

# PARTICIPANT GUIDE



**Owensboro-Daviess County**

**Executive Inn Rivermont**

November 10, 2007



## Steering Committee

imagining the future...  
working together...  
taking action...

...to bring about our community vision

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Public Life Foundation

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### Jennifer Wright

Project Manager



Before the event, more than **72 volunteers** helped select and analyze issues, write and edit the **Participant Guide**, design the format, plan logistics, raise funds, promote the event and reach out to Owensboro-Daviess County residents from all walks of life.

During the Town Meeting, **130 additional volunteers** will serve as table facilitators, laptop computer data entry recorders, data analysts, greeters, registration helpers, coat check attendants, drivers, translators and more.



## AmericaSpeaks

[www.americaspeaks.org](http://www.americaspeaks.org)

Based in Washington, DC, AmericaSpeaks is a nonprofit organization that engages citizens in important public decisions that impact their lives. More than 130,000 people have had an impact on their communities through the 21st Century Town Meetings® and multi-faceted citizen engagement strategies. Since 1997, AmericaSpeaks has conducted 21st Century Town Meetings® across the country and around the world on:

- the redevelopment of the World Trade Center after 9/11
- statewide health care plans in California and Maine
- regional economic development in Ohio
- the Washington D.C. municipal budget
- global priorities at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland
- The Clinton Global Initiative and much more.



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### CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION

The *WE the PEOPLE* Century Town Meeting is an unprecedented opportunity for people from all walks of life to take responsibility for the future of Owensboro-Daviess County, Kentucky. This extraordinary and carefully designed town meeting will generate great ideas, thoughtful deliberation, and a commitment to work together and take action to make a great community even greater.

At the town meeting, we will imagine our ideal community, explore exciting possibilities, and uncover our hidden potential. We will also be mindful of limitations, tradeoffs, costs and consequences, in order to set attainable goals and priorities.

We will demonstrate the value of grass roots democracy and the collective wisdom of “We the People”, and how we must all participate in a meaningful way in community decisions and public policy.

On Nov. 10, we are fulfilling our civic responsibility. To do so, we had to give up other activities. Hats off to us for our commitment and contributions. A legion of volunteers has devoted more than six months to research issues, prepare materials, and manage the many details connected with an event of this magnitude. Numerous sponsors have given generously to make this happen.

Consequently, we expect great things to come from this town meeting. Many public officials and community leaders are here to listen and to be responsive to the voice of the people — your voice.

We encourage you to use what you have learned today, embrace your vital role, stay involved, and continue to make a difference.



# Introduction

## Why are we coming together?

The “We the People” Town Meeting is our opportunity to help take responsibility for the future of Owensboro-Daviess County. Hundreds of residents will come together at this unique town meeting to ensure that our community becomes an even greater place to call home. Together we will define the community we wish to become and prioritize strategies to accelerate improvement toward five goals. We will conclude the day by outlining next steps and commitments from leaders and citizens.

## What is your role?

We ask that you:

- Review this discussion guide before the town meeting.
- Consider how these issues have affected you, your family, friends and co-workers.
- Speak up during the town meeting and contribute your ideas.
- Think about and suggest other options that are not presented in this guide.
- Listen carefully and respectfully to what others have to say.
- Be open to working as a group.
- and have fun!

## How will your feedback be used to make Owensboro-Daviess County a better place?

Public officials, policymakers and community leaders will acknowledge the significance of this unprecedented community gathering. Many of us will be amazed by the civic energy and ideas that will come forth from this exercise. It will rekindle our belief in grass roots participatory democracy. And to ensure that we make progress on our top priorities, participants will identify next steps and form working groups for follow-up action.

A preliminary report containing the results of the day’s work will be distributed as we leave the town meeting. Within a few weeks, a final report will be available on the event web site: [www.wethepeopletownmeeting.org](http://www.wethepeopletownmeeting.org).

## ASSESSMENT OF OUR COMMUNITY

### Conditions and Trends in Owensboro-Daviess County

**Envy of many communities.** Many people consider Owensboro-Daviess County to be one of Kentucky’s most successful and progressive communities. With several fine colleges, a new bridge and industrial park near the airport, ventures in research, biotechnology, and biodiesel production, and plans for a new hospital, we are the envy of many cities and counties.

**A great place to raise a family.** We take pride in our symphony orchestra and performing arts center, an ambitious riverfront plan, three museums, popular festivals, award-winning schools, safe and attractive neighborhoods. We’ve been named Kentucky’s top sports town. We like that there is very little traffic congestion. We were recently ranked as the eighth healthiest community in Kentucky. We have great parks and paths for walking and riding bikes. Owensboro-Daviess County is often referred to as an ideal place to raise a family.

**Lingering tensions and cynicism.** However, like any community, Owensboro-Daviess County is not without its challenges. City-county/urban-rural suspicions linger from a 1990 campaign to merge local governments. Many have become cynical about how important decisions are made without meaningful public participation.

**Shortcomings and struggles.** Despite progress, the education level of our workforce is not impressive. We still have inadequate highway and air transportation connections. Daviess County is last in non-farm business formation when compared with 11 other benchmark Kentucky counties. Our downtown struggles while we expand into prime farmland. Our community lacks a sense of excitement often necessary to bring back our best and brightest.

**Daunting challenges.** Substance abuse destroys families and drug offenders fill our jail. Too many single mothers get little support from fathers. Unaffordable health insurance leads many low-income families to postpone medical treatment and turn to the emergency room when conditions are serious. Generational poverty, unhealthy lifestyles, illiteracy, proliferation of coal-fired power plants... some issues and trends seem beyond our capacity to affect.

Great to even greater...

# Five Goals In An Exciting Vision



This guide includes goals and strategic options developed by our Steering Committee and a Content and Program Design Subcommittee after reviewing research, reports and articles with input from stakeholders, community leaders and focus groups. This framework is meant to guide and not limit your discussions on the strategic options to advance these five visionary goals.

Many of the strategic options may work together effectively, but our community has limited resources, time and energy. As a result, we may need to make tough choices about the best options available to us.

## 1. **A Community Committed to Education and Learning**

What can we do to become the best educated community possible with schools that compete globally? What can we do to create a culture that embraces lifelong learning?

## 2. **A Region of Opportunity and Appeal**

What can we do to attract great jobs, build businesses, and become a region of opportunity and appeal?

## 3. **A Uniquely Green and Clean Environment**

What can we do to reduce toxic emissions in our area and to responsibly address other environmental concerns?

## 4. **A Healthy and Caring Community**

As a community that cares about all our people, what can we do to help the less fortunate?

## 5. **A Government for the 21st Century**

What can we do to make sure our community is governed in an efficient, effective, fair and equitable manner?





## A Community Committed to Education and Learning

### The important early years



Children who enter school behind their peers typically remain behind. This is a contributing factor to students dropping out of high school. Nearly three-fourths of children who are poor readers in the third grade will be poor readers when they start high school. In our community, we have taken steps to fortify early childhood education.

- The Head Start program of Audubon Area Community Services is one of 25 top programs in the U.S. (out of 2,700 nationwide).
- Local child care providers (public, private for-profit and private non-profit) have gained distinction for staff training, high standards and collaboration.

Nonetheless, approximately 1,600 Owensboro-Daviess County children (age 5 and under) are not enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs.

