Board of Education Luncheon**
12:00 p.m.
Hager Preschool (Contact: Maxine Walker 686-1000)
601-B Foust Avenue
- Owensboro City Commission**
5:00 p.m.
City Hall, 4th floor
- 3 Chamber of Commerce "Rooster Booster Breakfast"**
7:30 a.m.
Executive Inn, International Room A
Program by: Barry Bratcher, Large Scale Biology, Inc.
- Daviess County Fiscal Court**
4:00 p.m.
City Hall
- Owensboro Metropolitan Board of Adjustment**
6:00 p.m.
City Hall, 4th floor

The TRACKER DATA OF INTEREST

Compiled by
Chad M. Gesser



- The average household income in Daviess County is lower than the average household income in over one-third of states in the United States.
- Our community ranks lower than the state rate for minority and female owned businesses.
- From 1990 to 2000 the state population grew twice as fast as the Daviess County population.
- There are more females than males in Owensboro-Daviess County.
- The average age in Owensboro and Louisville is 37.
- The average age in Bowling Green is 32.
- 37 percent of the Owensboro adult population is 18-44.
- 46 percent of the Bowling Green adult population is 18-44.
- Half the homes in Daviess County were built prior to 1970.
- 60 percent of Daviess County homes have two or more cars.
- 20 percent of adults in Owensboro-Daviess County have not completed high school.
- Daviess County ranks 18th out of 120 counties for the rate of adults completing four or more years of college.
- Daviess County ranks 14th out of 120 counties for the rate of adults completing some college or an associate's degree.
- Kentucky ranks in the top 10 of states for adults with no health care coverage.
- Adults in Kentucky are at a greater risk than adults in any other state in the U.S. for developing smoking-related illnesses.

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

Chad Gesser is Director of Institutional Research at Owensboro Community and Technical College. He holds a master's degree in sociology from Western Kentucky University.

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Public AGENDA

FEBRUARY

- 4 Preservation Alliance of Owensboro-Daviess County**
12:00 p.m.
Campbell Club (Contact: Gary Adams
683-3380)
517 Frederica Street
- 7 Owensboro Public Art Commission**
12:00 p.m.
Campbell Club
- 8 Green River Area Council on Aging**
10:00 a.m.
GRADD

Owensboro Board of Education Luncheon
12:00 p.m.
Newton Parrish (Contact: Maxine Walker
686-1000)
510 Byers Avenue
- 10 Citizens Health Care Advocates (CHCA)**
5:30 p.m.
GRDHD – Bedford Walker Community Room

Daviess County Fiscal Court
4:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission
6:00 p.m.
City Hall, 4th floor
- 15 Owensboro Board of Education Luncheon**
12:00 p.m.
Seven Hills (Contact: Maxine Walker
686-1000)
2401 McConnell Avenue

Owensboro City Commission
5:00 p.m.
City Hall, 4th floor
- 17 Daviess County Board of Education**
6:00 p.m.
Southeastern Parkway

Daviess County Fiscal Court
4:00 p.m.
Court House

Owensboro Board of Education
4:30 p.m.
Boardroom

Tourism & Convention Bureau
7:45 a.m.
215 E. 2nd Street
- 22 Owensboro Board of Education Luncheon**
12:00 p.m.
Central Office (Contact: Maxine Walker
686-1000)
1335 W. 11th Street
- 23 Owensboro Historic Preservation Board & Downtown Design Review Commission**
5:00 p.m.
City Hall, Community Development Office

Tobacco Control Coalition for Green River District
11:30 a.m.
GRDHD

- 24 Owensboro Board of Education**
4:30 p.m.
1335 E. 19th Street
- 25 Owensboro Housing Authority**
11:30 a.m. (Contact: Maxine Walker
686-1000)
2161 E. 19th Street

Owensboro Riverport Authority
12:00 p.m.
1771 River Road

MARCH

- 1 Owensboro Board of Education Luncheon**
12:00 p.m.
Sutton School (Contact: Maxine Walker
686-1000)
2060 Lewis Lane

Owensboro City Commission
5:00 p.m.
City Hall, 4th floor
- 3 Chamber of Commerce "Rooster Booster Breakfast"**
7:30 a.m.
Executive Inn, International Room A
(Reservations: 926-1860)

Daviess County Fiscal Court
4:00 p.m.
Court House

Owensboro Metropolitan Board of Adjustment
6:00 p.m.
City Hall
- 8 Green River Health Council**
9:00 a.m.
GRADD

Owensboro Board of Education Luncheon
12:00 p.m.
5-6 Center (Contact: Maxine Walker
686-1000)
2631 S. Griffith Avenue

