

# Owen County Economic Comprehensive Plan

Steering Committee Meeting 4 • April 20, 2022 • McCormick’s Creek Elementary School

## Note

Full details of this meeting – including the PowerPoint presentation - and other components of this planning process can be found at <https://owencountycompplan.com/>. The site is regularly updated.

## Attendees

Lisa Abbott, Matt Cazzell, Dylan Fluett, Kyle Hannon, Tony Leaderbrand, Anton Neff, Pam Rogers, Kurt Rosenbirger, Larken Seymour, Matt Sward, Norm Warner, Darrel White.

The meeting was facilitated by Scott Burgins, of SB Planning & Research and Rachel Christenson, of HWC Engineering.

Marce distributed “Ask Me About the Comp Plan” T-shirts to committee members.

## Review of Planning Process

The committee reviewed the basics of the comprehensive plan, its schedule and their role in the planning process. Details can be found in the PowerPoint presentation “Owen County SC 4 4-20-22” on the project website.

## Public Survey Results

Exactly 500 Owen County residents responded to the on-line survey. Here is a very brief summary of key findings. The following table shows topic areas, such as government services or quality of life, and what residents said that most common response to that topic.

Topic	Consensus Response
<b>Government, Public Facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sheriff’s Department in OC is reliable</li></ul>
<b>Quality of Life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strong sense of community pride.</li><li>• OC is a great place to raise a family.</li><li>• OC needs more attractive jobs and opportunities for young professionals.</li><li>• More entertainment activities needed for the young.</li></ul>
<b>Economic Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agriculture is important component of economy.</li><li>• New sewer, water, and broadband utilities should be extended to encourage new development.</li><li>• Existing sewer, water, and broadband utilities should be upgraded to maintain existing development.</li><li>• Incentives are needed to support small businesses.</li><li>• More restaurants, shopping, and grocery options are needed in OC.</li></ul>

Topic	Consensus Response
<b>Utilities and Transportation Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County roads are generally not in good condition.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New housing construction in OC is important to growing the population</li> <li>• Access to sewer and water is need to support new housing</li> <li>• More entry-level housing is needed</li> <li>• OC needs to address inadequate/failing septic systems</li> <li>• OC needs to address abandoned properties</li> </ul>

**Future Land Use Map**

Rachel showed the Future Land Use Map from the 2010 comprehensive plan and then invited committee members to update it. They discussed what areas of the county they want to protect and where development should be encouraged. The new map is being worked on will be discussed at the public meeting in June.

The group had similar discussions about critical sub areas, such as Owen Camp and Texas Pike. Those new maps will also be presented at the public meeting.

**Key Zoning Issues**

K.K. Gerhart-Fritz is part of the consulting team reviewing the county’s current planning and zoning regulations. She provided a list of priority topics for updating the regulations, which the group discussed:

**1) Preserve Agricultural Land:** Treat agricultural as a permanent land use that Owen County wants to preserve, not as a transitional use. Possible planning tools:

- Adopt multiple Agricultural Zoning Districts – see State of Indiana’s Model Ordinance, [https://www.in.gov/isda/files/ILRC\\_Model\\_Ordinances\\_-\\_Updated\\_2014.pdf](https://www.in.gov/isda/files/ILRC_Model_Ordinances_-_Updated_2014.pdf).
- Prohibit subdivisions from developing in AG zoning districts.
- Limit use of Administrative Subdivisions so they do not cumulatively result in a subdivision.

**2) Grow Quality Housing Opportunities:** Provide more options for all types of households. Possible planning tools:

- Revise current residential zoning districts to allow smaller lots /higher density when public water and sewer or community systems are available versus well and septic.
- Allow duplexes in single family district, like almost all Indiana communities do.
- Introduce “Missing Middle Housing” with a separate low density, small scale multi-family district for 3-plexes, 4-plexes, Townhouses, etc.
- Permit accessory apartments in all single-family dwellings and as mixed-use with commercial, if minimal ordinance standards are met



- Introduce conservation subdivisions, which build on smaller lots to preserve common open space.
- Require mobile homes be located within mobile home parks, with specific standards, not on individual lots.

**3) Protect the County and surrounding property owners from NIMBYs (Not In My Back Yard), LULUs (Locally Unwanted Land Use) & undesirable Nonconforming Uses:** Possible planning tools:

- Require rezoning to more intensive district (Heavy Industrial or Intensive Agricultural) for some high-impact uses.
- Stop allowing intensive land uses to occur by right – require a public hearing and granting of a conditional use on a case-by-case basis by the BZA, so they can evaluate if the site is appropriate and impose needed conditions, such as additional setbacks, screens, reclamation plans, financial guarantees, etc.
- Develop detailed minimum requirements for each of Owen County’s NIMBY/LULU uses (setbacks, screening, hours, etc.).
- Tighten enforcement to ensure compliance.
- Require Plan Commission do a Development (site) Plan approval, as allowed by state law.
- Require pre-hearing meeting for surrounding property owners.

**4) Preserve rural character and the County’s natural resources.** Possible planning tools:

- Add a voluntary Conservation Zoning District that prohibits development.
- Provide credit for preserving existing woodlands.
- Prohibit subdivisions from developing in agricultural areas.
- Reward historic preservation and matching infill by reducing other ordinance requirements (i.e., amount of parking).
- Make it more difficult to receive a variance or waiver from County standards by adding stricter criteria, as allowed by State law.
- Encourage new development around already developed areas by offering smaller lot sizes, when water and sewer are available and other infrastructure improvements can be cumulative and coordinated.

**Next Steps**

- Attend the public meeting at **6 p.m. on June 1** at McCormick's Creek Elementary. **Bring 3 friends.**

For more information or if you have questions, contact Scott Burgins at [scott@sbresearchandplanning.com](mailto:scott@sbresearchandplanning.com).