

Owen County Comprehensive Plan

Guide to Edits: Draft 1 to Draft 2

Ch. #	Draft 1 Pg. #	Draft 2 Pg. #	Edit
0	2	2	Alphabetized names. Removed Kyle Hannon, Dylan Heaslett from SC. Added Cassie Abrell, Corbin Abrell, Steve Fox, Sean Huss, Mary Skinner, Clint Sturgeon, Colin Sturgeon.
1	8	8	Added an "Owen County is Here" map, per OCRA request.
1	13 - 15	14 - 16	<p>Made changes to goals to reflect same changes in the various chapters:</p> <p>LAND USE Goal 4: Protect the County and property owners from undesirable nonconforming uses.</p> <p>GOVERNMENT GOAL 1: Build and maintain trust and communication with the public. GOAL 2: As demand for services and budget allows, consider hiring professional staff for key positions. GOAL 3: Begin community discussions on the importance of code enforcement.</p> <p>PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES Goal 2: Review emergency services as needed in response to development.</p> <p>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL 1: Promote business retention and expansion and small business development. GOAL 2: Encourage workforce attraction. GOAL 3: Explore development of employer sites. GOAL 4: Stay informed on trends in regional planning.</p> <p>HOUSING GOAL 1: Update zoning map and building code. GOAL 2: Explore the possibility of a county housing department. GOAL 3: Study creation of new building sites. GOAL 4: Promote preferred housing types. GOAL 5: Improve the stock of existing housing.</p> <p>TRANSPORTATION: GOAL 4: Do not support the addition of new highways in Owen County.</p>
2	20	21	For graphic on far right: Changed 'Vacant' to 'Vacancy rate all units.'
2	22	23	<p>After 3 bullets, added the following: "Some of this is offset by the lower cost of living in Owen County. For example, the local median home value is \$131,800, compared to \$229,800 for the Indiana average. Additionally, the community's high rate of retirees speaks to its affordability and quality of life. 20% of Owen County's population is 65 or over compared to the Indiana average of 15%."</p>
2	23	24	1 st Paragraph/2 nd sentence, deleted and replaced with the following: "The biggest job sector— at 21% - is manufacturing, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey."

2	23	24	After final paragraph, added the following: "In addition to the 10 biggest employers, other important job producers include the rest of the school system, McCormick's Creek State Park, Owen County Public Library, and the other state recreational sites. Spencer-Owen Community Schools, for instance, employs more than 370 teachers, administrator, custodians, bus drivers, etc."
2	23	24	Added row to table: Owen County Government / Government / 150. Delete McDonald's, so the count stays at 10.
2	24	25	2nd column/3rd paragraph: Made the bold-faced title read: SPENCER-OWEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORP.
3	27	28	Deleted last bullet point and replaced with: "Stick with it and provide continuous support to the planning process."
3	28	29	Deleted first sentence of the first paragraph and replaced with: "The committee met six times to set community priorities, study demographic information, and review draft recommendations."
3	28	29	Added after the first paragraph: "After a draft of the plan was released to the public, objections were made that the steering committee did not fully represent the county. For example, it had no members of the agricultural community. Seven new members were added, including farmers and other landowners, and they attended the last two meetings to edit the draft and take part in the public meetings."
3	28	29	Edited the table listing members of the CPC. Removed Kyle Hannon, Dylan Heaslett from SC. Added the names listed below in alphabetical order. Cassie Abrell - Resident Corbin Abrell - Resident Steve Fox - Resident Sean Huss - Owen County Soil & Water Conservation District Mary Skinner - Resident Clint Sturgeon - Resident Colin Sturgeon - Resident
3	30	31	Deleted 'AUG. 10, 2022' and everything after then added: "JULY 26, 2022: STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING 5 The newly expanded committee recommended changes to the future land use map and the requirements for mobile and manufactured homes." "OCT. 6, 2022: STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING 6 The committee reviewed changes to the draft before the next meeting of the plan commission."
3	34	36 - 37	Deleted 'JUNE 21, 2022,' then added: "JUNE 30, 2022: RELEASE OF DRAFT REPORT Copies of the draft plan were posted on the project website and promoted on social media and in a post card mailed countywide. Hard copies were left for review at the Owen County Public Library and Owen County Extension Office. Additionally, residents took it upon themselves to place hard copies at various places around the county." "JULY 7, 2022: PUBLIC MAILING A countywide mailing was sent as a post card inviting the public to review the draft comp plan on-line and to attend the upcoming public meeting." *Insert picture of postcard* "JULY 19, 2022: PLAN COMMISSION MEETING