### K-12 system faces challenges, but schools rank well

**Parent involvement** Some students benefit from parents who are engaged in their education and often have a presence through a volunteer role at school. Other parents may not have the time or inclination to track their child's progress in school. The child may not receive the assistance, support or encouragement they need. Some benefit from an intervening teacher, coach, tutor or counselor. Others lose interest, particularly in the middle school years.



### High School Comparisons

(ACT Composite Scores)

	Ave. ACT Score	Percent Taking Test	Percent On-To College
Apollo High School	20.6	78%	66%
Daviess County High School	21.8	80%	82%
Owensboro High School	21.2	59%	70%
Owensboro Catholic High School	21.5	98%	99%
Whitesville Trinity High School	19.6	78%	85%
Kentucky (ave.)	20.7	77%	n/a
U.S. (ave.)	21.2	n/a	n/a

**Students with learning disabilities** Fifteen to eighteen percent of students cope with learning disabilities. Some educators say that underfunded state and federal programs place unrealistic expectations on these students. And there is a critical shortage of qualified special education teachers.

**Teaching the test** Many educators, parents and students say that too much emphasis is placed on standardized tests. If a subject is not tested, it is de-emphasized or discontinued, even if it is important.

**College preparation** Fifteen to twenty percent of this year's high school freshman class will not likely graduate in four years. Of 989 new credit-seeking students enrolled at Owensboro Community and Technical College in the Fall 2007 semester, 620 of them (62.7 percent) did not test at college level in at least one subject area.

**Schools rank well** It is difficult to make conclusions from the most recent school assessments as state educational testing is restructured. However, local test scores typically compare favorably with schools across the state. Local schools regularly produce impressive numbers of National Merit scholars, and a number of local schools have been recognized for excellence at the state and national level.

**Administrators stress funding issues** Despite significant state education funding increases from 2004-2008, 92 percent of these funds enable school districts to maintain the status quo: staff compensation and benefits, building maintenance, technology, textbooks, etc. Only eight percent is available to advance learning: more school days, preschool, centers for reading and math, etc. Officials fear that we are losing ground in gifted and talented, vocational and arts education, safety, professional development and more.



**Implications of community growth and fixed boundaries**

Unlike city government, the city school board cannot annex property into its district; its boundary was fixed in the 1940s. Consequently, most of the residential, commercial and industrial expansion over the past 60 years has occurred outside the line, thereby exclusively enhancing the county district’s tax base and student population.

Since 1970, the city school district has lost about half of its student population, and its population is increasingly low-income. School taxes in the city school district are 35 percent higher than county school taxes. The city schools depend on 2.5 times more federal government revenue than the county schools, despite educating 60 percent fewer students.

Nearly every county school building is new. The last city school constructed was the Mary Mitchell Elementary School more than 40 years ago. However the city school buildings have been well-maintained, and a \$20 million athletic and fine arts expansion is planned at Owensboro High School.

**Bachelor Degree Attainment Rate**

(As a percent of the population)

	2004 RATE
US	27.0
Kentucky	19.0
Fayette	39.5
Warren	32.3
Jefferson	27.3
Madison	25.9
Boone	24.2
Kenton	22.8
Campbell	22.3
Hardin	21.1
McCracken	19.0
Christian	16.2
<b>Daviess</b>	<b>15.1</b>

*Note: In 2006, the Daviess County rate increased to 17 percent.*

**Educational attainment falls off after associate degrees**

Daviess County ranks first among eight peer Kentucky counties in the percent of 25-34 year-olds with an associate degree. Clearly this reflects the impact of Owensboro Community College (now Owensboro Community and Technical College) that dedicated its campus in 1989.

But we rank among the worst in the percent of adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher – 17 percent, compared with the state average of 20 percent and a national average of 27 percent. Education advocates want 10,000 more college graduates living in our community by 2020 and have

set a goal to increase the local percentage of college graduates to 24 percent in 10 years.

A key to that challenge may be more courses and degrees (baccalaureate, masters) offered through a branch of Western Kentucky University or other public universities. For many years, there has been a reluctance to support an expanded presence of WKU in Owensboro because of a concern that it would reduce enrollment at Kentucky Wesleyan College and Brescia University. With record enrollments in 2006, KWC demonstrated that local liberal arts institutions can thrive despite expanded offerings by a public university.

To facilitate WKU’s expansion, Daviess County Fiscal Court recently purchased property and offered \$6 million toward a WKU campus near OTC.

To become an average state, Kentucky will need to double its number of adults with a bachelor’s degree by 2010.

Of the 989 new credit seeking students enrolled at Owensboro Community and Technical College in the Fall 2007 semester, 620 of them (62.7 percent) did not test at college level in at least one subject area.

**Lifelong learning**

Education and lifelong learning are essential to economic development, better health and a rewarding life. An important part of that challenge is to inspire the 24 percent of adults in Daviess County who have earned some college credit to complete their degree, as well as those with a high school degree or less to continue their education, and improve life skills. The “Learning Community” campaign has embraced that goal.

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**What can we do to become the best educated community possible with schools that compete globally?**

**What can we do to create a culture that embraces lifelong learning?**

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# Strategic Options: A Community Committed to Education and Learning

## Option 1: Raise community awareness about the importance of education and lifelong learning.

**Instill a stronger community value of education and lifelong learning through an adequately funded, 10-year comprehensive marketing and communications program.**

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- “The Learning Community” initiative embraces this same objective. The program is off to a great start and should be sustained. It could also be an effective way to communicate community progress toward these objectives.
- Organizations, such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), have proved that a persistent awareness campaign can indeed change a public value.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- A campaign that affects a community value would take many years and an enormous amount of money.
- The money would be better spent on mentoring programs or scholarships.

## Option 2: Provide high quality preschool experiences for more children.

**Invest in early childhood (birth to kindergarten) research-based enrichment programs and advocate for more local, state and federal resources for this purpose. School districts should work with community-based programs to ensure quality and expand availability.**

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Children enrolled in high quality pre-kindergarten programs are less likely to be held back a grade, less likely to need special education, and more likely to graduate from high school. Early childhood education is a cost-effective investment.
- Too many students from low and middle income families start off behind in school and never catch up.
- Some students are placed in “slow” groups, ostracized, suffer from low self-esteem, and are quicker to lose interest in school.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Parents have a responsibility to prepare their children for school.
- We don’t need more taxpayer-supported programs when parents are perfectly capable of reading to their kids and teaching them their colors.
- We already target at-risk children with preschool programs, such as Head Start.

## Option 3: Increase parent and community involvement in education.

**Develop resources for school districts to expand parental involvement programs and stimulate local businesses, community groups and volunteers to become more engaged in the lives of students.**

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Research shows that parental involvement is key to student success.
- Parental involvement, mentoring and adopt-a-school programs are effective in supporting and encouraging students to apply their best efforts and plan for postsecondary education.
- Community partnerships can attract outside resources for school programs.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- It is impractical to think we could attract enough volunteer mentors to make much of a difference.
- Parents of at-risk students are less likely to get involved or attend teacher conferences. If students are not encouraged at home, efforts by outside groups are seldom effective.
- Parental involvement is immensely more difficult when parents are working several jobs just to make ends meet.

