



Farm Life Publishing Co.

# Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plan

2019  
**Owen County**  
Indiana



# Table of Contents

<b>01</b>	<b>Defining Quality of Place</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>02</b>	<b>Envisioning Our Future</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>03</b>	<b>Our Story</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>04</b>	<b>Engagement</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>05</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>06</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>07</b>	<b>Solutions</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>08</b>	<b>Appendix</b>	<b>105</b>





**Defining Quality of Place**



# Defining Quality of Place

Michael Miller is living proof of the power of quality of place. On a sunny afternoon, Miller put down a wrench in his bicycle shop to talk about why his family moved from Noblesville – population 61,882 - to Gosport, a town of 829.

“We used to come down here on weekends, just to get away from things,” Miller said. Then he noticed an available storefront on Gosport’s Main Street and started thinking. “We wanted to start a business and we wanted a great place to resettle and raise our kids.”

He now runs Penguin Cycle Werks, where he sells and services bicycles and repairs wheelchairs. His wife Lorna runs The Crazy Lady Next Door, a multi-purpose gift shop next to his business.

The terms workforce attraction and – especially - quality of place, are abstractions. Only when they’re applied directly to human life do they take on meaning. Gosport matched Miller’s definition of the terms by providing positive answers to two questions: Does this community provide an opportunity to realize my goal of launching a business, and will my family feel at home here?

Miller admits there’s still a lot of work to be done with his business, but – from a community development perspective - there are almost too many wins to count in this scenario. The town gains a new family, two entrepreneurs, local school enrollment and two new shops on Main Street.



Michael Miller- Owner of Penguin Cycle Werks

## We want Owen County to be a place people are proud to call home

And the Millers aren't alone in sensing new opportunities for launching a business and taking advantage of Owen County's lifestyle. A few storefronts down, the Rice family undertook a similar journey when they opened Nate's Candy Jar, which among other things features their homemade Fido's Fudge, treats for dogs.

Over in Spencer, buildings surrounding the courthouse square that sat empty for decades are quickly filling up. We now have two coffee shops, three gifts shops and our most recent grand opening - Civilian Brewing Corps, Owen County's first microbrewery.

Which characteristics most distinguish a place from others? How do families, entrepreneurs, and professionals decide where to call home? Where can creative people utilize their knowledge and talents? What features of a community improve the lives of people every day?

Each and every place has a unique set of attributes, assets, and amenities which informs the way these questions are answered. Successful places provide a range of experiences for different kinds of people at different stages in their lives and quality of place can be summed up as the set of those interrelated experiences. By utilizing its natural assets, highlighting its unique history and culture, and embracing innovative ways to meet the needs of citizens, Owen County can support a resilient and prosperous economy.



[A home in Spencer, IN.](#)

The long-term rewards go far beyond the economic growth - residents are the true beneficiaries. Stronger social ties, creative partnerships and collaborative solutions can set Owen County apart as a leader in the Uplands region, in Indiana, and in the Midwest.

Establishing Owen County as a place where people feel welcome, a place where individuals can feel like they fit in, and a place where neighbors work together will foster new growth while retaining the best of what we already offer. We want Owen County to be a place people are proud to call home, whether they're newcomers, such as the Millers, or they've lived here their entire life.



Our **Workforce Attraction** efforts will create opportunities for people already living and working here as well as for people who might consider moving for new jobs.

Owen County will develop a healthy, productive workforce by providing life's basic necessities and promoting the unique opportunities of the area. Workforce stability is developed when people can live, work, play, and grow in their own community.

Our **Quality of Place efforts** will appeal to everyone - current residents and potential residents. This is how they experience Owen County during visits, special occasions, and every day.

Our **Amenities & Attributes** efforts will improve and extend the services and experiences available to citizens and visitors.

Through both our Workforce Development and Quality of Place Efforts, we want to promote Owen County, Our Indiana Home.



Photo Credit: Marce King



# Envisioning Owen County's Future

# Envisioning Owen County's Future

It's our birthday, and we are spending our 200th year celebrating our past and planning for the future.

## Our Vision of People: The 'Everyday Owen County Resident

The first question we asked ourselves was: Who's future are we planning: Who is the 'average' Owen County resident? For example, Spencer is our best-known town, but only 10 percent of us live there. We think of ourselves as family oriented, but only 17% of our households are "married with children."

To truly plan for our future, we must first attempt to experience what life is like for all our residents. We want to make sure there are opportunities for everyone. For example, what jobs exist for the 780 single mothers listed by the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey? What challenges face the almost 5,000 of us who are age 62 or older, according to that same report?

We value and promote a diverse population, but also want to put ourselves in the work boots of our typical resident: a 45-year-old white male with a high school diploma earning \$38,000 at his manufacturing job.

The following graphic depicts the "average" Owen County resident.

## Everyday Owen County Resident

**Male**

51% MALE

**44.5**

MEDIAN AGE

**White**

97.4% WHITE



**\$24,220**

AVERAGE PER  
CAPITA INCOME

**\$48,315**

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME

**Manufacturing**

**47.5%**

MANUFACTURING  
EMPLOYEES THE MOST  
RESIDENTS

**High School  
Diploma**

AVERAGE HIGHEST  
LEVEL OF EDUCATION  
85.3% HIGH SCHOOL

**Family Size**

**Married w/o Children (37%)**

**Living Alone (25.7%)**

**Household**

**Owns Home (79%)**

**Renting Home (21%)**

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017



Because this portrait depicts not just a portion of our community – but the average citizen – our vision of the future must also reflect theirs'. Not all our residents have the advantages needed to prosper. Many live in marginalized parts of society.

While our vision of the future includes attracting a better-educated workforce, we must not lose the connection to our existing resident workforce.

In our push for progress – and we believe profound development is already underway in Owen County – we will be vigilant to not degrade or erase parts of our community or our past.



# Our Vision of Community: Micropolitan Life

Owen County is part of the Bloomington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which is home to about 167,762 people. MSAs are regions consisting of a densely populated urban core (Bloomington) and less-populated surrounding territories, sharing industry, infrastructure, and housing (Owen County).

We have no ambition to “be like Bloomington,” but we realize our fortunes and economies are inexorably linked. In fact, that connection has grown. For example, to be included in the MSA, Owen County must have at least 25% of its residents working in the core area of Bloomington. This tie is not guaranteed; Greene County used to be in the MSA but dropped below the 25%, according to an interview with staff from the Indiana Business Research Center.

Another connection is how businesses started in Bloomington have relocated or expanded to Owen County, such as Cook Urological.

Other strengthened connections include the new I-69 and improved roads linking Bloomington to Owen County via SR 46. We also note that Bloomington has one of the most expensive housing markets in the state and is undergoing other growing pains.



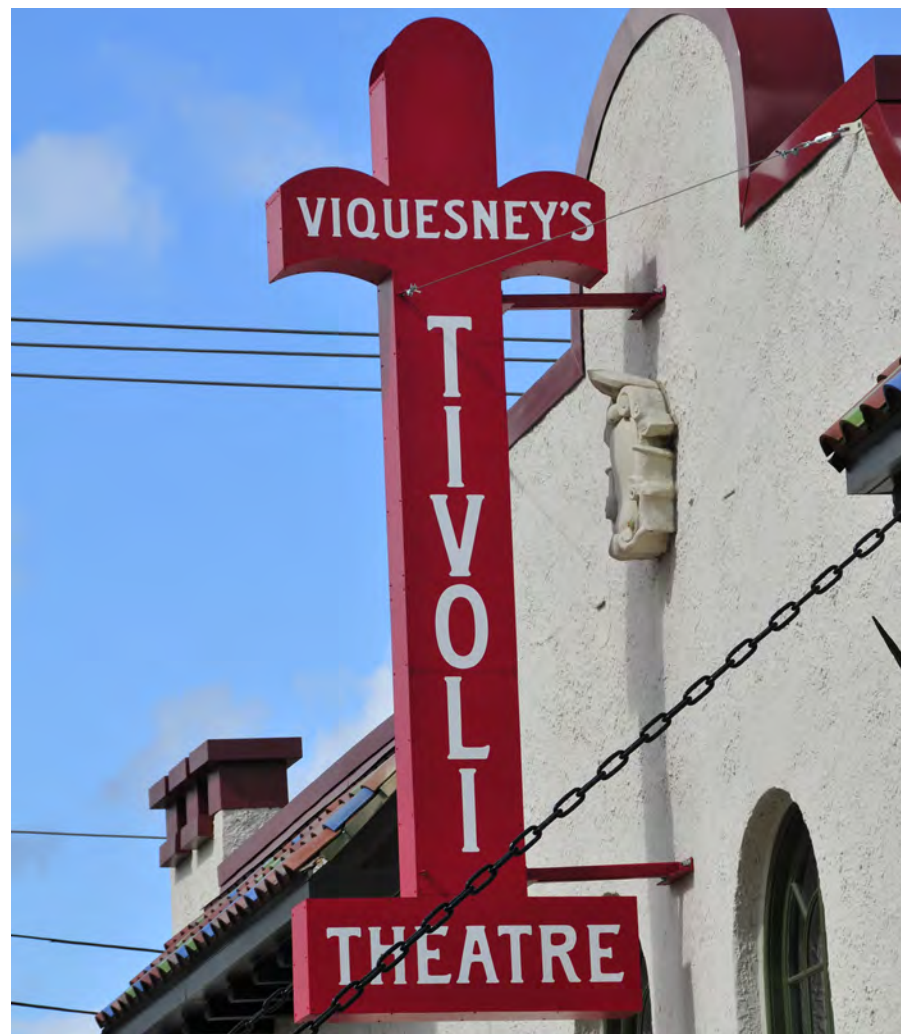


National studies show that rural communities tend to have stronger economies when they are similar to or near growing cities, according to a 2018 Brookings Institution study entitled “Why Rural America Needs Cities”. For instance, “micropolitan areas” — rural communities with small urban centers — have rebounded to near-pre-recession employment levels, and rural communities adjacent to cities fare better than remote counties.

Private investment flows to places with dense clusters of prized assets, according to the same Brookings Institution study, and we benefit from Bloomington’s amenities and offer our own. A walk around our courthouse square shows how investment is flowing into Owen County right now.

Just a few years ago, there was no new construction underway. Local leaders had been watching downtown’s decline with increasing concern for years, but local government did not have the money to invest in it, and market forces had bypassed the courthouse square and set up shop along SR 46.

That changed in 2012 when the Cook Group Inc. announced they would sponsor restoration of downtown Spencer’s Tivoli Theatre on behalf of all employees of Cook Urological. The theatre operated from 1928 to 1999, and had been deteriorating ever since. Not only was the theatre restored to its former elegance, a new retail space was created next door and a community meeting room on the second floor.



**Tivoli Theatre, Spencer Indiana**

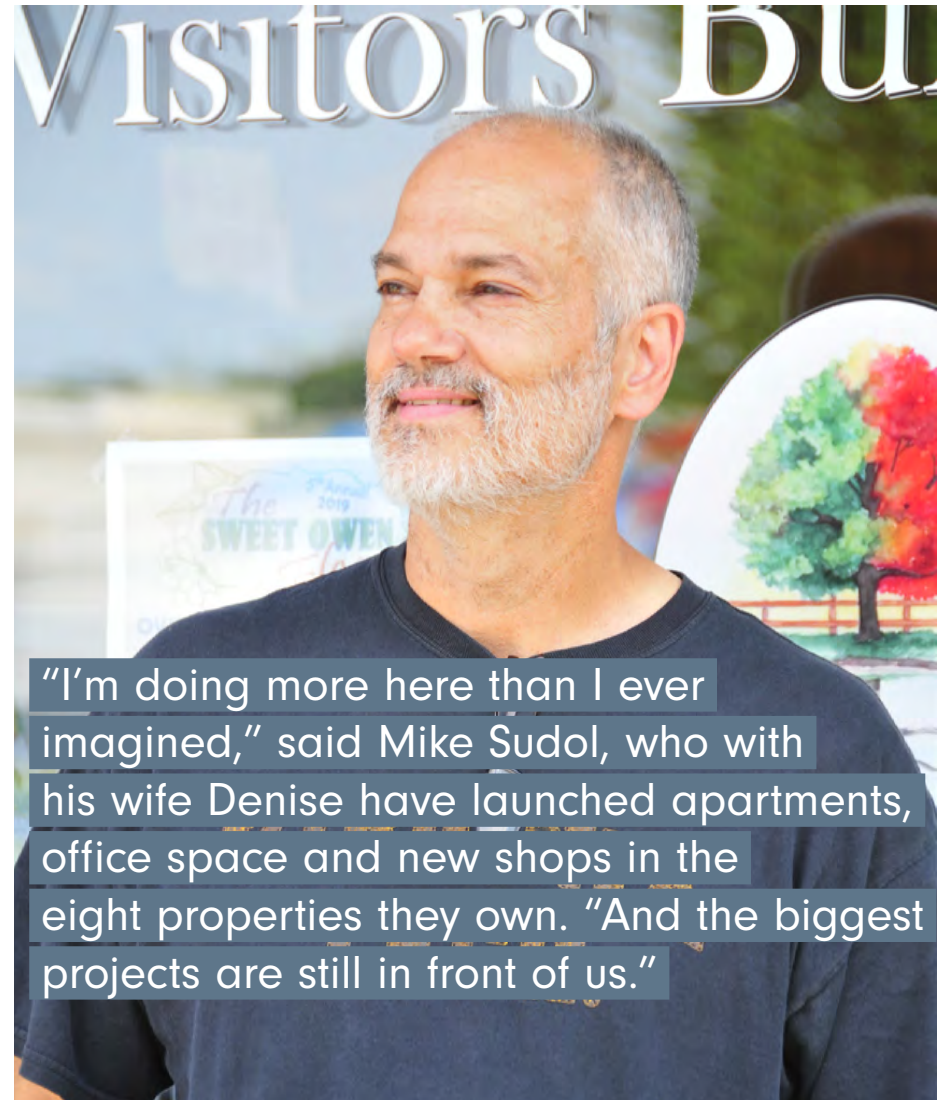
Mike and Denise Sudol had just settled into town when they noticed the energy generated by the theatre's restoration and the new Spencer Main Street group.

Mike Sudol saw the local growth and thought that some people who work at Cook or Boston Scientific but live in Monroe County could be attracted to live in Owen. With additional housing, including downtown lofts and condos, he thought he could also capture some people who worked in Monroe County but wanted a slower lifestyle – albeit one with modern amenities.

To that end, we are working on bringing broadband to the county and wi-fi to downtown Spencer. Besides getting us in synch with the modern economy, this amenity will open opportunities for work-from-anywhere entrepreneurs and small businesses.

In an era when the average U.S. commuter spends 42 hours in traffic per year and loses \$1,400 idling away gas, according to the INRIX 2018 Global Traffic Scorecard, we believe the micropolitan lifestyle will become increasingly attractive.

The vision of the Cook family, the Sudols and many others is taking shape right now. You can see the changes for yourself in the short videos of local shops and services at <https://www.facebook.com/spencermainstreet/videos>.



"I'm doing more here than I ever imagined," said Mike Sudol, who with his wife Denise have launched apartments, office space and new shops in the eight properties they own. "And the biggest projects are still in front of us."

**Mike Sudol, Owen County Resident**



# Our Vision of Workforce Attraction: R&E

We are starting with a “retention and expansion plan” for our current employers and workforce, making sure they have opportunities to get meaningful jobs and grow into even better ones. At the same time, it is vital to attract new workers to keep up with technological changes in manufacturing, our biggest job sector.

We are very fortunate to have such a strong base to grow on, particularly with our manufacturing jobs in the life sciences sector. Our two biggest employers - Boston Scientific and Cook Urological – offer both higher-paying manufacturing jobs and the opportunity to work in the growing life sciences sector.

For example, last year Boston Scientific announced they would hire an additional 350 employees, bringing the company’s total number to 1,400 after renovations at its current facility. Spencer faced stiff competition for the investment, including from cities in Scotland and Malaysia. Local leaders are excited to further their partnership with the medical device maker.

Our vision of workforce attraction includes programs that improve rural residents’ access to jobs, customers, small-business financing, and training programs.



# Our Vision: The Challenges

Proximity to urban areas such as Bloomington does not guarantee rural prosperity. We recognize direct local investments, such as broadband and rural entrepreneurship, will improve our fortunes.

We are not looking to create a bunch of new problems either, but the millions of dollars in business investments underway in Owen County makes it clear that development is seeking us out. We are responding with community dialogue and planning.

In fact, there are four separate but related planning processes underway right now: the bicentennial celebration, ROI Ready Communities grant, GIFT VII Leadership grant and the Owen County Economic Development Strategy. We're covering every corner of the community in discussions about our future.

As tradition calls for, we've taken the opportunity of our birthday to bring together family – including far-flung relatives we don't see all that often – to celebrate, reflect on the past and plan for the future. We are ready.

As tradition calls for, we've taken the opportunity of our birthday to bring together family – including far-flung relatives we don't see all that often – to celebrate, reflect on the past and plan for the future.

We are ready.







# Our Story



# Our Story

## Before Owen County

The story of Owen County's past starts with our land. The story of Owen County's future begins with our connections to that land, to each other and to the Indiana Uplands Region.

According to the US. Census Bureau Owen County has about 246,514 acres. As with most of the Uplands Region, the uses of that land have shifted slowly over time – and continue to change.

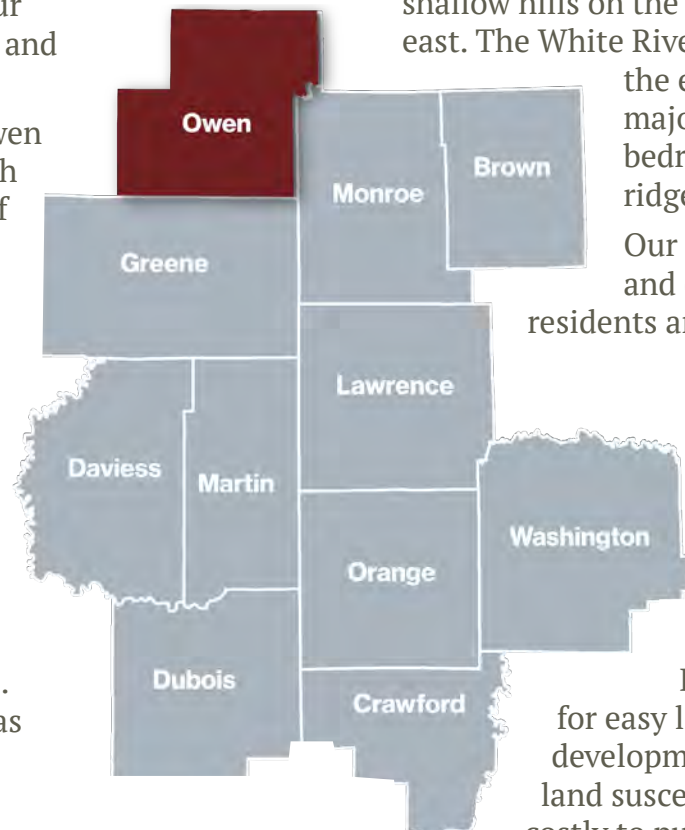
Despite its image as rural and agricultural, Owen County is not endlessly flat, open land for farming or development. Some 250 million years ago, Indiana was closer to the equator and covered by a shallow sea. The calcium carbonate shells and skeletons of the prehistoric marine animals were deposited at the sea floor, eventually forming limestone. The economically viable limestone areas of Indiana are primarily in Monroe and Lawrence counties; however, one mill remains open near Spencer.

Next came the glaciers, which scoured Owen during the Illinoian

glaciation stage 300,000 years ago. The retreating ice left shallow hills on the westside and an ancient lakebed on the east. The White River further eroded Owen Valley, which covers the eastern half of the county and where the majority of the farms are located. The limestone bedrock is prone to karst features producing ridges, fissures, sinkholes and caverns.

Our geologic history left us with idyllic scenery and contrasting landscapes admired by both residents and tourists. Lazy streams flow into the torrent White River. Flat farms line valleys fading into hilly woods. Teeming wetlands are only a short trip from the largest Indiana waterfall, Cataract Falls. Communities formed around the character of the landscape and have fostered a deep connection between the land and residents.

But Owen's landscape does not provide for easy living. Poor drainage and flooding restrict development in the valleys. Karst features may make land susceptible to sinkholes. Hilly landscapes make it costly to pump water around the county. Additionally, a "hard pan" and "periglacial loess" layer, both produced by glacier melt, makes it difficult to farm and septic tanks to filter wastewater.





## Settling Owen County



South Side of Spencer Square, Circa 1920

Tough landscapes call for tough people, and our ancestors were up to the challenge. Colonizers started settlements along the White River for trade and connection to forts down river. Owen County was formed in 1819 and was named after Abraham Owen, a colonel who died at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. Waves of settlers came to Owen in allied family groups originating from the Ohio River Valley to farm and trap furs. Historical information from this section was taken from Owen County, Indiana, a History; Owen County Historical & Genealogical Society, 1994.

The Town of Spencer, as the county seat, was laid out in 1820 and Gosport followed 10 years later. Families from the east came to Owen and were invited in by the locals. Owen was nearly undeveloped, and families relied on each other for support. The bond between residents is shown in the 1850s when locals formed the Blue Hens volunteer group to defend from

marauders. Owen was a land of opportunity and reached 16,000 people in 1870.

Communities grew around specific industries and traded goods throughout the region. Along the river, Freedom and Gosport grew as shipping ports visited by flat boats. Coal City was platted in 1875 and named after its access to that resource. Patricksburg was formed along trading roads to the frontier.

Quincy, Spencer and Gosport all flourished along the rail line. Other communities were built around farming, like Arney or Jordan, or for lumber. Owen served at the connection point between central Indiana and the Wabash Valley and produced many of the resources for the Uplands Region.

By 1900, almost all the land was used for agriculture or was undeveloped. With the decline of river and rail trade, Owen's population dropped and land uses changed. By 1997, the number of farmed acres shrunk to 107,265, and by 2012 it was 95,527. In that same year there were 549 farms with an average size of 174 acres, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture.



Indianapolis and Vincennes Railroad Depot, Circa 1900

By 2017 farming was on the rise and farmland jumped to 111,931 acres, but the number of farms dropped to 445. Fewer – but bigger – farms. Now, almost half of our total acreage is being cultivated, but farming only provides 540 jobs in the whole county, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis' 2017 report on jobs and earnings. The farm worker's average income is \$12,225, according to the bureau, meaning many farmers must seek a second job.

Because of our rural nature, changes in farming practices and shifting industries – there is not a clear pattern to land use, especially regarding the mix of commercial and residential properties.

It is not uncommon to find used car lots in a residential neighborhood or to see homes used as businesses. There are commercial spaces in remote areas of the county and residential areas are scattered throughout without organization into neighborhoods. While some mixing of uses is appropriate in a rural area such as Owen County, it provides little direction to those making land-use decisions. For property owners, it is also difficult to determine where to build homes because of the uncertainty of what will be allowed next to their property in the future.

What's true for the county also holds for our biggest town, Spencer. Although the land around Spencer seems open and rural to outsiders, geographic factors constrain the town's potential for growth. The White River rings the town to the east and south sides. Floodplain encompasses parts of the town. To the north, the land climbs to steep ridges and ravines. In fact,



flooding and scarcity of buildable land are not just impediments to growing the town's boundaries; they are an ongoing problem inside the existing borders, as shown by the 2008 floods.

Despite these limitations, the population started increasing again in the 1950s, peaking in 2005. Electrification and highways passing through the county created new opportunities for regional connections and overcoming local challenges.

As old connections fade – to coal, timber, river traffic – new connections form. Owen has shifted from agriculture and extraction to building and manufacturing. Half of our workforce is employed in the life sciences and manufacturing sectors and our two largest employers are Boston Scientific and Cook Urological. Both those firms have added new jobs and Boston Scientific has bought land to expand.

A stirring economy provides residents an improved quality of life; especially, as we add more modern amenities and housing to our small-town charm.



## Making Owen Home

Owen County has much to offer but sits at a critical juncture. Although roughly half our jobs are in manufacturing – which are traditionally high-paying – that sector of the economy comes with risks. Owen County’s manufacturing jobs have a 60% risk of being lost to automation and 28% risk of moving offshore, according to the Ball State Center for Business and Economic Research.

Additionally, our population is hovering around 20,000 and young people are choosing not to call Owen home. For example, there was a 2% drop per year in the number of people ages 10-29 in Spencer between 2014-2016, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.

However, we are now more alert and informed about issues in our community. Our cohesion and shared vision is a byproduct of our bicentennial. We formed a committee with ambassadors from all our communities – incorporated and unincorporated – to celebrate and plan this year.

But we have also been connecting our shared resources and opportunities. People are saying they see more economic activity now than they have in decades. For example, after about 30 years of discussion, we launched a countywide effort to extend sewer lines out to SR 43, and were immediately rewarded with Hoosier Energy opening a multi-million-dollar facility with dozens of high-paying jobs. The Chamber of Commerce is enacting a robust strategic plan connecting industries throughout Owen County.



**The Spencer resident is seen here with his friend Leo Wright, 13, of Gosport.**

Entrepreneurs are founding their businesses in Owen – and are learning modern strategies from each other. Spencer and Gosport are revitalizing their downtowns, as you will read about in detail in other sections. Historic buildings are reoccupied and functioning with their old gusto. After many, many years of requests, the Indiana Department of Transportation improved SR 46 through Spencer.

Community groups, companies and governments are working together to reconnect the hidden gems of Owen, making it easier and accessible to have the full Owen County experience. All of those groups and sectors are represented on our Quality of Life Advisory Team (QPAT), which is the volunteer group of community leaders overseeing this planning process.

Owen County is intimately connected within the Uplands Region and with Central Indiana. Our connectivity provides access for industry, small-town life for residents and hidden gems for visitors. Our strategy of interconnection has historically worked well for Owen and will help us rise to new challenges - pulling a shared history forward and driving the future to Owen County.

Our strategy of interconnection has historically worked well for Owen and will help us rise to new challenges - pulling a shared history forward and driving the future to Owen County.







# Engagement



# Introduction

Community engagement is both a noun and a verb - a process and an outcome. For example, with land-use planners the primary question is “has the community had an opportunity to provide input into the plan?” For community development work, there are two questions, “are we providing the services the community needs?” and “is the community well connected and involved in public life?”

It’s difficult to cover all of those questions, but we were fortunate that our Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plan overlapped with Owen County’s bicentennial and their many related events. By working with the Bicentennial Ambassadors’ group, we discussed the needs and connections of even the most remote regions of the county.

Because of these and other outreach events, we can guarantee that our Ready Communities plan will not be destined-for-a-dusty-shelf. Our findings will be used to launch our GIFT VII Leadership Plan. Immediately after that plan we will update our Owen County Economic Development Strategy. We intend to stay busy and stay relevant.

Our Quality of Place Advisory Design Team (QPAT) worked with the consulting company SB Research & Planning and HWC Engineering. Our engagement and research activities included all of the usual tools – focus groups, an in-depth survey and a website (<https://planowencounty.com/>), as well as some innovative ones including a 2½-hour canoe trip down the White River (it was beautiful!).



Following is a summary of our main participants and engagement activities. Reference to the survey and other engagement research can be found throughout the plan.



