

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

for the

TOWN OF OWENSVILLE

INDIANA



2008



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I. INTRODUCTION	
A. The Comprehensive Plan	3
• What does a Comprehensive Plan Do?	
• How is a Comprehensive Plan Developed?	
• What is the value of a Comprehensive Plan?	
B. 2005 Visioning Meeting	6
C. 2008 Comprehensive Plan	7
• Project Partners	
• Process	
II. COMMUNITY PROFILE	
A. Location	14
B. History	15
C. Population	17
• Age Distribution	
• Race Distribution	
• Disabilities	
E. Education	21
• Enrollment	
• Graduation Rates	
• Educational Attainment	
F. Employment and Income	24
• Unemployed Workforce	
• Employed Workforce	
• Commuting Patterns	
• Income & Poverty	
G. Housing	30
• Single-Family Housing	
• Multi-Family Housing	
• Aging Housing Stock	
H. Natural Resources	35
• Topography	
• Soils	
• Water Features	



III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	
A. Initial Owensville Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting	43
B. Owensville Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meetings	43
C. Owensville Community Workshop	44
• Grouped Community Comments	
• Sorted Top 10 Statements	
IV. ACTION PLAN	
A. Land Use	69
B. Transportation	76
C. Community Services, Facilities, & Programs	81
D. Local Economy	90
E. Community Participation	94
F. Plan Implementation, Evaluation, & Review	98
• Developing Implementation Teams	
• Implementation of Specific Projects	
• Using the Comprehensive Plan with Development Proposals	
• Use by the Plan Commission	
G. Comprehensive Plan Updates	102
• Five Year Review and Update	
Appendix A – Action Plan Matrix	
Appendix B – Meeting Documentation	
Appendix C – Supporting Documentation	
• Historic Structures Inventory – Owensville Excerpts	
• INDOT Traffic Data	



Appendix D – Required Documentation

- Plan Commission Meeting - Publisher’s Affidavit – Princeton Daily Clarion
- Plan Commission Meeting – Attendance Sheet
- Plan Commission Meeting – Minutes
- Resolution to Recommend for Adoption by Owensville Plan Commission
- Public Hearing - Publisher’s Affidavit – Princeton Daily Clarion
- Public Hearing Attendance Sheet
- Public Hearing Minutes
- Resolution for Adoption by Owensville Town Council



We would like to extend our thanks to the following people and organizations that helped to make the Owensville Comprehensive Planning process for the Town of Owensville a success. Many people contributed their time, commitment, and insight to make this a project of “action”.

Town Council

Dale Henry, President
Clyde Scott
Bernard Thompson

Local Representatives

Kristy York, Clerk-Treasurer, Plan Commission Secretary
Dean Short, Utility Superintendent
Rodger Leister, Town Marshall
Ray Druly, Town Attorney
Owensville-Montgomery Township Park & Recreation Board

Owensville Plan Commission

Mary Jane Barrett, President
Randy Dike, Vice President
Margo English
Jack Light
Dennis Simpson
Bernard Thompson
Larry York

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Bernard Thompson – Owensville Town Council/Plan Commission
Clyde Scott – Owensville Town Council/Owensville Volunteer Fire Department
Jack Light – Resident/Plan Commission/Park Board
Larry York – Resident/Plan Commission
Mary Jane Barrett– Resident/Plan Commission President
Madisann Richardson – Youth Representative
Randy Dike – Business Owner/Plan Commission/Park Board
Margo English – Resident/Plan Commission
Dennis Simpson – Farmer/Wellhead Protection Committee/Plan Commission
Brian Resenbeck – Resident/Plan Commission/Business Owner
Kristi York – Clerk-Treasurer/Plan Commission Secretary

Regional Representatives

Debbie Bennett-Stearsman – Grant Administrator
Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA)



INTRODUCTION



I. INTRODUCTION

This Comprehensive Plan is a guide for the future of the Town of Owensville. The community seeks to improve the quality of life for its existing and future residents by focusing on the existing community assets, projecting expected change, and developing a plan for future growth. This document provides strategic direction to town and community leaders on the improvements and changes that citizens desire and expect.

As a part of Southwest Indiana, the Town of Owensville has enjoyed economic growth resulting from the construction of the Duke Energy Generating Plant, northwest of Owensville, and the Toyota Plant along US 41. These economic changes have sparked industrial, commercial, and residential growth and development throughout the region.

As the Town of Owensville and other communities in Southwest Indiana continue to grow during the next ten years, the community will experience changes in development, transportation, population, and in local residential service needs, such as parks, sewers, and public safety. Future development pressures may come from Alliance Coal, LLC's plans to expand their operations north of Owensville, and changes to the regional transportation system. All of these changes will have potential effects upon the quality of life of the residents of the Town of Owensville, the Greater Owensville Community, and the entire Owensville Area.

