



2. Focus 2030 Vision: Direction for the Future

2.1 THE VISION STATEMENT

Preface

Warren County faces a time of transition, characterized by new challenges and opportunities that raise community expectations on key issues. Starting with a series of public forums held in February of 2008, Warren County, together with its incorporated municipalities and small rural communities has embarked on a mission to prepare a new Comprehensive Plan.

Over the past decade, the County as a whole has experienced rapid population growth and development which have led to certain undesirable impacts such as traffic congestion and incremental, yet noticeable character changes. While continued growth and change is evident, considerable uncertainty exists about how the County in conjunction with its cities and rural communities will choose to progress over the next 20 years.

During the forums citizens expressed widely-shared concerns about the impacts of growth on the community's character and quality of life. There is broad citizen consensus that the County, the City of Bowling Green, and the rest of the local communities should maintain an active role in managing growth to protect and enhance the primary assets of Warren County:

small town ambiance

scenic natural environment

educational and cultural opportunities

economic strength

functional infrastructure

productive agricultural base and rural countryside

excellence in governance

By identifying those assets that most residents value, the Vision Statement will define our shared "destination"—what we aspire to achieve through the strategies to be framed in the Comprehensive Plan. The Vision Statement, in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan, will be the mechanism by which the residents of Warren County will retain and enhance the community's character, define its identity and ensure a sustainable future.

The policies, strategies and regulatory measures identified by the Focus 2030 Comprehensive Plan will become the tools to positively impact the dynamics of change in Warren County. The community's future and that of all its citizens will be profoundly influenced by the degree to which we succeed in this mission. To more fully appreciate the significance of this challenge, we start by considering what a comprehensive plan is and how it will be used to guide the management of change.

Methodology for Community Input

Approximately 200 citizens, as well as Comprehensive Plan Task Force members and officials from the City and County, participated in eight (8) public forums held throughout the County from February 25 through February 28, 2008 to discuss issues facing the community. The community forums consisted of facilitated, small group discussions that posed the following four questions:

1. What are the present strengths of Bowling Green and Warren County? What community characteristics do we cherish and seek to retain?
2. What are the present weaknesses of Bowling Green and Warren County? What deficiencies should we seek to correct?
3. What future opportunities should we pursue to make Bowling Green and Warren County a better community?
4. What future threats or challenges should we anticipate and prepare for?

Upon tabulating hundreds of citizen responses to these questions, distinct areas of shared community opinion were identified around several themes that emerged from group discussions regarding each question/topic. The areas of shared opinion on the issues have been used as the basis for the Vision Statement. [Detailed tabulations of the community forum results are available for review in Volume 2: Appendix 2.]



The Comprehensive Plan for Bowling Green / Warren County will be...

A reflection of values, aspirations and shared vision

Just as one would not begin a trip without first identifying a destination, the planning process starts by defining the community's destination, the kind of place we want Warren County, Bowling Green, and our small rural communities to be in 20 years, our plan horizon. Citizens have expressed their views about the community's present strengths and weaknesses, future opportunities and threats. In listening to what citizens have said, broad areas of consensus emerged concerning the kind of community we want to become or to remain. These expressions of community values provide the basis for a shared vision of Warren County's future. The Vision Statement articulates expectations for the future, frames the mandate for the Comprehensive Plan and outlines the strategic framework necessary to achieve the vision.

A guide for the management of change

For the vision to be fully realized, the Comprehensive Plan should seek to manage the pace and direction of growth and change, being actively applied as a guide for the many decisions that will determine each increment of growth and change. While local government is taking a leadership role in this effort, the Comprehensive Plan will call on citizens, institutions and private industry to coordinate efforts with a shared sense of direction and a renewed spirit of partnership.

The foundation for policies, strategies and actions

The Comprehensive Plan examines policies and strategies for land use, including how to best plan land use while factoring in economic development and protection of open space and natural resources, as well as investments in utilities, roadways and other public facilities.

Our 20-year "To Do" list

The extent of the influence of the Comprehensive Plan on the future of Bowling Green and Warren County will be a product of the vision that inspires it and the actions taken to realize it. The vision will not be realized merely because we may agree with the values it expresses; it will not be a self-fulfilling prophecy, but rather a realization of steady progress in adhering to a well-defined plan of action comprised of effective short and long-term tasks bolstered by a commitment to stay on course.



Bowling Green / Warren County 2030 Vision Statement

The Vision Statement for Bowling Green/Warren County expresses what we, the citizens, envision and desire our community to be like in 2030; it conceptualizes what we hope to accomplish over the next 20 years as we implement a new comprehensive plan, Focus 2030.