Owensboro Historic Preservation Board
5:00 p.m.
City Hall, Community Development Office
- 10 Citizens Health Care Advocates (CHCA)**
5:30 p.m.
GRDHD-Bedford Walker Community Room

Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission
6:00 p.m.
City Hall, 4th floor
- 15 Owensboro Board of Education Luncheon**
12:00 p.m.
Hager Preschool (Contact: Maxine Walker
686-1000)
601-B Foust Avenue

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

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

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

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

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

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



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

Thomas Jefferson
FOUNDER OF THE FOUNDATION

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Citizen Action UPDATE

The Public Life Foundation promotes broad and meaningful citizen participation in community decision making and public policy. Grass roots action is a reflection of an informed, engaged, empowered citizenry. We welcome updates from all citizen initiatives, whether an established organization or an ad hoc group. Contact us at 685-2652 or info@plfo.org.

Bring Back Baseball Committee

Bruce Brubaker, Chair

bbrubaker@champion-ford.com

- examining site options for a new stadium for a Frontier League professional minor league baseball team
- conducted market study to determine level of interest
- through pro bono services of RBS Design, developed preliminary stadium design prototype
- developed financial model
- researched league affiliate options

The Citizens Committee on Education

Marianne Smith Edge, Co-Chair

msedge@smithedge.com

Forrest Roberts, Co-Chair

robrook@adelphia.net

- Planning a series of community forums to report on survey results and solicit additional citizen input concerning a community plan for higher education.
- Received a \$10,000 grant from the state Department of Education in support of "The Learning Community," a program to instill a higher value of education and lifelong learning into the fabric of community life.
- Tracking financial and student population trends of the city and county school systems. (The CCE is concerned about growing disparities from a landlocked city school tax district.)

Citizens Health Care Advocates

Dale Taylor, Chair

dalet@www.com

- Daviess County Judge-Executive Reid Haire was honored and spoke during the December meeting about steps taken to improve access to health care for the uninsured in Daviess County.
- During the January meeting, a citizens panel shared plans for a community-wide system of paths and bikeways to promote health and fitness.
- Developing plans and priorities for 2005.
- CHCA now has 103 members and meetings are broadcast on OCTV.
- Honored Dr. Larry Wigginton with R.C. Neblett Award

Goodfellows Club

Barry Carden, President

bcarden@messenger-inquirer.com

- Concluded successful 2004 "Roll Call" campaign, raising more than \$98,000.
- Due to heavy snowfall (and state of emergency), postponed annual Christmas Eve party for disadvantaged children – the event was held on December 31st.
- Contributed more than \$60,000 worth clothing to meet back-to-school needs for disadvantaged youth.
- Supporting a dental sealant program for disadvantaged youth.

Maceo Concerned Citizens

Patsy Hawes Gordon

10038 Kelly Cemetery Road, Maceo, KY 42355

- Tracking the cleanup and sealing treatment of a former hazardous waste "Super Fund" disposal site near Maceo in east Daviess County.
- Promoting nearby wooded areas as a possible public park.

Owensboro Area World Affairs Council

Rodney Berry

rodney.berry@plfo.org

- Recently adopted bylaws and recruited its first board of directors. Officers will be elected by the board during upcoming meeting.
- Identifying program opportunities for 2005: speakers, panels, films, etc.

PRIDE

Susie Tyler, President

grand.view@adelphia.net

- Public workshop scheduled for January 25 to share ideas suggested to this point and to solicit additional input for ways to enhance the new community entrance from the Natcher Bridge and West Parrish Avenue from the airport.
- Developing projects and priorities for 2005
- Held annual meeting and awards program on November 4th.
- Meet regularly with architects of proposed projects.

- Meet regularly with engineers and utility representatives regarding planned transportation and other public projects.
- Conducting historic home tours as a fund-raiser.
- Membership campaign planned for February.

Unity Coalition

David Kelly, President

davak@bellsouth.net

- Adopted bylaws and elected officers and directors
- Approved preliminary schedule of events for 2005: speakers, panels, film-discussion, etc.

Public AGENDA

MARCH

15 Owensboro City Commission

5:00 p.m.
City Hall, 4th floor

Tourism & Convention Bureau

7:45 a.m.
215 E. 2nd Street

16 Daviess County Public Library Board

5:00 p.m.
Library boardroom

Owensboro Historic Preservation Board & Downtown Design Review Commission

5:00 p.m.
City Hall, Community Development Office

17 Daviess County Board of Education

6:00 p.m.
1622 Southeastern Parkway

Daviess County Fiscal Court

4:00 p.m.
Boardroom

Owensboro Board of Education

4:30 p.m.
Boardroom

Owensboro Utility Commission Board

4:00 p.m.
OMU, 2070 Tamarack Road

Tourism Convention Bureau

7:45 a.m.
215 E. 2nd Street