



Preliminary Report (Partial) Owensboro-Daviess County November 10, 2007

Nearly 650 residents from Owensboro and across Daviess County spent a full day talking together about the future of our community. They identified values and assets to support building our future, and they prioritized strategies to move towards five goals for our 21st century community:

1. **A Community Committed to Education and Learning**
2. **A Region of Opportunity and Appeal**
3. **A Uniquely Green and Clean Environment**
4. **A Healthy and Caring Community**
5. **A Government for the 21st Century**

Participants worked together in small groups reviewing ideas put forth by the meeting organizers and developing new ideas. Then, using keypad polling and groupware computers, participants identified room-wide themes and collective priorities. This preliminary report includes the ideas and priorities generated in the Town Meeting.

Why did residents attend?

- To have a voice: "I want to have a say in the future of Owensboro and Daviess County."
- To make a difference: "To make this the best place it can be."
- To learn about community issues and listen to others' opinions.
- To make Owensboro/Daviess County a better place for youth and children and to ensure young people return.
- To be "a part of change."
- To develop a strategic community plan for growth.
- To satisfy curiosity: "I've never been to this kind of meeting."
- To be part of the solution.



Participants at the We the People Town Meeting filled the room to deliberate on options for creating our 21st Century Community. People gathered at 67 tables of 10, each with a trained facilitator. Photo courtesy of Phil Casper.

Values for our 21st Century Community

- Integrity, honesty, trust in government
- Spiritual, moral and religious values
- Lifelong education opportunities for everyone and cutting-edge education facilities
- Job opportunities that offer a living wage
- A healthy environment and preservation of green space
- A healthy lifestyle, people staying active
- Safety and justice for our community, especially children
- Accessible and high-quality health care services, especially for those with special physical and mental needs
- Respect for diversity through tolerance, acceptance and compassion: "Input from everyone from all walks of life."
- Preservation of our sense of community and its uniqueness: "Preserve the past, restructure for the present, and make provisions for the future."



Town Meeting Participant Demographics

Age			Gender		
	Participants	Population		Participants	Population
18-24	9%	12%	Female	57%	52%
25-34	12%	17%	Male	43%	48%
35-44	14%	21%	Where do you live?		
45-54	21%	19%	City of Owensboro	62%	59%
55-64	19%	12%	City of Whitesville	2%	0.7%
65 or better	24%	19%	Elsewhere in Daviess Co.	32%	40.3%
Race/Ethnicity			Outside of Daviess Co.	4%	*
African-American/Black	7%	4.3%	Employment		
Asian	1%	0.5%	Agriculture	4%	1%
Caucasian/White	88%	93%	Construction, Manufacturing, Wholesale	8%	19%
Latino	1%	1.0%	Education, Health Care, Social Services	25%	13%
Native American	2%	0.1%	Government	4%	3%
Other	1%	1.1%	Retail	5%	8%
Household Income			Other Work	13%	15%
< \$25K	21%	33%	Unemployed	2%	4%
\$25K - \$35K	10%	14%	Retired	24%	16%
\$35K - \$50K	21%	18%	Other (student, homemaker, not looking for work)	13%	21%
\$50K - \$75K	21%	20%			
>\$75K	28%	15%			



Table participants marked on a map where they live and their favorite place in Daviess County. Photo courtesy of Phil Casper.

Town Meeting Background

A diverse steering committee was created to guide the development of the strategy, content and design of the meeting to ensure that it is credible, fair and embedded in the community. The strategic options for each of the five goals were vetted by stakeholders, leaders and focus groups of citizens.

This meeting is made possible by the hundreds of volunteer hours by committee members, table facilitators, theme team members, and other volunteers such as the ushers and registration people.

AmericaSpeaks is a nonprofit organization that engages citizens in important public decisions that impact their lives. They are honored to be part of the We the People Town Meeting for Owensboro-Daviess County. As our partner they have guided the development of this 21st Century Town Meeting with the hope that engaged citizens from all walks of life and political persuasions can set a direction for Owensboro-Daviess County.



A Community Committed to Education and Learning



Assets

- Affordable early college opportunities through OCTC
- Additional opportunities through Brescia and Kentucky Wesleyan
- Expansion of Western Kentucky University programs and local campus
- New or up-to-date schools with appropriate technology
- Excellent and highly qualified teachers and administrators
- Excellent K-12 school systems
- Excellent early childhood programs including HeadStart and pre-K
- Strong educational partner in the hospital
- Numerous amenities to support education such as museums, RiverPark Center, symphony, Theater Workshop of Owensboro, library, etc.
- Community advocacy such as Citizens Committee on Education and The Learning Community
- Partnerships among stakeholders (business, government, labor and citizens)

Top 2 Options

- Increase parent and community involvement in education (54%)
- Provide high quality preschool experiences for more children (46%)