In 2030, Warren County will be a growing and diversifying community, one that cherishes and protects its heritage while embracing the opportunities that well-planned growth and bold economic development can bring. Bowling Green and Warren County will be recognized throughout Kentucky and the nation as a “community of choice,” where the drivers of growth and economic development are all related to the community’s outstanding character and quality of life. We will continue to enjoy our small community ambiance, along with a variety of attractions and amenities as well as the choice of urban, suburban and rural lifestyles.

In managing pressures for growth and change, we will limit sprawl by accommodating sustainable, compact, quality growth, which complements our character, retains our identity and protects our scenic rural countryside. Realizing the need for a diverse array of residential development, we will respond to the needs of long established areas of the community by reinvesting and redeveloping downtown and old-growth neighborhoods.

We will achieve our vision by exercising responsible leadership and by mobilizing partnerships among citizens, government, businesses and institutions.

We have crafted this Vision to articulate consensus on community aspirations, structured around four major themes and several interrelated subthemes:

1. QUALITY OF LIFE

Community Character

- In spite of its anticipated growth, Warren County will be able to retain its small-town charm and strengthen the identity of downtown Bowling Green and its historic neighborhoods.
- We will maintain the unique identities of the County’s smaller cities: Smiths Grove, Oakland, Woodburn, and Plum Springs and that of our various rural communities such as Hadley, Richardsville, and others, while increasing their self-sufficiency.
- We will protect and enhance our array of historic districts and quality older neighborhoods, with investment in maintenance, re-conversion to home ownership and compatible infill development.
- We will raise the bar for development quality by encouraging innovative forms of compact development and high standards.
- We will strengthen our community character and identity through the support of and pride that we take in Western Kentucky University, its athletic teams and sporting events, and its art and cultural offerings.
- We will retain our agricultural base and scenic rural character by discouraging sprawl as well as



premature and incompatible development.

People and Relationships

- Life-long residents, as well as new arrivals, will be deeply-rooted and actively involved in the community through churches, civic and neighborhood organizations and volunteer activities.
- Our people will be well-educated, informed, caring and involved in the betterment of the community.
- We will put in place a variety of services and programs that adequately address the needs of our multi-generational, multi-cultural community.

Scenic Natural Environment

- We will accommodate growth in a manner compatible with our unique natural resources; karst geology; river, stream corridors and wetlands; and woodland habitats.
- We will forever preserve a significant share of our County's scenic open space through an expansive network of greenways, trails and protected stream corridors.
- We will maintain the County's rural character by encouraging development that retains open space and limits impacts on agriculture.

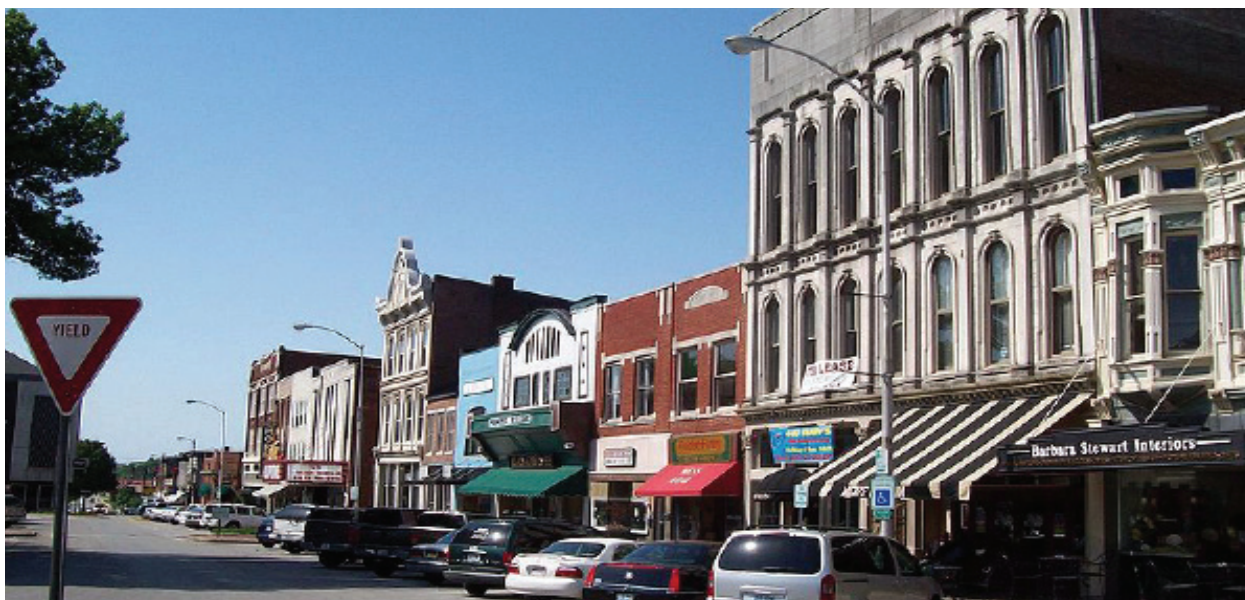
Educational and Cultural Opportunities

- We will continue to nurture our most valuable resource, children and young adults, by supporting excellence in the public schools and innovatively helping students develop skills in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and technology.
- Western Kentucky University will continue to be a valued resource and partner within the community. The University and local government will collaborate to provide for life-long learning, attract knowledge-based employment and challenge students to become involved citizens.
- Thanks to the presence of WKU and its libraries, local historic sites, many thriving arts organizations, and various venues for the performing and visual arts, Bowling Green will be a cultural destination throughout the region.