			<p>At a review of the draft plan, about 75 people crowded the courthouse chamber to voice concerns about how the comp plan – particularly the future land use map - might affect the agricultural community. They also asked for additions to the steering committee, particularly for people involved in farming and forestry.”</p> <p>“AUGUST 16, 2022: PLAN COMMISSION MEETING Another large crowd attended the meeting to hear consultants review changes to the future land use map, mobile homes regulations and the proposed Mid-States Corridor.”</p> <p>“AUGUST 25, 2022: PUBLIC MEETING About 240 people attended the meeting at Owen Valley High School to hear a presentation of changes to the draft plan and ask questions during the 2-hour session.”</p> <p>*Insert picture of postcard</p>
5	42	45	Replaced picture of cows with picture of sunset.
5	43	46	<p>Added after 2nd paragraph in second column: “WHY THE COMP PLAN NEEDS UPDATING Local leaders such as the plan commission have faced complicated proposals for new housing subdivisions, landfill transfer stations and other projects. In these cases, clear rules are needed to discourage the types of growth Owen County doesn’t want and to encourage the growth it does.</p> <p>The previous plan is 12 years old and no longer effective for guiding decisions, so the county’s plan commission and others asked for an update. In summary, parts of Owen County are growing, but local leaders don’t have the regulations and tools needed to direct that growth.</p> <p>Additionally, the county’s planning and zoning ordinances need to be updated to manage ongoing development proposals and to meet state requirements, and this process starts with a comprehensive plan.</p> <p>The new comprehensive plan, as an advisory document, will provide guidance to local government (plan commission, BZA, county commissioners, etc..) and other organizations (INDOT, utilities, etc.) as they consider land use decisions. It will also indicate to developers where the community wants new growth to go.</p> <p>COMP PLANS & ZONING ORDINANCES Both the county’s comprehensive plan and its set of ordinances are out of date, but updating them are two different processes. The comprehensive plan is about the future; it’s a long-term vision of how and where the community will grow and change over next 20 years. It is an advisory document, and one of the factors they consider when making decisions.</p> <p>The zoning code is about how land can be used and what can be built today. Zoning codes are more specific and establish rules, such as maximum heights, setbacks from property lines, etc.</p> <p>Because the comprehensive plan is an advisory document, it does not have the power to change zoning maps or local ordinances. However, an updated comprehensive plan is needed in order to update zoning regulations, and the plan commission and others can pursue those updates after the comprehensive plan is completed.</p>