# Quality of Place Team

## Design Team

Jennifer Abrell, Owen County 4-H  
Don Bingham, EDC  
Marce King, OCCOC  
Mary Krupinski, Gosport Resident  
Mark Rogers, OCCF  
Michael Spinks, Town of Spencer-Council

## Advisory Team

Lisa Abbott, Bloomington Board of Realtors  
Jennifer Abrell, Owen County 4-H  
Jessica Barrett, Owen County Civic Theatre  
Don Bingham, EDC  
Chad Briggs, Spencer Owen Schools  
Dwight Brooks, McCormick's Creek State Park  
Bob Bruner, Purdue Extension  
Josh Clark, Home Builder  
Craig Coffman, Coffman Proactive CPA  
Danielle Connor, OCSB  
Todd Gardner, BBP Water

Brian Gessler, GBA  
Bruce Hamlin, SCI REMC Director  
Marilyn Hart, OCCF Board  
Marilyn Jackson, Tourism  
Marce King, OCCOC  
Mary Krupinski, Gosport Resident  
David Lessard, Cook Medical  
Allan Lewis, Christian Church  
Tim Lewis, World Arts  
Greg Linton, CCS  
Ethan McNeil, Keith Realty  
Cheryl Moke, Town of Spencer  
Leslie Nieves, Spencer Pride  
Mark Rogers, OCCF  
Kurt Rosenberger, Our Community Bank  
Kathy Sips, Cook Medical  
Michael Spinks, Town of Spencer-Council  
Don VanDerMoere, OC Prosecutor  
Darrell White, YMCA  
Shawn Williams, BSCI  
Steve Withem, Spencer Main St.  
Cara Zogorski, Indiana Health Centers

\*See Appendices for List of Acronyms

# Engagement Events





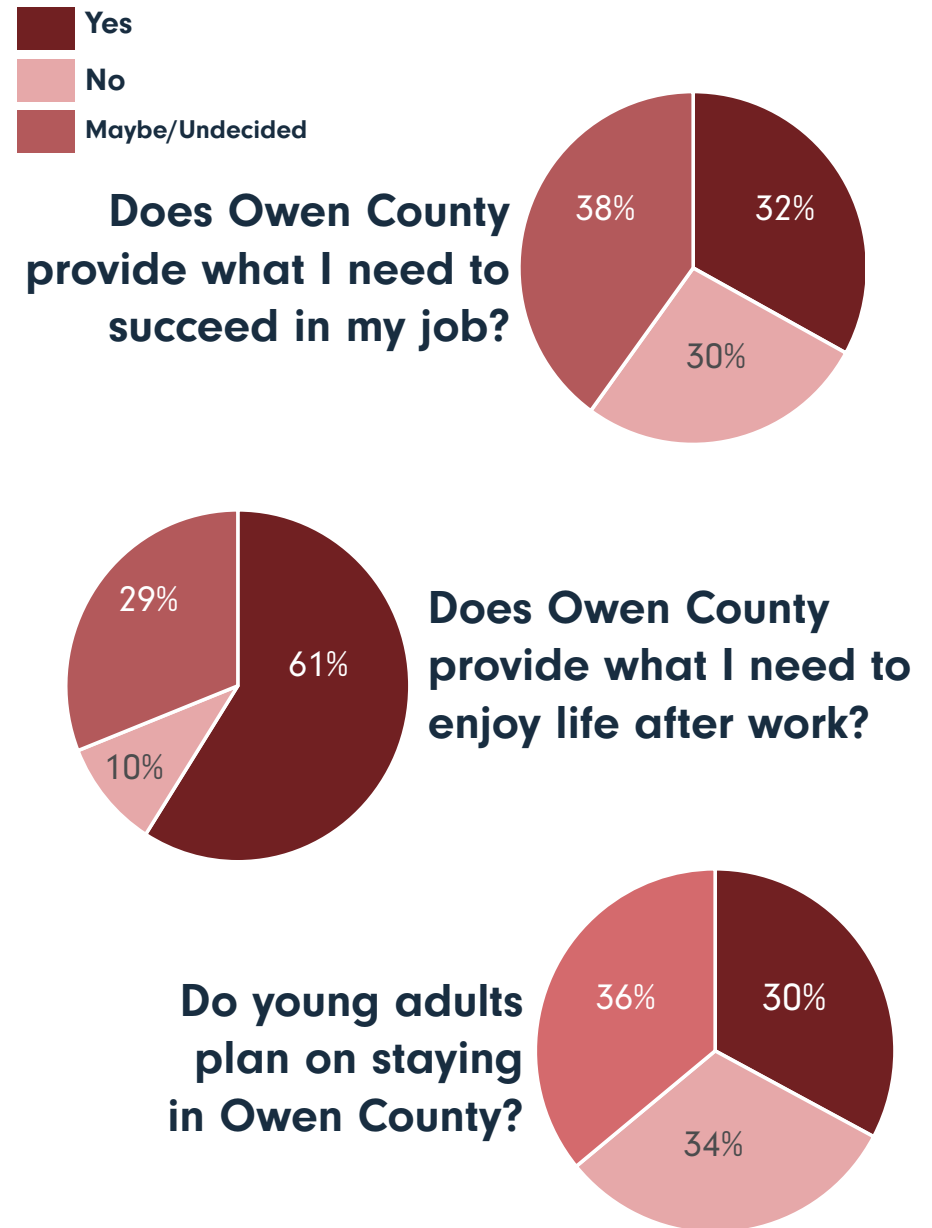
# Survey

Our survey was available throughout the planning process. We worked with the chamber and attended festivals to gather responses and often conducted interviews with the respondents. The remaining responses came from the online survey, which was advertised in the local newspaper and online. More than 220 people have completed the survey thus far, and that number will grow as we keep promoting it during our other planning processes this year.

## Highlights

We will emphasize three questions tied directly to quality of life and workforce attraction. As shown in the charts below, the survey found that Owen County residents highly value our many quality of life amenities, which allow them to enjoy life outside of work. But the survey also found that fewer workforce attraction and development amenities make it more difficult to keep residents and attract new workers.

We had a special survey section for young adults, who said they are split on whether to stay or leave the county. About 36% said they are undecided. In the comments section, residents who plan to leave said they seek better job opportunities or school.



## Survey Results

Several questions on the survey asked Owen County residents about the aspects of Owen that they value and what keeps them in Owen. We also asked what they wanted the community to start providing.

### "Does Owen County Give me..."

Several questions on the survey asked Owen County residents about the aspects of Owen that they value and what keeps them in Owen. We also asked what they wanted the community to start providing.

#### Amenity Values

<b>01</b>	Sense of community	<b>75%</b>
<b>02</b>	Natural Amenities	<b>71%</b>
<b>03</b>	Cultural Amenities	<b>56%</b>
<b>04</b>	Community Involvement	<b>52%</b>
<b>05</b>	Good Job Opportunities	<b>38%</b>

#### What do I need from Owen County to Succeed in my career?

<b>01</b>	Better Jobs	<b>33%</b>
<b>02</b>	Internet	<b>14%</b>
<b>03</b>	Training	<b>12%</b>
<b>04</b>	Business	<b>10%</b>
<b>05</b>	Housing	<b>08%</b>

## Community Engagement

<b>90%</b>	ate at a local restaurant.
<b>87%</b>	visited a friend or neighbor
<b>75%</b>	attended a community event.
<b>71%</b>	enjoyed local cultural amenities.
<b>69%</b>	attended community org. meeting.
<b>67%</b>	enjoyed local amenities.
<b>61%</b>	made a new friend.
<b>35%</b>	attended a government meeting.

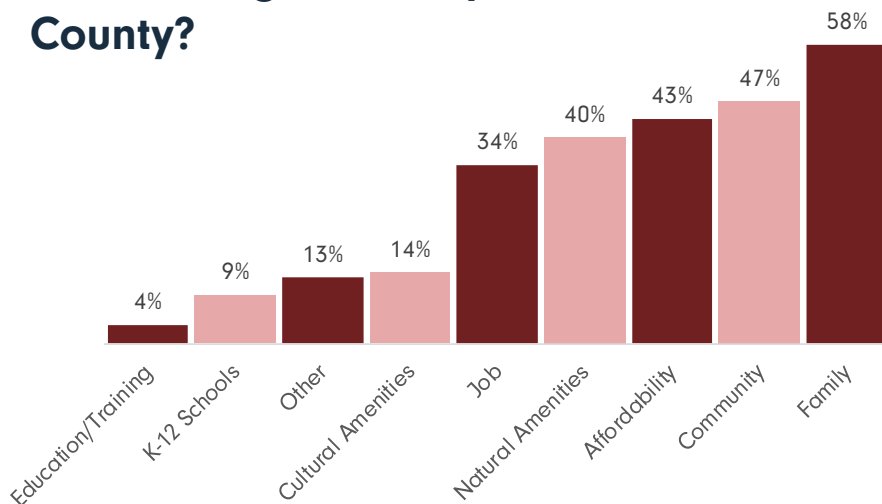




## What do I need from Owen County for my life after work?

<b>01</b> Restaurants	<b>19%</b>	<b>06</b> Extended Business Hours	<b>08%</b>
<b>02</b> Festivals/Events	<b>16%</b>	<b>07</b> Skatepark	<b>07%</b>
<b>03</b> Shops	<b>15%</b>	<b>08</b> Infrastructure	<b>05%</b>
<b>04</b> Recreation Activities	<b>15%</b>	<b>09</b> Park Internet	<b>03%</b>
<b>05</b> Trails	<b>09%</b>	<b>10</b> Arts	<b>01%</b>

## What brought or keeps residents in Owen County?



## Biggest Threats to Owen County

<b>64%</b>	feel that there are not enough well-paying jobs
<b>47%</b>	feel that there is not enough affordable housing
<b>35%</b>	Feel that we are not adequately improving amenities

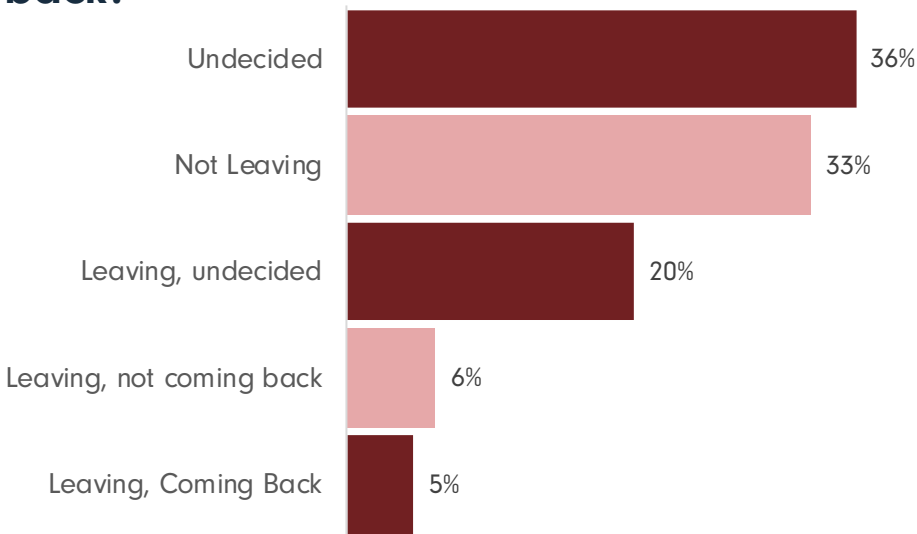
## What should Owen County focus on for the next two years?

<b>01</b> Infrastructure	<b>24%</b>	<b>06</b> Healthcare	<b>05%</b>
<b>02</b> Housing	<b>15%</b>	<b>07</b> School	<b>04%</b>
<b>03</b> Community	<b>09%</b>	<b>08</b> Transportation	<b>02%</b>
<b>04</b> Jobs Beautification	<b>08%</b>	<b>09</b> Environment	<b>01%</b>
<b>05</b> Shops Internet	<b>06%</b>		

# Young Adults Survey

The survey had some questions directed at younger residents of Owen County. Specifically, we wanted to understand why younger residents are leaving and what Owen County could provide to get them to stay.

## Are you leaving Owen County; will you come back?



## Why are you leaving Owen County?

01	Job	35%
02	Opportunity	16%
03	Family	10%
04	Undecided K-12 School System City Size	06%
05	Entertainment College	03%

## What would it take to keep you in Owen County?

01	Jobs	35%	04	Family Infrastructure	06%
02	Recreation Activities	13%	05	Welfare Community College	03%
03	Housing Shops K-12 School Improvements	10%			



# Prioritized Issues for Individual Communities

Members of the Bicentennial Ambassadors Committee listed the top priorities for issues facing their representative communities as well as the whole county.

The Design Team ranked their top priorities for improving workforce attraction and quality of place in Owen County. Those results were combined with the rankings from the Bicentennial Ambassadors Committee and the QPAT. The top ranked issues

were weighted heavier than the lower ranking issues. From both a simple summary and the weighted summary the same top priorities emerged, as shown in the illustration below.

The importance of more housing options, internet access, childcare options and workforce education were repeated from one end of the county to the other.

Community Represented	Issue #1	Issue #2	Issue #3	Issue #4	Issue #5
Gosport	Retention/Attraction of young people	Housing	Spencer/Gosport MainStreet	Substance Abuse	Planning/Zoning
Owen County	Internet	Courthouse Streetscape	Housing	Workforce Education	Utility Extensions
Spencer	Retention/attraction of young people	workforce education	Roads	Internet	Spencer/Gosport Mainstreet
Coal City	Utility Extensions	Mental Health	Housing	Workforce Education	Quality of Place
Vandalia	Rep left before the group exercise				
Cuba/Carp	Internet	Quality of Place	Housing	Workforce Education	Quality of Place
Owen County	Internet	Quality of Place	Substance Abuse	Workforce Education	Planning/Zoning
Freedom					
Cataract	Housing	Workforce Education	Child Care	Utility Extensions	Substance Abuse
Owen County	Housing	Workforce Education	Child Care	Internet	Substance Abuse

# Prioritized Issues

Members of the Bicentennial Ambassadors Committee listed the top priorities for issues facing their representative communities as well as the whole county.

The Design Team ranked their top priorities for improving workforce attraction and quality of place in Owen County. Those results were combined with the rankings from the Bicentennial Ambassadors Committee and the QPAT. The top ranked issues are:

<b>01</b>	<b>Housing</b>	Simple vote sum: 38 Weighted sum: 135
-----------	----------------	--

<b>02</b>	<b>Internet</b>	Simple vote sum: 35 Weighted sum: 116
-----------	-----------------	--

<b>03</b>	<b>Child Care</b>	Simple vote sum: 32 Weighted sum: 83
-----------	-------------------	---

<b>04</b>	<b>Workforce Education</b>	Simple vote sum: 32 Weighted sum: 69
-----------	----------------------------	---

<b>05</b>	<b>Utility Extension</b>	Simple vote sum: 23 Weighted sum: 48
-----------	--------------------------	---

<b>06</b>	<b>Outlying Township Services</b>	Simple vote sum: 14 Weighted sum: 40
-----------	-----------------------------------	---

<b>07</b>	<b>Retention/Attraction of Young People</b>	Simple vote sum: 14 Weighted sum: 35
-----------	---	---

<b>08</b>	<b>Quality of place in secondary communities</b>	Simple vote sum: 12 Weighted sum: 21
-----------	--	---

<b>09</b>	<b>Substance Abuse</b>	Simple vote sum: 11 Weighted sum: 21
-----------	------------------------	---

<b>10</b>	<b>Youth Programs</b>	Simple vote sum: 9 Weighted sum: 23
-----------	-----------------------	--

<b>11</b>	<b>Senior Services</b>	Simple vote sum: 8 Weighted sum: 20
-----------	------------------------	--

<b>12</b>	<b>Planning/Zoning</b>	Simple vote sum: 8 Weighted sum: 18
-----------	------------------------	--

<b>13</b>	<b>Spencer/Gosport Mainstreets</b>	Simple vote sum: 7 Weighted sum: 16
-----------	------------------------------------	--

<b>14</b>	<b>Courthouse Streetscapes</b>	Simple vote sum: 6 Weighted sum: 18
-----------	--------------------------------	--

<b>15</b>	<b>Adult Education Opportunities</b>	Simple vote sum: 4 Weighted sum: 6
-----------	--------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

<b>16</b>	<b>Higher Paying Jobs</b>	Simple vote sum: 3 Weighted sum: 14
-----------	---------------------------	--

<b>17</b>	<b>Recreational Opportunities</b>	Simple vote sum: 1 Weighted sum: 5
-----------	-----------------------------------	---------------------------------------

<b>18</b>	<b>Mental Health Services</b>	Simple vote sum: 1 Weighted sum: 4
-----------	-------------------------------	---------------------------------------





Data

# Data: What The Numbers Tell Us

## Introduction

Our demographic report highlights key areas of workforce development and quality of life for Owen County. Among the dozens of indicators to choose from, we are focusing on the two ends of the spectrum: the persistent problems in our community - which we are trying to improve - and areas where we are successful - which we are also trying to boost and highlight.

Keeping track of our progress on both ends ensures we do not leave anyone out – the struggling or the thriving – in our quest for balanced community development. Moving forward, we will use these factors as benchmarks while implementing projects. Citations of our data are included in the Appendix.





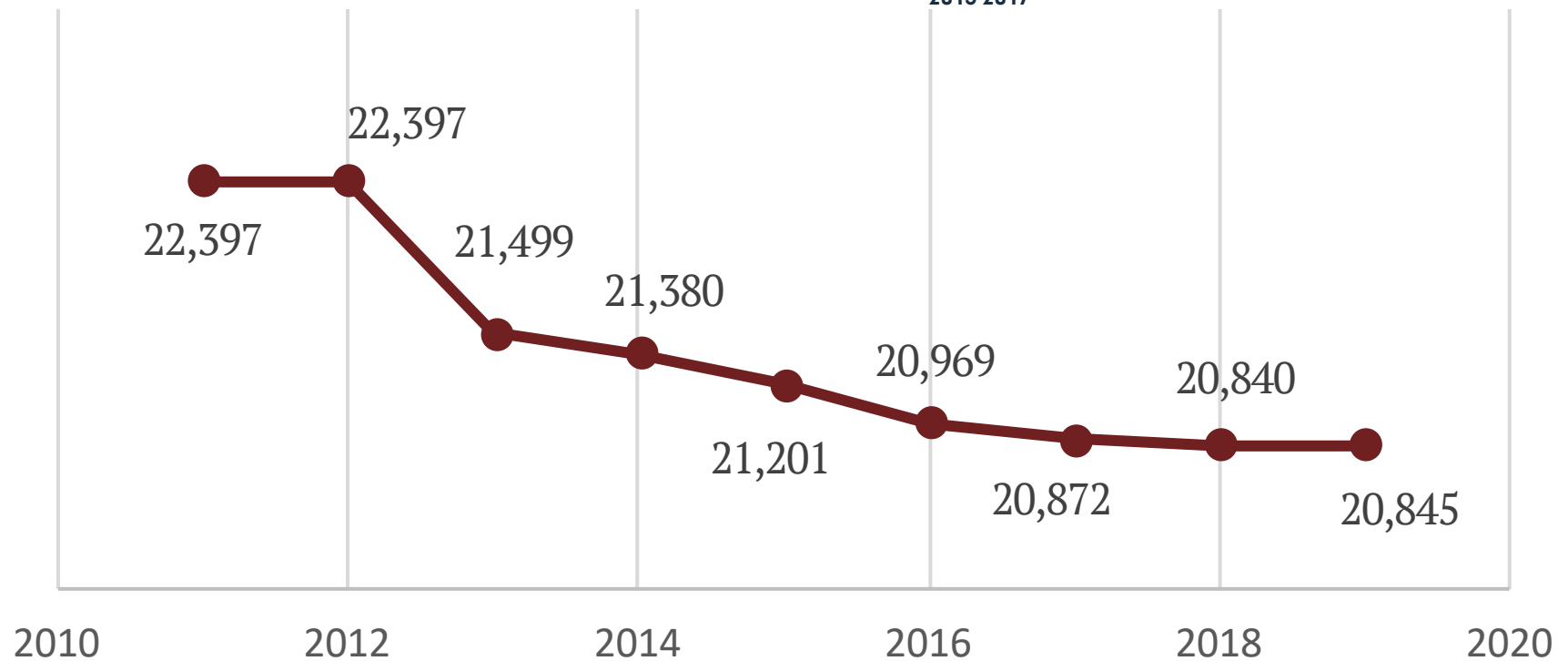
# Population

The population of Owen County is on a slow decline. We know a stable or growing population is directly tied to economic vitality and so we are focusing on attracting new residents. We are particularly interested in retaining our young people. Fortunately, overall Owen's population seems to have stabilized.

## 2%

Average drop in number  
of people ages 10-29  
in Owen County 2014-2016

Source Location: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates  
2013-2017



Source Location: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

# Education

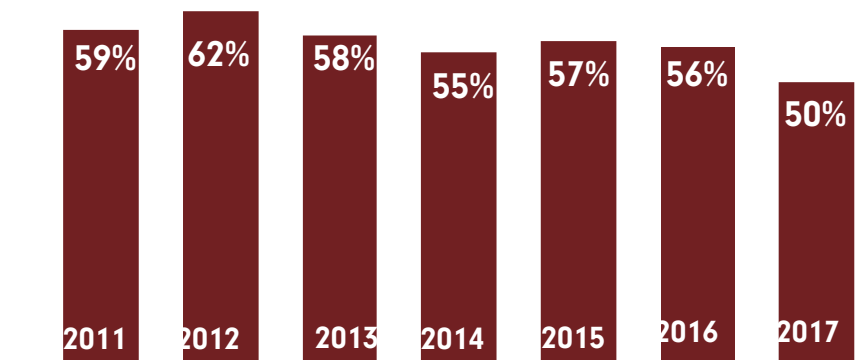
## Primary Education

High quality education leads to better jobs and more involved citizens. We know we need strong schools to attract new families. We are proud of our local teachers and schools and are committed to helping them “raise their grade.

## College Readiness

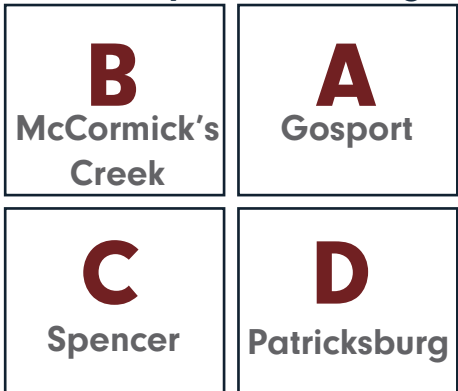
National studies show a bachelor’s degree is the single most influential determinant in multigenerational change and ending the cycle of poverty. Once our students go to college, they need to be prepared for the demands of higher education, and we believe too many of them drop out after one year. About half of our post-secondary students head to Ivy Tech. A 2017 BLS Report on career outlooks shows that people who hold an associated degree have a 1.2% lower unemployment rate than a person with just a HS diploma.

## Percent of Students Enrolling in any Post-Secondary Edu. Institution

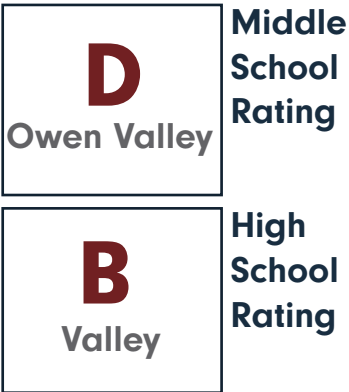


Source: Indiana College Readiness Report

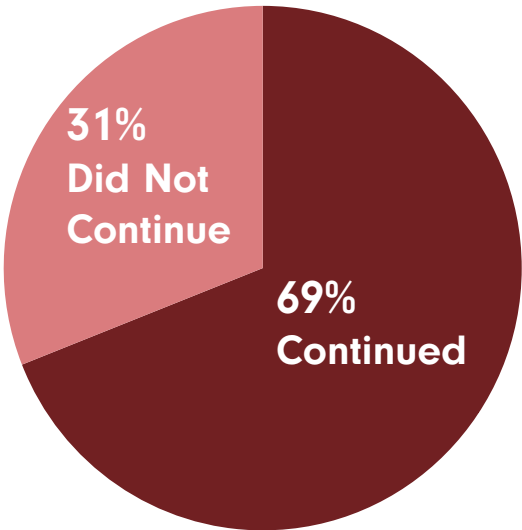
## Elementary School Rating



Source: IN Department of Education School Grade Results 2018



## Percent high school students who continued to year two of college



Source: Indiana College Readiness Report



# Community Health

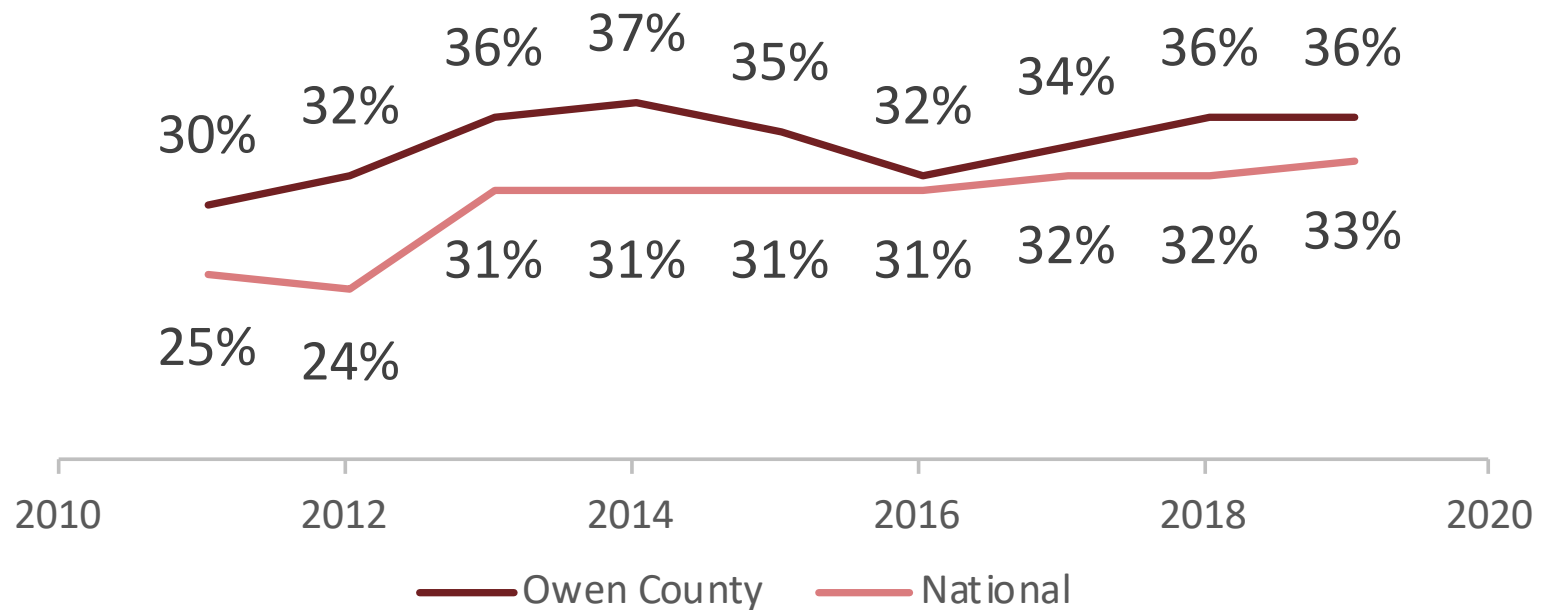
Heart disease, which is a leading cause of death in Owen County, is tied to lifestyle choices such as smoking and obesity. We want to help connect our residents to services that allow them to step away from addictions and link them to healthier, affordable food options. We are also profoundly troubled about the opioid and methamphetamine drug problem in our community.

**15.9** per 100,000

Indiana rate is 24 per 100,000 and national rate is 23 per 100,000.