2. SUSTAINABLE GROWTH | ECONOMIC STRENGTH

Throughout Warren County we will...

- Accommodate desired forms and distributions of balanced development and re-investment, creating quality urban, suburban and rural places that offer a choice of setting, housing type and lifestyle.
- Raise standards for the quality of commercial and residential development, particularly with regard to sustainability, environmentally-friendly design, pedestrian access and landscaping.



- Curb sprawl and other inefficient development, while promoting compact, pedestrian-friendly development patterns that incorporate mixed uses and densities, conserve resources, and encourage walking and biking.
- Coordinate growth-management strategies, development standards and infrastructure investment policies between the County and its municipalities.
- Promote well-planned and attractive development and redevelopment of highway frontages in ways that manage efficient access along major roadways.
- Become an important regional employment hub by attracting technology-based and other corporate entities to the Kentucky TriModal TransPark, South Industrial Park and other centers for clean industry.
- Increase homeownership rates and reduce overcrowded and substandard housing conditions to strengthen, stabilize, and enhance existing neighborhoods.
- Provide access to leading-edge healthcare and continue to serve as the central destination for healthcare services throughout the region. Healthcare will remain an economic driver for job creation, while serving as a desirable component for businesses and industry.

In our long-established urban areas we will...

- Accommodate compact, contiguous, high quality development, redevelopment and infill within residential, commercial and employment centers which can be efficiently served by existing or expanded public facilities and services.
- Maintain stability and continual re-investment in older neighborhoods to ensure historic character is protected and homeownership and neighborhood pride are encouraged.
- Maintain well-defined urban edges of the City, within which we will accommodate a large portion of the County's growth, by implementing consistent City/County policies for land use, development standards, annexations and public facility extensions.
- Transform downtown Bowling Green with new housing, employment, shopping, arts, and entertainment opportunities.

In our rural areas, we will ...

- Reduce pressure for development of farmland and provide large land-owners with a variety of options. These may include programs and incentives such as conservation development, purchase or transfer of development rights, and rural land.
- Reduce pressure on farming operations from population growth infringing upon rural areas.
- Achieve limited low-density development that is compatible with and retains rural character.

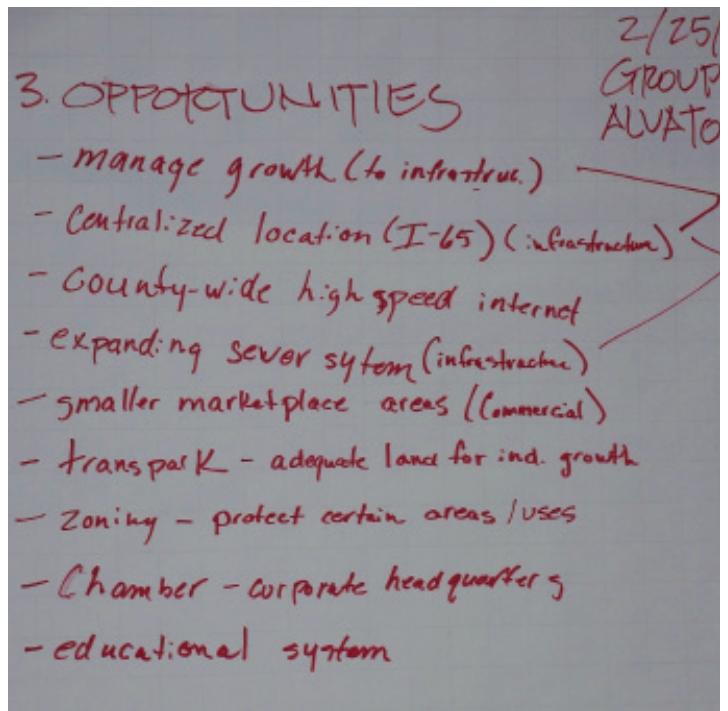
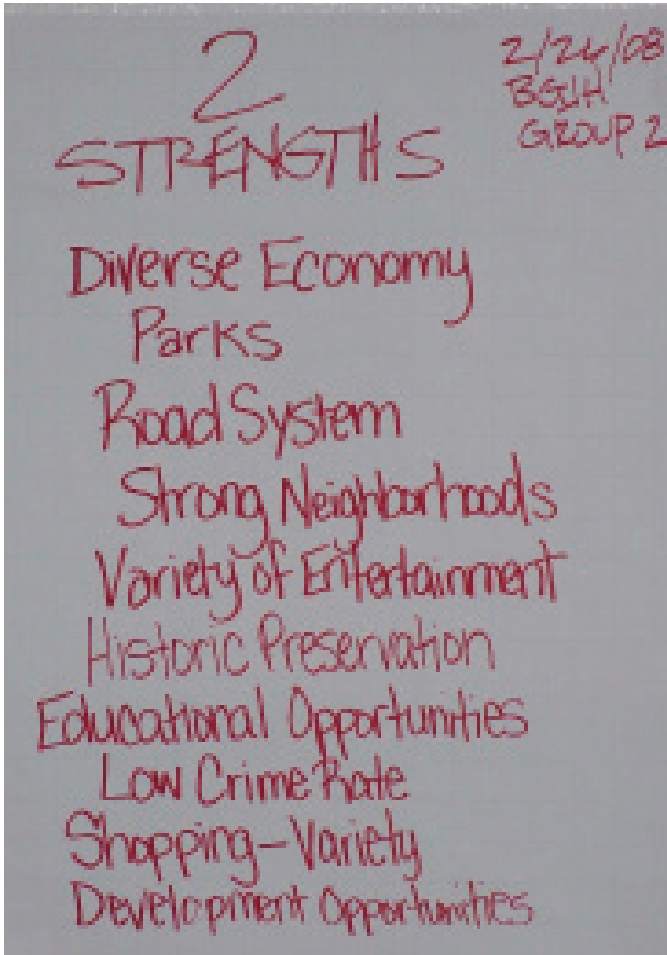