The future of the Town of Owensville will be dependent upon a balance of growth and the provision of public services and facilities to support this growth. This will be accomplished through commitments to:

- Sound comprehensive community planning
- Maintaining a long-range view of the public interest when evaluating land use issues
- Support for infill development and revitalization initiatives
- Encouraging the conservation of significant natural features and environmentally-sensitive land
- Encouraging the continued agricultural use of the area's most productive farmland



2

The final outcome of these planning efforts requires the acknowledgement that the public good is affected by private and community development. The individual actions of landowners, developers, and residents affect the whole community. Similarly, actions taken by local leaders through the enforcement of local ordinances and the pursuit of infrastructure investments will also contribute to the overall development of the Owensville Community.



A. The Comprehensive Plan

A Comprehensive Plan is an official public document adopted by a local government to serve as a guide toward decision-making and the development of local policies concerning the overall development of the community. As a policy guide, it must recognize the interdependence of land use decisions, resource management, the process of governing, and the physical infrastructure of the built environment.

What does a Comprehensive Plan do?

Because it is comprehensive, the plan provides guidance to the decision-making process of the *Plan Commission* and *Town Council*. Officials within these groups have been empowered to protect community character and natural resources, ensure efficient expenditure of public funds, and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of those living within the Town of Owensville. The Comprehensive Plan is a vision for the community's future and a road map for community decision-making.

How is a Comprehensive Plan Developed?

A successful Comprehensive Plan relies upon resident participation to represent the voices of a wide range of citizens. Public input is essential to the formulation of the goals and objectives of the plan. Public participation activities define the course of action that the Town of Owensville will undertake to reach its vision for the future.

It is critical that the document represents those individuals who have been active participants in the planning process and identifies the actual interests of area residents. Through community workshops, public hearings, and meetings with the *Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee* and *Town Council*, the Comprehensive Plan is a statement about the future of the Town of Owensville, by and for the people of the Owensville Community.

Preparation of a Comprehensive Plan and updates to that Plan are the responsibility of the Plan Commission (IC 36-7-4-501). Indiana Code 36-7-4-201 specifies that the overall purpose of planning is to “encourage units to improve the health, safety, convenience, and welfare of their citizens and to plan for the future development of their communities...” The



“Goals and Objectives” section of this plan has been designed with the following general principles in mind, as specified in IC 36-7-4-201:

- Carefully plan transportation systems
- Allow growth with adequate provisions for public ways, utilities, healthcare, educational opportunities, and recreational facilities
- Consider the needs of industry in future growth decisions
- Ensure that residential areas help to create healthy surroundings for family life
- Support growth of the community through a proportionate and efficient expenditure of public funds

Additionally, Indiana Code 36-7-4-501 specifies that the purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is “for the promotion of public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or the general welfare and for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of development.”

What is the value of a Comprehensive Plan?

The value of a Comprehensive Plan is to articulate the community’s future vision and how it will move toward that vision. To some degree all development is planned, but a Comprehensive Plan looks at all of the pieces as a whole, coordinating efforts to avoid duplication and limit expensive public expenditures. It protects the general welfare of the community by ensuring quality development occurs in the right locations and that incompatible uses are not adjacent to each other. A Comprehensive Plan promotes *proactive thinking* about issues central to the community, rather than addressing them in a reactive manner. Planning can provide numerous benefits to a community, including:

- Coordinating capital improvement expenditures
- Directing development to areas capable of handling increased growth pressures
- Ensuring that developers will pay their fair share of improvements needed as a direct result of their development projects
- Helping local government provide efficient services
- Improving the quality of life
- Limiting and mitigating impacts to natural resources of all types
- Preserving and enhancing community character
- Preventing incompatible development from locating in a residential neighborhood



- Protecting property values
- Providing a circulation network of safe streets and sidewalks

The Owensville Comprehensive Plan contains the following sections:

- Introduction
- Community Profile
- Public Participation
- Action Plan

Ultimately, the implementation of the Owensville Comprehensive Plan requires the recognition and acceptance that public interest is affected by both personal and community actions.

For any Comprehensive Plan, its overall goal can be described as a method of helping a community to analyze its decisions for the future within the context of its local character, history, and traditions; to develop a road map for its future; and to move forward with proactive measures to prepare for that future.

**B. 2005 Visioning Meeting**

The Town of Owensville moved forward with its first steps toward identifying plans for its future by coordinating a Visioning Meeting. This meeting was held at the Owensville Community Center and invited all members of the community, local leaders, organization members, business owners, and residents. At the meeting, a S.W.O.T. analysis was conducted that identified the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats expressed by participants. A dot voting process was conducted to determine the areas of highest importance. This information was collected, compiled, tallied, and formed the building blocks of the plan's Goals, Objectives, and Strategies.



C. 2008 Comprehensive Plan

This Comprehensive Plan is the first document of its kind completed for the Town of Owensville. The development of this document relies heavily on guidance from community leaders, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and comments from the general public.