Source: Center for Health Statistics

## Adult Obesity

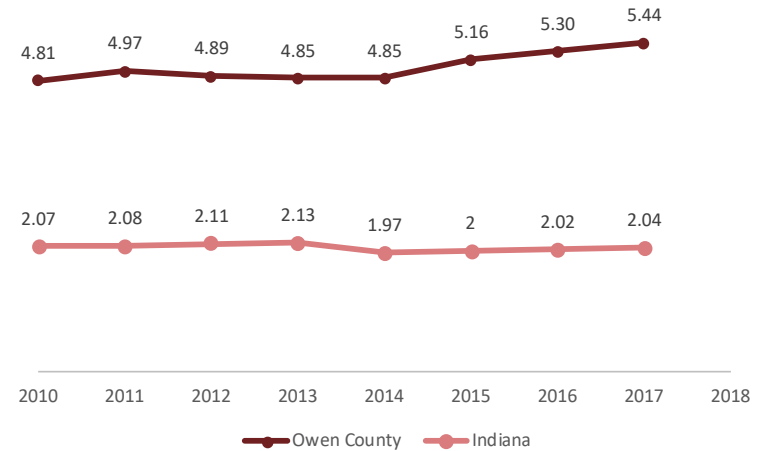


Source: The National Diabetes Surveillance System

# Workforce

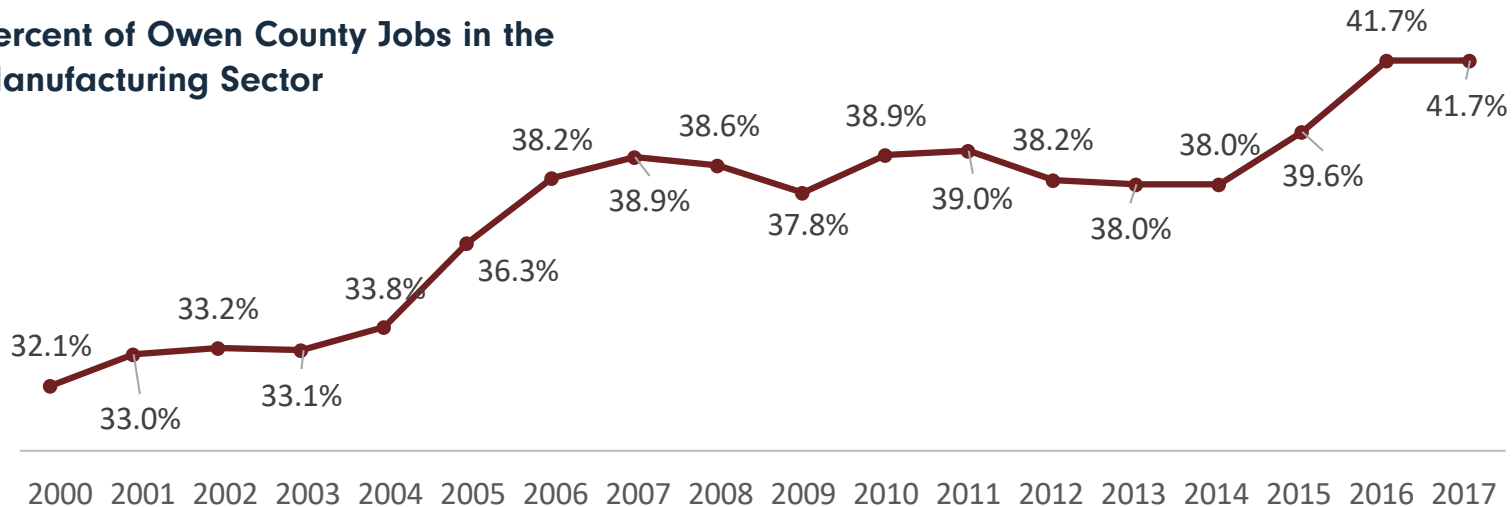
We have a good workforce and want to expand their opportunities for growth and prosperity. Location quotients (LQ) are a way of determining how concentrated an industry is in a region, revealing what makes a community unique in comparison to the national average. An LQ above 1.5 indicates a degree of specialization, and so we are pleased to see Owen County's LQ of 5+ for manufacturing. This underscores how important those jobs are to us. The number of local manufacturing and life science jobs continues to grow, which we see as a way to raise our per capita income.

## Location Quotient: Manufacturing



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics QCEW

## Percent of Owen County Jobs in the Manufacturing Sector



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics QCEW



# Poverty and Underemployment

## Underemployment

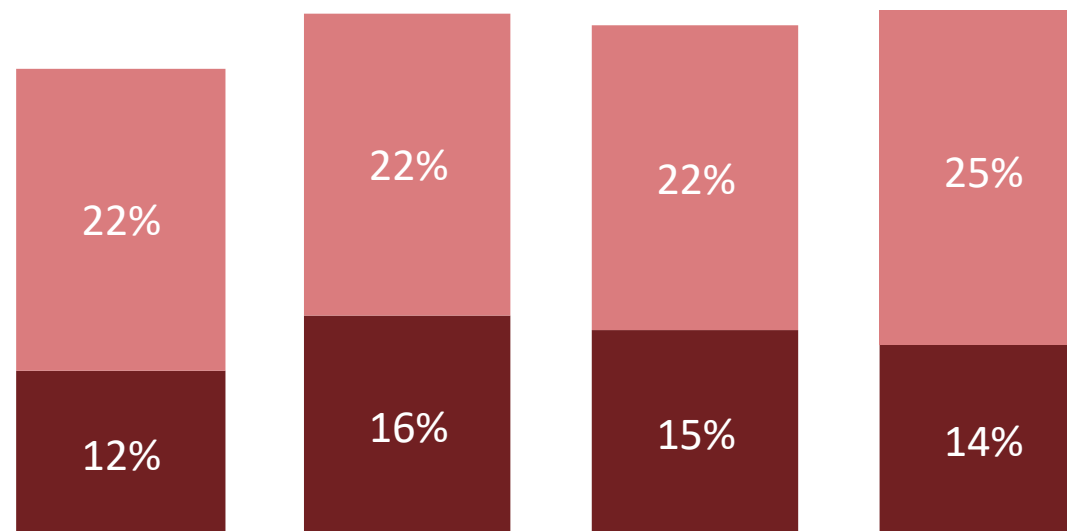
The national economy has resulted in very low unemployment rates, but we still have a problem with underemployment. The United Way measures underemployment using a system called ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). The ALICE population represents working people who, due to childcare costs, transportation challenges, etc., are living paycheck to paycheck. The National Low-Income Housing Coalition calculates how many hours a minimum-wage employee would have to work in a week to afford the average market-rate rent without the unit becoming “unaffordable” (more than 30% of their income).

# 62 hours

**work week needed for a minimum-wage employee to afford a 1-bedroom apartment in Owen County**

Source: 2018 NLIHC's out of Reach Report

## Percent of total Owen County Residents Living in or Near Poverty



Source: 2018 IN ALICE Report

■ % Poverty ■ % Near Poverty

# Social Well-Being

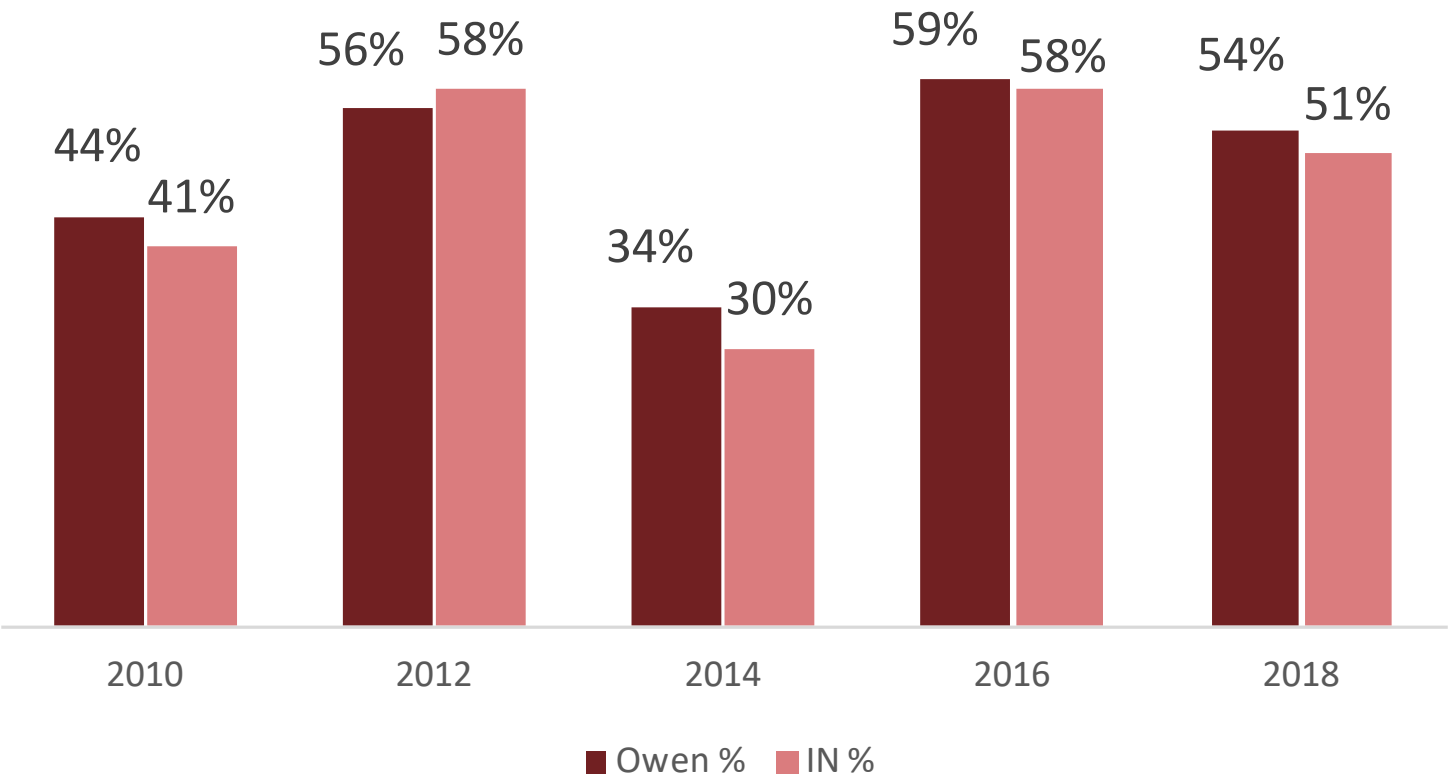
We want our residents to have a strong sense of community. Voter turnout is a fundamental indicator of a healthy democracy and engagement in civic issues. Disconnected youth, a number compiled by the American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, covers 16-24-year-olds who are not going to school and are not employed. We intend to move that number down.

percent 16-24 year olds  
not going to school or  
employed

18%

National Average: 14%  
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## General Election- Voter Turnout



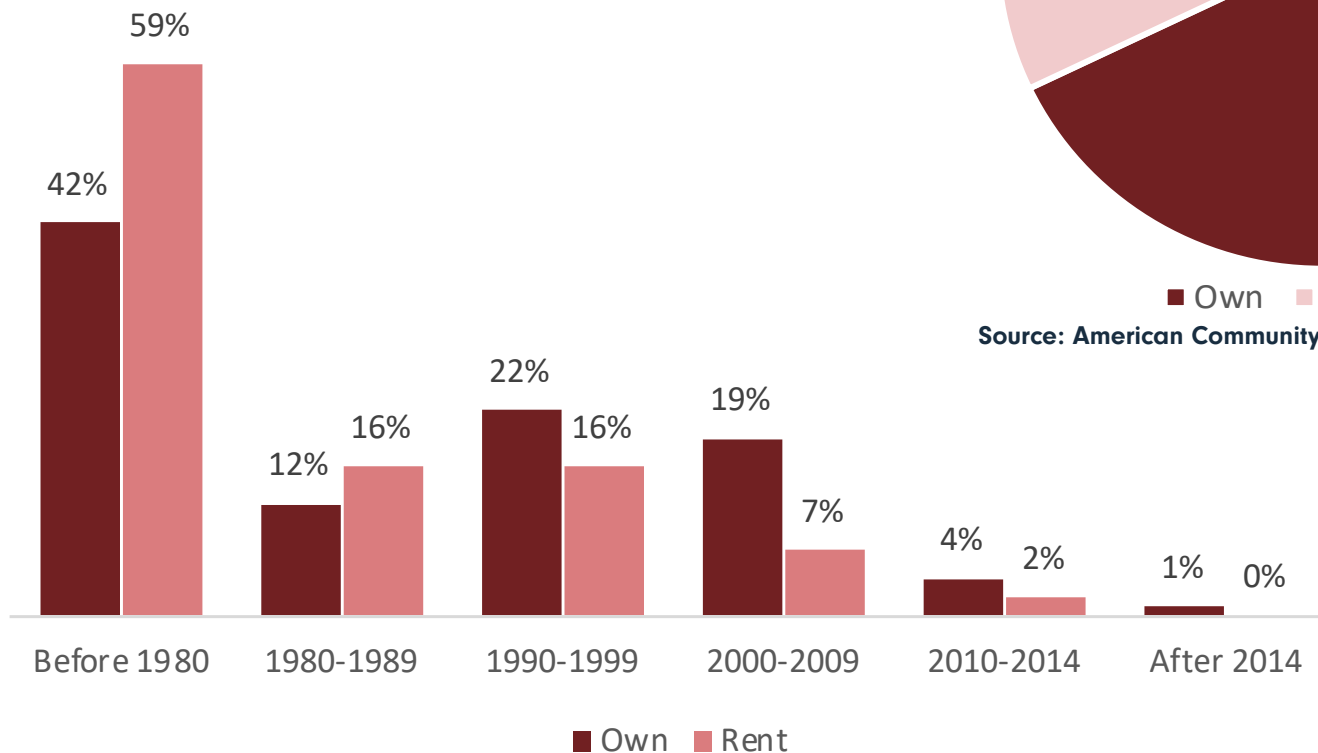
Source: in.gov Election Results



# Housing

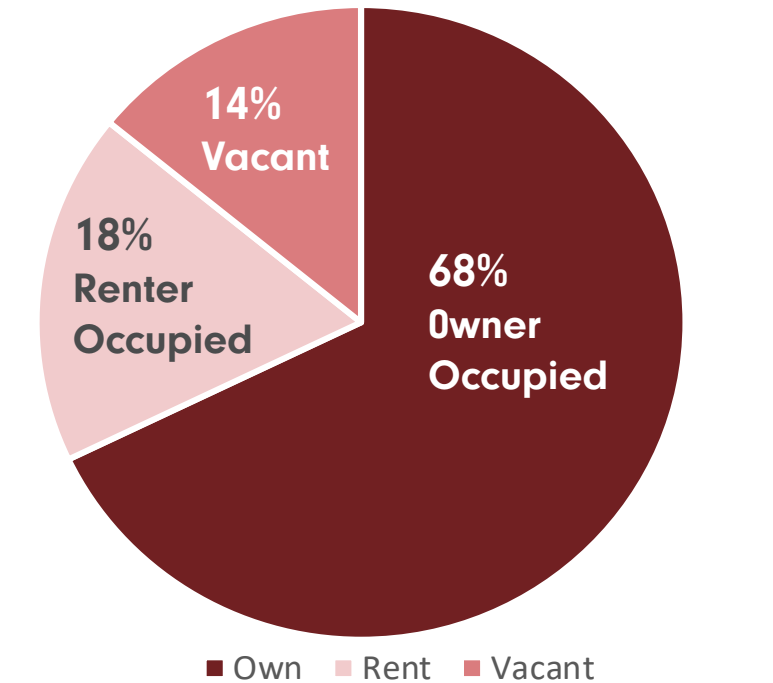
Affordable housing fulfills a basic human need for shelter, but it also contributes to the well-being of both parents and children. Housing condition is also important, and we note that almost 60% of our renters living in homes at least 40 years old.

**Occupancy Status of Houses by Age of Structure**



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

**Housing Characteristics**

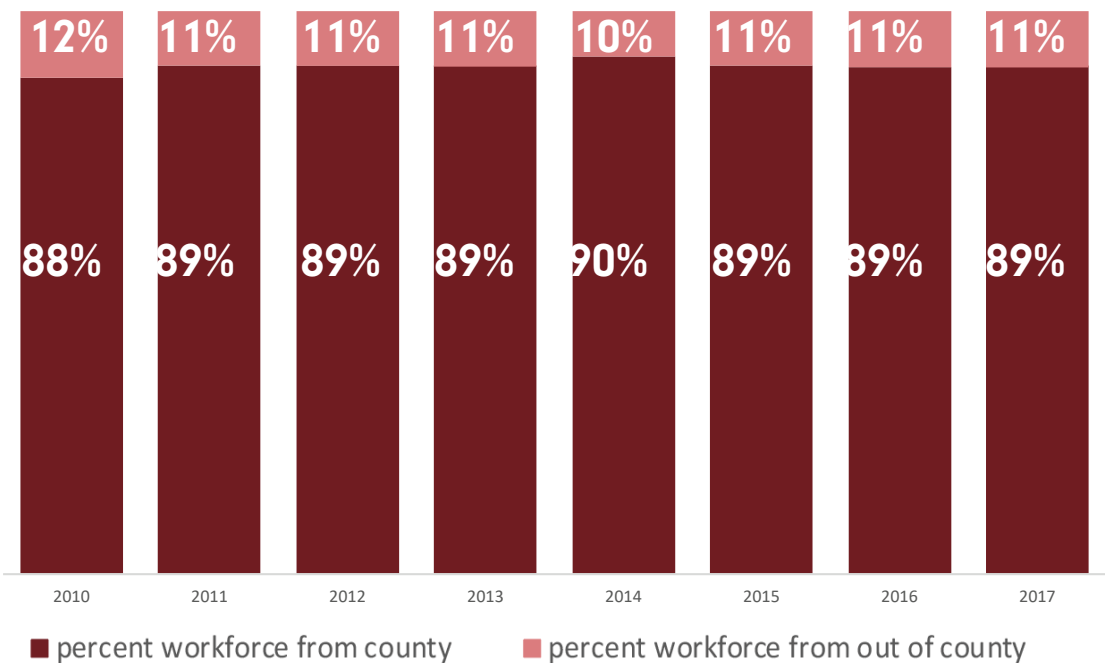


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

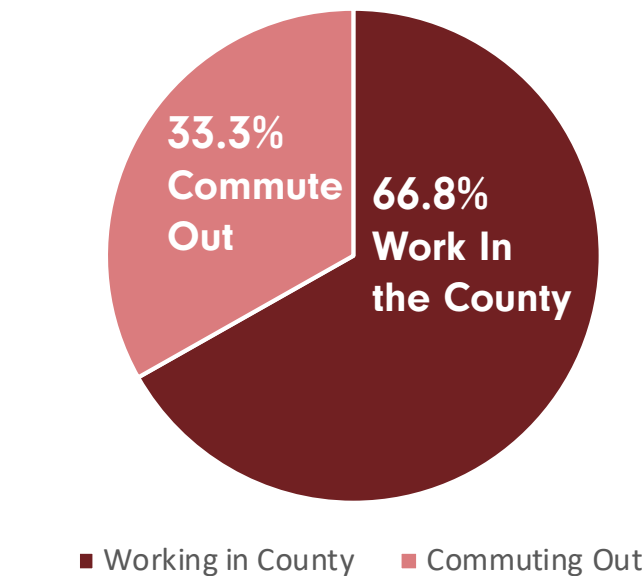
# Commuting/Workforce

We want our workers to live and work in Owen County. Right now, a third of our workforce leave the county for work, but almost all the jobs in our community are filled by people who live here.

Workforce



Commuting Patterns 2017



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017





# Context

# Introduction

After 200 years of governance, Owen County looks remarkably different but still holds the spirit of connection and community.

Through the Ready Communities planning process, local leaders gained a deeper understanding of what Owen County has to offer and discovered aspects of our community that were formerly under researched. Trends from national and state studies were merged with the experiences of our residents drawn from many engagement meetings.

Led by the QPAT, we have generated a vision for what Owen County could be and ideas for practical and creative methods of achieving that vision. The following Context chapter ties together all we have learned into digestible goals that governments and community groups united around.

Designed by residents, our plan serves as the foundation for Owen County's future. It focuses on improving the quality of place for residents, highlighting the unique features and strengths of our home, the Uplands Region and promoting the county as an attractive place that values the health and prosperity of current and future generations. This plan, informed by current datasets and local stakeholder input, will guide elected officials, nonprofits, schools, entrepreneurs, creative professionals, employers, and residents as they lead community and economic development efforts within Owen County.

This plan, informed by current datasets and local stakeholder input, will guide elected officials, nonprofit organizations, entrepreneurs and creative professionals as they lead community and economic development efforts within Owen County.



SB Research and Planning Intern, Andy Davis and Jamie Sweany, Owner of the Juniper Art Gallery.

# Community Priorities

We have shown the connections between local landscapes, historic places and our people. There are also connections among the issues facing Owen County. Projects that address one of our community's most pressing needs will likely impact other local issues as well. During many of our public engagement activities, we asked residents to prioritize Owen's most pressing needs. Based on these activities, residents and community leaders indicated that the top pressing needs of the community include:

**01** Obtainable housing at a variety of economic levels, including rental options and "starter homes" for new families.

**02** Internet and cable expansion to underserved areas.

**03** Improve career path options for the "everyday resident."

**04** Retention and attraction of young, educated people (Age 18-35).

**05** Pre-school and childcare options, particularly high quality programs, including before-and after-school programs and youth programs.

**06** Utility and/or water treatment extensions crucial to housing and community expansions.

**07** Strengthening the quality of place in small community centers such as Patricksburg, Freedom, Whitehall, Coal City, and Cunot/Cataract.

**08** Setting and meeting increased public education standards to prepare our students for the future, as well as serve employer workforce needs.



# Assets

There are two main types of assets which impact local workforce attraction and quality of life.

## Quality of Place Assets

Refers to physical resources which affect everyday living for people working in or visiting Owen. These are cultural and natural assets including festivals, arts, broadband, water, parks and forests.



## Workforce Attraction Assets

Refers to physical resources that affect the local economy and attract new residents to seek jobs in the schools, roads, broadband, water, and community centers. All of Owen's assets should be tied together and leveraged to address our priorities.



Photo Credit: Marce King Photography

# Quality of Place

## Assets

The following table lists some of the Quality of Place assets among our many treasures. Please note that the table is mostly for events and features; our real strength lies in organizations such as our churches, Owen County Community Foundation, YMCA, Owen County Chamber & EDC, Spencer Main Street, Tourism Bureau and others. The complete list can be found in the Appendix.

Farm-to-Table Dinner	Uplands PEAK Sanctuary	Historic Spencer Courthouse Square	Coal City Festival	Spencer Pride Festival	MYPATH Trail System
Cataract Falls & Covered Bridge	White River Public Access Point	Owen County Heritage and Culture Center	Gosport Lazy Days	Apple Butter Festival	Vandalia Strawberry Festival
Cataract Lake Cabins	Cagles Mill Lake	Owen County Art Guild	Patriot Festival	Arts in the Park	County Fair
Lieber State Recreation Area	Green's Bluff Nature Preserve	Cataract Falls State Recreation Area	Gosport Business Association	50th Cataract VFD Bean Dinner	Cooper's Commons
Steels Campground	Gosport Town Park	McCormick's Creek State Park	Tivoli Theater	Owen-Putnam State Forest	Pumpkins in the Park

# Goals and Opportunities

## Quality of Place

### Introduction

Through our public engagement activities, survey results and research on Owen County, several goals have been formulated based on the needs of the community. The following collects all that we have learned and divides our goals into two buckets: first Quality of Place and second Workforce Attraction.

### Enhance Trail Connectivity

#### Goal

**Extend current trail connectivity and publicize all trails county-wide.**

Through our public engagement activities, survey results and research on Owen County, several goals have been formulated based on the needs of the community. The following collects all that we have learned and divides our goals into two buckets: first Quality of Place and second Workforce Attraction.

The increased use of walking trails brings health and economic benefits that are too good to ignore. Consequently, our ongoing trail project will have a ripple effect on many of Owen County's top priorities.

Trail users report an average increase of 25% in exercise levels after gaining access to trails, according to the 2017 Indiana Trails Study, by the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands. Trail users also spend an average of \$3,564 per year on trail-related expenditures.

The same statewide study showed that 96% of people whose property is adjacent or includes trails felt the trail had either a positive or neutral effect on the resale value of their property. Trail users' greatest concerns are trail maintenance and access to facilities such as restrooms or water fountains.

Local efforts are centering on the MYPATH trail system. The proposed network links McCormick's Creek State Park - "M" - and the YMCA - "Y." Ultimately, the MYPATH vision will connect the newly revitalized courthouse square, the Owen County Fair Grounds, elementary schools, middle-high school complex, the DNR public access boat launch, etc.

When complete, the project will provide a central hub for a growing network of multipurpose trails. This network will help address many pressing issues by promoting healthier lifestyles, allowing more children to walk to school and enhancing the quality of place in connected communities. This has been a community wide effort, including local firms lending us engineers to design a small crossing and lots of sweat equity. We program weekly events on the trail.

Having all the trails mapped and maintained will make it easier for residents and visitors reach them. Mapping and strategizing for trail networks can be supported by the U.S. EPA Recreation Economy for Rural Communities program that offers planning assistance to help communities develop strategies and an action



# Goals and Opportunities

## Quality of Place

plan to revitalize their Main Streets through outdoor recreation.

### Goal

**Increase the walkability of community centers and within neighborhoods starting with simple, low-cost programs (signage, promoting bike use, etc.).**

### Promote Walkability

The completed MYPATH will be a jewel in our community, but it won't answer all our needs for non-motorized transportation (walking, cycling and their variants).

For example, the private company Walk Score calculates the proximity of amenities and assigns to communities a rating with 100 being the most walkable. Spencer has a Walk Score of 69 ("some errands can be accomplished on foot") and a Bike Score of 61. Gosport has a 34 and 34 respectively.

While there are reasons to make walking easier – community livability and improved fitness – there are also economic benefits. Communities find that a one-point Walk Score increase is typically associated with a rise of \$700 to \$3,000 in house values, depending on the market, according to the 2009 study, *Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Housing Values in U.S. Cities*, by the organization CEOs for Cities. The increase is not as extreme for rural areas, but there are still benefits.

Tying in beautification, environmental projects and signage with improved sidewalks and walkable areas compound the local benefits. While these projects can be daunting for

rural communities, the U.S. EPA Healthy Places for Healthy People program helps communities create walkable, healthy, economically vibrant places by engaging with their health care facility partners such as community health centers. The Healthy Communities program with the Indiana State Department of Health also offers assistance on improving experiences for walkers and bicyclists.

### Goal

**Increase recreational tourism for current natural amenities and create new environmental experiences.**

### Increase Recreational Tourism

Visitors to parks and other natural features bring an economic boost to gateway communities. In 2017, the National Park System estimated that "visitors to national parks spent an estimated \$18 billion in local gateway regions." Owen is gateway to many natural features including McCormick's Creek State Park, which had 625,088 visitors in 2018, according to Indiana's Department of Natural Resources.

Besides McCormick's Creek, Owen's landscape has many other lures for lovers of the outdoors including Owen-Putnam State Forest, Cataract Falls State Recreation Area, Lieber State Recreation Area and other private sites. About 67% of our survey respondents said they enjoyed Owen County's natural amenities

# Goals and Opportunities

## Quality of Place

within the last three months.

Bolstering recreational tourism in Owen County requires highlighting current natural amenities, creating connections between environmental tourists and community centers and driving more visitors to our attractions. This will produce multiple, inner-related economic benefits. Linkages should be made with the entire Uplands Region to drive regional tourists

### Goal

**Plan programs and events that foster Owen County as an arts and culture destination including pathways for high school students.**

to the whole area.

### Promote Arts & Culture

Owen County is blessed with many talented artists and the arts should be elevated as a unique attribute of life in the county.

Arts can significantly add to a local economy. Nationally, the arts contribute \$764 billion to the U.S. economy, more than agriculture, transportation or warehousing, according to a 2018 study by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the National Endowment for the Arts. About 84% of Hoosiers think that community arts assets are necessary to attract and retain employees and businesses, according to the Indiana Arts Commission's Citizen Survey.

About 70% of our survey respondents said they'd engaged with Owen County's cultural amenities in the last three months

including libraries, farmers' market and festivals.

The Owen County Art Guild and three new galleries in downtown Spencer are evidence of our increasing strength in this sector. Additional testimony comes from Jamie Sweany, who used to have a shop in Bloomington but decided to open the Juniper Art Gallery in Spencer. "Why did I start my business here? Because Spencer is up and coming. It's becoming the place to be. Tourists come to Owen and then come over to Spencer's downtown," she said.

Steps should be taken to leverage art development in Owen

**"Why did I start my business here? Because Spencer is up and coming. It's becoming the place to be. Tourists come to Owen and then come over to Spencer's downtown."**



**Jamie Sweany, who used to have a shop in Bloomington but decided to open the Juniper Art Gallery in Spencer.**

# Goals and Opportunities

## Quality of Place

county and connect students to local artists. By connecting students to artists and developing a pathway program, we can embolden young adults to adopt an arts career.