# Strategic Options: A Community Committed to Education and Learning

## Option 4: Promote the highest possible standards for classroom teachers.

Offer the most competitive teacher compensation possible, cutting-edge professional development, ample planning time, manageable class sizes, technology and other resources to attract even more superior classroom teachers to our community. At the same time, develop more effective tools for administrators to discipline and terminate teachers who are not effective or dedicated.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Most teachers work extra hours at no pay and purchase supplies out of their own pocket with added pressure to improve student scores on standardized tests.
- By elevating a classroom teacher to a higher level of professionalism, we can continue to attract our best and brightest people into the teaching profession.
- Administrators need greater authority and support to intervene, discipline or terminate teachers when necessary. Ineffective teachers should not be protected by tenure.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Teachers do not choose the profession because of compensation levels. They need to be in it for the right reasons: to serve students.
- Tenure guarantees due process. We do not want dedicated teachers casually dismissed and replaced by entry-level teachers at a lower rate of pay.
- Teachers are already required to serve a term as student teacher and an internship under the direction of a principal, university representative and a veteran teacher.

## Option 5: Increase resources for schools.

School boards should not pass up the annual four percent property tax revenue increase allowed by law. Our schools need more state and federal funding and changes in state law to allow more local flexibility to increase resources for schools.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- If we want world class schools, we need to fund them adequately.
- To retain and attract our best and brightest into teaching, schools need more resources.
- To compete globally, the status quo is inadequate. We need the latest technology, more instructional days, more programs in science and math.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- More money is being spent on education than ever. Taxpayers have had enough.
- Rather than throw more money at schools, we need to get back to basics and restore discipline in schools.
- The public does not support an increase in school taxes. City school district residents, in particular, are opposed to school tax increases since they already pay a higher rate than county school district residents.

## Option 6: Help students move from associate degree to bachelor's degree.

Expand scholarships and programs that target students who have earned an associate degree but have been unable to complete their bachelor's degree. Expand course and degree offerings from Western Kentucky University and other post-secondary institutions.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- An endowed fund ("Students for Success Scholarship Fund") with the same objectives has been established through the Community Foundation of Owensboro-Daviess County. We can build this fund into a substantial one.
- Many people with an associate degree cannot afford tuition or reduce their work schedule. Many non-traditional students do not qualify for financial aid.
- Increasing the number of people with a bachelor's degree will improve our appeal to employers that rely on an educated workforce.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- A comprehensive third and fourth year scholarship program would be a very expensive undertaking with no guarantee of return on investment.
- Increasing the number of people with a bachelor's degree does not guarantee higher paying jobs. Some jobs that do not require a college degree pay more – construction, factory and trades.
- There is plenty of financial aid available. Our problem is economic development: When students graduate from our local colleges, they are forced to go out of town to find good jobs.

## Your ideas and options

Are there other strategic options that you propose to advance this community goal?

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## Goal #2

# A Region of Opportunity and Appeal

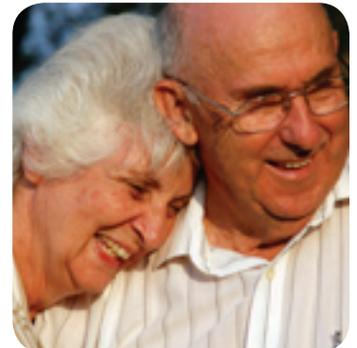
### Key indicators of progress

**Unimpressive growth** Owensboro (pop. 55,525) is Kentucky's third largest city. Daviess County (pop. 93,613) is Kentucky's seventh largest county. From 2000-2006, Owensboro grew by 2.6 percent and most of that is attributed to annexation. In the same period, Daviess County grew by 2.2 percent.

**Manufacturing employment now second to education and health care** Despite a common perception that Owensboro-Daviess County is increasingly a low-wage service employment economy, manufacturing employs almost 8,600 workers, second only to Education, Health and Social Services at 9,100. Owensboro Medical Health System is our largest employer with 3,300 workers.

**Median income better than most, but less than competitors** With a median household income of \$40,020, Owensboro-Daviess County is ahead of 97 Kentucky counties, but behind 22 other communities that we tend to measure ourselves against.

**Changing demographics** By 2030, Owensboro-Daviess County's senior population (65 years and older) is expected to reach 23,300, nearly double the number of seniors living here in 2000. Analysts also predict that nearly all our growth in the next decade will be a consequence of immigration.



**Help wanted: knowledge workers and the creative class** Communities and regions with highly educated workers tend to have more jobs with better pay. These areas attract companies, create an environment of innovation, and grow together as they



### Population & Rankings (2006 est.)

Daviess County	93,613	7th (of 120 counties)
City of Owensboro	55,525	3rd (of 421 cities)
City of Whitesville	597	285th (of 421 cities)

### Population Growth Rates (2000-2006)

Warren County	+ 9.4 %
Bowling Green	+ 7.9 %
Northern Kentucky (Boone, Kenton and Campbell Counties)	+ 7.9 %
Lexington/Fayette County	+ 3.9 %
Hardin County	+ 3.0 %
Elizabethtown	+ 3.8 %
Daviess County	+ 2.2 %
Owensboro	+ 2.6 %
McCracken County	- 0.8 %
Paducah	- 2.4 %



cluster around comparable technologies. Also, communities that flourish have a climate that attracts and supports entrepreneurs. This can mean resources and services for business ventures, but it also means a focus on improving overall community appeal and livability so that creative workers and entrepreneurs will choose to live here.

**Economic growth possibilities**

**Growing from within** Daviess County is last in non-farm business formation when compared with 11 other benchmark Kentucky counties. However, recent initiatives through the Economic Development Corporation (venture club, incubator program, etc.) and Green River Area Development District (entrepreneur club) are promising. KWC recently launched a program in entrepreneurial studies.



Expansions at Owensboro Grain, Toyotetsu, OMHS, Wax Works and other local employers reflect slow but steady growth.

**Attracting from beyond** As we cultivate innovation and start-ups, as we support expansions, we can also recruit the next Toyotetsu, DANA Corporation, Scott Paper or Unifirst plants. We have attributes to sell that call for a balanced approach to economic development.

**Downtown sets the tone** Downtown Owensboro is not the vastly vacated city core that it was following the opening of our first suburban shopping mall nearly 30 years ago. Despite sporadic improvements, our downtown has never fully recovered. In our downtown, there is very little retail, major corporate and government buildings have left



downtown or chosen to build outside the city. A few restaurants appear to do well, but others struggle. The Executive Inn has teetered with bankruptcy and a series of owners and renovations through the years, and now may be pursuing casino possibilities.

From 2000-2006, Owensboro grew by 2.6 percent (primarily through annexation); Daviess County grew by 2.2 percent.

State demographer Ron Crouch projects that most growth over the next decade will occur from the influx of immigrants, particularly Latino.

Since 1992, RiverPark Center has anchored the infusion of performing arts activities into downtown. This will be enhanced with the completion of a \$50 million Riverfront Master Plan. Downtown advocates hope to bring about significant private investment to complement the riverfront improvements. However, an ambitious mixed-use commercial project off Highway 54 could absorb much of the market, particularly if an arena and convention center are built there rather than in the downtown.

**Niche opportunities** With leadership from OMHS, recent initiatives in cancer research, biotech and plant-based pharmaceuticals, new uses of tobacco, biodiesel and more offer intriguing possibilities for Owensboro-Daviess County.

