

CHAPTER 4: COMMUNITY ISSUES

A. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE MEETING

On Tuesday, May 27, 2008 urban planners from Bernardin, Lochmueller and Associates, Inc. met with the Greene County Comprehensive Plan Committee at the Greene County 4-H Center. This meeting included a review of the comprehensive plan process, the content of the proposed plan and the schedule for preparation of the plan. Members of the Committee reviewed and revised the proposed community survey which was sent to citizens of Greene County. An exercise was also completed during the meeting to determine the growth and development issues of the town. Each committee member was given an opportunity to list the issues they believed were important to Greene County. The committee then scored these issues by importance. The top ten issues were included in the community survey, and additional issues were added as survey size permitted. The Plan Committee ranked these issues as follows:

- 1) Need increased job opportunities at a variety of expertise levels. (score: 117)
- 2) Need higher quality standards for county roads and bridges. (score: 82)
- 3) Need to take care of existing businesses, including offering business expansion incentives. (score:55)
- 4) Need to enforce public health and safety regulations, such as septic system inspection and enforcement and illegal dumping. (score: 50)
- 5) Need to protect and respect individual property rights, including grand-fathering of legal existing land uses. (score: 43)
- 6) Need to maintain rural integrity of Greene County. (score: 36)
- 7) Need to limit the “red tape”, if any land use controls are implemented. (score: 34)
- 8) There is a lack of quality affordable housing including rental properties. (score: 32)
- 8) Need to coordinate scheduling of county-wide school programs. (score: 32)
- 9) Need to enforce individual property maintenance including abandoned properties. (score: 25)
- 10) Need to support and expand the Greene County Hospital while providing incentives to attract quality medical personnel. (score: 23)
- 11) Need increased retail opportunities to encourage local commerce. (score: 21)
- 12) Need to improve Greene County’s (and its communities) image. (score: 17)
- 13) Need a centrally-located YMCA including varied sports facilities. (score: 15)
- 13) Need increased leadership opportunities for youth within the county. (score: 15)
- 13) Need to increase Sheriff Department’s staff. (score: 15)
- 14) Need to increase recreational opportunities for all age groups (score: 14)
- 14) Need to expand the service area of rural water providers. (score: 14)
- 15) Need more public transportation within the county. (score: 9)
- 15) Need a county-wide school administration. (score: 9)
- 16) There are not enough full-service family restaurants. (score: 8)
- 16) Need County Park with full-service camping and recreational facilities. (score: 8)
- 17) Need more support for volunteer fire departments and emergency medical services. (score: 6)
- 18) Need more assisted- and independent-living facilities. (score: 5)
- 18) There is not enough attention given to natural resource conservation. (score: 5)
- 19) Rural areas need to identify with the rest of the county. (score: 4)
- 20) Need additional quality lodging facilities. (score: 0)

B. TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING

Planners from Bernardin, Lochmueller and Associates, Inc. also met with a Greene County Tourism Committee on Tuesday, May 27, 2008 at the Greene County 4-H Center. This meeting included a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis exercise. The committee created a list of all of Greene Counties existing strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats for future development. Below is a list of the items that the committee derived.

Strengths

- 1) Goose Pond
- 2) Tobacco Barn
- 3) Greene-Sullivan Forest
- 4) Local town festivals
- 5) Shawnee Theater
- 6) Walnut Grove Springs
- 7) Tulip Railroad Trestle (the Viaduct)
- 8) Centralized location relative to Bloomington, Terre Haute and Vincennes
- 9) Natural beauty
- 10) Small communities have individual strengths and identities
- 11) Red Bird (atv park)
- 12) Agricultural base
- 13) Low tax base
- 14) Affordable
- 15) Desirable place to live and retire

Weaknesses

- 1) Lack of promotion
- 2) Lack of signage and maps
- 3) No county public park
- 4) Lack of “vision” and spirit
- 5) Lack of job opportunities
- 6) Lack of hotel and restaurant industry
- 7) Lack of volunteers for Goose Pond, etc.
- 8) Inadequate road infrastructure
- 9) Lack of coordination
- 10) Lack of modern technology
- 11) Lack of communications such as high speed internet and cell phone service
- 12) High fuel costs

Opportunities

- 1) Growth in jobs in county related tourism
- 2) Work together
- 3) Educate the vision
- 4) Tourism facilities and welcome center
- 5) Community collaboration
- 6) Tourism Plan
- 7) Recycling education

Threats

- 1) Fear of change
- 2) Erosion of commercial-retail properties
- 3) Gas prices
- 4) Limited access from I-69
- 5) Erosion of agricultural base
- 6) Water quality; environmental threats

C. COMMUNITY SURVEY

As part of the Comprehensive Plan process, 3,600 surveys were sent out to residents of Greene County through the Greene County Daily World delivered Saturday, June 28, 2008. Residents were asked to fill out the survey and mail it back to Bernardin, Lochmueller and Associates, Inc. The surveys began to be returned later that week and were collected through August 4th, 2008. The results of the surveys were used to determine community issues that need to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Nine percent (317) of the surveys were completed and returned. Table 5 shows a list of issues from the survey, composite scores and percent agreement with the issues.

D. COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW

In addition to the surveys, community leaders were contacted to do an interview regarding current and future growth in Greene County. Community leaders are those persons representing one of eight interest groups including Real Estate, Developers and Builders, Civic Leaders, Education and Other Interest Groups.