			<p>ZONING ORDINANCE REVIEW</p> <p>As stated, an ordinance update is a different process than a comprehensive plan revision. However, because local planning officials are facing increasingly complicated decisions and are eager to get new planning tools, it was decided to prepare for a possible ordinance update by reviewing the current rules during this planning process.</p> <p>K.K. Gerhart-Fritz, who is president of The Planning Workshop and certified by the American Planning Association, reviewed Owen County’s existing planning ordinances.</p> <p>Her complete review, which is planning guidance and not legal advice, can be found in the Appendix of this report. In summary, she concluded that the existing ordinances are so outdated that it would probably be easier to drop them and start over by creating a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).</p> <p>A UDO is a document in which traditional zoning and subdivision regulations are combined with other desired county regulations, such as design guidelines and water management, into a single document.”</p>
5	45	Deleted	Deleted page 45 on existing zoning classifications.
5	46	49	The legend on the maps in this chapter were resized to be more legible.
5	50	53	Updated future land use map.
5	50	53	The location of Carp was adjusted slightly further South on the Future Land Use map.
5	51	54	Change header to “Future Land Use Classifications.” Body text changed to “Owen County has developed ten distinct future land use classifications which are defined in the following table.”
5	51	54	<p>Deleted ‘Rural Preservation’ classification. Reworked ‘Agricultural’ classification: “The Agricultural classification is intended to preserve, protect, and support the unique, rural landscape of Owen County. Areas with this classification are suitable for agriculture, can be used for agricultural activities, and support family farms and the continuation of such.</p> <p>This classification does not restrict landowners from farming crops, raising livestock, or from timber production/harvesting activities. This classification supports larger lots, discourages subdivisions, and encourages existing agricultural land uses to continue. Areas that have this classification may also include floodplain areas around rivers or other bodies of waters, distinct topographical areas, or wooded areas. Connections to utilities, such as water and sewer, may not be feasible in this district.”</p>
5	53	56	Updated CSA1 map. Checked that legend is correct.
5	54	57	Updated CSA2 map. Checked that legend is correct.
5	55	58	Updated SRA1 and SRA2 maps. Checked that legends are correct.
5	57	Deleted	Deleted page 57, “While Waiting to Update Zoning Ordinances.”
5	59	61	Goal 4 changed to: “Protect the County and property owners from undesirable nonconforming uses.”
5	61	63	<p>Deleted the sixth action item under Goal 3. Replaced with the following 4 new action items:</p> <p>“Re-evaluate if mobile homes should be permitted on individual lots, and under what conditions.”</p>

			<p>“Develop standards for new Mobile Home Parks that, at a minimum, meet State of Indiana Standards.”</p> <p>“Ensure that before individual mobile homes are placed on single lots, they first receive all required permits and certificates from the County, ensuring compliance with health and safety issues, including adequate septic systems and foundations.”</p> <p>“Develop standards for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) which are additional living quarters on single-family lots that are independent of the primary dwelling unit.”</p> <p>**In the "Responsible Party" column, Plan Commission is indicated for all 4 action items.</p>
6	65	67	Deleted final bullet in second column and replaced it with: “In May 2022, a judge ruled that an Owen County commissioner will have to face corruption charges filed against him, including official misconduct, conflict of interest and misdemeanor theft. The commissioner later pleaded guilty to some charges and resigned from his position.”
6	66	68	In the second paragraph, deleted the second sentence and replaced with: “This can be accomplished by attracting new development or encouraging redevelopment of existing land. For example, ...”
6	68	70	<p>Inserted before KEY GOALS: “VISION AND KEY GOALS GOVERNMENT VISION Building and maintaining the public’s trust is the cornerstone of democracy and good government. With this in mind, Owen County will build and maintain the drivers of public governance: reliability, responsiveness, openness, integrity and fairness.”</p>
6	68	70	Replaced Goal #1 with “Build and maintain trust and communication with the public.”
6	69	71	Replaced Goal #2 with “As demand for services and budget allows, consider hiring professional staff for key positions.”
6	69	71	Replaced Goal #3 with “Begin community discussions on the importance of code enforcement.”
6	70 - 71	72 - 73	Replaced goals in the Implementation tables.
6	71	73	Added after the first sentence in the action item for Goal #3: “For example, more funding will be required to enforce priority issues.”
7	74	76	Changed “over 450 square miles of Owen County roads” to “712 lane miles of county roads and highways” to add clarity.
7	76	78	<p>Added a section for broadband: “Access to broadband will prove vital to retaining and attracting jobs and talent in Owen County, according to the 2022 Owen County Broadband Assessment. For example, the report stresses the importance of increasing broadband capacity to support the county’s largest job sector – manufacturing - which is rapidly digitizing.</p> <p>Additionally, amidst remote work, hybrid educational models and online programs, broadband access to households is vital to supporting educational attainment in the county.</p> <p>Fortunately, Owen County is developing an innovative plan to streamline broadband access for all citizens by 2023. Owen County received a \$4.5 million grant through the state's Next Level Connection grants in early 2021 to continue broadband build-outs. Every Owen County citizen will have access to high-speed internet due to the collaborative effort of local broadband providers. The county</p>