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**What can we do to attract great jobs, build businesses and become a region of opportunity and appeal?**

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# Strategic Options: A Region of Opportunity and Appeal

## Option 1: Transform downtown and insist on well-planned suburban expansion.

Apply ample resources toward a distinctive downtown. Attract homebuilders, commercial developers, buyers and tenants to urban areas. At the same time, recognize suburban expansion is inevitable. Insist on the highest standards of planning to minimize urban sprawl.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- An aggressive urban investment plan will curb urban sprawl, strengthen the tax base and enhance the appeal and vitality of downtown and older neighborhoods.
- Suburban expansion is inevitable and can have a significant positive economic impact. We should welcome it when there are high standards of planning, design and a responsible role for the public sector.
- We have a special opportunity to build upon the \$50 million Riverfront Master Plan.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Downtown has moved to south Frederica Street and Highway 54. It is futile to fight changing consumer trends and preferences by forcing investment to downtown.
- The riverfront plan will attract the interest of the private sector on its own without government involvement.
- Our priority should be on supporting businesses no matter where they want to locate.

## Option 2: Expand workforce training.

As our economy changes, workers need the chance to acquire new skills so they are qualified for the jobs of the future. Workforce programs can play a valuable role in connecting businesses with qualified workers who have a strong work ethic.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Low skill jobs result in low wage jobs. To increase the standard of living and family income, we need a better educated and trained workforce.
- Employers consistently report that, above all, they need dependable workers who will show up on time, be part of a team, communicate clearly and take pride in being part of the organization.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- We have a solid workforce already. We just need leaders who will get out and sell this community and our industrial sites. And we need governmental policies that keep our manufacturing jobs in this country rather than Mexico or China.
- Employers expect more and more as they cut health care benefits and downsize. When workers are treated better they will be more dedicated to the company.

## Option 3: Support local entrepreneurs.

Increase community support for local entrepreneurs, emphasizing technology, innovation and international markets. Incubator services, venture capital programs, technical assistance, college curricula in entrepreneurial studies are among the applications.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- From buggy manufacturing to products for law enforcement, through the years many of Owensboro-Daviess County's major employers have been home grown.
- We must create ways to link the people with ideas to prospective investors.
- Many "would be" entrepreneurs don't know where to begin.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Most entrepreneurs that have a good idea don't have trouble selling it to investors.
- We should not devote community resources to far-fetched dreams.
- Low education levels will make this effort an uphill climb.

# Strategic Options: A Region of Opportunity and Appeal

## Option 4: Continue to attract, grow and retain businesses.

While we pursue an education and workforce development strategy, we must not lose sight that in years to come manufacturing plants, distribution centers, air cargo/maintenance facilities and more will be building new, expanding or relocating plant sites. We need to make the most of these opportunities.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- The MidAmerica AirPark offers superb sites, infrastructure and convenience to our regional airport and runway extension. Other industrial parks still have significant acreage – some with river, rail or highway access. We must promote these assets.
- We need to track business expansion/relocation opportunities and remain as competitive as possible, even though the opportunities are less frequent.
- We must support existing employers and make their growth and success as important as attracting businesses from other locations.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Economic development officials may be spreading themselves too thin. We can't recruit industry if too much emphasis is on education and workforce development.
- We can't recruit major industries until larger sites are available.
- Despite our best efforts, state Commerce Cabinet officials steer prospects to the Golden Triangle (Louisville-Lexington-Northern Kentucky) or cities along interstates or where major universities are located.

## Option 5: Maximize new technology opportunities.

Owensboro-Daviess County could be on the cutting edge of exciting new biotechnologies and research initiatives that result in a quantum leap for our economy and community image. These include new uses for tobacco and plant-based pharmaceuticals, alternative fuels, and other developments. We should offer tax incentives, infrastructure, workforce training and more to get these companies here.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- These industries have enormous growth potential as governments, universities, pharmaceutical companies and others find increasing applications.
- We have healthy partnerships with universities, hospitals and researchers that position us well for future innovations, new products, services and contracts.
- The curriculum developed by Owensboro Community and Technical College (OCTC) could be a feeder system for a cutting edge new biotechnology industry.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- The local biotech initiative is a subsidiary that diverts hospital resources to a risky endeavor better left to venture capitalists.
- We don't have the university research infrastructure to make a major impact. We should focus on what is more practical for a small city that does not have a research university.
- OCTC runs the risk of developing an associate degree program in biotechnology that will simply supply workers for other areas.

## Your ideas and options

Are there other strategic options that you propose to advance this community goal?

■ \_\_\_\_\_

■ \_\_\_\_\_

■ \_\_\_\_\_

■ \_\_\_\_\_



## A Uniquely Green and Clean Environment



### Coal, rivers attract power plants

Owensboro-Daviess County is strategically located near large coal reserves and two commercial rivers. Consequently, there are 17 coal-fired power plants in our area with more planned at Cash Creek on the Henderson-Daviess County line and the Peabody Thoroughbred plant proposed for

Muhlenberg County. Several coal-to-gas plants are also under consideration in our area.

matter concentration, but poorly in emissions of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide.

### Other practices and policies damage the environment

Land use policies, industrial and agricultural practices, factory farms, aging septic systems and drainage issues affect our rich farm land, food and ground water quality. At times, chemicals and sewage are discharged into the Ohio River and its tributaries. An increasing number of local soil tests show high lead readings.

Environmental practices transcend county and state boundaries. Emissions from plants in Indiana and Illinois affect our air. Practices in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Louisville affect the Ohio River ecosystem as much as our local practices. As demand for coal increases because of more pow-

### Regulations offset by exemptions

New technologies promise reduced pollution, but older plants (10 of the 17) are exempt from new standards and result in higher net emissions. The 1970 federal Clean Air Act was an important step forward, but the law allows utilities to assign emissions from complying plants to non-complying plants.

### Air problems could limit economic growth

In the new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines, some analysts expect Daviess County to be listed as a nonattainment area for air pollution, one of 136 counties designated nationally. Spencer, Warrick and Vanderberg counties in Indiana are already so designated.

### City utility has reduced emissions, but air quality an issue

Owensboro Municipal Utilities (OMU) operates the Elmer Smith power plant, located just east of Owensboro. The plant was built in 1965. Over the past 20 years, OMU has spent \$175 million on emission control equipment, including some that is not required by law. OMU must meet mercury regulations beginning in 2010. Carbon dioxide is not regulated.

According to the Pollution Locator (2002), Daviess County air quality ranks well in ozone and particulate

## Regional Coal-Fired Power Plants

Plant	County	Built	EMISSIONS			
			SO2 Tons	NOx Tons	CO2 Tons	Mercury lbs.
TVA	McCracken	1953	35,577	20,061	10,968,115	148
Big Rivers (HMP&L)	Henderson	1973	3,484	5,685	2,480,595	72
Big Rivers (Reid)	Henderson	1965	10,582	1,296	519,541	36
Big Rivers (RD Green)	Webster	1979	3,424	7,401	3,960,962	114
OMU (Smith)	Daviess	1964	7,113	9,561	2,765,016	100
Big Rivers (Coleman)	Hancock	1969	49,028	6,849	3,325,571	368
Big Rivers (DB Wilson)	Ohio	1984	8,893	8,516	3,755,010	124
KU (Green River)	Muhlenberg	1950	13,028	2,198	933,519	50
TVA (Paradise)	Muhlenberg	1963	84,072	47,027	16,350,089	1,184
Cinergy (Gibson)	Gibson, IN	1975	127,357	38,241	19,247,465	658
IP&L (Petersburg)	Pike, IN	1967	47,152	20,249	13,484,833	506
City of Jasper (Jasper 2)	Dubois, IN	1968				
SIG&E (Warrick)	Warrick, IN	1970	98,777	17,550	6,246,969	508
SIG&E (AB Brown)	Posey, IN	1978	8,639	7,400	3,508,264	104
AEP (Rockport)	Spencer, IN	1984	53,196	34,243	16,837,252	806
Ameren (Newton)	Jasper, IL	1977	17,870	5,252	8,122,255	294
Ameren (Hutsonville)	Crawford, IL	1953	14,955	1,799	677,543	46

### Daviess County Air Quality Rankings: Health Risks, Exposure and Emissions

Carbon Monoxide emissions	...in the worst/dirtiest 30 percent in U.S.
PM-10 emissions	...in the worst/dirtiest 40 percent in U.S.
Nitrogen Oxide emissions	...in the worst/dirtiest 10 percent in U.S.
PM-2.5 emissions	...in the worst/dirtiest 30 percent in U.S.
Sulfur Dioxide emissions	...in the worst/dirtiest 20 percent in U.S.
Volatile Organic Compound emissions	...in the worst/dirtiest 20 percent in U.S.