Expanding the frequency and variety of events throughout the county to showcase local talent, make use of available venues, inspire creativity among youth and adults, attract visitors and trigger further arts and cultural investment will foster Owen as an upcoming arts destination. One example might be encouraging more downtown mural paintings on buildings.

### Goal

**Owen County should maximize festivals by better communicating events within the county and throughout the Uplands Region, ultimately providing a space that fosters the civic connection needed to build community.**

### Maximize Festivals and Events

From the long-running Gosport Lazy Days to the Spencer Pride Festival, we understand the importance of celebrating community and creating memories of home.

While there are financial benefits to local businesses and vendors, festivals also produce greater community pride and create interactions that normally might not happen. Festivals serve as an event where people deepen their relationship with their friends or make new friends. About 22% of our survey respondents said they had not made a new friend in my community in the past three months.

Festivals also create a civic benefit by allowing community

leaders to hear from residents who normally are difficult to engage.

Festivals and event programming serve a greater democratic purpose than simply fun and commerce. For instance, church events have long served to build and extend a sense of community. Additionally, pride festivals can reorient community leaders' understanding of their hometown and bring relief to differences in community attitude, according to CityLab, a national group which explores innovative ideas and pressing issues facing cities and neighborhoods.

Owen County has a host of festivals: Coal City Festival, Cataract VFD Bean Dinner, Gosport Lazy Days, Owen County Apple Butter Festival, Rev 20, Spencer Pride, Vandalia Strawberry Fest and more. However, communities must continually work on programming and promoting events. Thinking regionally, we could put together a pamphlet listing all the festivals and events



# Goals and Opportunities

## Quality of Place

in the Uplands Region

### Goal

**Develop cohesive branding in all communities to establish a stronger sense of history and place throughout Owen County.**

### Promote Place Branding

We were reminded during our many bicentennial events that every Owen County community has a unique story and an urge to talk about their history. Those combined narratives create who we are.

Most of our unincorporated communities do not have dense development, but still possess assets such as historic buildings, which can be promoted as part of overall life in Owen County.

This branding can be used to create historic tours and

### Goal

**Explore how the physical and social character of a neighborhood or town is shaped around arts and cultural activities. Pursue opportunities such as the Indiana Housing & Community Authority's Placemaking Grants.**

community pride.

### Invest in Public Spaces

Public spaces are the hallmark of a desirable community. Public spaces are not simply big, open areas that can be reserved for public events, they are areas where the community engages with each other.

For instance, the Ransom Place Neighborhood Association and Keep Indianapolis Beautiful worked together to turn a small lot across from the Cultural Trail into a pocket park and gateway for the neighborhood. The area became a gathering space with a stage for residents, highlighting the historic significance of the neighborhood and served as an outdoor classroom. Other examples include the Sculpture Trails in Greene County and Rushville Farmer's Market performance space.

Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire and be inspired. Many of these projects

# Goals and Opportunities

are inexpensive yet can have a high impact, and can turn an underused property into a destination location. For example,

## Goal

**Increase beautification efforts in key locations.**

plans for a gazebo on the southeast corner of Spencer's courthouse square are a major project for next year.

## Increase Community Beautification

As with public spaces, Owen County should focus on beautification efforts to draw attention and offer a pleasant experience for residents and visitors. Art and decorative landscaping are hallmarks of a healthy community, but aside from inherent visual benefits, beautification can provide value to the infrastructure, architecture, commerce and events within a town. Thoughtful planning and curation of beautification efforts can make a community more enjoyable year-round.

Offering incentives and grants for businesses to invest in beautification projects can translate into overall community

## Quality of Place

charm. Initially, these grants should focus on our central

## Goal

**Facilitate historic building preservation to keep the stories of Owen County alive and encourage historic site connections.**

business districts of Spencer and Gosport, which already have efforts underway.

## Preserve Historic Buildings

Owen County has many success stories built around historic preservation. The Tivoli Theatre is an excellent example of a project that has fostered many benefits and created a community space.

Rehabilitation offers a higher return on investment in terms of job creation than new construction or manufacturing according to a 2010 study produced by the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Even areas that have well-maintained historic buildings, like Vandalia's Historic Chapel and One-Room School House and the courthouse square, need to take another step to leverage their unique history. Having and maintaining a historic building is most valuable when the space is used. Historic buildings should be prioritized when considering event planning and community

# Goals and Opportunities

programming. Furthermore, connecting all the historic sites in Owen can foster heritage routes and draw tourists to community centers. One supporting project might be offering tax abatement

## Goal

**Increase young adult and youth recreational activities throughout the county.**

and matching grants for projects such as improving store facades.

## Increase Youth Recreational Activities

Recreational activities outside of school help decrease healthcare costs related to childhood obesity, reduce juvenile delinquency, help youth develop self-confidence and increase civic responsibility and participation, according to a study by The National Recreation and Park Association.

High quality of life is tied directly to high-quality health. Having opportunities for young adults and children to use recreational activities can translate to benefits throughout their whole life.

We need more chances for children and young adults to engage in recreational activities. There are some opportunities including the Owen County Family YMCA, Owen Valley Sport Complex, Tier Ten Sport Campus, Owen County Youth Soccer League, Nazarene Basketball and other programs, but they are not evenly available throughout the county.

We believe Owen County families would take advantage of new resources if they were available and affordable. We would

## Quality of Place

also be remiss if we left out– as recorded in our public survey – that there’s a strong contingent pushing for a new skateboard park. Of the participants to our survey, 40% indicated that the enjoyment of the outdoors (lakes, woods, hills, parks) is one

## Goal

**Leverage Owen’s connection to the White River by creating greater water trail infrastructure, supporting new amenity options and implementing a comprehensive water trail strategy.**

of the reasons they moved or stayed in Owen County, and 70% responded that they highly value natural amenities (parks, hiking trails, bicycle/pedestrian trails)

## Leverage Water Trail Assets

The largest populations centers in Owen were founded around the use of the White River as an economic engine, and we are now rediscovering the river’s full potential.

Water trails (also known as blueways) are marked routes on navigable waterway such as rivers, lakes, canals and coastlines that have been prepared for recreational use. Local water trails can have significant economic benefits; however, these benefits are only realized after communities have actively focused and financially invested in engaging a robust river trail, according to the 2015 report, *An Economic Argument for Water Trails*, written by Natalie Warren and published by the National River Management Society.



# Goals and Opportunities

We've made progress: Gosport has recently opened a new public access launch point to enter the river, garnering regional attention and driving visitors to Owen. However, Spencer and Gosport feature the only public boat launches on the river within the county. Additionally, there are no local boat or canoe rental businesses servicing the White River.

Other areas along the White River might also benefit from having a public access launch point, which would help create a cohesive water trail system. Romona, Freedom and Farmers were all established along the river and might be options for public

## Goal

**Improve key health indicators by creating opportunities for residents to learn about healthier lifestyles and insurance options.**

access or a canoe rental business.

To get the most benefit from river trails, they must be tied to other tourism-based assets like cabin rentals and outfitter shops.

## Increase Public Health Knowledge

Owen County has an adult obesity rate of 36%, according to the National Diabetes Surveillance System. That number is even higher than Indiana's 33%.

## Quality of Place

Public health knowledge is important for improving long-term quality of life. Health education programs can help reduce body mass index and lower obesity rates, according to a 2018 Boston Medical Center Public Health study. Adults need resources and support to create better meals for their family and to step away from bad habits.

Furthermore, helping residents learn about public and private insurance plans are vital to supporting their long-term health. Residents without insurance are less likely to go to the doctor, meaning problems go unaddressed, and uninsured residents are financially vulnerable during a health emergency. About 11% of Owen County residents are uninsured, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Health Insurance Estimates, as compared to the 8.8% national average, according to the U.S.

## Goal

**Provide accessible senior services within our cities and our more rural areas.**

Census Bureau's Health Insurance Coverage in the United States.

Increasing public health knowledge can come in many forms but educational programming in vulnerable communities and at schools will elevate Owen's health quality.

## Plan for Senior Services

Our seniors are an underused asset and our most vulnerable population. Both these factors are increasingly important because the number of people over the age of 65 is growing.

About 18% of Owen County's population was 65 or older in 2017,

# Goals and Opportunities

according to the Indiana Business Research Center. The center also estimates that as the Baby Boom generation ages, the senior population across Indiana will jump to 20 percent by 2030.

As their numbers grow, there will be a corresponding increase in the need for senior services including transportation, safe housing and medical care. Area 10 Agency on Aging runs a vital local service, the Rural Transit system, which needs support.

On the other hand, seniors are often an underused asset. Older residents serving as volunteers can be a tremendous help to local nonprofits. Area 10 offers their SVP 55+ Program for volunteers (age 55 and better) who want to make a difference in their community. There are also federal projects such as Senior

## Goal

**Promote community programming where residents meet with their neighbors.**

Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) that help rural, long-term unemployed seniors return to the workforce

## Advance Community Friendships &

### Connections

We often brag about our friendliness and family connections, and we're proud of those qualities. However, reviewing information about decreasing population, brain-drain and drug abuse has us wondering about how to ensure that our positive qualities continue, whether we grow as a county or don't.

In many places, rural populations are becoming more socially isolated as relatives and friends leave. Loneliness begets more

## Quality of Place

loneliness. Americans are "facing an epidemic of loneliness and social isolation," U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy warned in 2016. "By virtually every conceivable measure, social capital has eroded steadily and sometimes dramatically over the past two generations," said Dr. Robert Putnam, author of the lauded book *Bowling Alone*.

Social capital is the links, shared values and understanding in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other. Churches and fraternal orders comprise most of the social capital in rural communities. Festivals are the main event for

## Goal

**Acknowledge a problem of low civic engagement at the government level and directly tackle the hurdles stopping people from participating.**

small communities where people deepen their relationship with their current friends or make new ones. Communities should prioritize physically engaging with neighbors and fostering regular events where people can become closer friends.

## Promote Civic Engagement

As shown in our survey, only about 22% of survey respondents said they had attended a government meeting in the past three months and only half of us voted in the last general election.

One reason for low public engagement is that few people see the direct relationship between government services and their quality of life. However, county and incorporated governments have the greatest tools for influencing life in Owen and making attractive communities for an Upland's workforce.

Traditional methods of increasing civic engagement begin at the school level. Creating classwork that makes students attend government meetings and educating residents about how to get involved is fundamental. Afterschool programs and mentorships offer strong positive connections for students to link into local

### Goal

**Recognize the importance of skill building among our elected officials and others, and build the leadership programs we'll need to achieve the future detailed in this report.**

government participation.

Ultimately, promoting events and methods of increasing civic engagement will translate into better democratic outcomes for Owen County.

### Grow County Leadership

Confident, skilled and knowledgeable leaders are needed to inspire a dynamic future and strong communities. While there are many individuals in our community willing to give their time and talents to serve, others lack the connections, skills or confidence to take on leadership roles.

Owen County should consider fostering regular programs that train current and future leaders about the best strategies of leading, organizing groups and living to higher standards. We had a successful Leadership Academy when the Owen County Learning Network was funded, but that important program has since faded away.

Owen does not need to reinvent the wheel. Local and regional programs exist and tapping into those that offer workshops will expand our leadership capacity. One program that might prepare leaders and serve as a resource is the statewide Purdue Extension Community Leadership Program. Other local groups could be the “farm team” for building future adult leaders including the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC), Future Farmers of America and 4-H program.



# Workforce Attraction and Development

## Assets

The following table includes some of our key Workforce Attraction and Development assets. The complete list can be found in the Appendix.

Gosport MFG	Boston Scientific	4-H Programs	Spencer Downtown
Cook Urological	Owen County Fairgrounds	YMCA of Owen County	WorkOne Express
World Arts, INC	Chambers of Commerce	Economic Development Corp.	Ready Schools Initiative

# Goals and Opportunities

## Workforce Attraction

### Provide Career Development for “The Everyday Citizen”

#### Goal

**Increase enrollment in workforce development programs offered through WorkOne Express through cross-promotion among Owen County’s leadership network.**

The biggest threat to the future of Owen County is the lack of well-paying jobs, according to 65% of our survey respondents. Only 33% agreed that, “My community provides what I need to succeed in my job (opportunities for growth, training, etc.).”

As this plan has observed, the Everyday Owen County resident is employed in manufacturing or other primary local industries. Due to expansion plans by major area employers, residents need a place where they can learn new skills to access these job opportunities.

In many rural areas job seekers must travel long distances to access services and jobs, often with limited public transit options. Jobs centers are the best one-stop-shop for job seekers to have access to training programs for the state’s most in-demand jobs. Rural job centers, like WorkOne Express in Spencer, operate with less funding and fewer staff than their metropolitan counterparts. Owen does not need to recreate a center, but to connect what exists in a central place.

Throughout the county, many entities are working to support Owen workers – library soft-skill training events, High School Equivalence, chamber events, trade programs, vocational training and apprenticeship programs for youth, continuing education, pathway programs through Boston Scientific and Cook, etc. Programs provide a more direct link to economic development by providing specific training to support new or expanding industry.

Adult education can also retrain displaced farmers or other workers for entry into new career areas or can retrain the existing workforce to help them remain professionally competitive. Furthermore, adult education reduces the demand for other publicly provided services. Adding all projects and program to a central clearing house will make it easier for job seekers.

Finally, there are multiple barriers for job seekers other than lack of qualifications and skills. Ex-offenders struggle with finding and maintaining a job. More than 20,000 ex-offenders are released from Indiana prisons each year, and more than one-third return within three years, according to the Hoosier Initiative for Re-Entry (HIRE). Those rates increase to 60% when individuals remain unemployed, according to the group. The estimated incarceration cost to taxpayers is \$20,000 per year, per inmate and the average time served is 7.8 years in Indiana, studies show.

Owen County has an active pretrial release with monitoring program, but more help is needed. Highlighting the WorkOne Express Center as the workforce space that links to other county resources should be helpful for job seekers and reduce recidivism.

# Goals and Opportunities

## Workforce Attraction

### Expand Housing Options

#### Goal

**Improve Owen's older housing stock, increase affordable housing options and increase housing options for residents to age-in-place primarily by using ROI Housing Study and through land-use policies.**

There's a shortage of affordable homes for the young families that Owen County hopes to attract, and many existing homes are in poor or deteriorating condition, according to the 2010 Owen County Housing Study. The report concluded:

- **Owen County has a shortage of some housing types.**
- **Private developers have not met the county's housing needs.**
- **The recession made it even more difficult to engage developers.**
- **Owen County has no locally-centered housing organization and has not received state and federal grants on par with its neighbors.**
- **To get things done, the county must create its own housing organization or partner with outside groups that specialize in development.**

The report selected three housing priorities:

- **Improve the condition of existing housing.**
- **Increase housing options for young families.**
- **Create housing that suitable for a range of senior citizens.**

There has been increased housing activity since the 2010 study, but the fundamental problems remain. About 47% of survey respondents said the lack of affordable housing is the biggest threat to the future of Owen County.

On the positive side, there were 77 permits issued in Owen County in 2018 — 43 for single family residences and 34 for manufactured housing according to the 2019 ROI Housing Study. New apartments are available in Spencer after a local developer started restoring underutilized properties. "I could fill a hundred more apartments if I could build them," said Mike Sudol, who has been working on downtown revitalization projects for several years. He believes young professionals who work at Boston Scientific or Cook Urological but live in Monroe County would move to Owen to be closer to their jobs if there's the right mix of housing and amenities.

There has also been interest in building a much larger, mixed-use housing development near the SR 46/SR43 intersection, where sewer lines are now available. That location would put residents within easy reach of both Spencer and Bloomington.

But those projects are in one section of the county and do not cover all our needs. Preliminary research from the Indiana Uplands: Regional Housing Strategy projected that 768 new



# Goals and Opportunities

housing units will be needed to meet demand in 2030. Those units are split among affordable, moderate and high-market homes. To meet that demand, an annual construction rate of 116 units would be needed, which is double the current rate.

The housing strategy concluded, “Employment opportunities within Owen and Monroe counties position the county for this kind of growth if certain strategic initiatives can be completed.” Those initiatives include pooled funding to fill gaps necessary for the development of high to medium density housing to add variety to the market. Some demand would also be met by a lower vacancy rate, which could entail restoring existing housing to better conditions.

## Extend Broadband Access

### Goal

**Extend broadband access to all of Owen County throughout a combined effort from county officials and supporting residents to pre-register for SCI REMC broadband initiative.**

Is it an overstatement to say Owen County’s future must be built upon broadband access? If access doesn’t improve, then we will certainly have to rethink our entire strategy of becoming a micropolitan community with all the conveniences of modern life. We do not intend to become a quaint reminder of yesteryear. Internet access allows for necessary commercial and residential development and expansion. In order to implement many of Owen County’s planned quality of place and workforce

## Workforce Attraction

attraction initiatives, residents, community organizations and schools need more reliable access to high-speed internet. Many residents living outside of town limits are not able to take online classes or work from home— two issues that negatively impact quality of life.

Broadband adoption in non-metro areas actually cause certain types of economic growth and resulted in significantly higher growth in median household income, according to the Community and Regional Development Institute at Cornell University, which researched growth rates between non-metro areas with and without internet access.

REMCs are in the process of adopting broadband as a feature of their services and are working with the county to address broadband shortcomings. SCI REMC, which serves Owen, announced plans to provide internet access to over 24,000 homes in South Central Indiana. The first phase will bring internet access to parts of Brown and Morgan counties. However, the project is not scheduled to happen in Owen County without sufficient local support.

REMCs must have a minimum threshold of residents claim they are willing and able to adopt broadband in order to make fiber optic internet a viable investment. The following table shows all the build-out zones in Owen County and nearby Ellettsville, as of July from South-Central Indiana REMC: Zones In Construction Process web page. The closest project is Carp 101 2.0, with 56% of the customers needed. Most have less than 30% of the support needed for REMC to begin construction.

The local private sector including Endeavor Communications and Smithville Telephone see opportunities for broadband

# Goals and Opportunities

## Workforce Attraction

County Wide Broadband Projects		
Project Name	Current Sign-up Percentage	Customers Needed
Ellettsville 101 2.0	30%	295
Ellettsville 105 2.0	31%	281
Romana 101	20%	512
Romana 101 2.0	26%	155
Romana 103	27%	160
Romana 104	27%	89
Carp 101	28%	472
Carp 101 2.0	56%	38
Carp 102	19%	640
Carp 102 2.0	27%	181
Carp 104	4%	316
Cunot 101	0%	353
Cunot 103	2%	838
Cunot 104	12%	428
Cunot 104. 2.0	30%	72
Spencer 101	17%	1474

expansion but need our encouragement. The Owen County Economic Development Corporation has been holding roundtables and promoting sign-ups.

## Extend Sewer and Address Water Needs

### Goal

**Extend sewer and water access to key locations and vulnerable populations.**

Water is a basic human need and infrastructure is the foundation for sustained community growth.

Unfortunately, Southern Indiana has the most limited supply of groundwater in the state, according to a 2015 study by The Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission.

Few areas are connected to a central water system. Most drinking water in Owen is drawn from groundwater, but because of soil types and karst topography, groundwater resources are easily polluted by failing or poorly installed septic tanks. The vulnerability of groundwater is demonstrated by Neal's Dump, a 1-acre former Superfund site near Spencer. The site was a disposal area for industrial waste that resulted in contamination of soil and groundwater before the U.S. EPA oversaw its cleanup, completed in 2003.

There were additional problems in May 2018 when the U.S. EPA listed the town's aquifer, which provides water to nearly 10,000 residents, as a Superfund site. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management and EPA found unsafe levels of the dry-cleaning chemical tetrachloroethene.

# Goals and Opportunities

Spencer officials argued that unsafe levels were only detected in the aquifer and were not found in the drinking water coming out of local taps after being treated. New equipment was set up to ensure treatment. The EPA said the quality of the final drinking water doesn't make a difference in the naming of a Superfund site, as the decision is made based on the quality of the water in the aquifer. Clean-up plans are continuing.

Developers are unlikely to build in an area without access to high-quality water and sewer systems. It is an essential investment for community growth and attraction. One dollar of water and sewer infrastructure investment increases private output in the long-term by \$6.35, according to a 2008 study by the Cadmus Group, an international consulting company.

The Town of Spencer Wastewater Treatment plant and the Gosport Wastewater Treatment plant both run around 50-55% of their capacity. Both plants can handle more wastewater. The main holdup for wastewater build-out is the cost of running sewer lines for existing communities and new developments. Coal City was prepared to add sewer to their community, but the action was delayed late in the process. Sewer and water projects must be considered again for community centers if they are going to attract and maintain businesses.

## Workforce Attraction

### Address Septic Shortcomings

#### Goal

**Improve and monitor the state of septic tanks throughout the county by educating, promoting and incentivizing upgrading septic tanks.**

Not all wastewater needs to go through a sewer system. However, much of the water pollution in rural communities comes from non-point sources such as septic, waste treatment facilities, animal waste and agrobusinesses.

Septic systems make sense for rural, isolated homes and many residents rely on septic because it is a long-term, low-cost option. Septic systems typically last 25-30 years if managed properly. Many homes were built more than 30 years ago and if not managed properly septic system failures can lead to infiltrated drinking water wells and increased health risks. Additionally, not all property is suited to support a second septic system if the first fails.



# Goals and Opportunities

## Workforce Attraction

### Improve Quality of Roads

#### Goal

**Improve the quality of roads throughout Owen County, between communities and within communities by communicating with local government officials about the need for improving roads.**

The first thing most Owen County residents would like to improve are roads. When asked what Owen County should focus on in the next two years, infrastructure – specifically roads – was a top focus for survey respondents.

This reflects national trends, where one out of every five miles of highway pavement is in poor condition and roads have a significant and increasing backlog of rehabilitation needs, according to the 2017 American Infrastructure Report Card, by the American Society of Civil Engineers. In Indiana, driving on bad roads costs the average Hoosier motorist \$480 per year, according to the report.

When residents say they will not take certain routes to businesses, as they did in the survey, you can be assured that visitors will have a poor experience. Owen should prioritize roads which need service and evaluate long-term costs of projects.

### Bolster Stormwater Management and Mitigate Flooding

#### Goal

**Roll up our sleeves and continue to address stormwater management problems.**

This is another one of those expensive and nagging problems, especially within our towns. When a property floods after a storm, the stormwater system is supposed to manage this rain flow for homes and businesses. However, with continually heavier rain events, river flooding and stormwater management becomes more important. Often, flooding appears first on impervious surfaces, such as parking lots or buildings, but it can impact buildings and neighboring properties.

The communities we envision for the future will require good stormwater management. Work is underway, including \$1 million project to address the problem in Spencer. More must be done for our stormwater infrastructure and to increase green spaces in flood-prone areas.

# Goals and Opportunities

## Workforce Attraction

### Increase Childcare Options

#### Goal

**Increase the number of subsidized childcare spaces and open more facilities in underserved communities.**

Childcare is vital to economic development, as it allows parents to participate in the labor force and pursue education or training.

For each \$1 of additional federal spending on childcare subsidies, state economies increase by \$3.80, according to The Committee for Economic Development's report *Child Care in State Economies – 2019 Update*. Attracting new families requires childcare options for those who work during the day. Owen County has three professional childcare centers but no centers for people who work second or third shift. While the YMCA is expanding the number of children they will be accepting by 20, more options are needed. We should also note that it is important for children to have quality childcare. Fortunately, subsidized funding is now available in all Indiana counties for On My Way Pre-K if the family enrolls a child in a site that has achieved a Paths to Quality rating of level 3 or 4.

### Continue Work to Improve Local Schools

#### Goal

**Focus on schools with low performance grades as indicated by the Indiana Department of Education, highlight the specialized learning atmosphere of Owen Schools towards families in the Uplands region, and implement the Ready School Plan by supporting current projects that address career and technical education.**

Our schools are our foundation and play a primary role in preparing our youth for life. A benefit of Owen schools is the small class sizes. Many studies show that small class sizes help students learn faster and perform better.

Families will look at school grades, though, when deciding where to move. Also, the quality of the local school can affect home prices. Overall grades for the Spencer-Owen Community School Corp. rank in the bottom 25% in Indiana for performance, according to the Indiana Department of Education.

However, there are strong initiatives in place to improve local schools. Regional Opportunity Initiatives Inc. has funded the Ready School Plan for Spencer-Owen Community Schools. This process tailors PK-12 curricular and programmatic offerings to community needs. Specifically, it focuses on Southwest Central Indiana's key industries; advanced manufacturing, life sciences and national security and defense.

# Goals and Opportunities

## Workforce Attraction

### Foster Local, Small Businesses

#### Goal

**Promote new small business creation not only in Spencer, but in commercial nodes throughout the county. Develop co-working space and business incubators**

Since 1995, small businesses are responsible for creating 64% of all new jobs in the United States, according to national studies. Small business growth is particularly essential to rural communities such as Owen County, which don't have the population densities to attract many national chains or businesses.

There are innumerable benefits to a locally grown economy. For example, local businesses' success means more local tax money, which helps improve schools and other services. While money spent at larger, chain businesses rarely stays in the community, small businesses keep a large percentage of their profits and turn those back into other community endeavors.

Despite economic momentum and new business creation in parts of the state, the percent of adults starting a new business each month in Indiana is declining, according to a national study called Kauffman Indicators of Entrepreneurship. Indiana has fallen from 44th to 47th nationally. This points to the ongoing importance of regional economic development and quality of place initiatives.

Creating a small business is fraught with problems, with as many mis-starts as successes. Fortunately, local organizations offer support including the Owen County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corp. (tax abatements), Spencer Main Street (grants) and Helping Owen Professionals Excel (low-interest loans up to \$50,000 based on good business plans). The chamber also provides advertising, networking, promotion, marketing campaigns and community events through their "Wagons Forward" program.

Locally, more use can be made of Indiana's statewide network of Small Business Development Centers (ISBDC). Owen County is within the West Central region, with an office in Terre Haute, but is much closer in distance to the South-Central regional office in Bloomington. Connecting these offices and their services to Owen County and collaborating often is imperative for the development of new businesses and meeting the needs of individual entrepreneurs.

Through the Owen County Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development office and the Indiana Small Business Development Center, the Everyday Owen County resident can receive counseling and guidance for commercial success and sustainability. "There are resources available through ISBDC that can create a larger footprint in Owen County and there is absolutely a willingness to support small business creation and growth," said Courtney Richey-Chipol, the ISBDC's West Central regional director.

Owen County also has a start on – and the potential for a lot



# Goals and Opportunities

## Workforce Attraction

more of – value-added, small agriculture businesses. The vibrant Owen County Farmers Market, which runs the annual Farm to Table Dinner and other events, is an excellent laboratory for launching new farm-related businesses.

The high school has a student-run business for providing goat meat and another coming next year. Patriot Manufacturing will be a self-sustained business selling T-shirts for athletics, decals for drinking glasses and mugs and embroidering for shirts and jackets. Next year, the student run business will expand production in collaboration with local businesses.

### Provide for The Next Generation

#### Goal

**Owen County must leverage their attributes and amenities to meet the needs of the next generation. This should be a priority project.**

Fifty-four of Indiana's 92 counties lost population in 2012, with eight losing more than one percent of their residents, according to research by the Indiana Business Research Center, and a 2012 report by Kenneth Johnson from the University of New Hampshire explained that the only rural counties to experience population growth, are those with significant natural amenities, recreational opportunities, or quality of life advantages. The population leaving rural America: young people. Too often, high school graduates leave for more school, training or jobs and do not come back. Almost 70% of the young people who took

our survey said they planned to leave Owen County, or were undecided.

Some communities have found a way to beat the odds. Students often leave but they come back because of family ties and experiences in the community. In fact, 70% of our survey respondents said they had moved away and then returned to Owen.

People generally return to their hometowns because of their perception of strong schools, former sport experiences, close-knit communities and family recreational activities, according to the 2015 USDA report, Factors Affecting Former Residents' Returning to Rural Communities. However, those who didn't have good schools or positive experiences do not return. Communities that meet the needs for both parents and their children fair better in slowing brain drain.