			<p>received its Broadband Ready Community designation from the State in 2020.</p> <p>For now, existing service in the county appears inadequate in the center and center-south regions, with additional underserved areas scattered throughout, according to the report.</p> <p>However, state and federal programs will fund new broadband buildout for a large portion of these unserved and underserved areas. These projects are scheduled to take place on various timelines over the next several years.”</p>
7	77 – 78	80 - 81	Deleted goal 2 and replaced with: “Review emergency services as needed in response to development.”
8	82	85	Add final bullet: “Agricultural assets such as the White River Poultry Club.”
8	86	89	Added to the text under Goal 1: “Other tourism assets are already developed, including the \$1-million Christmas light show at the county fairgrounds and Arts, Blues & BBQ at McCormick’s Creek State Park.”
9	92	95	Reworked the last paragraph on this page: “These maps capture the main commuting patterns but there are many things they do not show. For example, Owen County’s biggest companies, including Cook and Boston Scientific, draw employees from more than 15 counties. Businesses that originally started in Bloomington have relocated or expanded to Owen County. The development of I-69 and improvements to other roadways (i.e. S.R. 46) have strengthened Owen County’s connection to its neighbors, creating new opportunities.”
9	92	95	Added another paragraph to the bottom of this page: “With changes to the national economy brought on by things like COVID-19, telecommuting and the expanding availability of broadband, people can relocate to Owen County and work from home, where they would benefit from lower housing costs, lower crime rate, less congestion, etc. The county could build on a “live here-work here” plan.”
9	95	98	Added after the second paragraph in the second column: “Agriculture, including everything from crops to cattle to hardwood, is a vital part of the county’s economy. Agriculture makes up 30% of the land in Owen County, forest and wetlands make up 62%, developed land makes up 6%, and ‘Other’ makes up 2%, including rivers and waterways, according to a 2021 report from the Indiana Department of Agriculture.”
9	95	98	Added after the last paragraph in the second column: “The Owen County Fairgrounds are another under-recognized economic asset. Mostly associated with the annual fair, the 40-acre, privately-owned facility, run by a board, attracts visitors throughout the year with rodeos, Apple Butter Weekend, The Moving Wall Vietnam Veterans Memorial and farm shows. Events by the White River Poultry Club, for example, can draw 1,500 people from around the country.”
9	Added	100	<p>Added a page with information on Tax Increment Financing: “Tax increment financing (TIF) is a financial tool used by local governments to fund economic development. Though the basic concept of TIF is straightforward - to allow local governments to finance development projects with the revenue generated by the development - its implementation can differ in each county and town where it is used.</p> <p>TIF is based on the theory that development can pay for itself, according to the Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis. The basic idea is that public investment in an area, often in the form of infrastructure, induces property value growth which increases property tax revenue. The revenue increase is, in turn, used to pay for</p>

			<p>the initial investment. This results in TIF being labeled as “self-financing,” due to the use of future revenue to pay current costs.</p> <p>Owen County can further explore how TIF might work to help pay for infrastructure in an area where housing developments are going. The revenue stream from that TIF could serve to fund long-term payment of bonds or other financing as an effective tool. To be effective, local appointed and elected leaders need to be kept current on the potential benefits and limitations of TIF.”</p>
9	99	103	Deleted Goal 1 and replaced with: “Promote business retention and expansion and small business development.”
9	100	104	Deleted Goal 2 and replaced with: “Encourage workforce attraction.”
9	100	104	Deleted Goal 3 and replaced with: “Explore development of employer sites.”
9	100	104	Deleted Goal 4 and replaced with: “Stay informed on trends in regional planning.”
9	100	104	Added new first paragraph for Goal 4: “Concerns were expressed during this planning process that regional planning – working with other governments on joint projects – could lead to a loss of local sovereignty. This concern can be thoroughly addressed during a project in a memorandum of understanding with the partnering government or agency. It is worthwhile to keep this option open because of recent trends in funding.”
9	101 - 102	105 - 106	Updated tables with new versions of goals.
10	Added	113	Added a page with information on manufactured and mobile homes.
10	110	115	Deleted Goal 1 and replaced with: “Update zoning map and building code.”
10	110	115	Deleted Goal 2 and replaced with: “Explore the possibility of a county housing department.”
10	110	115	Deleted Goal 3 and replaced with: “Study the creation of new building sites.”
10	111	116	Deleted Goal 4 and replaced with: “Promote preferred housing types.”
10	111	116	Deleted Goal 5 and replaced with: “Improve the stock of existing housing.”
10	112 - 113	117 - 118	Updated the tables with new versions of goals.
11	116	121	Updated INDOT projects to reflect STIP 2022 – 2026 report.
11	116	121	Added a paragraph on the Mid-States Corridor: “During the planning process, Owen County leadership and residents raised questions about the proposed Mid-States Corridor Project. The Mid-States Corridor Project examines an improved highway connection in Southern Indiana. According to the Mid-States Corridor Regional Development Authority, the project’s purpose is to provide an improved transportation link between US 231/Natcher Bridge and Interstate 69 to facilitate business and personal regional connectivity in Dubois County and Southern Indiana. The project will also improve highway connections to existing multimodal locations in Southern Indiana. The project was commissioned by the Mid-States Corridor Regional Development Authority (RDA). At this time, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) does not have this project as part of their future plans. There are no short- or long-term plans to extend the project into Owen County, as shown in Figure 11.2.”
11	117	122	Source added to map.
11	Added	123	Added a page with a map of the Mid-States Corridor.
11	118	124	Added after first paragraph: “The “life expectancy” of the Indiana Southern Railroad may be limited, as evidenced by many similar lines