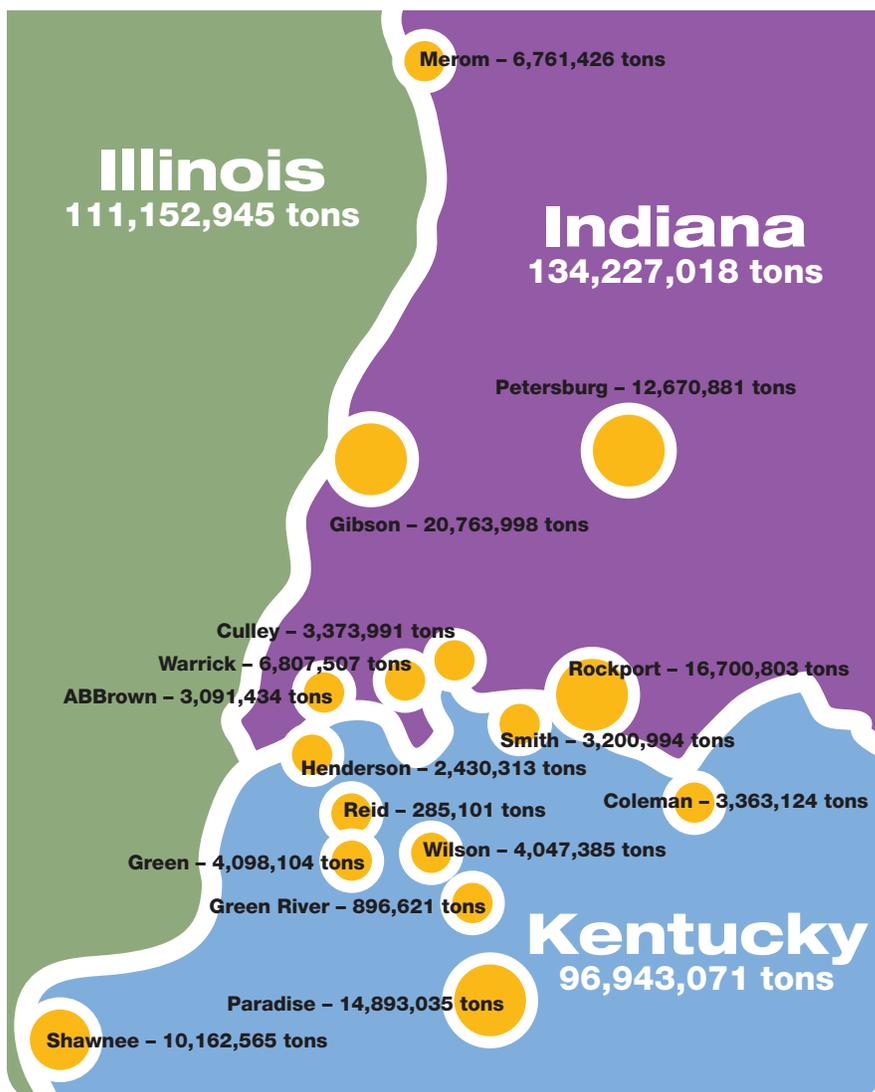
### Daviess County Air Quality Index

Ozone 1-hour average concentration	...in the best/cleanest 20 percent in U.S.
Ozone 8-hour average concentration	...in the best/cleanest 20 percent in U.S.
PM-2.5 24-hour average concentration	...in the best/cleanest 40 percent in U.S.
PM-10 24-hour average concentration	...in the best/cleanest 10 percent in U.S.

Source: Pollution Locator: Smog and Particulates: County Report ([www.scorecard.org/env-releases](http://www.scorecard.org/env-releases))

## Tri-State CO2

USEPA/DOE eGRID Database



er plants, there is more strip mining and mountaintop removal in eastern Kentucky.

Our local recycling efforts don't match other communities. We continue to be insensitive to the effects of urban sprawl. And research is increasingly conclusive that climate change impacts us all – and coal burning is central to that issue.

### Multi-faceted, global challenges

Our environmental challenges, then, are multi-faceted and local, regional, national and global in scope. Communities that address these challenges become more appealing places to live, work and recreate.

**What can we do to reduce toxic emissions in our area and to responsibly address other environmental concerns?**



# Strategic Options: A Uniquely Green and Clean Environment

## Option 1: Create a “safe and sustainable growth” committee.

Create a watchdog organization that educates, raises awareness, reviews proposals, advises community leaders and ensures responsible environmental decisions. Committee appointments should be long-term so members can become knowledgeable and objective. There should be adequate funding for staff, community education and research.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- This committee would provide a big picture view of the issues and needs for the 21st century and serve as an ongoing mechanism to review the environmental impact of industrial and development proposals. For instance, Lexington is establishing a Department of Environmental Quality.
- The committee could also examine and promote mass transit, car pooling, recycling, green technology, outdoor recreation, walking and biking, proper land use, development and more.
- We need environmental education and a watchdog group to protect the common land, water and air that the public uses.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Our community and region already has environmental organizations: Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Valley Watch and a new “Be Cool, Go Green” initiative. Creating another layer of organization will encumber what has been working to date.
- This type of group could stifle future development and community progress.
- Beyond the efforts of a few, the public has not demonstrated a strong interest in environmental issues. Moreover, much of this is beyond our control and in the hands of state and federal regulators.

## Option 2: Reduce air pollution from coal-fired power plants.

Advocate that all new coal-fired power plants meet the highest emission control standards. Discourage additional power plants to be built in our area unless there are additional emission controls for old polluting plants or else close them as new plants are built.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Daviess County air quality ranks among the worst/dirtiest in several categories. Mercury and other pollutants are so high that 100 percent of Kentucky’s waterways are under a fish consumption advisory.
- Some emissions are linked to asthma attacks, cancer, heart attacks, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and more.
- Most scientists believe that the burning of fossil fuels (including coal) is a major cause of global warming.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Coal production can reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Reserves from this area are a vital resource.
- Environmental damage claims are overblown: Through advanced technology, emissions are cleaner than ever; OMU has spent \$175 million on emissions control equipment over 20 years; strip mined areas are reclaimed. And there is not a consensus among scientists on global warming.
- Power plants produce hundreds of high-paying construction and mining jobs. We need less regulation and a more streamlined permitting process to facilitate power plant and industrial development.