People who return cited their acceptance of financial and career sacrifices for returning home. Most non-returnees have considered coming home but cited low wages and lack of career opportunities as the primary barriers to their return. Owen must consider these hurdles and attempt to mitigate them.

However, Owen currently has 18% of 16-24 year-olds not going to school or employed, against a national average of 14%, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Disconnected youth are not having the positive experience needed to remain or return to Owen and are likely the population who will leave forever.

# Goals and Opportunities

## Workforce Attraction

### Continue Downtown Revitalization Efforts

#### Goal

**Continue to redevelop Owen's downtown centers and plan for future developments.**

Owen and Spencer have started successful revitalization projects, led by Spencer Main Street, the Gosport Business Association, the chamber and local developers. Renewing downtown areas and restoring them to their former prominence as the center of community activity offers multiple benefits and is the lynch pin of our plans for building a micropolitan community.

Revitalization helps produce memorable experiences and a desirable place to visit, but also spurs construction jobs and turns vacant spaces into move-in-ready sites.

Spencer and Gosport have invested in their downtown and have received benefits and should keep their revitalization plans current. Updated plans are the quickest link to federal and state grant programs for new projects, such as a gazebo on the courthouse lawn.

It is extremely important for communities to invest in downtown revitalization. Owen County struggles to retain and attract residents - especially young professionals - largely due to lack of technology and poor infrastructure systems. We believe that restored, modernized downtowns might be our single biggest tool for future growth.

### Increase Addictive Substance Abuse

#### Programs

#### Goal

**Inventory Owen County's existing capacity among healthcare, social services, churches, etc. to develop a community-based substance abuse assistance programs for residents to overcome addiction, contribute to society and reduce jail rates.**

The misuse of opioids and other abused drugs is a scourge upon Owen County and much of the rest of the country. Opioid misuse caused an estimated \$40 million in damages to Owen County's economy from 2003-2017, according to a report from the Indiana Business Research Center. That equals a per capita cost of \$1,989.

The calculations include direct costs such as funerals, first response, acute hospitalization, long-term treatment, neonatal abstinence syndrome, foster care, arrests and court costs, property loss, incarceration, HIV and overdose death wage losses; indirect costs such as losses to workforce productivity; and the present value of all lost future productivity of past opioid-related casualties.

In other words, the crisis has spread through the home life into the workplace and to all other sectors of the community. It will take a community-wide approach to combat it.

# Goals and Opportunities

## Workforce Attraction

### Update Comprehensive Land Use Plans

#### Goal

**Update comprehensive plans to put them in line with current civic design guidelines and to promote the need for sustainable economic growth.**

Land use planning is a critical tool for maintaining and improving vital assets such as economic development, infrastructure and quality of life.

In a rural community with limited options for large-scale growth, it is important that a comprehensive plan is not simply a checklist of everything the county lacks (better roads, higher-paying jobs, nicer housing, etc.). Instead, the plan should focus on realistic solutions to the everyday problems facing residents. For example, there has been discussions about the need to update zoning in the county after recent issues with a variance request for a new waste transfer station.

Because many rural communities lack the resources to tackle problems immediately, the emphasis should be on setting priorities and building capacity for growth. The 2010 Owen County Land Use Plan identified top priorities including:

- The lack of sanitary sewers throughout the county. Steep slopes and high-water tables make installation of sanitary sewers very costly, especially around Cunot, Coal City and at county lakes.
- The provision of safe drinking water in many parts of the county, with some wells having to go down 200-300 feet and even then, producing water unsuitable for consumption.
- The shortage of “shovel ready” land for economic development.
- Damage to the county’s rural heritage by the unregulated growth of substandard housing throughout the countryside.

Because these are county-wide problems, county plans should be coordinated with those of Spencer and Gosport.



# Goals and Opportunities

## Workforce Attraction

### Invest in Renewable Power

#### Goal

**Plan for renewable infrastructure, increase the ownership of renewable energy sources and educate residents about the financial benefits of renewable energy.**

Renewable power generation is a fast-growing industry and projects often pay for themselves while creating local, high-wage jobs. Businesses and industrial facilities look for communities where they can have low-cost energy and know that they are using or generating renewable energy.

Southern Indiana has hosted fewer large-scale renewable energy development due to its hilly, wooded landscapes and different agricultural mix, but as the economics and technology of renewable energy continues to evolve, room exists for future renewable energy development throughout the state, according to the Indiana Office of Energy Development. For example, Hoosier Energy recently built a 1.1-mw solar panel facility in Ellettsville.

The costs of renewable energy - solar, wind, geothermal and run-of-the river power generation - have decreased significantly over the past decade making most renewable options cheaper or competitive with fossil fuels, even without subsidies. As of 2019, Indiana power generation is comprised of 8% from renewables, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, and numerous utility-scale solar and wind farms are under

construction.

Furthermore, residents and commercial businesses can receive significant cost reductions from renewable projects. Solar Photovoltaic (PV) and geo-thermal are the two most common options. The U.S. Federal government offers a 30% tax credit for renewable installations and solar projects pay for themselves in 9-12 years with radically reduce energy costs. The federal government offers a host of incentives for businesses, rural communities, and farms that often go unheard. On top of federal incentives, the assessed value of any new solar installation is exempt from property taxes in Indiana. Coupled with energy efficiency, renewable residential and commercial projects can have major cost reductions.

Many municipal governments also are turning towards renewable power primarily because of cost reductions but also the environmental imperative. Municipal governments should consider investing in energy efficiency, such as replacing all municipal lights for LEDs, and evaluate the cost benefit of a Guaranteed Energy Savings Contract (GESG) as outlined by the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance for investing in renewable energy and reducing costs.

However, many Indiana counties have failed to create planning codes and policies to address renewable infrastructure. Proactive planning must be taken to adequately prepare for renewable infrastructure.



# Solutions

Photo Credit: Marce King Photography

## Introduction

Our goals grew from our research and our engagement with the public about what they need and want to make Owen County a more desirable place to live. These goals evolved as we talked among ourselves. For example, the seven main goals from the survey expanded into a larger list.

Most of our challenges are solvable, but not simple. Throughout this planning process, we have been reminded about how connected the issues are involving quality of place and workforce attraction. We still have some planning to do but are eager to move beyond strategy and toward action. Following is a list of our tiered goals and our ambitious next steps to address them.

Quality of Life Goals	
Tier I	Enhance Trail Connectivity
Tier I	Plan for Senior Services
Tier II	Increase Recreational Tourism
Tier II	Promote Arts & Culture
Tier II	Maximize Festivals & Events
Tier II	Leverage Water Trail Assets
Tier II	Grow County Leadership
Tier II	Increase Youth Recreational Activities
Tier III	Promote Place-Branding
Tier III	Advance Community Friendships & Connections
Tier III	Promote Civic Engagement
Other	Promote Walkability
Other	Preserve Historic Buildings
Other	Increase Public Health Knowledge
Other	Invest in Enhanced Public Spaces

Workforce Attraction Goals	
Tier I	Expand Housing Options
Tier I	Extend Broadband Access
Tier I	Career Development for the “Everyday Citizen”
Tier I	Foster Local, Small Businesses
Tier II	Provide for The Next Generation
Tier II	Increase Childcare Options
Tier II	Extend Sewer and Address Water Needs
Tier II	Address Septic Shortcomings
Tier II	Improve Quality of Roads
Tier II	Bolster Stormwater Management & Mitigate Flooding
Tier II	Invest in Renewable Power
Tier III	Continue Work to Improve Local Schools
Other	Update Comprehensive Land Use Plans
Other	Increase Addictive Substance Abuse Programs
Other	Continue Downtown Revitalization Efforts



## Enhance Trail Connectivity

**Goal: Extend current trail connectivity and publicize all trails county-wide.**

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Expand MYPATH	Continue the MYPATH trail system by connecting existing trails to the planned exteriors. Match grant money with community resources and volunteer labor to reduce costs. The ultimate success of the project will not just be the construction the MYPATH system, but the collective community involvement and use of the trail.	Extend MYPATH to its planned locations by 2022. Increase the number of people who use MYPATH.	Community Foundation, OCCC, OCED, County Government
Evaluate Pedestrian Trails between Owen communities via walking or bike paths.	Create a Trail Connection Report evaluating options for pedestrian trails among communities and collect resources to install those trails. Improve physical connection of communities via trails, while also providing a recreational benefit.	Complete Trail Connection Report and implement. Increase mileage of trails throughout Owen County.	Sweet Owen CVB, OC Government
Create an Owen County Trail Map - OneMap	Every park or recreation area markets their own trails but having one map where visitors and residents can view trail options will leverage assets.	Create OneMap trail map - print pamphlet and online source. Increase number of people who use MYPATH. Increase number of people who attend and use trails in Owen County.	Sweet Owen CVB, Community Foundation, OCCC, OCED, County Government
Connectivity Master Plan	Create a Connectivity Master Plan uniting Owen with the Uplands Region, planning around three fundamental factors: health and safety, access, and economic impact. This plan will need to be completed with the help of other counties and communities – including ROI.	Connectivity Master Plan created.	Sweet Owen CVB, Community Foundation, OCCC, OCED, County Government, ROI

Plan for Senior Services			
Goal: Provide accessible senior services within our towns and rural areas.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Strategic Plan for Seniors	This plan will strategize how Owen can create an environment that provides information and educational opportunities, promote physical and social health, enhance collaborations to address senior housing needs, promote independence and inclusion and support safe and accessible transportation for seniors.	Create a strategic plan for addressing Owen County's senior population.	Local Governments, Board of Realtors, Area 10 Agency on Aging and other social service agencies
Consider assisted living and nursing homes	As Owen County residents age, these facilities improve the quality of life of seniors. Owen should consider where senior living should go and prioritize development locations.	Evaluate the need for nursing homes. Increase number of units.	Developers, OCCC, OCED
Create Senior Arts and Culture Programing	Providing programs and encouraging seniors to engage in creative work related to painting, music or creative writing can be beneficial to society and prevent social isolation. Activities can be financed through arts and crafts courses in social clubs or community centers.	Evaluate similar Senior Arts and Culture programs. Create pilot program that gauges community interest.	Arts Guild, Area 10 Agency on Aging and other social service agencies
Exercise programs for senior citizens	Programs similar to Silver Sneakers and aerobics are enjoyable, encourage healthy activity and prevent social isolation among seniors.	Evaluate similar exercise programs for seniors. Create pilot program that gauges community interest. Track number of attendees.	YMCA

Increase Recreational Tourism			
Goal: Increase recreational tourism for current natural amenities and create new experiences.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Online portal for all Recreational Amenities	Every outdoor, recreational opportunity in Owen County is housed on different, and sometimes dated, websites. Tourists want and need a one-stop shop for where to go and what to do. Create an online portal for residents and visitors to view all environmental activities.	Create a website or platform for residents to learn about Owen County's natural amenities. Increase number of visitors to environmental amenities.	Sweet Owen CVB, OCCC
Bolster Gosport Riverfront	Advertise Gosport's Riverfront as part of a greater environmental tourism strategy in the Uplands Region. Draft advertising targets and hosting events at the Riverfront will greatly increase awareness.	Estimate how many people use Gosport's riverfront. Increase the number of tourists who use the riverfront.	Community Foundation, Gosport Business Association
Upkeep and expansion of Parks and Natural areas	Owen has several public parks, forests and recreation areas throughout the county; however, these sites are underfunded. Create streams of revenue or grants for specific projects to help with capital improvements. Owen should become the premier area for natural amenities in the Uplands Region.	Increase investment in parks and natural amenities.	Community Foundation, Sweet Owen CVB
"Fix Our Park Day"	An annual event where volunteers gather to fix one community park or natural area rotating to a new area every year. Volunteers will reduce the capital costs for parks using volunteer labor to fix trails and facilities.	Create an annual Fix Our Park Day. Measure the number of volunteers who attend and dollars of diverted costs for the parks by using volunteers.	Sweet Owen CVB, Community Foundation
Promote Mountain Bike Amenities	Visitors across the country come to the Uplands Region for mountain biking. Owen should leverage their biking amenities through promotion throughout the Uplands Region.	Create Mountain Biking promotion plan that strategizes the best promotion options. Using the promotion plan, advertise Owen County Mountain Biking throughout the Uplands Region. Measure number of ads and number of visitors to Mountain Bike trails.	Sweet Owen CVB, Community Foundation



Promote Arts & Culture			
<b>Goal: Strategize programs and events that foster Owen County as an arts and culture destination including pathways for high school students.</b>			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Create Afterschool Theatre Programming Facility	Residents have indicated that they need another space to view and practice theater. Creating a locally run facility could serve many purposes, including youth programming, adult theatre, etc.	Construction of a new facility. Increase number of theatre programs (primarily for afterschool students).	Local governments, Community Foundation
Host annual Arts Festival	Our robust arts community should be displayed to the Uplands Region. A festival offers a quick financial boon for local artists and shows young adults that an art career is lucrative. Owen County should improve their arts scene and make Owen the new, premier art center.	Create an annual Owen County Arts Festival. Increase sales for the arts.	Sweet Owen CVB, Community Foundation, OCCC. Local galleries and shops
Connect student artists with community artists	Students learning from local artists creates mentors and shows potential job prospects.	Hold three events where local artists meet youth artists. Increase number of artists in Owen.	Sweet Owen CVB, Spencer-Owen Community School Corp.
Advance prominence of Owen County Arts Guild	The Owen County Art Guild needs greater promotion to attract more artists. Reestablish an Art Guild website and promote guild throughout the region.	Reestablish Arts Guild website by 2020. Advertise Arts Guild with targeted social media ads. Add students to Arts Guild membership.	Guild, Sweet Owen CVB
Promote the Tivoli to the Upland Region	Create advertising strategy to drive more residents and visitors to the Tivoli.	Increase Tivoli attendance as compared to 2018 average attendance numbers.	Sweet Owen CVB
"Gap Filler" program	Unused vacant spaces serve little use to a community. A Gap Filler program combines student arts and creative stakeholders to produce temporary installations in vacant units focused on bringing people together to experiment with the space. Furthermore, it allows unrented spaces to gain broader attention, while making a unique downtown attraction and pride among community members.	Identify vacant spaces for pop-up events. Create Gap Filler program. Monitor vacant space rate.	Main Street groups, Arts Guild, Building Owners, OCCC, Community Foundation,

Maximize Festivals & Events			
<b>Goal: Maximize festival attendance by better communicating events within the county and throughout the Uplands Region, ultimately providing opportunities that foster civic connection.</b>			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Create County-wide Festival Guide	Owen's many festivals should be cataloged and advertised together so residents and visitors know when and where festivals are taking place. This will maximize efforts of our volunteers by driving more people toward events.	Create an Owen County Festival Guide for 2020. Begin measurement of festival attendance starting in 2020. Include Festival Guide in newspapers once per year. Increase festival attendance annually.	Sweet Owen CVB, Community Foundation, ROI
Online Platform for Event Promotion	Events throughout the year are siloed. Collecting all events into a single online space allows for easier advertising campaigns of events and festivals. Furthermore, residents and visitors will discover new events without needing to hunt around to find them.	Create online platform for event promotion. Increased event attendance.	Sweet Owen CVB, OCCC, ROI
Advertise Owen Festivals to Uplands Region	Invest in a campaign strategy to drive visitors to Owen County festivals.	Create Festival promotion plan that strategies the best promotion options. Using the promotion plan, advertise Owen County Festivals throughout the Uplands region. Measure number of ads and number of visitors to festivals.	Sweet Owen CVB, ROI

### Leverage Water Trail Assets

**Goal: Leverage Owen county's connection to the West Fork White River by creating greater water trail infrastructure, supporting new amenity options and implementing a comprehensive water trail strategy.**

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Freedom Public Access Launch Point	Gosport's and Spencer's public access launch points are assets, and other communities could benefit from one. A launch in Freedom would further unify a Water Trail system. Ideally, a launch point will translate into more stores and other local economic effects from tourism.	Choose site location for the public access launch point and research grant opportunities. Build Public Access Launch Point.	OCCF, local government
Romona Public Access Launch Point	The distance between Gosport and Spencer is very long for casual water trail users. A mid-point allows inner tubes to be used on the river. Romona can benefit from an access point and may spur more recreational development.	Choose site location for the public access launch point and research grant opportunities. Build Public Access Launch Point.	OCCF, local governments
Gosport Riverfront Information and Picnic Area	Gosport's Riverfront should be taken to the next level by adding information signage and enhanced picnic area for visitors and a walking trail to downtown.	Picnic area built. Signs installed. Multi-use path connecting riverfront to downtown.	Gosport Business Association, Local Government
Founding a river recreation rental business	With the influx of river access points, a business could take advantage of the new infrastructure and provide rental services in the community.	One river recreational rental business founded (may be run as a nonprofit or an extension of a parks department).	OCED, OCCC
Water Trail Strategy Plan	A comprehensive plan includes a vision, desired future conditions and strategies to strengthen management of a water trail.	Create Water Trail Strategy Plan.	Sweet Owen CVB, water trail stakeholders

Grow County Leadership			
<b>Goal:</b> Recognize the importance of skill building among our elected officials and others. Increased local leadership will be needed to achieve the future that is envisioned in this report.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Create a Citizens' Academy	Citizens' Academies teach residents about how local governments works and how they can get involved. A former program run by the now closed Owen County Learning Network had some success.	Create Owen County Citizens Academy program.	Owen County Leadership
Create a Young Professionals Group	Young Professional organizations are often created by local the Chamber of Commerce, but not exclusively. Open to anyone ages 18-35 who lives, learns, works, and/or plays in Owen County, this group facilitates development and networking opportunities for the rising generation.	Create a Young Professionals' group. Number of participants in Young Professional organization. Decrease the rate that young people leave Owen County.	OCCC, OCED
Mentorship program between leaders and youth	This program will allow youth and students to create professional relationships with community and business leaders. This translates into general life skills, potential job opportunities and job shadowing.	Mentorship program started.	OC Leadership
Increase internships	Internships allow for younger members of the community to learn about the employment opportunities.	Increase number of internships for students.	OC Businesses, OCCC



Increase Youth Recreational Activities			
<b>Goal:</b> Increase young adult and youth recreational activities throughout the county.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Hire a Youth Sports Director	A youth sports director could take lead in organizing and promoting local programs. A county wide program could increase participation in youth sports.	Hire a director. Increase number of programs a year. Increase youth participants.	Owen Valley Sports Complex, YMCA, Local governments
Create a Spencer Skatepark	There is public support for a skatepark in Owen County. The park would provide a space for beginners to learn and for more experienced skateboarders to practice.	Skatepark is built. Number of visitors at the skatepark tracked.	Local government, Youth

Promote Place-Branding			
<b>Goal:</b> Develop cohesive branding in all communities to establish a stronger sense of place throughout Owen County.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Story Collections	Incorporate significant features of Owen County's history into projects to showcase unique events, heritage of the county's residents, and preserve the ongoing story of Owen County.	Create a program for Owen County stories to be collected and archived. Create a website for these stories to be publicly accessible.	Sweet Owen CVB, Community Foundation
Community Marketing Strategy	Assess and improve the use of the Sweet Owen and Indiana Uplands Region brands to develop a marketing strategy which includes print, online, etc. to promote assets and amenities.	Develop a community brand for each community. Create media plan for each community.	Sweet Owen CVB, OCCC
Develop community banners or signage.	Communities should build signage around the county to show gateways, upcoming events, etc.	Community-specific banners are created and installed.	Sweet Owen CVB, OCCF

### Advance Community Friendships & Connections

**Goal: Advance programing where residents meet with their neighbors and fosters community friendship.**

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Grants for block parties	Offer grants for communities to throw a block party where neighbors meet and engage with the goal of improved community and friendship.	Create and fund grant program. Increase number of events in smaller communities.	OCCC, Sweet Owen CVB, Local governments
Educate students on being good neighbors	Similar to other civic education tools, classes should teach about being good neighbors and civic commitment.	Create education tools and course guides on being a good neighbor and civic commitment. Deploy tools and courses guides to educators.	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp.
Annual Neighbor Day	Host an annual event where neighbors celebrate living near each other and participate in community building activities.	Host annual Neighbor Day event.	OCCC, Sweet Owen Visitors Bureau
Create an Inter-Community County Board	The creation of a board fostering collaborative efforts among communities, faith groups and others with the goal of increasing the quality of life for all residents. Continue the momentum from the Bicentennial Ambassadors committee.	Creation of the Inter-Community County Board. Measure number of events/collaborative projects done by the board.	OCCC, OC Churches and other organizations
Neighborhood Postcard Project	The Neighborhood Postcard Project is where people and children collect stories from residents in underinvested communities and send these stories on postcards to random people in the same community to break down stereotypes and build new community connection.	Host one Neighborhood Postcard Project. Evaluate benefits and community desire for further programming.	OCCC, OC Leadership

Promote Civic Engagement			
<b>Goal:</b> Acknowledge a problem of low civic engagement at the government level and directly tackle the hurdles stopping people from participating.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Increase education efforts to connect students to local government	A school program where students attend local government events and activities will help students learn about government with their peers and offers an opportunity for government officials to hear from younger populations. Field trips might include going to the Indiana Statehouse, Owen County Courthouse and other government settings. This program should also normalize the discussion of politics and include friendly debates about local issues in a classroom setting.	Host field trips to government centers and meetings with elected officials. Increase government meeting attendance. Improved voter turnout.	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp., Local Government
County Department Representation at the Farmers Market	Have one department representative every week at the farmers market with rotating departments each week. Department representatives will discuss with residents' issues they face.	Establish county representation at weekly farmers markets. Increase government meeting attendance and public comments.	Owen County Leadership, Farmers Market.
Create an online portal for county volunteerism	There is no central volunteer portal for people to find new activities or track how many hours they are working. The creation of an online volunteer portal allows new projects to find volunteers and track how much volunteer work Owen residents are doing overall.	Establish volunteer portal by 2021. Phase one: have the library and churches use the portal to manage volunteers. Phase two: expand to all of Owen County volunteer opportunities. Monitor volunteerism in Owen. Compare to other counties.	Owen County Government



## Promote Walkability

**Goal:** Increase the walkability of community centers and within neighborhoods by starting with simple, low-cost programs (signage, promoting bike use, etc.).

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Link Downtown Gosport to Gosport Riverfront	Gosport needs more pedestrian connection between their new public access point and the downtown. Adding walking trails and fixing sidewalks between the public access launch point and the downtown strip should drive more visitors towards downtown and drive more residents toward the riverfront.	Installed walking path between downtown Gosport and Gosport public access point. Fix one mile of sidewalks, prioritizing areas near the Gosport Riverfront.	Gosport Business Association, OCCC, Town of Gosport
Improvements throughout Gosport	Improving the walkability of Gosport encourages people to enjoy the downtown area and its surroundings.	Create and fund grants for sidewalk improvements. Prioritize the areas with the greatest need. Create a maintenance schedule.	Local government
Invest in sidewalk improvements throughout Spencer	Spencer has improved their downtown and received economic benefits from the projects. Improving the walkability of Spencer encourages people to enjoy downtown and its surroundings.	Fix one mile of sidewalks outside of downtown Spencer. Create a maintenance schedule.	Local government
Improve ADA Features	Investing in Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) infrastructure makes communities more welcoming and encourages mobility. Grants can be administered to businesses and government facilities for improvements.	Create a tiered list for installing ramps to buildings by 2020. Create grant program for businesses and governments to improve ADA features.	Local government, Owen County Government
Identify and inventory infrastructure for pedestrian, transit and bicycle.	Identify all infrastructure for transit, pedestrian and bicycles. For needed projects create a tiered priority list.	Create an Alternative Transportation Infrastructure Report indicating priorities improving alternative transportation. Complete report by 2021.	Local government
"Bike to Work Day" Event	May 15th is Bike to Work Day. Promote an event that encourages biking to work and educational activities demonstrating health and financial benefit. Have community and civic leaders' bike to work to demonstrate the importance.	Create Annual Bike to Work Day Event. Measure attendance. Increase number of bikes used.	Local government
Spencer and Gosport as Bike Friendly Cities	The League of American Bicyclists, Bicycle Friendly America (BFA) program provides a roadmap, hands-on assistance and recognition for states, communities, universities and businesses.	Evaluate what is needed to get Spencer and Gosport to Bike Friendly City status. Invest in infrastructure that makes Spencer and Gosport Bike Friendly communities. Complete infrastructure improvements and register Spencer and Gosport as Bike Friendly Cities by 2022.	Sweet Owen CVB, Community Foundation, OCCC, OCED, County Government

Preserve Historic Buildings			
Goal: Facilitate historic building preservation to keep the stories of Owen County alive and encourage historic site connections.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Grants for Historic Preservation	Historic buildings create community pride and often double as a community center for cultural and educational activities. Communities need grant money to afford the cost of remodeling.	Create a grant system for restoring historic buildings.	OCCF, historic building owners, Local Government
Historic Building Maps	Conduct mapping of historic locations, anchor institutions and community specific destinations.	Create an asset map of key sites. Publish in print and online by 2021	Main Street group, Sweet Owen CVB
Annual Historic Tours	Create annual historic tours connecting visitors with historians who can show and explain the unique history of Owen County.	Produce Historic tour resources by 2021. Launch an annual Historic Tour of Owen County	Historic building owners, Sweet Owen CVB

### Increase Public Health Knowledge

**Goal:** Improve key health indicators by creating opportunities for residents to learn about healthier lifestyles and insurance options.

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Weekly lunch exercise events	Weekly education events where people exercise during their lunch time and learn about other healthy habits. Tie it to existing MYPATH programs.	Number of attendees at weekly events. Number of attendees using a trainer or nutritionist learning about healthy living.	YMCA, Spencer Main Street
Education about healthy living and quality food	Event programming where residents learn about living healthier and eating better. This will translate into healthier youth populations and more educated residents.	Increase attendance at Farmers Market. Decrease obesity rates.	Owen County Public Library, Farmers Market
Food education programming during school lunch	Educating students during lunch about healthy eating translates into different eating choices and will help teach long-term health habits.	Decrease childhood obesity rate. Improved health outcomes for Physical Education courses.	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp.
Invite non-profit groups to explain public health insurance options	This event will focus on insurance options for low-income residents with the explicit outcome of helping people learn about insurance and help people get insurance.	Monitor number of attendees and events educating. Reduce rate of uninsured.	Owen County Health Dept.
Farmers Market Healthy Diet Plan	A regular Farmers Market event that focuses on healthy eating and dieting. Event will showcase affordable meal options and basic health information.	Market sales, market attendance, increased health. Reduction of obesity rates.	Hospitals, Farmers Market

## Invest in Enhanced Public Spaces

**Goal:** Explore how the physical and social character of a neighborhood or town is shaped around arts and cultural activities. Pursue opportunities such as the Indiana Housing & Community Authority's Placemaking Grants.