Over the past twenty years, many communities across the nation have realized that planning with community participation is the most effective way to plan. The residents of Owensville are the true experts on community issues within their community. The assembled planning team members from Bonar Group serve only as facilitators and information transmitters to guide the community and its leaders in identifying, inventorying, and formalizing the informal planning that they undertake in their daily lives.

The planning process was designed to enhance day-to-day planning efforts by increasing the information available to leaders and citizens to make informed decisions. The intent is to establish a dynamic planning process that will continue to facilitate and stimulate communication among community stakeholders well into the future. This approach to planning ensures that future development and community decisions and activities will continue to adapt to the changing needs and demands of the community as a whole.

The Comprehensive Plan process was undertaken to establish a current framework to guide land-based decision-making for the incorporated areas of the town and any areas that may be annexed in the future. The goals and objectives contained in this document are aimed at promoting public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, and the general welfare and the efficient provision of services during all stages of development.



Project Partners

Town Council: Owensville is governed by a Town Council, which consists of three elected officials who are responsible for the administration of town business. The powers and duties of the council (related to planning and development) include the following: managing town property, constructing and maintaining roads, operating and funding public services and programs, enacting ordinances (including land use-related ordinances), levying taxes for public services, and sitting on or making appointments to various commissions and boards, including the Plan Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Under Indiana Code, the Town Council holds the legislative authority to adopt the Owensville Comprehensive Plan and implement all planning-related policies and strategies for the incorporated area. Implementation will take place under the guidance of the Plan Commission. The Town Council is also the fiscal authority for the local government. They provide funds for the completion of the Comprehensive Plan document and will assist in the ongoing implementation of the plan through the operating budget for the Town of Owensville.

Plan Commission: The Plan Commission operates as the body that interprets local land use ordinances for the community. Because the Town of Owensville currently does not have local land use ordinances established for the community, it is the responsibility of the Owensville Plan Commission to monitor the implementation and progress of the adopted Comprehensive Plan. They should also meet on a regular basis to ensure that the plan is being utilized and remains applicable to the community, especially as new growth and development occurs within the Owensville Area. The primary role of the Plan Commission during the comprehensive planning process has been to review the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan, make final recommendations, and recommend the final document to the Town Council for final adoption by official resolution.



Steering Committee: The Steering Committee draws from a variety of different public organizations and offices. It includes concerned citizens who want to play an active role in the Comprehensive Plan process. The Steering Committee acts as the voice of the public as provided by a diverse group of community representatives. Upon review and approval of the Owensville Comprehensive Plan, it is the Owensville Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee's responsibility to recommend the adoption of the document to the Plan Commission.

Bonar Group – Planning Services: Bonar Group was the primary consultant for the Owensville Comprehensive Plan under the direction of the Town Council and the Steering Committee. Bonar Group gathered and processed the data for the community profile, facilitated workshops and meetings, provided expertise in all phases of the project, and drafted the comprehensive planning document.



Process

The Town Council initiated the development of this Comprehensive Plan to identify opportunities to improve the community, address potential growth and development, and maintain the overall quality of life of its residents.

The Owensville Comprehensive Plan is to be used by community leaders as a tool for guiding decisions, policy makers for the development of ordinances, and the development community as a reference to make informed development choices.

Phase I: Initiating a Plan - The first phase of the planning process started with the Town Council's realization that a Comprehensive Plan was needed. Subsequently, local officials dealt with administrative tasks while setting up the project framework. This preparation phase included:

- Securing funding
- Choosing the consultant
- Negotiating the Scope of Work
- Creating the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
- Creating base maps to record data
- Gathering relevant documents, studies, and plans
- Coordinating public participation activities and establishing meeting schedules

Phase II: Data Gathering and Analysis - The second phase of the planning process involved implementing a variety of data gathering activities. The existing condition of facilities, services, land use, and development were gathered and analyzed. The majority of this data is located within the Community Profile Section. Some of these tasks included:

Surveying current land uses, classifying each parcel by principal use
Reviewing US Census Data and county records to construct a community profile based upon demographic, socio-economic, environmental, and development-related information
Gathering existing data on local utilities, infrastructure, community services, and regional amenities



Phase III: Public Participation – Resident participation was an important part of the Comprehensive Plan process. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was consulted throughout all the phases of the planning process to discuss issues important to them and the community. Additionally, the community played an active role by participating in public meetings and workshops, geared toward both adults and children, to identify critical issues and other important community information. A more thorough description of these activities is presented in the Public Participation Section of this plan.

Phase IV: Draft Plan Development - This planning phase included organizing the information gathered in previous phases, drafting goals, objectives and strategies, creating the future land-use map, and creating the draft plan. Comments gathered at public meetings provided the essential information for these elements. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee participated by reviewing the goals, objectives and strategies and offering comments and suggestions. Following the receipt of these comments, the final goals and objectives were presented and agreed upon. Once these were completed, a draft plan was presented to the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee for review and comment.

Phase V: Final Plan Completion - In the final phase, revisions and edits were made based upon the comments and feedback from community members and leaders. A final document was recommended to the Town Council for further review and its final adoption.



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