## Option 3: Be a leader in conservation and develop renewable energy alternatives.

The fact that our area has substantial coal reserves should not preclude efforts to conserve and develop clean and renewable energy alternatives. We should be leaders and innovators in green technology, solar, wind, hydroelectric and other sources of energy.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Such an effort would bring distinction to our community and make a bold statement from a historically coal-driven energy area.
- We cannot continue to drill and mine our way out of our energy challenges; oil and coal are finite resources with environmental consequences.
- There are ample, if not endless, supplies of renewable energy sources. We simply need to unleash our collective ingenuity to develop these technologies.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- We do not have the resources to expand or subsidize alternative energy uses. Industry and government research is promising, but we simply cannot meet worldwide energy demand without fossil fuel production.
- If alternative technologies become feasible, it will still be impractical to quickly retool electric power generation in this region or anywhere else; changes must occur incrementally.
- Many of the promising technologies that are promoted offer limited capacity; some are far-fetched.

# Strategic Options: A Uniquely Green and Clean Environment

## Option 4: Expand recycling.

Develop a broad regional recycling operation and curb-side recycling program for all households and businesses in the city and county.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Owensboro-Daviess County lags behind in recycling efforts. A curb-side program would enhance our image as a progressive city.
- Curbside pick up would dramatically increase the number of families and businesses that recycle.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Citizens prefer low taxes and a voluntary recycling program.
- Curbside recycling programs lose money. To pay for the service, other local government programs and services would be cut or taxes would be raised.

## Option 5: Create land trusts to preserve undeveloped land.

Identify area lakes, streams and woodlands that have not been developed. Develop a plan to preserve such areas for habitats and public access.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Many of our local parks are dominated by playgrounds and sports facilities and don't provide a connection to nature. The national average for park land is 12 to 15 acres per 1,000 people; Owensboro parks comprise about 50 percent of that average.
- Preserved land is essential for healthy ecosystems and important for all to experience. Our people deserve a "big woods" experience in an urban setting similar to Wesselman's Nature Center in Evansville or Forrest Park in St. Louis.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Larger parks (Ben Hawes, Yellow Creek and Panther Creek) are not far from the city and feature nature trails.
- Acquiring and maintaining land for parks and nature preserves is costly to taxpayers.

## Your ideas and options

Are there other strategic options that you propose to advance this community goal?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## A Healthy and Caring Community

To be a community that cares means helping those among us who cannot afford health insurance and adequate housing, those who are victims of neglect and abuse, the handicapped, those addicted to drugs and alcohol, those suffering from mental illness, the seniors living alone and others.

As a caring community, we acknowledge the intrinsic value of people – all people – and make a commitment to their total health and well-being. And to address complex health and social issues, all the major players must be involved and working together.

### Increasing number of uninsured and underinsured



Approximately 14,000 residents of Owensboro-Daviess County lack health insurance, including 60 percent from working families. The number of underinsured is much greater. Most low-income and part-time jobs do not offer a health insurance benefit. Thousands of local families are one serious health issue or surgery away from bankruptcy. The uninsured seldom have a primary care physician and typically receive their care at the hospital emergency room or one of three local clinics. The uninsured receive

less preventive care, are diagnosed at more advanced disease stages, and once diagnosed, tend to receive less therapeutic care (drugs and surgical procedures).

### Lifestyle choices affect health

Daviess County was recently named the eighth healthiest county in Kentucky, but far too many people (including pregnant women) still smoke, have poor diets, and lack physical activity. Owensboro-Daviess County is fortunate to have state-of-the-art public and private health facilities. Programs and services are sometimes limited, how-



Owensboro-Daviess County Population <i>(65 years and older)</i>	2000	2030
Male	4,600	9,500
Female	7,500	13,800
Total	12,100	23,300

ever. For example, our district health department recently discontinued pre-natal care services. Uninsured pregnant patients (40-50 new patients per month) must now rely on only 5-6 local obstetricians who will accept them. Without pre-natal care, there are increased instances of newborns with health problems.

### Low income have added pressures when mentally ill

Owensboro-based RiverValley Behavioral Health is a designated provider of state and federal Medicaid funds for mental health services for low income residents of this area. Despite pressures to increase services, the agency has been flat-funded since 1999. City and county governments have made modest contributions. County government could enact a taxing authority for mental health services similar to those established for the health department and public library.

A mechanism is in place for follow-up care when patients are released from state psychiatric hospitals, yet managers of local homeless shelters report that many of their clients suffer from mental illness and cannot afford their medications.

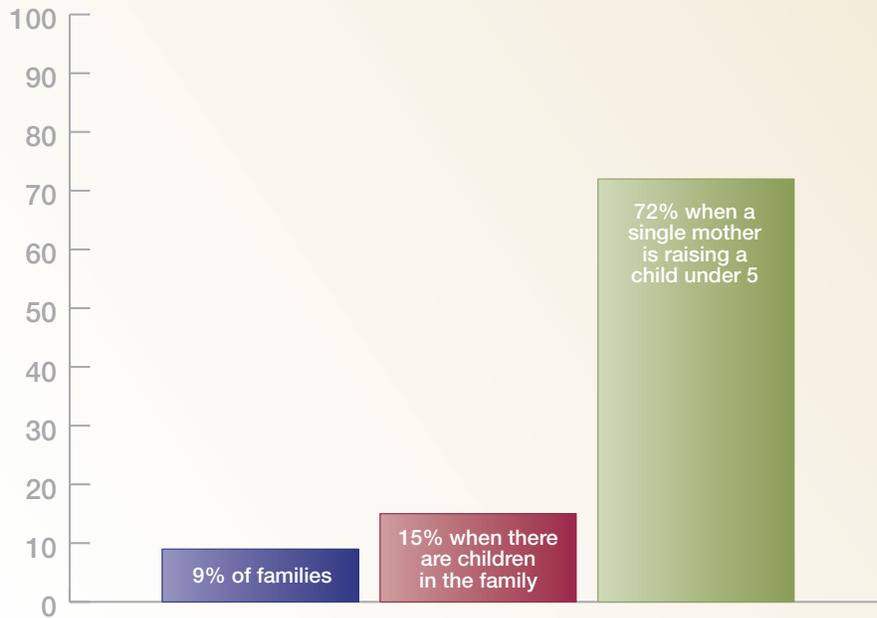
### Substance abuse is a burden on the courts and public finances

Meanwhile, tougher drug laws are filling our jails and busting our budgets. County government will subsidize the jail by \$1.6 million in fiscal year 2008. Officials shut down 49 meth labs in Daviess County in 2005, 23 in 2006. But local meth arrests increased from 319 to 396 in that same period. At least 70 percent of all local crime is connected to drug or alcohol abuse.

### Hospital plans a new facility

Owensboro Medical Health System (OMHS) recently announced

## Poverty in Owensboro-Daviess County



plans to build a new \$500 million facility east of the city in a high growth area. Officials are considering an expanded free clinic on the current campus. Some of the newer facilities, such as the emergency department and cancer research center, may not relocate.

OMHS is Daviess County's largest employer (more than 3,300) and is the primary hospital serving an 11 county area. Because of its financial strength, OMHS can take on ambitious building plans, research partnerships and a state-of-the-art technology and procedures. OMHS foregoes \$21 million in charges per year to low-income patients, funds a full-time physician at the McAuley Clinic (for uninsured patients) and donates several hundred thousand dollars annually in services to the Daviess County Community Access Project.