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Finance public space projects	Create a small grant program to invest in public space projects in all communities. Grants can be used on projects that increase the use of public spaces and increase engagement.	Create public space grants.	OCCF, Local Governments
Design competition for public spaces	Parks and other public spaces need art and community involvement. Creating a design competition getting the public and students involved will produce high engagement and valued spaces.	Host a Design Competition for Public Spaces. Public spaces gain more use.	Sweet Owen CVB, Community Foundation
Create Farmers Market Pavilion	Owen County has experienced increased Farmers Market attendance over the years. A pavilion that covers vendors and visitors would likely improve market atmosphere.	Choose pavilion location. Design pavilion. Research funding sources. Install pavilion by 2021.	OCCF, OCED, Farmers Market



### Increase Community Beautification

**Goal: Increase beautification efforts in key locations.**

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Signage at State park directing people to Spencer & Owen County attractions	As people come to McCormick's Creek State Park, signage should be installed to drive populations toward Owen communities. Improving the state of entrance signage for communities should help community pride and drive visitors.	Increase signage at prominent destinations guiding visitors toward downtown Spencer and Gosport.	Spencer Main street Gosport Business Association, OCCC
Gateway to Downtown Spencer	Now that Spencer has turned their downtown into a destination location, creating entrances to the community will provide a welcoming invitation for visitors.	Community gateway installed for Spencer.	Spencer Main Street, Local Government
Gosport Landscaping and Downtown Beautification	Provide grant opportunities for downtown landscaping and for businesses to improve building facades. Volunteers should be included in the installation of downtown beautification projects to reduce cost and connect residents. Ultimately, improving the beauty and community of Gosport.	Create grant opportunities for downtown Gosport landscaping and facade improvements.	Gosport Business Association

Expand Housing Options			
<b>Goal:</b> Improve the Owen's older housing stock, increase affordable housing options and increase housing options for residents to age-in-place primarily by using ROI Housing Study and through land-use policies.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Create Housing Taskforce	Owen needs to organize all its efforts to bring a range of housing options to Owen County. The formation of a Housing Taskforce began during this planning process but will continue as the main driver for better housing options in Owen County.	Formation of an Owen County Housing Taskforce.	Local government, OEDC, Board of Realtors
Create development-ready locations	These locations are generally focused around business development. However, residential development needs similar infrastructure requirements to make development happen efficiently and effectively. Governments that prepare sites for development will reduce the hurdles for developers.	Create report of current shovel-ready locations and where future sites will go by 2020. Invest in creating 20% more shovel-ready locations for residential development by 2022 as compared to the 2020 report.	OC Building Dept, OCCC, OCED, RDC
Incentivize the development of affordable housing	County and town governments must study the amount of affordable housing (AH) needed, define what qualifies as AH, and design incentives to increase AH.	Create report about AH units needed including information from the ROI Housing study. Define AH and create incentives. Increase AH units.	OC Building Dept, OCED, Developers, Local Government, RDC
Program to Demolish Condemned Homes	Condemned and blighted homes can stop people from purchasing homes in an area and pose a safety risk. Community demolition programs can remove the worst homes and open areas for new development.	Count of condemned/blighted buildings with a prioritized report. Implement demolition program by 2021.	Local governments
Advance rural renovation show to more community network stations	The rural renovation program showcases the unique community of Sweet Owen and helps residents. The show should be advertised to more community stations to expand the reach of the show.	Biannual Rural Renovation episodes created. Regularly airing episodes on all public access stations by 2020.	OC Leadership
Incentivize age-in-place developments near community centers	Aging-in-place is when a person lives and ages in their residence of choice, for as long as they are able. Aging-in-place includes having services, healthcare and support in the residence as well. These needs change over time as the individual ages. Age-in-place communities are often near downtown centers to allow residents to enjoy the excitement of downtown without needing to drive.	Create report for Age-in-place development. Create incentives for age-in-place facilities to develop.	Developers, OCCC, OCED, OCCF

Extend Broadband Access			
<b>Goal:</b> Extend broadband access to all of Owen County through a combined effort from county officials and supporting residents to pre-register for SCI REMC broadband initiative.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Achieve second phase of broadband initiative for Owen County	Mobilize residents to sign-up for REMC broadband so that Owen is the next county to get broadband access. Mobilize residents through advertising and promotion.	Increase broadband sign-ups. Owen will achieve the second phase of REMC - SCI Broadband project.	OCED, OCCC
Broadband scholarship for students	Some families are not able or willing to sign-up for broadband access. Therefore, school corporations have offered scholarships to homes with children that are unable to afford broadband internet. The scholarship is small and covers just the cost of broadband and usually for a limited time (i.e during the school year or while the child is in school).	Create Broadband Scholarship for Spencer-Owen Community School Corp. students. Increase broadband sign-ups.	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp., OCED, OCCF, Owen County Government, OCCC

### Provide Career Development for the “Everyday Citizen”

**Goal:** Increase enrollment in workforce development programs offered through WorkOne Express through cross-promotion among Owen County’s leadership network.

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Publicize WorkOne Express Services	WorkOne should become more well known throughout the county as a resource for workers to increase their skills and advance their careers.	Advertise WorkOne in newspapers and via social media advertising. Increase number of participants using WorkOne.	OCCC, OCED
Career Central Clearinghouse	Many entities are working to support Owen County’s workforce. Adult education retrains the existing workforce for new or more advanced careers, and to help them remain professionally competitive. All projects and programs will be housed in a central clearing house for job seekers.	Create a Career Central Clearinghouse. Decrease unemployment. Stabilize the rate that young people leave Owen County.	WorkOne, OCCC, OECD, OVSC, Public Library
Use Indiana’s HIRE program to reduce recidivism for ex-drug offenders.	The HIRE Program is a cooperative effort between the Department of Workforce Development, Department of Corrections, Indiana employers and the public safety community to provide incarcerated and/or discharged Hoosiers with job readiness and placement.	Work with HIRE to support ex-offenders in Owen. Decrease recidivism rates.	Law enforcement, OC Health Dept, local businesses



## Workforce Attraction

Foster Local, Small Businesses			
Goal: Promote new small business creation not only in Spencer, but in commercial nodes throughout the county.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Create co-work space/ business incubator	Small business owners are leading the way in local downtown revitalization efforts. They are crucial to continued growth but need an affordable place to get off the ground and establish new enterprises.	Research co-work space /business incubator programs from other communities. Pilot a co-work space /business incubator in Owen County by 2021.	Local governments, OCED, Main Street, RDC
Promote women and minorities in businesses	Women and minorities populations owning businesses are important to Owen County, but these populations face different hurdles than male-owned businesses. Promoting women and minority populations in business will create a supportive environment for leaders and future businesses. Furthermore, highlighting their business may draw visitors from the whole Uplands Region.	Hold an Annual Women and Minorities Business Conference. Increase women-owned businesses. Increase minority-owned businesses.	OC Businesses, OCED, OCCC
Promotion of SCORE and HOPE Resources	SCORE is the largest national volunteer business mentor program and Owen County a similar program: HOPE. These services should be advertised more and leveraged to students.	Increase the number of new businesses as compared to 2019. Create business that last for greater than five years.	HOPE, OCED
Programing on starting a small farm business	Local farms and small husbandry businesses are regaining prominence with the rise of farmers' markets and buying organic. Programming that educates residents and provides resources on founding, running or expanding a small farm will help establish new small farms.	Increase new or expanded farm count. Create resource list by 2020. Example business plans developed by 2020. Increase number of businesses at farmers' market annually.	OCED, Farmers
Business programing for co-ops	Cooperative businesses offer a lot of benefits for local communities and often maintain wealth in the area. A co-op is a private business organization that is owned and controlled by the people who use its products, supplies or services. Owen County should offer programing on the benefits of forming a business cooperative. Profits are reinvested in the co-op or distributed to its members. Co-ops can work well for small communities that have strong connections.	Single event programing about cooperatives by 2020. Collect resources on founding co-operatives by 2020.	OCED, Farmers

## Workforce Attraction

Offer short course for high school students and young adults on starting a business	Students and young adults may want to start a small business but lack fundamentals. Entrepreneurial short course will provide insight, resources, and basic insights on starting and operating a business. These short courses should work in connection with existing OVHS programs and connect with other resources like IU-Bloomington Business School and WorkOne. Tie it to the existing high school entrepreneurship program.	Host at least two short courses targeted towards young adults on starting a business. Measure enrollment in course. Monitor if attendees start local business. After year one, student run business will collaborate with local businesses on new production projects.	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp., OCED, Local Businesses
Highlight business start-ups in Owen County	For small start-ups, any additional advertising helps keep the community engaged and shopping at these businesses. Having Owen County lead organizations share one highlighted business can give them the edge to sink or swim.	Highlight one business per month beginning in 2020	OCED, OCCC, Start ups

## Workforce Attraction

Provide for The Next Generation			
<b>Goal: Owen County must leverage their attributes and amenities to meet the needs of the next generation.</b>			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Late Night at the Tivoli	Regular high-energy events that provide quality entertainment for students regularly. Late Night events are hosted by students, for students and include food and tons of fun! Late night events can offer a quality experience and keep students out of trouble.	Create a Late Night at the Tivoli. Decrease the rate that young people leave Owen County.	Tivoli, OCCF
Support student businesses in schools	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp. has several student-run businesses in their curriculum. One business is about raising goats and the other about T-shirt printing.	Continue to support in-school business programs. Add one new product stream by 2021 that meets the needs of local businesses. Monitor how many students become local entrepreneurs.	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp.
Boys and Girls Club	Founding a Boys and Girls Club (BGC) promotes safe, positive and inclusive environments for all. BGCs support all youth and teens – of every race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic status, and religion – in reaching their full potential.	Found Boys and Girls Club in Owen by 2021.	Boys and Girls Club, BS/BS, OCCF, Local Leaders
Big Brothers Big Sisters	This is a valuable program that currently does not have space in Owen County.	Secure a building for Big Brothers, Big Sisters by 2021.	BS/BS, Community foundation, local leaders
Support juvenile detention alternatives initiative	Owen has signed as one of thirteen counties to join Indiana's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) making Owen a JDAI site. JDAI is a national juvenile justice reform initiative that aims to improve outcomes for children in the justice system while ensuring public safety. Owen should support this program, so our youth have lower recidivism rates and live prosperous lives.	Connect schools with the JDAI program. Apply for associated funding for JDAI projects.	Indiana Criminal Justice Institute, Indiana Department of Correction, Indiana Department of Child Services, Family and Social Services Administration
Youth Taskforce	Create Youth Taskforce to address and provide for youth needs and improve youth experience in Owen County.	Create Youth Taskforce. Decrease the rate that young people leave Owen County.	4-H, OVSC, FFA and YMCA

Increase Childcare Options			
Goal: Increase the number of quality, subsidized childcare spaces and open more facilities in underserved communities.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Training retirees for childcare services	Retirees can serve as a great source of volunteers and part-time employees which makes them ideal for childcare services.	Train 30 retirees for childcare. Increase childcare services in county by 20% by 2022.	Childcare centers, OCCF, retirees
Expand YMCA Childcare Occupancy	YMCA is working to expand their capacity.	Evaluate the current demand for childcare after the 2019 YMCA expansion of services. Increase available spots by another 20 children in 2020 if demand is not met.	YMCA, Local Leaders
Investigative report covering cooperative childcare program. Create Cooperative Childcare program. Promote enrollment in On My Way Pre-K program.	Research the use of cooperative childcare facilities. Investigate the desire and willingness of families to participate in such a program.	Investigative report covering cooperative childcare program. Create Cooperative Childcare program.	OCCF, YMCA



### Extend Sewer and Address Water Needs

**Goal: Extend sewer and water access to key locations and vulnerable populations.**

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Connect high-risk communities to water treatment facilities	Several areas in Owen County, such as schools or neighborhoods, have their own, small water treatment facility. However, there is a high cost for maintaining all of these facilities and many facilities have a history of failing and violations with the EPA.	Connect all schools to water treatment facilities by 2024. Connect all high-risk communities to water treatment facilities by 2022.	Spencer or Gosport WWTP, developers, Spencer-Owen Community School Corp., IDEM, RDC
Connect high-risk areas to potable water	Many residents in Owen County drink well water pay for clean water using cisterns. Well water requires having the water tested and/or filtered. Cisterns have little oversight about hygiene. It is important for reducing long-term costs and health of residents to connect high-risk areas with potable water.	Connect high-risk areas to potable Water; specifically, Coal City by 2024.	BBP, Owen County Health Dept, IDEM
Extend Sewer and Water to Planned Development	New developments will want water and sewer. Wastewater treatment plants in both Spencer and Gosport operate at roughly 50% capacity. Therefore, homes in the surrounding area should connect to sewer and water. Sewer and water should also be extended to areas where Owen expects development.	Increase number of homes connected to sewer and water. Increase housing developments.	Spencer or Gosport WWTP, Developers, OCED, IDEM

### Address Septic Shortcomings

**Goal:** Improve and monitor the state of septic tanks throughout the county by educating, promoting and incentivizing upgrading septic tanks.

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Septic Knowledge Campaign	It is unclear how many septic tanks are properly working in Owen County and this creates a public health crisis. Diverting resources to a public outreach campaign to make people think about their septic is the first step at addressing this issue	Create a county-wide campaign to make people think about their septic by 2020. Increase the number of septic information engagements.	OC Health Dept., OCED
Septic Health Inspection Day	Creating an annual event where residents check their septic tank quality will provide education about the importance of septic health. Connect residents with information on how to properly maintain their septic tank.	Participants at events. Participants engaged.	OC Health Dept

Improve Quality of Roads			
Goal: Improve the quality of roads throughout Owen County, between communities and within communities by communicating with local government officials about the need for improving roads.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Road Markings	Marking roads is a priority so that nighttime driving is easier. Prioritize roads connecting communities.	20% increase in mileage of painted roads. Develop a Road Quality Report Card. Decrease number of accidents/repairs caused by poor road quality.	Local Governments, OCED
Long-term cost analysis of road repair and construction	Road maintenance should be done regularly in order to preserve the quality of roads. Many residents lament the state of roads in Owen County. While there are limited funds for road construction, better tools to evaluate the cost and benefits will help law makers make more effective decisions.	Work with state and regional leaders to create better long-term cost analysis of road repair and construction. Create a tool to evaluate long-term cost/benefits of construction projects.	Local Governments, OCED

<b>Bolster Stormwater Management &amp; Mitigate Flooding</b>			
<b>Goal: Roll up our sleeves and continue to address stormwater management problems.</b>			
<b>Project</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Partners</b>
Evaluate status of stormwater systems	A preliminary study on flooding conducted to understand flooding issues in the community and future risks.	Complete Flood Study.	OC Health Dept, IDEM, OCED
Increase green spaces in town centers	Green spaces and other rain gardens can serve as best management practices for stormwater control and mitigate stormwater issues. More green spaces can either be required by code or encouraged by grant programs.	5% increase in acreage of installed green space in Spencer and Gosport by 2025.	Sweet Owen CVB, Local Governments
Flood Management Plan	Conduct a study to find the best ways to mitigate flooding in river towns and the estimated costs for making communities more flood proof.	Create Flood Management Plan.	Local Governments
Fund buy-out program for homes in regular flooding locations	Some homes were built prior to floodplain rules and because of heavier rain events, some people will never have a home that is not prone to flooding. A buy-out program will buy homes from owners who want to move because of flooding damage but cannot sell the property.	Create and fund buy-out program for homes in floodplains. Reduce county-wide estimated flood damage.	OCED, Local Governments



Invest in Renewable Power			
<b>Goal: Plan for renewable infrastructure, increase the ownership of renewable energy sources and educate residents about the financial benefits of renewable energy.</b>			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Invite regional non-profit to offer solar info-sessions	Residential and commercial renewable options offer a huge payback. Aside from the environmental benefit, most people do not know about renewable options. Inviting a non-profit, apolitical group to teach residents about residential and business renewable projects could increase the value of buildings in Owen County and offer a significant payoff for residents down the road.	Hosting one or more info-sessions about renewable projects; most likely about solar. Increase the preponderance of renewable energy, which offers financial benefits for residents.	OCCC, OCED, County Government, Spencer and Gosport Government, Southern Indiana Renewable Energy Network (SIREN)
Evaluate Owen's renewable energy potential and include it in their Economic Development Strategy	Create a report showing the renewable potential for Owen County, including wind, solar, geothermal and run-of-the-river. Hire an experienced consultant or university class to evaluate renewable generation and potential locations. Apply report findings to overall economic development strategy.	Create a document demonstrating locations for utility scale renewable projects, including estimated costs and community /benefit. Leverage report with utility companies to invest in Owen.	OCED, County Government, IU-Bloomington. Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs. National Renewable Energy Laboratory
Create County codes for renewable development	Owen County does not want to be reactionary toward renewable projects. Creating codes now, will prepare residents and installers for the investment.	Research similarly sized County codes for residential, commercial and utility scale renewable energy projects. Increase the number of renewable projects and the associated benefits for residents.	Local Government, OCED

Continue Work to Improve Local Schools			
<b>Goal:</b> Focus on schools with low performance grades as indicated by the Indiana Department of Education, highlight the specialized learning atmosphere of Owen County schools toward families in the Uplands Region, and implement the Ready School Plan by supporting current projects that address vocational and trades education.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Implement Ready Schools Plan	Owen has earned a Ready School's implementation grant through the Regional Opportunities Initiative (ROI).	Implement Ready School Plan. Increase school performance.	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp., Ready Schools plan, ROI
Directly improve low school evaluation grades	Some school funding is tied to school evaluation grades and families look at those grades to determine where they will move. Leaders should directly address shortcomings that are reducing Spencer-Owen Community School Corp. evaluation grades.	Improve school evaluation grade.	County Leadership, OCCF, Spencer-Owen Community School Corp. Ready Schools plan, Indiana Department of Ed., ROI
Widely advertise and publicize school strengths	One of the major methods of drawing students to return later in life is their perspective on the quality of their school system. Highlighting school strengths will attract new residents and families. Leveraging small class size and intimate learning environment of Owen Schools will demonstrate a high-quality learning environment. Increase positive perspective of schools.	Measure current perception of schools. Increase positive perception of schools.	Owen County Indiana Visitors Center. Spencer-Owen Community School Corp. Ready Schools plan. Indiana Department of Education, ROI
Youth career exploration	Continue efforts to start career exploration early and have business representatives and alumni visit schools to speak with students.	Business representatives and alumni will visit Owen Valley High School and elementary schools at least once per calendar year.	OC Businesses, Spencer-Owen Community School Corp., OCED, ROI

## Workforce Attraction

On-the-job and trades programs	Promote on-the-job training including apprenticeships, job shadowing and internship opportunities. Primarily show that trades jobs are lucrative and equally as important as other fields.	Program to pipeline students to workforce opportunities and trades programs created by 2021. Decrease the rate that young people leave Owen County.	OC Businesses, Spencer-Owen Community School Corp., OCED, ROI
Classroom-Centered (CC) and Family-School Partnership (FSP) Intervention.	CC and FSP interventions are universal first-grade interventions to reduce later onset of violence and aggressive behavior and to improve academic performance. Program strategies include classroom management and organizational strategies, reading and mathematics curricula, parent-teacher communication and behavior management in the home.	Investigate Classroom-Centered (CC) and Family-School Partnership (FSP) Intervention. Pilot program for CC/FSP program. Monitor aggressive behavior and decrease long-term school violence.	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp., IU Bloomington, ROI

### Update Comprehensive Land Use Plans

**Goal:** Update comprehensive plans to put them in line with current civic design guidelines and to promote the need for sustainable economic growth.

Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Update Comprehensive Land Use Plans for local governments	Develop community standards for land use.	Land Use Plan published by 2020	Local governments
Hire planners for county building department	While Owen has a Building Department and strong Plan Commission and BZA, these are not sufficient for planning and enforcement. A planning department will keep Owen up-to-date with best management practices and state code.	Increase personnel for planning and enforcement by 2024.	Owen County Government
Identify problem properties	Use surveys to identify problem properties that do not meet code enforcement standards, are listed as vacant by the USPS or are not included in the landlord registry database.	Create a database of problem properties for Building Department.	Local Government



## Workforce Attraction

Increase Addictive Substance Abuse Programs			
<b>Goal:</b> Inventory Owen County's existing capacity among healthcare, social services, churches, etc. to develop a community-based substance abuse assistance programs for residents to overcome addiction, contribute to society and reduce jail rates.			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Inventory current addictive substance programs.	Create a one-stop location for all of Owen County and neighboring county addictive substance services.	Inventory community-based substance abuse programs. Create a place where residents can freely, without fear of arrest, access information.	OC Health Dept, Community Foundation,
Campaign to connect residents to rehabilitation from addictive substances.	A major hurdle for getting help is that addictive substance discussions are not prominent in communities. Rehabilitation programs are necessary for those who have had addictive substance issues.	Establish public campaign to discuss rehabilitation from addictive substances by 2021. Decrease overdose mortality rates. Obtain grants to reduce cost of rehabilitations services.	OC Health Dept, OCCF, Churches
Guiding Good Choices (GGC) program.	Curriculum is designed to educate parents on how to reduce risk factors and strengthen bonding in their families. Sessions teach parents on family involvement skills, setting clear expectations, monitoring behavior and other family management and bonding approaches.	Evaluate the cost of GGC programing and implement if cost effective. Decrease youth arrests.	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp., OC Health Dept.
Project ALERT	A 2-year universal program for middle school students in rural communities, Project ALERT is designed to reduce the onset and regular use of drugs among youth, and focuses on preventing the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and inhalants.	Evaluate the cost of project ALERT programing and implement if cost effective. Decrease long term drug rates. Decrease overdose mortality rates.	Spencer-Owen Community School Corp., OC Health Dept.

Continue Downtown Revitalization Efforts			
<b>Goal: Continue to redevelop Owen's downtown centers and plan for future developments.</b>			
Project	Description	Performance Indicators	Partners
Evaluate grant opportunities for Main Street Programs	Evaluate the status of federal state grant programs for Main Street organizations. Apply for grant funding to complete main street plans.	Collect resources and apply for grants.	Owen County Main Street, Gosport Business Association
Implement Main Street Plans	Evaluate the status of current Main Street plans. Prioritize next steps for completing or updating plans.	Enacted Mainstreet Plans.	Main Street, OCED, Local Governments
Before and After Campaign	Main Streets will visually compare the downtown before and after revitalization to show how Main Street services have been beneficial. This can also be applied to individual businesses.	Online and physical documentation to show the benefit of revitalization.	Main Street, Gosport Business Association

*This page was intentionally left blank*



# Appendix

# Conclusion

**Happy birthday** to every community in Owen County, and thank you for helping us design the next 200 years.

We admit we’re thinking big, but this plan is just the beginning of our vision. You can track our progress at **planowencounty.com**.

To share ideas or discuss this plan in more detail, please contact:

**The Owen County Community Foundation**  
60 East Market Street, Spencer, IN 47460  
Phone: 812-829-1725

**Owen County Chamber of Commerce**  
& Economic Development Corp.  
119 S Main St, Spencer, IN 47460  
Phone: 812-829-3245

All the really good photographs in this report were provided by Marce King Photography.

This plan was created with assistance from a team of consultants from SB Research & Planning including Scott Burgins, Andrew Davis, Andy Kain and Quintin Thompson. They can be reached at the email [scott@sbresearchandplanning.com](mailto:scott@sbresearchandplanning.com). Cory Whitesell and Amber Janzen from HWC Engineering were also partners on this report.

Acronym	Organization
IDEM	Indiana Dept of Environmental Management
OC	Owen County
OCCC	Owen County Chamber of Commerce
OCED	Owen County Economic Development Corp
Sweet Owen CVB	Sweet Owen Convention & Visitors Bureau
YMCA	Young Men’s Christian Association



# Appendix

<b>I.</b>	<b>Engagement: Public Meeting Sign in Sheet</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Engagement: Survey Results</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Data: Demographic Report</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Context: Analysis</b>	<b>116</b>

# I. Engagement: Public Meeting Sign in Sheet

## Owen County Ready Communities Plan • Public Meeting • July 16, 2019

NAME	E-MAIL
MARCE KING	marce@myowencounty.com
JULIE COFFIN	JULIE_COFFIN@ATT.NET
Danielle Conner	dconner@oesbank.com
Don Bingham	donald@myowencounty.com
Niki + Brian Gessler	bessler@gmail.com niki.gazibara@gmail.com
Mark Rogers	mark@owencountyof.org
Andrea White	director@spencertolc.org
Lisa Eldridge	eldridge.lisa@gmail.com
Alyssa Rice	Alyssa@NatesCandyJar.com
Jessica Barrett	janet1@gmail.com
Deb Tomas	debtoomas@hotmail.com

## Owen County Ready Communities Plan • Public Meeting • July 16, 2019

Please print clearly.

Name	E-Mail
Mike Spinks	mike.spinks@owencounty.com
Tony (Anton) O. Neff	awn2@yahoo.com
Jan White	WhiteJan15@aol.com
DARRELL WHITE	
Mary Krupinski	mkrupinski@earthlink.net
STEVE WITHEM	swithem@indiana.edu
Suzanne Seymour	seymour-s@att.net
Lise Abbott	Lise.Abbott@homefinder.org
Andy Davis	and101@ic.edu
Quintin Thompson	quintin.thompson@gmail.com
Becky Mann	Swann@homefinder.org
Mark Quigley	MCQuigley@gmail.com
Robert White	rwhite4746@gmail.com

# I. Engagement: Public Meeting Sign in Sheet

Owen County Ready Communities Plan • Public Meeting • July 16, 201

Andy Kain	akain@div.edu
Kesha Crites	kesha.crites@gmail.com

## II. Engagement: Survey Results

Our survey was available throughout the planning process. We worked with the chamber and attended festivals to gather responses and often conducted interviews with the respondents. The remaining responses came from the online survey, which was advertised in the local newspaper and online. More than 235 people have completed the survey thus far, and that number will grow as we keep promoting it during our other planning processes this year.

## II. Engagement: Survey Results

### Owen County, Tell Us What You Think

We're asking Owen County residents what they value the most about their community, and what can be improved. Your participation will help us complete a *Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plan* and to compete for grants for local improvement projects. Thank you for getting involved!

1-A. Were you raised in Owen County? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. How long have you lived in Owen County?

☐ 0-5 years ☐ 6-10 years  
☐ 11-25 years ☐ 25+ years

3. Have you moved away from Owen County, then moved back?

☐ Yes ☐ No  
Why: \_\_\_\_\_

1-B. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Where do you live in Owen County?

☐ Spencer ☒ Gosport

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your employment status?

☐ Full-time ☐ Part-time ☐ Self-Employed  
☐ Unemployed ☐ Retired ☐ Student

6. Does this statement represent you? Mark with an X:

Yes Not Lately No

I attend a community, religious, business, political, and/or labor organization.			
I visited a friend or neighbor in the past month.			
I made a new friend in my community in the past three months. (Not Facebook)			
I attended a community event in the past three months.			
I ate at a local restaurant and/or bar in my community in the last month.			
I enjoyed Owen County's natural amenities in the last three months. (parks, hiking trails, bicycle/pedestrian trails)			
I engaged with Owen County's cultural amenities in the last three months. (performance venues, libraries, museums/arts, farmers' market, festivals/fair)			
I attended a government meeting in the last three months.			

7. What brought or keeps you in Owen County? Check all that apply:

- ☐ For my job. ☐ To live with or near my family.  
☐ For education or training. ☐ Because I enjoy the community, healthier work/life balance, and small-town life.  
☐ Because I enjoy the outdoors (lakes, woods, hills, parks). ☐ Because of the cultural amenities (performance venues, libraries, museums/ arts, farmer's market, festivals/fair).  
☐ So my children can attend the K-12 schools.  
☐ Because I find it affordable.

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. How much do you value these community assets? Mark with an X:

High Med. Low N/A

Natural amenities (parks, hiking trails, bicycle/pedestrian trails).				
Cultural amenities (performance venues, libraries, museums/arts, farmers' market, festivals/fair).				
Sense of community and friendly atmosphere.				
Involvement of residents in the community.				
Proximity to larger cities.				
Good job opportunities.				

### Owen County, Tell Us What You Think

9. My community provides what I need to *succeed in my job* (opportunities for growth, training, etc.)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

What is missing: \_\_\_\_\_?

10. My community provides what I need to *enjoy life after work* (recreation, opportunities for friends, etc.) ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

What is missing: \_\_\_\_\_?

11. Are there any specific businesses that you think are *needed* in Owen County?

List: \_\_\_\_\_

12. What should Owen County focus on in the next two years to improve everyday quality of life?

\_\_\_\_\_

13. What do you see as the biggest threats to the *future* of Owen County? Check ONLY the top two:

- ☐ There are not enough well-paying jobs. ☐ There is not enough housing that is affordable.  
☐ New developments are negatively impacting the character of Owen County. ☐ There are not enough people here between the ages of 25 -35 for the next generation.  
☐ We are not working hard enough to attract a new, talented workforce. ☐ We are not adequately improving amenities in Owen County.

14. Are there other threats not listed above in Question 13?

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

15. What are TWO *strengths* of Owen County?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. WHERE in Owen County should growth and development go?