Of the leaders selected to be interviewed, 14 people were available and agreed to discuss current and future growth in Greene County. In the various categories, the number of respondents equaled: four (4) from Industry, three (3) from Banking and Financial, two (2) from Real Estate, zero (0) from Developers and Builders, one (1) from Civic Leaders, one (1) from Education, one (1) from Religious, and two (2) from Other Interest Groups.

1. CURRENT ASSETS TO GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

More than a third of respondents commented that the local workforce is an asset to growth and development. Four respondents felt the availability of land is an asset. The same number valued the area's recreation opportunities, including the Goose Pond. Respondents also felt the county's proximity to larger cities is an asset, as well as the existing infrastructure. Two respondents mentioned the value of having Crane NSWC nearby and the employment opportunities it provides. Other assets mentioned include: rail availability, existing utilities, the beauty of the area and the climate, the availability of medical services at the local hospital, available retail space, the low cost of living, and the strength of the agriculture industry.

2. CURRENT OBSTACLES TO GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Lack of interstate access was the most often cited obstacle among respondents. Five respondents felt the anticipated I-69 project is overdue. Another four respondents felt infrastructure is an obstacle to growth and development. Four respondents mentioned a lack of land use management creates obstacles. Four respondents also felt a common attitude in the community against change discourages growth and development. Two respondents felt an uneducated workforce creates an obstacle. Other obstacles mentioned include: the current economic climate, a community attitude that the county can't compete for industry, and a lack of available land.

3. DESIRES FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Four respondents desire job growth, followed by three respondents who desire construction of I-69. Respondents also desire additional industry, retail and dining opportunities, and additional support for schools through a larger tax base. Two respondents desired land use management, specifically zoning. Leaders responded that they desire promotion of area recreation and tourism as well as business opportunities. One respondent asked that Jasonville's autonomy be preserved. Another respondent asked for continued support of Crane. Another respondent wished for growth that balances preservation of the area's outdoor opportunities. Another leader hoped for a solution to area homes that are rundown and in need of care. Respondents also wished for a way to keep young people from moving out of Bloomfield and additional opportunities for adult education.

Table 6: Community Survey Results

	Composite Score	% Strongly Agree	% Somewhat Agree	% Somewhat Disagree	% Strongly Disagree	Did not respond
Strongly Agree (1.0 - 1.5)						
Additional job opportunities at a variety of expertise levels are needed in Greene County.	1.1	88.6%	7.3%	1.3%	0.9%	1.9%
Greene County needs to do more to keep the "best and brightest" young people in the community.	1.3	75.0%	17.1%	3.5%	1.6%	2.8%
Property maintenance needs to be better enforced, including abandoned properties.	1.4	74.1%	16.1%	4.4%	3.8%	1.6%
Higher quality standards are needed for county roads and bridges.	1.4	64.2%	29.4%	3.5%	0.9%	1.9%
If any land use controls are implemented in Greene County, individual property rights should be respected and protected, and existing legal land uses should be grandfathered (allowed to continue).	1.5	63.3%	24.7%	5.7%	3.2%	3.2%
There is a need to improve communications between all parties involved in economic development in Greene County.	1.5	59.2%	31.6%	3.5%	2.8%	2.8%
The existing rural integrity of Greene County should be maintained.	1.5	57.0%	31.0%	5.7%	1.6%	4.7%
Somewhat Agree (1.6 - 2.4)						
Development standards are needed to protect property values and attract businesses.	1.6	59.8%	25.0%	5.7%	6.3%	3.2%
Public health and safety regulations need to be better enforced, such as septic system inspections and illegal dumping.	1.6	53.8%	29.1%	8.9%	5.1%	3.2%
Greene County needs to better address the needs of an aging population, including transportation and recreational opportunities.	1.6	53.5%	36.1%	7.0%	1.9%	1.6%
If any land use controls are implemented in Greene County, the paperwork and formalities should be limited.	1.6	49.7%	35.8%	5.7%	2.5%	6.3%
Support should be provided to existing businesses, including offering incentives for business expansion.	1.6	47.8%	39.6%	7.3%	2.5%	2.8%
The visual appearance of Greene County needs improvement.	1.7	46.2%	40.2%	6.6%	3.5%	3.5%
More assisted- and independent-living facilities are needed in Greene County.	1.7	42.1%	39.9%	12.0%	2.5%	3.5%
Greene County needs more quality affordable housing, including rental properties.	1.9	38.0%	34.5%	17.4%	6.0%	3.8%
Better coordination is needed in scheduling county-wide school programs.	1.9	33.2%	39.9%	14.2%	4.4%	8.2%
There is a need for additional recreational facilities in Greene County.	2.1	30.7%	35.1%	19.6%	8.2%	6.3%
Mobile homes should only be located in mobile home parks or mobile home subdivisions.	2.2	40.2%	21.2%	15.8%	20.3%	2.5%
A County Park is needed in Greene County with full-service camping and recreational facilities.	2.3	25.9%	31.6%	23.1%	13.6%	5.7%
Disagree (2.5 +)						
New commercial growth should only be located in or near incorporated areas or at interstate interchanges.	2.5	13.9%	33.2%	30.4%	17.4%	5.1%
Mobile homes are appropriate on lots in traditional single-family home areas.	2.6	22.8%	25.6%	22.2%	27.2%	2.2%