### Youth services are valuable, but not enough



Schools, churches and community organizations offer extra-curricular activities: sports, arts, academic teams, hobby clubs and much more. Youth organizations and community centers (Boys and Girls Club, Girl's Inc., Dugan Best Center, Neblett Center and others) offer after-school programs, tutoring, moral grounding and positive role models.

These programs are not substitutions for a nurturing home environment. Many youth do not discover their unique interests and skills. It will take a community effort to intervene, guide and support our at-risk youth so they can rise above their circumstances and make

their unique contribution.

### Youth health care gaps

An estimated 1,100 children in Owensboro-Daviess County are not enrolled in the Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program (K-CHIP) even though they are eligible. As they enter school, children in poor health are absent more often and have lower cognitive development.

A disturbing number of youth in our community do not have access to adequate dental care. Some studies conclude that 50 percent of school aged children have untreated tooth decay. School social workers have a difficult time finding dentists who will provide follow-up care after screenings.

### Senior needs will intensify

Many seniors live alone and in poor health. Others have added obligations of raising a grandchild. Care for the growing number of aging baby boomers could wreak havoc on health care and social agencies. Communities that are user-friendly for seniors will attract more retirees, benefit from their productivity and creativity, and reduce accidents.

### Our poor – and efforts to help them

Nine percent of Owensboro-Daviess County families live in poverty. That jumps to 15 percent when there are children in the family. And it leaps to 72 percent when a single mother is raising a child under age five. Thirty-seven percent of local families with children under 18 are headed by single parents, compared with 30 percent nationally.

Many of our poor suffer from drug and alcohol addiction. People living in poverty are nearly twice as likely to have psychiatric disorders as the general population. Some have been released from state mental institutions without self-sustaining capacity.

Many families live paycheck to paycheck on marginal incomes. Most do not understand financial management, pricing, or interest rates. Consequently, they become targets of lenders and services that take advantage of them. A new asset-building coalition promotes financial literacy and a new advocacy group has been established to speak out for the poor.

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**As a community that cares about all our people, what can we do to help the less fortunate?**

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# Strategic Options: A Healthy and Caring Community

## Option 1: Coordinate and fund proven community health and social service programs.

Improve and sustain a system that gives a hand-up to those in need. Allocate or shift more funds into proven programs that target social priorities and the truly needy.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- People from all walks of life deserve dignity, respect and real opportunities for themselves and their families.
- When basic needs are met and the stresses of life are reduced, there is more harmony in the home, less spouse, child and substance abuse, and a stronger sense of possibilities for the future.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Governments have been scaling back welfare programs and requiring recipients to enroll in school or job training. We need to stay on course with that strategy.
- Handouts foster dependency and irresponsibility. We should not expand the social safety net until we find a way to reduce the abuses of the system

## Option 2: Help low-income get on solid financial footing.

Extend affordable child care and public assistance to give people a reasonable opportunity to go back to work, school or enroll in job training. Help people manage their finances and qualify for benefits.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- We penalize many people who try to improve their circumstances by removing benefits prematurely.
- Many people are not aware that they are eligible for programs and do not know how to manage money.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Free and discounted child care and public assistance is expensive. Taxpayers have said "enough is enough."
- People get back on solid financial footing when they learn to live within their means.

## Option 3: Expand public health services when needed.

Expand the capacity of public health and community clinics that serve the uninsured who are unable to pay.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- OMHS has the capacity to offer a first-rate medical and dental clinic.
- The health department should step in with dental and prenatal care for low-income if the needed.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Medical clinics, dental clinics and expanded prenatal services are all very expensive. The costs would be passed along to those who pay insurance premiums.
- OMHS fulfills its obligation to serve the poor and uninsured through the charity care it absorbs in the emergency room.

## Option 4: Ensure the mentally ill can access therapies and medications.

Service providers serve low income on a sliding scale fee basis, but some people appear to fall through the cracks of the system. Some may need job placement services, transportation, home visits and social casework to assist with paperwork. Explore establishing a special tax authority over mental health.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Untreated mental illness only gets worse and patients can become societal threats.
- Many mentally ill patients are not insured or their insurance does not cover treatment or medications.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Taxpayers should not be expected to absorb the expensive, sustained treatment and medications for the mentally ill.
- A mental health taxing authority would be comprised of appointed officials. People who are not elected should not have the authority to impose taxes.

## Option 5: Fight substance abuse.

Promote prevention and treatment programs as alternatives to incarceration. Ensure that the drug court and treatment programs are sustained. Push for changes in Medicaid to expand coverage for substance abuse treatment.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- We need to recognize addiction as a disease and get more people into treatment programs.
- Substance abuse programs save taxpayers \$5 for every \$1 spent on the services.
- Projects, such as the Boulware Mission relocation/expansion and the new Lighthouse Recovery Center, must be funded adequately.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- We should not be apologetic about incarcerating people who are a threat to the safety of others. Addicts can get their own treatment.
- Taxpayers will pay dearly if we expand substance abuse treatment, especially Medicaid coverage.
- The more our community reaches out to substance abusers, the more we attract clients from the region without much support from the region.

## Option 6: Expand and sustain programs that promote healthy lifestyles.

Reduce smoking, improve nutrition and encourage exercise to reduce obesity. Provide early dental education, preventive medical and dental check-ups, and special efforts to protect our senior population. Offer incentives to encourage changes in destructive lifestyles.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- A healthier community reduces its health care costs and slows its health insurance premium increases. Prevention beats expensive treatments.
- A healthier community reduces absenteeism and improves worker productivity. Healthier children miss less school, do not fall behind and learn more.
- Those who practice destructive lifestyles may change their ways if there is a financial incentive.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- People already know that they should eat healthy foods, exercise and quit smoking. Family influences will outweigh and overwhelm community efforts.
- People will change when they are responsible for paying more of the cost of healthcare.
- Many sports and recreational programs attract only the affluent who can afford league fees for uniforms and equipment, transportation, special lessons and more.

## Your ideas and options

Are there other strategic options that you propose to advance this community goal?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## A Government for the 21st Century

### Our system of representation

City of Owensboro and Whitesville residents are represented by separate city and county governments. Those who live in Daviess County outside the Owensboro and Whitesville city limits are only represented by county government. However, some governmental bodies serve the entire county: health department, public library, planning and zoning, water and sewer district, etc.

### Speaking for our community

Collaboration between the city and county is paramount to moving our community forward. Recognizing that we have three governments, who speaks for Owensboro-Whitesville-Daviess County? Is there a unified vision? If not, how do we create a unified vision within this framework?

### Taxing authority and taxation issues

Local governments and other public entities can levy taxes and fees. Some of these are led by appointed leaders (e.g., OMU, library, health department); others by elected leaders (e.g., school boards). Tax rates vary from city to county, and have more to do with where one lives or works than the services received.

Our tax rates compare well with other benchmark communities. For example, Bowling Green recently lowered its occupational and net profits tax to 1.85 percent from 2.0 percent. Workers in the new Bowling Green



### Government Tax Comparisons

	Occupational Tax	Net Profits Tax	Property Tax Real Estate*	Property Tax Vehicle*
City of Owensboro	1.33 %	1.33 %	25.8 cents	30.3 cents
Daviess County	.35 %	.35 %	13 cents	17 cents
Whitesville	n/a	n/a	.09 cents	14 cents
City Schools	n/a	n/a	74.8 cents	64.1 cents
County Schools	.35 %	n/a	55.3 cents	49 cents

\* per \$100 of assessed value

### Urban Sprawl Issues

- development of prime agricultural land
- impact on drainage
- impact on wetlands and ecosystem
- cost of expanding public facilities: streets, sewers, utilities, sidewalks, streetlights (eventually park and schools), etc.
- cost of expanding services: police, fire, sanitation, etc.
- longer commutes, more traffic, fuel, etc.
- underutilization of properties where public facilities and services already exist

industrial park pay 3.35 percent. This compares with 1.33 percent in Owensboro and .35 in Daviess County.