\_\_\_\_\_

17. What is your long-term vision for Owen County? What would you like to see in your community?

\_\_\_\_\_

18. To what degree do you anticipate resistance to growth, change, or development in Owen County?

☐ Impossible ☐ High Resistance ☐ Low Resistance ☐ Neutral ☐ No Resistance

#### ONLY For Young Adults

1. Do you plan on leaving Owen County?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

4. If you indicated "Yes" for Question 1, what is your main reason for leaving?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. If you indicated "Yes" for Question 1, do you plan on returning someday?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

5. If you indicated "Yes" for Question 1, what will it take to keep you in Owen County?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Indicate your age group?

☐ 13-20 years ☐ 21-35 years



# II. Engagement: Survey Results

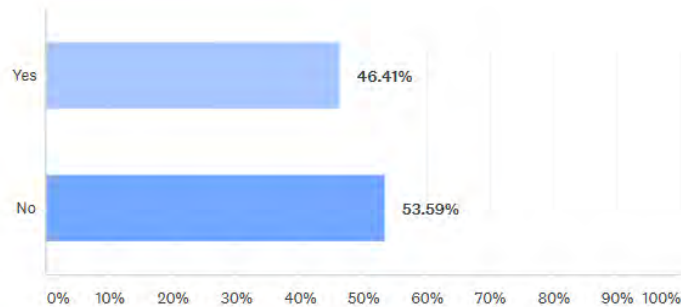
## Results of Owen County 2019 Survey

Survey Monkey - Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plan for ROI Grant

### Question 1

Were you raised in Owen County?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0

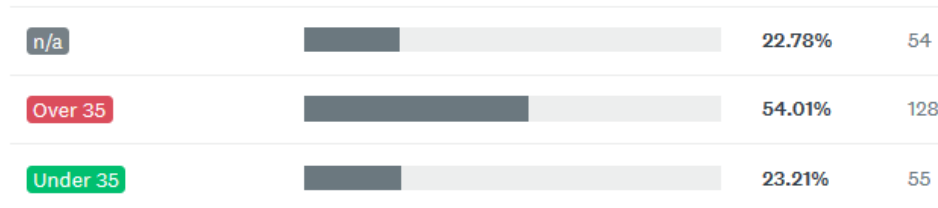


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	46.41% 110
▼ No	53.59% 127
TOTAL	237

### Question 2

What is your age?

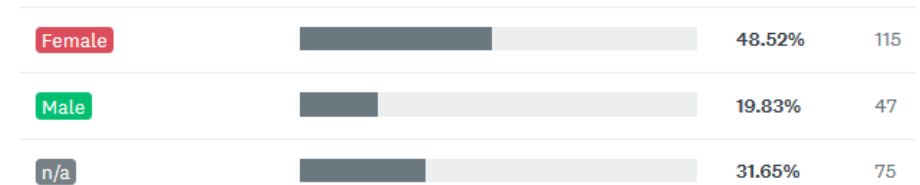
Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



### Question 3

What is your sex or gender?

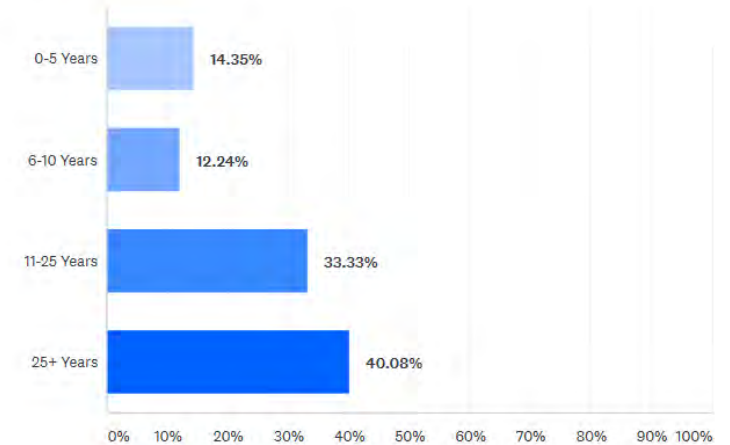
Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



### Question 4

How long have you lived in Owen County?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



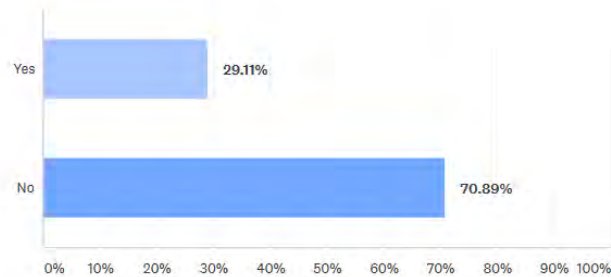
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ 0-5 Years	14.35% 34
▼ 6-10 Years	12.24% 29
▼ 11-25 Years	33.33% 79
▼ 25+ Years	40.08% 95

## II. Engagement: Survey Results

### Question 5

Have you ever moved away from Owen County, and then moved back?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



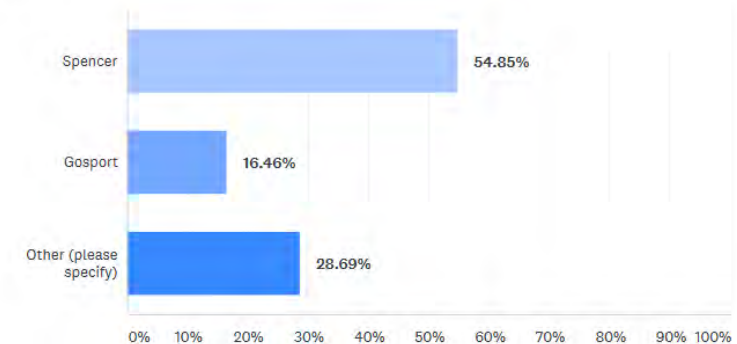
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	29.11%	69
No	70.89%	168
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>237</b>

Affordability		1.64%	1
College or Training		29.51%	18
Family Ties		32.79%	20
Housing		3.28%	2
Military Service		9.84%	6
Other		6.56%	4
Peace/Love of Com		14.75%	9
Work/Job		14.75%	9

### Question 6

Where do you live in Owen County?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Spencer	54.85%	130
Gosport	16.46%	39
Other (please specify)	28.69%	68
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>237</b>

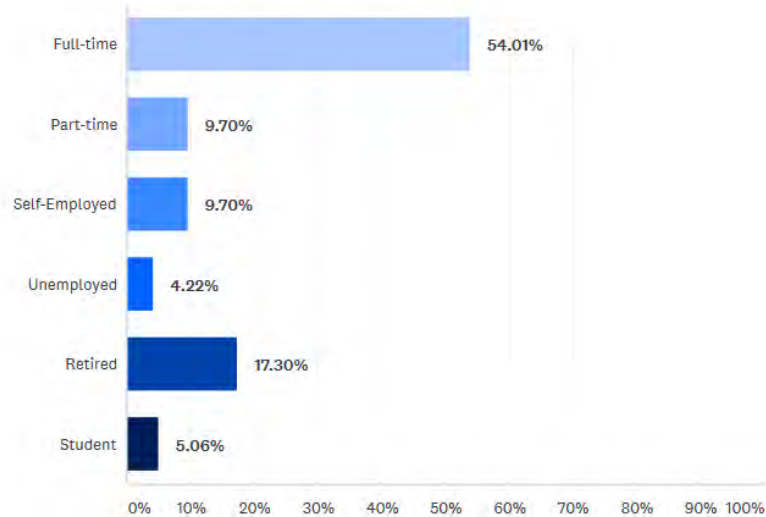
Coal City		8.82%	6
Freedom or Arney		19.12%	13
Near Spencer or Gosport		22.06%	15
Non-Owen Co		10.29%	7
Nondescript		17.65%	12
Patrickburg		5.88%	4
Poland		16.18%	11
Quincy		2.94%	2
Vandalia		1.47%	1

## II. Engagement: Survey Results

### Question 7

What is your employment status?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0

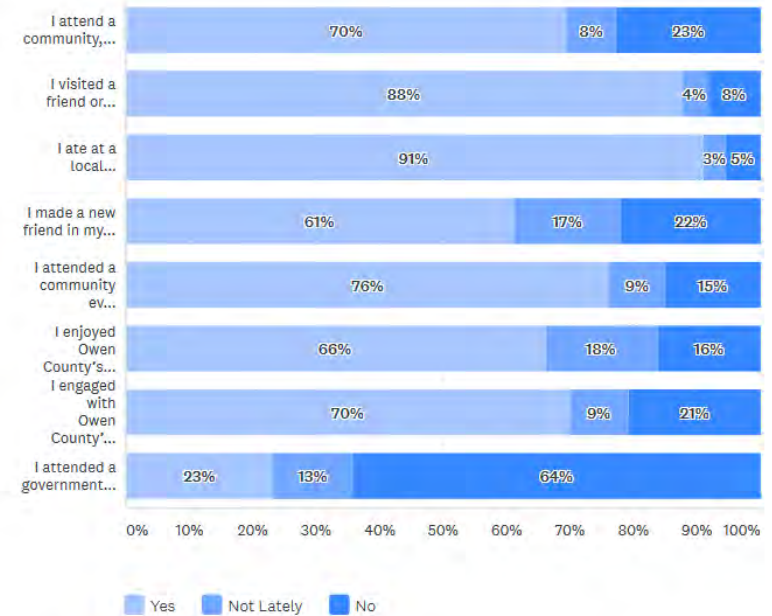


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Full-time	54.01%	128
▼ Part-time	9.70%	23
▼ Self-Employed	9.70%	23
▼ Unemployed	4.22%	10
▼ Retired	17.30%	41
▼ Student	5.06%	12
TOTAL		237

### Question 8

Does this statement represent you?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



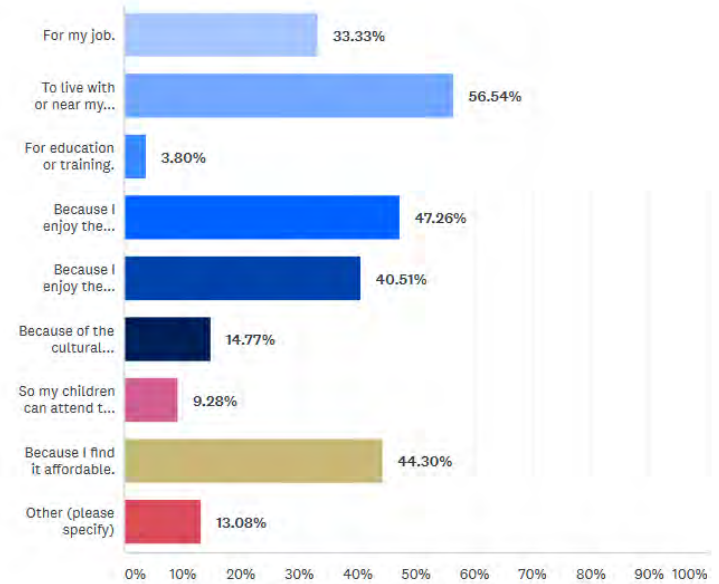
## II. Engagement: Survey Results

	YES	NOT LATELY	NO	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
I attend a community, religious, business, political, and/or labor organization.	69.62% 165	7.59% 18	22.78% 54	237	1.53
I visited a friend or neighbor in the past month.	87.76% 208	4.22% 10	8.02% 19	237	1.20
I ate at a local restaurant and/or bar in my community in the last month.	91.14% 216	3.38% 8	5.49% 13	237	1.14
I made a new friend in my community in the past three months. (Facebook does not count)	61.18% 145	16.88% 40	21.94% 52	237	1.61
I attended a community event in the past three months.	76.37% 181	8.86% 21	14.77% 35	237	1.38
I enjoyed Owen County's natural amenities in the last three months. (parks, hiking trails, bicycle/pedestrian trails)	66.24% 157	17.72% 42	16.03% 38	237	1.50
I engaged with Owen County's cultural amenities in the last three months. (performance venues, libraries, museums/arts, farmers' market, festivals/fair)	70.04% 166	9.28% 22	20.68% 49	237	1.51
I attended a government meeting in the last three months.	23.21% 55	12.66% 30	64.14% 152	237	2.41

### Question 9

What brought or keeps you in Owen County? Check all that apply:

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
For my job.	33.33% 79
To live with or near my family.	56.54% 134
For education or training.	3.80% 9
Because I enjoy the community, healthier work/life balance, and small-town life.	47.26% 112
Because I enjoy the outdoors (lakes, woods, hills, parks).	40.51% 96
Because of the cultural amenities (performance venues, libraries, museums/ arts, farmer's market, festivals/fair).	14.77% 35
So my children can attend the K-12 schools.	9.28% 22
Because I find it affordable.	44.30% 105
Other (please specify)	13.08% 31
Total Respondents: 237	

## II. Engagement: Survey Results

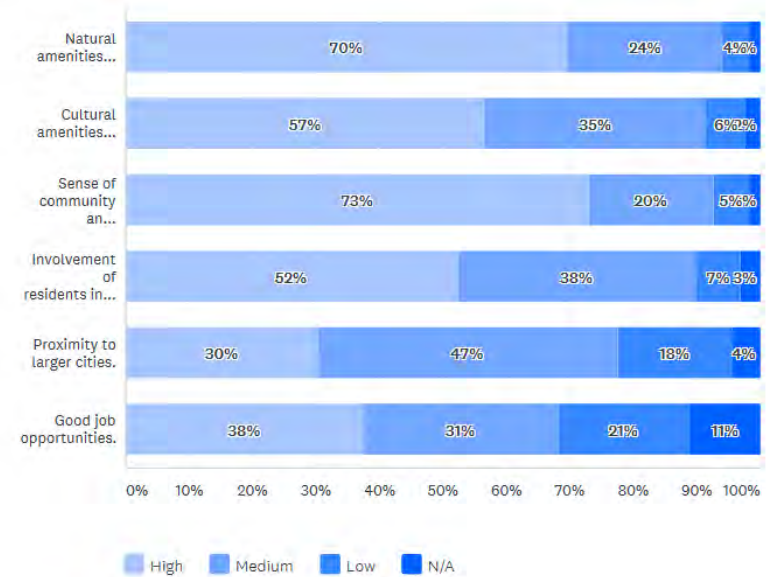
### Other Responses:

Community/Peace	<div><div></div></div>	35.48%	11
Family/Sig. Other	<div><div></div></div>	35.48%	11
Friends	<div><div></div></div>	3.23%	1
Job	<div><div></div></div>	12.90%	4
Low Cost of Living	<div><div></div></div>	9.68%	3
Nature	<div><div></div></div>	12.90%	4
Non-Owen Co	<div><div></div></div>	3.23%	1
Nondescript	<div><div></div></div>	9.68%	3
Proximity	<div><div></div></div>	6.45%	2

### Question 10

How much do you value these community assets?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	N/A	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
▼ Natural amenities (parks, hiking trails, bicycle/pedestrian trails).	69.62% 165	24.47% 58	4.22% 10	1.69% 4	237	1.33
▼ Cultural amenities (performance venues, libraries, museums/arts, farmers' market, festivals/fair).	56.54% 134	35.02% 83	6.33% 15	2.11% 5	237	1.49
▼ Sense of community and friendly atmosphere.	73.00% 173	19.83% 47	5.49% 13	1.69% 4	237	1.31
▼ Involvement of residents in the community.	52.32% 124	37.55% 89	7.17% 17	2.95% 7	237	1.53
▼ Proximity to larger cities.	30.38% 72	47.26% 112	18.14% 43	4.22% 10	237	1.87
▼ Good job opportunities.	37.55% 89	30.80% 73	20.68% 49	10.97% 26	237	1.81

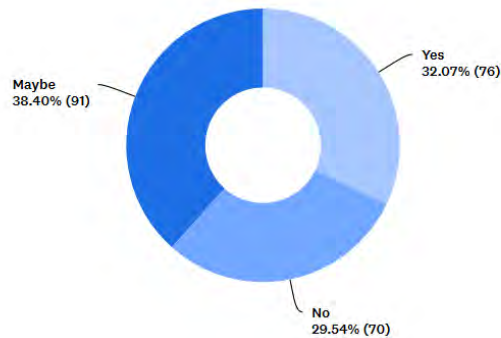


## II. Engagement: Survey Results

### Question 11

My community provides what I need to succeed in my job (opportunities growth, training, etc.).

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	32.07%
▼ No	29.54%
▼ Maybe	38.40%
TOTAL	237

[Comments \(81\)](#)

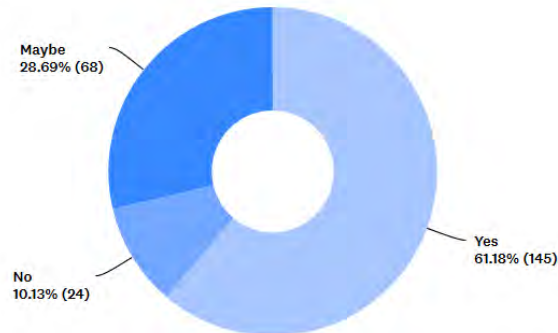
Better/Aff. Housing	7.41%	6
Better/More Jobs	25.93%	21
Education/Training	11.11%	9
Healthcare/Dental	2.47%	2
Improved Government	1.23%	1
Improved Roads	3.70%	3
Increased Funding	3.70%	3
Increased Tourism	3.70%	3
Internet Access	8.64%	7
More Buisness	16.05%	13
More Restaraunts	1.23%	1
No or n/a	28.40%	23
Public Transportation	6.17%	5
Support the Arts	2.47%	2

## II. Engagement: Survey Results

### Question 12

My community provides what I need to enjoy life after work (recreation opportunities for friends, etc.).

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	61.18%	145
▼ No	10.13%	24
▼ Maybe	28.69%	68
TOTAL		237

### Question 13

Are there any specific businesses that you think are needed in Owen County?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0

#### Responses

- 7 Alteration/sewing shop. Im trying to get one up and running in town!
- More sit down restaurants that are open later in the day and that offers other dining options like steak and seafood. Bowling, mini golf, go carts, maybe a small zoo or theme park to bring in revenue as well.
- 9 Better restaurants, a pediatric dental office, pediatricians, a kids barber would be great, more businesses geared towards kids, I have to travel 40+ miles for quality pediatric care
- 11 A shoe store--better quality than Walmart but affordable for families. A local newspaper--I know that we have one; I'm just reinforcing the fact that we NEED one, and I hope the SEW is able to carry on.
- 15 restaurants, canoe/kayak rental, smaller scale fitness/ymca in outreach areas. Gosport needs evening restaurant option or community coffee house option.
- 29 Locally Owned, non-chain (no more fast food) restaurants + shops, a book store, a healthy food coop or grocery!!
- 33 More restaurants, more areas for teens and youth to gather, especially in the evenings, more places to socialize.
- 89 More health care oriented businesses, small tech oriented businesses, more art related small businesses.
- 120 A good sit down and eat restaurant. Arby's would be nice. Something different than hamburger & pizza. Crossroad dinner is nice but they need to open longer for dinner( the evening meal)
- 141 A variety of downtown businesses from bakeries, to butcher shops, to ice cream parlors and a small bowling alley, this is new technology smaller balls shorter alleys great scoring.
- 147 Restaurants, wish the Walmart was bigger with more variety. Babbs and save a lot are too expensive or don't have what I need so I have to travel Bloomington.
- 148 Cellular companies I think in general is one (I.e. Verizon, AT&T, etc.). A good local gym. I know that there is the YMCA, but they only house the most basic equipment when it comes to weightlifting and cardio.
- 150 A good sit down diner place would be nice. I know there is Chambers, Jits, El Ranchero, Civilian and Crossroads but a "nice" restaurant would be good.
- 159 More dining not in the vein of Crossroads 46 or Chambers. These places are great but sit down restaurants where one could enjoy cocktails and live music would be great. Higher quality food and variety are sorely missing. Another bar or two would be nice.
- 160 Local restaurants, grocery store that offers healthy foods-a serve yourself salad bar, homemade ice cream stand, bicycle shop, outdoor supply shop (hiking, running, camping supplies), music store (offering lessons), boutiques. The park in our town draws lots of outdoorsy people and we should be trying to draw them into our town -not sending them into Bloomington
- 186 An actually bar! The brewery is cool but did not replace skids.Gosport should have a gym of some sort. Like a small community gym or maybe a pool.
- 196 Machining operation that is small but allows a central location for custom ordered parts. And a variety of skilled jobs.
- 197 More advance Manufacturing and tech jobs that paid good wages would be a good start.
- 201

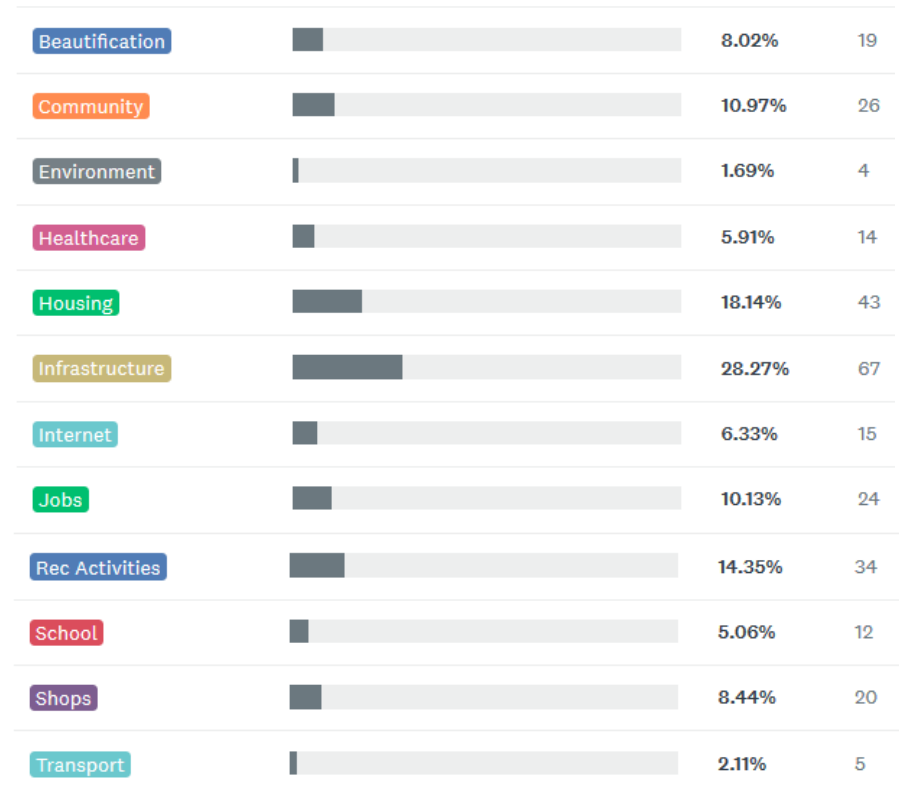
## II. Engagement: Survey Results

- 202 More businesses catering to the needs of youth/families with youth. For example: water park, indoor playground, supervised "hang out" type venues
- 204 More businesses with a high standard for excellence. Would like to see small businesses thrive and be able to keep their doors open
- 205 Recreational facilities i.e. skateboard park, bowling, arcade, mini golf, go-karts, Maybe a business that is technology centered that attracts high end paying jobs for young people.
- 206 Bowling Alley, Skating Rink, Pool, Large chain, Grocery, fun to get young people/families here.
- 223 baking, grocery store w/ organic options, more restaurants, addictions help center
- 226 Bookstore, activity center, community garden
- 237

### Question 14

What should Owen County focus on in the next two years to improve everyday quality of life?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0

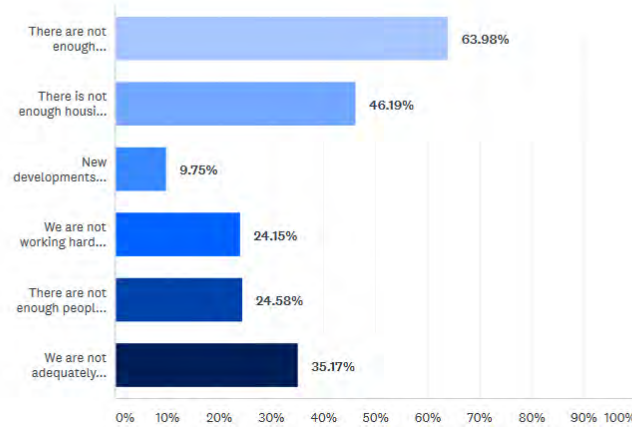


# II. Engagement: Survey Results

## Question 15

What do you see as the biggest threats to the future of Owen County? (Check ONLY the top two)

Answered: 236 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
There are not enough well-paying jobs.	63.98% 151
There is not enough housing that is affordable.	46.19% 109
New developments are negatively impacting the character of Owen County.	9.75% 23
We are not working hard enough to attract a new, talented workforce.	24.15% 57
There are not enough people here between the ages of 25 -35 for the next generation.	24.58% 58
We are not adequately improving amenities in Owen County.	35.17% 83
Total Respondents: 236	

## Question 16

Are there other threats not listed above in Question 15?

Answered: 209 Skipped: 28

Responses	
3	Lack of animal control, law enforcement related to animal welfare
17	Sometimes it seems that people who have been here all their lives have too much say in how things go. Their opinions are often outdated and harmful to our future.
27	46 is like a throughfare, there is nothing (no signs) pointing people to turn off the highway + visit shops/restaurants, "historic downtown!" (for Spencer or Gosport!). The intersection of main and 46 is TERRIBLE and UNINVITING for drawing visitors to Spencer.
98	Promote clean yards, roadways moved, flowers, along all roads and streets in Owen Co.
112	Cooperation and communication and relationships in elected roles, not working together
113	Not following Owen County's Zoning Ordinance adopted in 2003
116	There are very few apartments/rentals in the area with more than 2 bedrooms. It would be nice to have some affordable town houses.
118	Mental health issues for teens and young adults—access to resources. Loss of family structure, too many kids living at or below poverty level. Parents failing to do their job.
136	The growing need for mental health services. It seems to me that the population (not just in Owen Co.) has in increased mental health level of need. There are not enough resouces aviable to meet that need.
141	Cataract is a beautiful natural resource, but lets be honest, we have a drug problem out in that area. Houses sell for next to nothing out there and we know it's not a great area. It's ashame that such a beautiful area in our county has come to that. Some kind of action has to be taken to clean up that area.
148	Limited senior housing and amenities
149	Infrastructure! Our roads run people away! Lots of people can't afford housing in Monroe so they are looking to the counties on the outskirts. I consistently hear from clients that they aren't interested in Owen Co because of the roads.
167	New people who are moving into the community and are destroying the history of the community. They are causing friction among the people who have lived here their entire lives. If we wanted our small community to be like a large city, we would move there. Do not come in and change things by making rules and regulations that are not needed.
168	Drug abuse and longer term drug substance abuse. Individuals knowing ahead of time when they will be tested for drugs so they can beat the tests. Also better drug testing thru probation, centerstone and court requirement such as hair, urine or blood testing. Mouth swabs don't work well with meth or herion. Kids deserved to be protected better.
175	We have a base of older residents who don't want ANY change to Owen County.
180	Our education system is key. Why would someone want to move their family to Owen county when we have poor ratings compared to Bloomington or Ellettsville. Why wouldn't people just move 30 minutes East to give their kids a better school?
190	Keeping up with new technologies
191	Old boy attitude to change (resistance), not enough zoning
196	Safe Roads to travel here, the roads are a deterrent. Our community is finacially broke. Roads need big repair now!
205	people to start new businesses downtown
207	Country Roads (will leave if the county allows Percision Gun Range and Trash Transfer Station)

## II. Engagement: Survey Results

### Question 17

What are TWO strengths of Owen County?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0

Responses	
5	Friendly town that's not too big, not too small. Somewhat progressive for a small town in Indiana.
7	The arts, and the farmers market
8	Many eager and interested individuals are working hard to develop and improve OC. Many great opportunities for community involvement.
9	Family friendly atmosphere and lots of wild area
11	The people here are like no other, full of kindness and compassion. There is a sense of belonging no matter your social class and where you go. Working in Carmel makes me value our small town simple life
13	It's absolutely beautiful. The YMCA is awesome. McCormick's Creek State park is wonderful. SES and OVHS are great. OVMS needs help.
14	Proximity to Bloomington, Indy & Terre Haute Absolutely beautiful
15	1) I think we have great "civic" leadership right now (as distinct from "elected" leadership). 2) our natural resources (as long as we take care of them)
17	For the most part, people are tolerant. OC is a friendly place.
20	Small town atmosphere, friendly. Less than an hour from larger cities
21	The Pride Festival and the way the local community has accepted the LGBT folks who have moved here or lived here already. The small town vibe that lets kids be kids a little longer than their big city counterparts.
26	Natural Beauty. Strong Engaged Community
28	Local lakes/parks, not densely populated
29	natural amenities, affordability
31	Political Climate. Caring Population.
32	Community involvement, relaxing, genuine small town feel, strong sense of place.
33	Natural beauty! + River! A lovely historic square (Spencer).
34	MCSP - lots of energy! Improvements to downtown! More attractive + inviting!
43	Strong sense of community, lots of opportunities for help for those who need it
74	Volunteers, Cook/Boston Jobs
75	Lots of stuff for how big we are, the park
76	McCormicks, Downtown is improving, Economical to live here
79	Sense of community. Our natural beauty.
80	A great sense of community. Our State Park!
81	Nature. Size.
82	Community. New Shops.