Other Options Discussed

- Merge city and county schools (40%)
- Raise community awareness of the importance of education and lifelong learning (30%)
- Promote the highest possible standards for classroom teachers (30%)
- Increase resources for schools (25%)
- Align education opportunities with projected workforce needs (25%)
- Help students move from associate degree to bachelor's degree (22%)

A Region of Opportunity and Appeal



Assets

- Great diversity in employment opportunities – Owensboro Medical Health System (cancer center, HealthPark); agricultural (farming, bio-tech and bio-diesel); manufacturing (Mid-America Airpark Development); and more
- Centrally located to two-thirds of the East Coast
- Ohio River which provides transportation, recreation and economic opportunities
- Strong education focus (Learning Community program plus OCTC, Brescia, Kentucky Wesleyan for postsecondary learning)
- Cultural and arts facilities and environment (RiverPark, museums, festivals) which are attractive to businesses
- Active and recognized Chamber of Commerce
- Improving transportation infrastructure

Top 2 Options

- Transform downtown and insist on well-planned suburban expansion (61%)
- Continue to attract, grow, retain businesses (60%)

Other Options Discussed

- Maximize new technology opportunities (41%)
- Expand workforce training (38%)
- Support local entrepreneurs (37%)
- Develop a mass transportation system (30%)



A Uniquely Green and Clean Environment



Assets

- Location on the Ohio River, transportation access
- Excellent parks, Western Kentucky Botanical Gardens, Greenbelt, green space
- Responsible farming and abundant farmland
- City beautification and neighborhood alliances
- Local groups such as PRIDE, Sierra Club
- Well-run Owensboro Municipal Utilities – clean power and water
- Biodiesel plant – use of local natural resources
- Excellent sports facilities
- Smoke-free facilities
- Countywide planning and zoning, landscape regulation

Top 2 Options

- Expand recycling (75%)
- Be a leader in conservation and develop renewable energy alternatives (53%)
- Reduce air pollution from coal-fired power plants (51%)

Other Options Discussed

- Consumer-oriented awareness programs about “green” opportunities (36%)
- Create a “safe and sustainable growth” committee (32%)
- Create land trusts to preserve undeveloped land (25%)

A Healthy and Caring Community



Assets

- No smoking ordinance
- Healthy lifestyle infrastructure – Greenbelt, parks, sports facilities, bike trails, HealthPark, exercise facilities, advocacy groups
- Social services agencies for children, underprivileged, elderly
- High-quality hospital services and new cancer center
- Free clinics and public health department services
- Churches and faith-based initiatives
- Community interest in a clean and green environment
- Services for mental illness/health and substance abuse
- High level of volunteerism: “We’re a caring community which rallies to help people in need.”

Top 2 Options

- Help low-income get on solid financial footing (48%)
- Fight substance abuse (48%)

Other Options Discussed

- Expand and sustain programs that promote healthy lifestyles (44%)
- Expand public health services when needed (43%)
- Financial incentives for healthy living (37%)
- Coordinate and fund proven community health and social service programs (34%)
- Ensure the mentally ill can access therapies and medications (22%)



A Government for the 21st Century



Assets

- Good basic public services: fire, police/sheriff, streets, roads, government facilities, library, parks, sanitation
- Citizens who are willing to serve as resources to local government leaders
- Quality and commitment of elected officials, past and present
- Opportunity for personal contact with government officials
- Professional and competent staffing in local government
- Diversity and collaboration between local governments: "City and county working together for the betterment of the community." Some see two governments operating together as a strength. Some see a need to merge governments.
- Take advantage of technology (in government)
- Good tax base: "Maximize use of tax dollars."
- Development of neighborhood alliances

Top 2 Options

- Establish policies that ensure openness and transparency (63%)
- Require leadership trainings for elected and appointed officials (49%)

Other Options Discussed

- Consolidate city and county governments (44%)
- Consolidate by department and collaborate (37%)
- Establish fair, adequate and dependable revenue streams (32%)
- Retain city and county governments as separate entities (22%)
- Before raising taxes, reduce the size of local government, privatize some services, or sell city assets (21%)
- Raise taxes to meet the needs of Owensboro/Daviess County (8%)

Implementation

At the end of the meeting, participants discussed their own personal commitments to achieve the goals discussed during today's meeting.

Look online at www.wethepeopletownmeeting.org for the complete preliminary report by Monday.

We the People will maintain communication with participants and demonstrate progress through newsletters, emails and website. The Steering Committee will host a meeting Nov. 20 with leaders and other stakeholders to review results from the meeting and plan the Working Group structure.

The We the People Town Meeting Final Report will be published by early January.

We look forward to working together to build our 21st Century Community for Owensboro-Daviess County.



Participants listened to each other's ideas about education, the economy, the environment, health care and government. Photo courtesy of Phil Casper.

**Stay Involved! Attend the
Working Group Kickoff Meeting
Tuesday, December 4, 2007, 6:30 p.m.
Owensboro Community and Technical College**