While at the 2.0 percent level, the city of Bowling Green was generating \$13 million more per year from its occupational, net profits and insurance tax than Owensboro. However, the city of Owensboro benefits from a \$6.7 million annual transfer from Owensboro Municipal Utilities (although the city receives no property or net profits tax from OMU since it is owned by the city.)

Owensboro-Daviess County has never received its fair share of state dollars. A 2004 study by University of Louisville economist Paul A.

State government returns to Owensboro-Daviess County \$53.4 million *less per year* than what the state receives from local taxpayers.

Businesses now have a financial incentive to locate in the county.

Coomes concludes that state government returns to Owensboro-Daviess County \$53.4 million less per year than what the state receives from local taxpayers.

Those who reside in the city school district pay 35 percent more in school taxes than those who live in the county school district. People who work in the city, and businesses located in the city, pay nearly four times the occupational tax and net profits tax as those in the county. Businesses now have a financial incentive to locate in the county, which contributes to urban sprawl and the costly expansion of public infrastructure and services.

#### Government service delivery

City government routinely annexes property into the city limits, but there are numerous pockets of county property within the city limits that have not been annexed. This complicates the delivery of services by the city and county departments. For instance, sometimes it is not clear which government should respond to a fire or emergency call, or to clear a fallen tree that blocks a road.

City and county government provide many of the same services to their respective constituency, but the level of service may vary significantly. For example, the county fire department relies on volunteers. Some responsibilities are restricted to one government over the other by statute. For example, county government is responsible for the detention center.



#### Encroaching financial pressures

Both governments have healthy reserves but face financial pressures. The detention center is a major drain on county finances due to state reim-

bursement policies, the transfer of juveniles to Bowling Green and other factors. County government has budgeted nearly \$1.6 million to subsidize the jail in 2008. Unless adjustments are made, city officials project that, over the next five years, it will take 25 percent of its \$35 million annual budget to cover city employee retirement fund obligations.



The quality of public infrastructure and services in Owensboro and Daviess County is generally considered of high quality, although a recent sewer collapse and frequent flooding underscores the need for pre-emptive maintenance and storm drainage projects.

#### Openness and transparency

Important decisions made by local governments, school boards and other public bodies are viewed by some as being made without substantive public input. However, local government often feels that despite their best efforts to inform the public, only the most vocal opponents choose to participate. This has left many citizens feeling their voice doesn't matter and local government feeling the community is too busy or disinterested.

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**What can we do to make sure our community is governed in an efficient, effective, fair and ethical manner?**

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# Strategic Options: A Government for the 21st Century

## Option 1: Retain city and county governments as separate entities.

Existing governmental structures have served us well in making progress locally. Better communication can overcome occasional problems with service delivery.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Owensboro-Daviess County is one of the most successful and appealing communities in Kentucky. Our governments have made this possible.
- Problems in local governance and tax disparities are relatively insignificant. Our system works well already.
- Merger proposals are controversial and divisive. It is better to stay focused on the specific issues, work together, and make progress.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Most of our leading indicators are on a downward trend and do not match up well with benchmark communities. Our governance structure limits our potential.
- We have overlapping governments and are paying for two when one would do.
- Our local governments were designed for an agrarian economy, not for the 21st Century.

## Option 2: Consolidate by department and collaborate.

Consolidate certain city and county departments to improve efficiency, services or reduce costs.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Some departmental mergers just make sense (parks departments, 911, road departments) and would reduce overlap and the size of government.
- It is more politically practical to address this challenge on a departmental basis rather than a comprehensive consolidation of the city and county governments.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- This is just a “foot in the door” for merger proponents to push forward their agenda.
- It may be difficult to consolidate some operations because of legal oversight, support services and funding complications.

## Option 3: Consolidate city and county governments.

Join Louisville-Jefferson County and Lexington-Fayette County to become the third community in Kentucky to consolidate city and county governments.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Merger would send a message that this community is moving forward with an efficient, streamlined government with one CEO and one board of directors.
- One local government would eliminate overlapping jurisdictions, tax disparities, confusing service delivery because of pockets of city and county property.
- Businesses and entrepreneurs looking at our community will have fewer approval processes, permits and government departments to deal with.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Many county residents do not want to be forced to pay more for services they do not need or require.
- Those elected under a merged structure would not be as responsive to county and rural needs as our current county commissioners.
- If merger is such a good thing, more city and county governments would have already consolidated.

## Option 4: Before raising taxes, reduce the size of local government, privatize some services, or sell city assets.

There are alternatives to a “tax and spend” approach to governing. Cut the size of government, or get government out of areas that could be taken over by more efficient, tax-paying businesses. Working people would rather have fewer services in order to keep more of their own money.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Our city and county will be more appealing to business and will attract more jobs and entrepreneurs with less government and lower taxes.
- Local governments should not fund performing arts centers, museums, bike paths and Little League fields. Patrons and parents should pay for them.
- City government could establish a large endowment if we sold OMU and the riverport to private investors. We could sell golf courses to homebuilders. Private contractors could collect garbage and provide other services.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Cities that do well and attract businesses have a high quality of life. The poorest communities in Kentucky have the lowest taxes, but no one wants to live there because they don't offer much.
- When it comes to recruiting solid companies and attracting entrepreneurs, an educated workforce trumps low taxes.
- When vital services remain public, net income does not have to be distributed to stockholders, but rather can be re-invested into the service or increase government's general fund.

## Option 5: Establish fair, adequate and dependable revenue streams.

To serve the people and move our community forward, local governments need adequate resources for public services and infrastructure, business recruitment, and community amenities.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- We cannot compete with communities such as Bowling Green when their officials have millions of dollars more than us to work with every year.
- We must demand a greater share of our state taxes.
- City and county taxes should be the same for governments and schools.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- To recruit business, it is to our advantage to have lower taxes, even if that means we have fewer dollars for parks, street repairs, drainage, human services, retirement funds, cultural attractions etc.
- If county government and county schools can keep taxes lower than the city, that's a credit to their efficient management.
- The extra revenue from higher taxes is essential for the city schools.

## Option 6: Establish policies that ensure openness and transparency.

Establish policies and practices that not only abide by open meetings/open records laws, but that also convey a genuine value of meaningful civic participation.

### THOSE WHO SUPPORT THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Too many important decisions are made without meaningful public participation and too many public hearings are held after the vote has essentially been made.
- Decisions are inherently better when made within the context of an open and transparent process.
- When they practice openness, officials earn trust, foster participation and reverse citizen resistance and indifference.

### THOSE WHO OPPOSE THIS OPTION MAY SAY...

- Leaders were elected to lead. They cannot govern by polls and surveys. They are expected to make tough, sometimes unpopular decisions.
- The law allows matters connected with property acquisition, litigation and personnel to be exempt from open meetings laws.
- Strong leaders stay within the law, make solid decisions, charge ahead and don't look back.

## Your ideas and options

Are there other strategic options that you propose to advance this community goal?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_





