

Owen County Economic Comprehensive Plan

Steering Committee Meeting 1 • Nov. 8, 2021 • Owen County Family YMCA

Overview

- ❑ Owen County received a state grant to update their comprehensive land use plan, which was last completed in 2010.
- ❑ The planning process will be facilitated by consultants and headed by a steering committee of local residents. It will last through summer 2022.

Introductions

- **Consultants**

- Scott Burgins, SBP&R, scott@sbresearchandplanning.com
- Rachel Christenson, HWC Engineering, rchristenson@hwcengineering.com
- Cory Whitesell, HWC Engineering, cwhitesell@hwcengineering.com
- K.K. Gerhart-Fritz, The Planning Workshop, KK@theplanningworkshop.com

- **Steering Committee in attendance**

The steering committee was recruited from a broad spectrum of Owen County residents, including not just local leaders who had been involved in previous efforts, but also people new to community planning.

- **Kathryn Shumate** (Gosport): New to area; worked on business brochure for Gosport.
- **Linda Bertram** (Gosport): New to area; worked on business brochure for Gosport.
- **Dylan Heasick** (Spencer): Real estate broker; built home here recently.
- **Grant Beaman** (Spencer): Originally from Martinsville; works for Boston Scientific.
- **Kristin Portteus**: Lived in area since childhood; teacher at the high school; has grant writing experience.
- **Larken Seymour**: Does marketing for Owen County Civic Theatre.
- **Kurt Rosenberger**: Former President and CEO of Our Community Bank in Seymour; Had involvement in the Economic Development Corporation; Served on the YMCA Board; Participated in meetings for the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.
- **Norman Warner**: Tech Coordinator at the schools; Long-time community volunteer and coach; President of the Owen County Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals.
- **Matt Cazzell**: Elementary school principal; lives in Bloomington; would like to relocate to Owen County but cannot find land.
- **Aaron LaGrange**: Assistant principal at elementary school; former police officer and now a reserve officer; Works with Sweet Owen Industries; Is a Chamber Captain.
- **Marcie King**: Executive director for the Chamber of Commerce.

Background

The consultant team introduced the project and described past work that has been done in the community, gave an overview of what a comprehensive plan entails, the role of the steering committee and the public engagement process. The development of a new unified development ordinance was also discussed.

They emphasized that a comp plan update is needed because:

- Owen County is growing, but local leaders don't have the regulations and tools needed to direct that growth.
- The county's planning and zoning ordinances need to be updated.
- Comp plans are a great method to develop new community leaders.

The role of steering committee members will be:

- Represent broad community interests, providing guidance through the entire process (about 5 meetings and eight months).
- Identify issues and concerns during the project development process and advise consultants.
- Encourage community consensus and stakeholder participation.

Questions from the Steering Committee

When should information about this project's progress be shared to the plan commission and board of zoning appeals?

K.K. responded that updates will be given to the plan commission and the board of zoning appeals on a monthly basis. The Project Team will provide the steering committee with agendas, slide decks and meeting minutes that they will forward onto the plan commission and board of zoning appeals. The group discussed making the comprehensive plan a regular item on the monthly meeting agendas until project completion. It was also discussed that engaging these boards in the public input opportunities would be important.

Were subdivision and zoning ordinances updated after the completion of the last comprehensive plan update?

Scott said that ordinances were not updated, but the comprehensive plan laid the foundation for other needed community elements, such as the formation of a redevelopment commission.

Is there anything we can glean from the last planning process to help move this new plan forward?

Scott responded that the plan commission and the county commissioners will be approving the new plan, so having buy-in from these groups would be absolutely vital. Although not a voting entity to approve the plan, it will be helpful to have the county council on board as they are responsible for the county's budget, which may help fund some of the projects identified in this plan.

Questions from the Project Team

What would the Steering Committee like to accomplish with this comprehensive plan update?

Protect small/local/independent businesses.

What concerns does the Steering Committee have about the planning process?

A challenge will be overcoming the mindset that “people come to Sweet Owen County ‘not to be bothered.’ ” Processes and formalizing things make people nervous. This is a positive project, but it could be perceived as a negative. We need to educate the public along the way to say this will help protect us.

Next Steps

- For more information or if you have questions, contact Scott Burgins, SBP&R, scott@sbresearchandplanning.com.
- Steering Committee Meeting #2 to be held Wednesday, **Jan. 12th at 6 p.m.** at the YMCA.