### Question 18

WHERE in Owen County should growth and development go?

Answered: 232 Skipped: 5

Most respondents gave no or incomplete responses. There are no trends other than near community centers.

### Question 19

What is your long-term vision for Owen County? What would you like to see in your community?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0

Responses	
2	I would like to see Owen County to continue to grow as it has been. Additional housing and child care agencies are needed to attract families to want to move to/and to remain in Owen County. Child care is very limited and is an area that needs great attention. Affordable housing will also need to be addressed as the county continues to grow.
3	A great place to raise family ! In the area of Freedom a store with fuel would be nice ! Just saying that every little town affiliated with Owen County is missing something that could be used right away
8	It'd be nice for OC to be self-sustaining. I'd be happy to live in a town where I can live, shop, and enjoy community life without the need to drive to a larger town or city.
9	A thriving community that has a wide range of family friendly restaurants, activity centers, cultural things such as zoos and libraries ,as well as valuing the wild areas surrounding it.
11	I'd love to see improvements on the buildings in town and our town to be better kept. Driving thru town can be embarrassing when you look at how run down everything looks. I'd also like to see more pediatric practices and services geared towards younger people
13	I do not mind some growth to improve the community for all. However I do not want Spencer to be over grown like Brownsburg or Noblesville. I was born and raised in central Indian and I have watched allot of small towns grown in to lost cities. It would be a shame if that happened to Spencer. most of the people are so nice and laid back. It would be a shame to lose that.
15	MORE community involvement. Huge groups of people gathered on the Square (for whatever events). More cohesiveness (between town residents and rural, between Spencer and Gosport, between those who are active and those who are not). Better communication--a 21st-century challenge, I think. With newspaper subscriptions down, HOW do we keep the general population informed about....anything and everything? As an artist, I would like to see the arts community grow. An artists' co-op would be great.
17	In general, I would like to see growth in the cultural aspects of our county.
18	Local government that works together, internet access, affordable housing, encouragement of small business, ecological county planning, more open minded thinking.
21	I would like to see my kids have a reason to stay here and raise their families. Maybe an under 21 club and a bar that catered to young adults. Since the one in Spencer closed and the new Brewery has early hours, they go to Bloomington.



## II. Engagement: Survey Results

22	A thriving community with fun activities and well paying jobs where people want to stay and raise their family. I believe we our on our way there. To be more connected through trails and the river, to enhance the access to nature for those that live and visit Owen County.	108	We all worry about the "rising" generation but let's not forget the older generation - affordable assisted living so we don't have to go to Bloomington, more activities, etc.
26	To see another 2,500 new housing unit over the next 10 years....	123	Affordable housing that are not run down trailers, bug infested apartments, family events all year long that are affordable for all, and a county we can all be proud of. School system needs a major overhaul as well as the county offices that care about our roads and want to attract money from outsiders.
28	Unfortunately I don't have a long-term vision for Owen county. Our goal is to move away because of poor roads and trashy properties.		I love that there have been so many improvements on/near the square. Now, I feel we need to do more to encourage spending there to keep it flourishing. Also, people have expressed frustration over housing near town. There are few apartments/rentals, and many of them are 2 bedrooms or less. A family with 2 kids often has to move out in the country to find a rental that can accommodate them. Also, many of the apartments in town having extensive waiting lists.
29	Improve the current housing stock for affordable housing for all. With more population, there would be more taxes generated to work on our issues. I would like to see Owen County as the smart local choice for living!	131	More residents involved. If you are not in the elite group, you are never asked to serve on a committee or make decisions regarding what goes on in your community
31	More people involvement in community affairs, YMCA + Library out reach to other areas in Owen County other than just Spencer.	134	More trails for our area and connecting with Ellettsville and Gosport. We need free parking downtown Spencer and more warehousing for the life science companies in town.
32	With the expected job growth housing is a main priority, internet access, employment/education advancements to keep young people here. Internships for the youth.	147	Equality for all. No special treatment based on wither or not you are official, or special treatment based on sexual orientation.
33	I want to see it become financially viable for small business + this will depend on increased tourism, becoming a destination for visitors, for the arts, for nature, for shops and restaurants. We have what it takes to be a success!! :)	149	Lots of new job opportunities, affordable housing, more activities for everyone, our county government officials actually doing their jobs and not stonewalling everything.
35	I like what the school is doing with the alternative schools. I can see that bringing some manufacturing jobs.	154	More outsiders choosing to live here and raise their families. I would also love to see more church involvement in our community.
36	More vibrant city center, opportunities, for college graduates	155	The small town feel is important when you think of a rural community but I would like to see the safety of a small town feel return to the community.
37	I would settle for people not becoming coalitionist, I would choose death before I would submit to socialist	156	Continued growth for businesses and community. Introduction of new competing businesses, expanded services for technology and it's serving industries, and a reinvestment in the youth of the community.
53	Focus on bringing quality jobs and growth to community, retain young people to prevent brain drain	160	I don't want the town to change ~too~ much... I like it here. But it's headed in the right direction. New paved streets, downtown revitalization, etc. I hope to see the town embrace the buildings, landmarks, and resources that we already have and make the most of them to attract new, younger families.
69	More small businesses on the square, more entertainment and opportunities for teens/young adults to get together	162	I would like to see growth. Kids who want to make something of themselves. People not addicted to meth walking the streets. Job opportunities for convicted people who are looking to better themselves.
80	More housing for younger families. A city park that does not flood. Continued enthusiasm about small business in all of the county. I would like to see our elected officials do their jobs for the betterment of our community. To face the challenges, make decisions not matter how tough they may be. I love my town. I just want the best for all who live here. Thanks!	163	Expanded tax base from new businesses paying good wages to families that have ample housing choices and numerous entertainment options.
86	I would like to see a full time community center open as a safe haven and education center. A place where culture can be germinated.	170	I would like to see a massive effort to overhaul the roads. I strongly feel that if the roads were improved our real estate would sky rocket. All this would mean more tax money for the county, more businesses would consider joining our community. The more people we add the stronger the community!
88	Keep the sense of community and offer more for those moving into the area to do inside of the town limits	171	Hopefully, the county will advance with officials that truly want to see growth and stop bickering with each other.
93	People that work in the county, living in the county. Using the old plant site for a new business and keeping our talented young people coming back to live and work locally.	181	We have talented people with the desire to make things better, but they are always stopped!!! Therefore, we lose these people and make absolutely NO progress.
94	Effective governance with LEADERS who spearhead efforts by finding common ground, efficiently expending tax dollars, and motivating the citizenry to get involved. Affordable housing. More decent paying jobs. Protect the environment (a great asset).		Revitalize downtown first- make it visually attractive. Bring in more businesses and festivals are great too. Partner with McCormick's Creek State Park in projects that will draw their clientele (e.g., outdoorsy folks) to our town and not let Bloomington steel those people from us. Build the 4- H program—so much that organization can offer at almost no cost to youth! Would like working people to move out of the 'city' of Bloomington or Terre Haute and realize how great a choose Owen County can be
97	I would like Spencer to become a special destination for people to come for a tasteful and unique experience.		
98	Continued Sewer, Water, and WIFI expansion and availability across the county will greatly help in attracting people to stay and live here as well as facilitate the development of housing.		
103	I would like to see Owen Co become a better place for young families to live and work. More decent paying jobs and more housing in general. I would also like to see more interest from County government to form a Parks and Rec. Department.		
107	Very neat and clean community - all towns and rural area where possible. Owen County is a wonderful area in which to live.		

## II. Engagement: Survey Results

191

Continued development on the square and the completion of MY Path and added jobs for college educated professionals

193

A water type pool with slides and water activities during summer months. A super Walmart. Better tax base for individuals without children, elderly so many cant afford taxes on their homes, more transportation for individuals elderly, disabled, or can not drive to go do shopping, get medicine, and go to doctor appointments. That would be an idea for a new. Business for someone. Several elderly express that current rural transit is difficult to schedule and spend most of their time serving nursing homes in the area.

195

A steak house! Allowing some business without destroying the aesthetics of the town. A very controlled growth.

200

More community involvement. Keep taxes low. Improve educational opportunities. Housing for a workforce.

201

I would like to see more community involvement and pride for our county from the residents. Too often I hear, "Well, it is Owen County," in a disparaging light.

202

It would be nice to see a community where neighbors talk to one another regularly. Neighborhood areas like playgrounds, meeting facilities, etc. would be great for this.

203

I would love to see a park such as Karst Farm. Free (well kept) playgrounds, soccer fields, splash pad, sand box. A place where everyone in Owen County could afford to let their kids enjoy the summer outdoors.

204

I hope to see a small town community that thrives and attracts people because of its safety, charm, and excellent workforce.

205

More downtown businesses with nice apartment housing above. Clean up few remaining eyesores on Morgan street to improve Spencer's appearance(offer incentives for those undesirable businesses to relocate)

206

Great infrastructure for future growth, improved quality of life (higher paying jobs, education, amenities), less negativity and more getting something done.

207

Vision - more emphasis on cradle to college education for all kids, support for families, and well educated young adults returning to Owen Co. to live, work, and enjoy their community Keeps expanding and growing, as long as they don't build so fast, don't overdo it (out west housing booms).

210

Expansion and development, county line, so where it rains we don't have to go to Spencer to get home.

222

Large chain stores to compete w/pricing of food. For Gosport to not be forgotten. Kids need something to do here in Gosport.

223

Gosport needs to be included in planning for Owen County. Gosport is growing and it seems like the rest of the county ignores it. It'll be an opportunity missed!

226

Continued growth in jobs added that will attract people from outside of the County, expand housing.

231

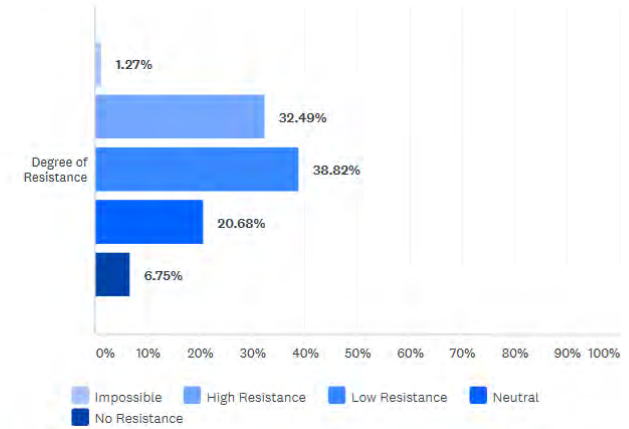
I would like to see the sense of community to grow and increased housing for young people so they have the ability to stay. (mother of two)

237

### Question 20

To what degree do you anticipate resistance to growth, change, or development in Owen County?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0



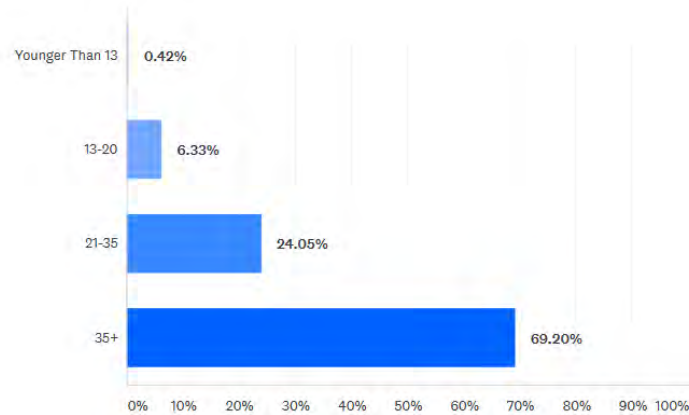
	IMPOSSIBLE	HIGH RESISTANCE	LOW RESISTANCE	NEUTRAL	NO RESISTANCE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Degree of Resistance	1.27% 3	32.49% 77	38.82% 92	20.68% 49	6.75% 16	237	2.99

## II. Engagement: Survey Results

### Question 21

What is your age group?

Answered: 237 Skipped: 0

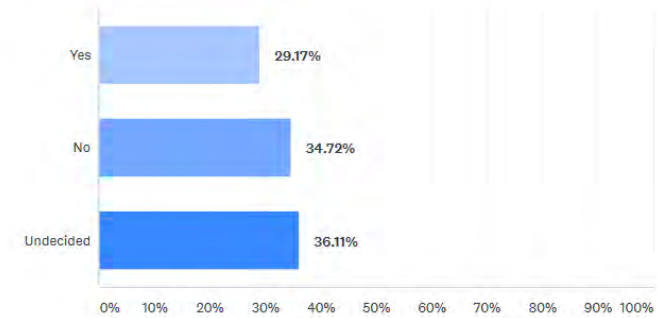


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Younger Than 13	0.42%
13-20	6.33%
21-35	24.05%
35+	69.20%
TOTAL	237

### Question 22

Do you plan on leaving Owen County?

Answered: 72 Skipped: 165



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	29.17%
No	34.72%
Undecided	36.11%
TOTAL	72

## II. Engagement: Survey Results

### Question 23

If you indicated "Yes" for Question 22, what is your main reason for leaving?

Answered: 72 Skipped: 165

#### Responses

- 1 The type of job I want is not located in Owen County and these jobs have a mileage requirement for their employees. Many of these jobs are too far away from Owen County to meet the requirement
- 2 I'm not leaving
- 7 Schools and lack of common sense in Owen County's population.
- 22 Nothing to do
- 29 College
- 30 search for new opportunity
- 31 I like bigger cities.
- 32 to be closer to husbands work
- 34 Travel, job opportunities, new experiences
- 35 Family
- 37 I want to live in a place of adventure
- 39 Employment proximity to work
- 40 Jobs
- 42 new opportunities, new buildings
- 43 more opportunities/change
- 46 Roads and lack of services.
- Job is elsewhere, also I have to travel out of Owen county to eat or get groceries cause babbs is too expensive and save a lot has no choices.
- 48 Job opportunity
- 49 Not enough housing or amenities
- 52 Job growth
- 53 If I do leave it will be for work.
- 55 No opportunity. Too much drama. Too many drugs. Too much crime.
- There isn't enough here for me. I need to make more money and experience more. I've experience all there is to experience in Owen County.
- 57 I'm not sure. The roads and limited utility (Internet, public water) services become more and more frustrating to me.
- 59 I'm not leaving
- 60 Undecided if leaving
- 64 I put undecided but it's closer to a yes - there's no job outlook and I'd like to pursue a masters
- If we left, it would be going to Ellettsville. Near our school (Seven Oaks), and additional kid activities.
- 65 I may leave, I may not.
- 69 No housing available w/o mortgage or section 8
- 72

### Question 24

If you indicated "Yes" for Question 22, what will it take to keep you in Owen County?

Answered: 72 Skipped: 165

#### Responses

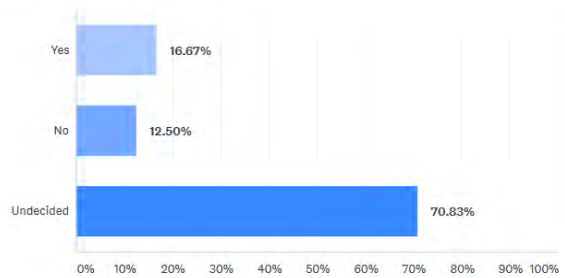
- 1 Create positions for the job that I want
- 2 Not leaving
- 5 Nothing. I'm here for family
- 7 Honestly, I won't move I just might take my kids to different schools.
- 18 Job and school options
- 22 Skatepark, local shops
- 24 Better jobs
- 29 My family
- 31 More accepting people!
- 32 better schools and jobs
- 34 A well paying job in my chosen profession.
- 35 Affordable housing
- 37 More opportunities for adventure
- 40 Better Jobs
- 41 A college
- 43 nothing really, I want to go and do more things
- 46 We've got to fix our roads
- 48 Better stores & restaurants
- 49 Create a job opportunity
- 50 More housing, amenities and businesses
- 51 Nothing, it is not our choice.
- I lived here my whole life but had moved to Greene County to assistance in a church. I did not leave for any other reason. I currently work in Owen Co.
- 52 Expansion of tech related jobs near by.
- A better system in place for keeping people off drugs and allowing decent paying opportunities for the less fortunate.
- 55 Higher paying jobs, more opportunities for the arts, more recreation.
- 57 A massive effort to overhaul our infrastructure!
- 59 More affordable housing
- 60 Not leaving
- 63 Career opportunities to make more than 40k and not have to do it in a factory or trade.
- 64 Family, small town feel.
- 65 At this moment family connections and a hope to see my hometown become a gem in central Indiana
- 66 More High Paying Jobs
- 71 affordable housing
- 72

# II. Engagement: Survey Results

## Question 25

If you indicated "Yes" for Question 22, do you plan on returning someday?

Answered: 72 Skipped: 165



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	16.67%	12
▼ No	12.50%	9
▼ Undecided	70.83%	51
TOTAL	72	



# III. Data: Demographic Report

## I. Population

1. **Population size:** Change in population over time
2. **Young Population:** Rate youth are leaving Spencer

Data Browser, Population size: <http://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/anydata/>  
Youth Population:

## II. Primary Education

1. **School Grades for 2018:** Overall school grade based on variety of factors

Grades: <https://www.niche.com/k12/d/spencer-owen-community-schools-in/#schools>

## III. College Readiness

1. **College:** % going to college vs % going to workforce
2. **College performance:** Students continuing to Year 2

Indiana College readiness report, College Going and College Performance:  
<https://www.in.gov/che/4553.htm>

## IV. Community Health

1. **Adult Obesity:** Rate of obesity for Owen county Adults vs National avg.
2. **Modeled Drug Overdose Deaths:** Estimated overdose deaths per year

County Health Rankings, Health Behaviors (Adult Obesity) and Additional Health Behaviors (Modeled Drug Overdose Deaths):  
<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/indiana/2019/rankings/owen/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

## V. Workforce

1. **Income per Capita:** Income per capita for Owen county, Indiana, and US
2. **Location Quotient:** LQ for Manufacturing for Owen County and Indiana

Income per Capita: Stats Indiana  
[http://www.stats.indiana.edu/dms4/new\\_dpage.asp?profile\\_id=339&output\\_mode=2](http://www.stats.indiana.edu/dms4/new_dpage.asp?profile_id=339&output_mode=2)  
Location Quotient: BLS LQ Data:  
[https://data.bls.gov/cew/doc/layouts/cty\\_high\\_level\\_layout.htm](https://data.bls.gov/cew/doc/layouts/cty_high_level_layout.htm)

## VI. Underemployed

1. **Out of Reach:** Hours worked needed to afford 1 bedroom apt
2. **Alice:** Change in poverty and ALICE over time

2018 Alice County Report: <https://www.iuw.org/alice>  
Out of Reach Data: <https://reports.nlihc.org/or/indiana>

## VII. Social Well Being

1. **Voting Turnout:** % Turnout for General Elections for Owen county and Indiana
2. **Disconnected Youth** (16-24 not in school or working):

Voter Turnout: <https://www.in.gov/sos/elections/2983.htm>  
County health, Additional Social & Economic Factors, Disconnected Youth:  
<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/indiana/2019/rankings/owen/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

## VIII. Housing

1. **Own vs Rent**
2. **Home Age**

Own v Rent: 3 values (Owner occupied, renter occupied, vacant)  
[https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community\\_facts.xhtml](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml)

Home Age: <https://pcrd.purdue.edu/ruralindianastats/housing/physical-characteristics.php?variable=year-built&county=Owen>

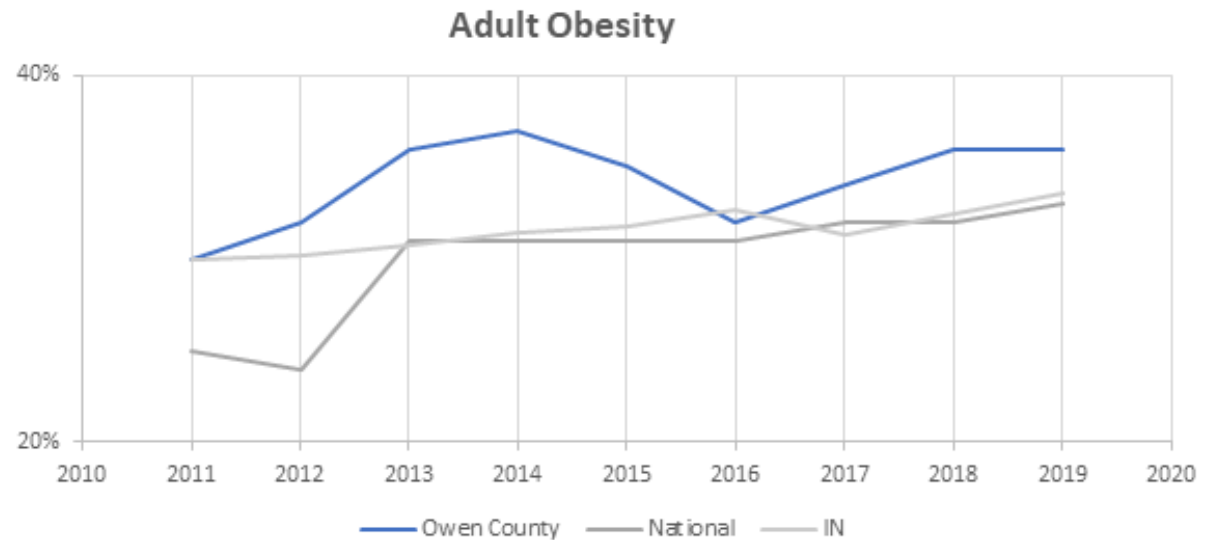
## IX. Commuting/Workforce

1. **Commuting flows:** % of the commuters to work in or out of the county
2. **Work Force:** % of Owen county workforce from in county or from a different county

Commuting flows: Stats Indiana:  
[http://www.stats.indiana.edu/dms4/new\\_dpage.asp?profile\\_id=306&output\\_mode=2](http://www.stats.indiana.edu/dms4/new_dpage.asp?profile_id=306&output_mode=2)

## IV. Adult Obesity Comparision

Adult Obesity			
Year	Owen County	National	IN
2011	0.3	0.25	0.30
2012	0.32	0.24	0.30
2013	0.36	0.31	0.31
2014	0.37	0.31	0.31
2015	0.35	0.31	0.32
2016	0.32	0.31	0.33
2017	0.34	0.32	0.31
2018	0.36	0.32	0.33
2019	0.36	0.33	0.34



# V. Context: Full Asset List

<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Drive In 67	Carp
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Uplands Peak Sanctuary	Freedom
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Rolling Meadows Golf Course	Gosport
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Penguin Cycle Works	Gosport
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Milly McGees Diner	Gosport
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Spencer Downtown	Spencer
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Owen Valley Winery	Spencer
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Spencer Main St	Spencer
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	YMCA	Spencer
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	4H Program	Spencer
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Owen Valley Sports Complex	Spencer
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Pine Woods Golf Course	Spencer
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Owen County Fairgrounds	Spencer
<a href="#">Amenities</a>	Brewery	Spencer
<a href="#">Arts &amp; Culture</a>	Greydog Art Gallery	Gosport
<a href="#">Arts &amp; Culture</a>	Stable Studios	Patrickburg
<a href="#">Arts &amp; Culture</a>	Tivoli Theater	Spencer
<a href="#">Arts &amp; Culture</a>	Owen County Art Guild	Spencer
<a href="#">Arts &amp; Culture</a>	Tamarack Stoneware	Spencer
<a href="#">Arts &amp; Culture</a>	Juniper Art Gallery	Spencer
<a href="#">Events</a>	Bean Dinner Festival	Catact
<a href="#">Events</a>	Coal City Festival	Coal City
<a href="#">Events</a>	Gosport Lazy Days	Gosport
<a href="#">Events</a>	Patriot Festival	Gosport
<a href="#">Events</a>	Pumpkins in the Park	Gosport
<a href="#">Events</a>	Spencer Pride	Spencer
<a href="#">Events</a>	Apple Butter Festival	Spencer
<a href="#">Events</a>	County fair	Spencer
<a href="#">Events</a>	Arts in the Park	Spencer
<a href="#">Events</a>	Route 20 - Religious Group	Spencer
<a href="#">Events</a>	Strawberry Festival	Vandalia
<a href="#">Historic Sites</a>	Amish Store	Carp
<a href="#">Historic Sites</a>	Catact School House	Catact
<a href="#">Historic Sites</a>	Catact General Store	Catact
<a href="#">Historic Sites</a>	Catact Covered Bridge	Catact
<a href="#">Historic Sites</a>	Presbyterian Church	Coal City
<a href="#">Historic Sites</a>	Owen County Court House	Spencer
<a href="#">Historic Sites</a>	Owen County Heritage and Culture Center	Spencer
<a href="#">Historic Sites</a>	Robinson House	Spencer
<a href="#">Historic Sites</a>	Beem House	Spencer
<a href="#">Historic Sites</a>	Vandalia Chapel	Vandalia
<a href="#">Major Employers</a>	Gosport MFG	Gosport

<a href="#">Major Employers</a>	Boston Scientific	Spencer
<a href="#">Major Employers</a>	Cook	Spencer
<a href="#">Major Employers</a>	Owen Valley School Corporation	Spencer
<a href="#">Major Employers</a>	World Arts MFG	Spencer
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Amazon Lake	Carp
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Corns Ridge	Catact
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Catact Lake Cabins	Catact
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Camp Otto Lake	Catact
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Paradise Lake	Catact
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Hickory Hills	Catact
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Catact Lake Cabins	Catact
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Steels Campgrounds	Catact
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Ernie Pyle Island	Cunot
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Hoot Woods	Freedom
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Stokey ridge	Freedom
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Gosport Quarry	Gosport
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Jones Quarry	Gosport
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Camp Romona	Gosport
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Farm Pond	Gosport
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Hollybrook Lake	Gosport
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	White River Public Access Point	Gosport
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Gosport Town Park	Gosport
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Greybrook Lake	Patrickburg
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Indian Oaks	Quincy
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Mccormick's Creek	Spencer
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Wolf Cave	Spencer
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Owen-Putnam State Forest	Spencer
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Green's Bluff Trail Head	Spencer
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	MyPath	Spencer
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Cooper commons	Spencer
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Twin Bridges	Spencer
<a href="#">Natural Resources</a>	Boone Cave	Spencer
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Catact Volunteer Fire	Catact
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Coal City Volunteer Fire	Coal City
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Franklin Volunteer Fire	Freedom
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Gosport Police	Gosport
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Gosport Fire	Gosport
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Wayne Harrison and Montgomery Fire	Gosport
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Patrickburg Volunteer Fire	Patrickburg
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Owen EMS	Spencer
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Owen Sheriff;s Office	Spencer
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Owen Valley Fire	Spencer
<a href="#">Police and Fire</a>	Spencer Police Dept	Spencer
<a href="#">Economic Development</a>	RDC	Owen County
<a href="#">Economic Development</a>	TIFS	Owen County
<a href="#">Economic Development</a>	Main Street Group	Owen County
<a href="#">Economic Development</a>	HOPE	Owen County
<a href="#">Economic Development</a>	Local Banks	Owen County