			across the country. Community leaders would be prudent to think about potential uses of this property in the event the railroad ceases operations and the rail line becomes abandoned.”
11	119 – 120	125 - 126	Content of pages shifted around. Added source to MyPath Trail System map.
11	122	128	Added “Goal 4: Do not support the addition of new highways in Owen County.” “Throughout the planning process, residents and leadership provided clear input that new highways are not wanted in Owen County. In particular, an extension of the Mid-States Corridor Project through Owen County is not supported by Owen County.”
11	124	130	Added action items for Goal 4. Action Item: “Designate an Owen County representative (staff or elected official) to track progress on the Mid-States Corridor Project. Have this representative report findings back to County Commissioners on a regular basis.” Responsible Party - County Commissioners Action Item: “To help guide future INDOT decisions, develop a county-wide Thoroughfare Plan.” Responsible Party - County Commissioners/County Engineer
12	128	134	Source added to map.
13	138	144	Added final sentence to Goal 1’s action item: “Involve adjacent landowners in these discussions and ensure that these protections do not restrict property rights.”
14	139	145	Replaced photo.
14	140	146	Added parks & recreation map.
14	141	147	Reworked first paragraph: “Owen County is home to over 10,000 acres of parks and recreational areas, primarily in the form of State Parks and State Recreational Areas. Collectively, these park areas could serve as the foundation for community leaders seeking to expand recreational opportunities for Owen County residents. There are also efforts underway to link these assets. For example, MYPath is a network of safe sidewalks and multi-use trails that seeks to connect the YMCA on the west side of Spencer, Indiana with McCormick’s Creek State Park on the east side. Efforts to develop and enhance recreational opportunities are limited, however, because the county is currently operating without a parks and recreation department. Listed below are some of the primary destinations and nature preserves comprising a large percentage of Owen County’s acreage.”
14	143	149	Added bullet point: “Hoot Woods.”
14	145 - 146	151 - 152	Source added to MyPath maps.
15	151	157	Reworked last two bullet points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Several structures at McCormick’s Creek State Park, including the park’s entrance and gatehouse, the CCC Recreation Building/Nature Museum, and the Stone Arch Bridge” • “Old Town Cemetery (Laurimore) and other cemeteries dating back to the early 19th century”
16	156	162	Added information about 2021 flood event.
16	157	163	Added section with Community Feedback. “According to comments left on the public survey, Owen County residents are primarily concerned about flood hazards. This is understandable given that Owen County experienced a severe flooding event in 2021.

			<p>Residents argued that “further development in flood plains should be restricted.” They were particularly concerned about future housing development in flood zones and encouraged planners and developers to exercise caution.</p> <p>Residents also noted that parks in the area regularly flooded during storms, posing a risk to residents using these spaces recreationally.”</p>
18	Added	183 - 190	Added several pages with Steering Committee meeting summaries.