3. BALANCED TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

- We will successfully coordinate with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet to provide a functional collector and arterial road system in growth areas, upgrade road conditions, improve safety, reduce congestion, and provide for convenient circulation throughout the County, while guarding against unwanted forms of roadway corridor development.
- We will apply development standards in a way that supports a functional transportation system through guidelines for access management, road connectivity, and reservation of future roadway corridors.
- We will progress toward a functional, well-integrated transportation system that provides convenient public transportation choices.
- Water and sewer infrastructure systems will be provided in a coordinated, county-wide manner that meets long-term infrastructure needs, supports the reservation of future utility corridors, guides desired development patterns, and conserves resources.
- Bowling Green and Warren County will continue to provide a wide array of parks and recreational activities in coordination with schools and other recreation providers.

4. EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNANCE

- City and County governments will provide a high level of responsiveness to citizens, exercising visionary leadership in planning and investing for the future.
- Local governments will create and enforce innovative, effective and fair regulatory codes and development standards to guide growth and improve development quality. At the same time, we will avoid over-regulation by prioritizing flexibility and by balancing regulatory requirements with incentives.
- We will anticipate long-range needs and plan for adequate public facilities including police, fire and recreation.
- We will maintain and improve fiscal strength through:
 - A diversified and fair tax structure, reflecting balanced residential, commercial and industrial development; and
 - A compact growth pattern, which reduces public facility costs.
- Local governments will actively promote greater intergovernmental coordination including:
 - Coordination of policies and standards for growth management, development regulations and provision of infrastructure between Warren County and its incorporated municipalities; and
 - Exert a greater influence and effectiveness in interacting at the state and federal levels concerning funding and governmental mandates.



2.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The primary motivation in creating the Focus 2030 Vision Statement was to identify those values that most of our residents share for the quality of life and character of our community, today as well as in the future. This Vision of our future is our *shared “destination,”* what we aspire to achieve through the policy elements contained in the next chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Together, the Vision Statement and the policy elements are the means by which the residents of Warren County will retain and enhance the community’s character, define its identity, and ensure a sustainable future.

Based on the input received at the community forums, the input of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force, and the resulting Focus 2030 Vision Statement, the following broad principles have guided the preparation of this comprehensive plan and specifically the development of the goals, policies and actions within each one of its elements:

Generally

- Improve the existing **balance** of land uses.
- Discourage **sprawl patterns** to strengthen our urban core, preserve our farmland and open space, and reduce the fiscal burden of inefficient development.
- Provide **more and better choices** for developers and greater flexibility for new development types,
- Expand the range of **housing choices**,
- Promote **connectivity and alternative movement systems**,
- Protect our **natural and cultural assets**; and
- Improve the visual/aesthetic character of our built environment.

The Land Use/Infrastructure Connection

- Designations of presently undeveloped land are influenced by:
 1. transportation/ accessibility (including planned improvements)
 2. availability of infrastructure
 3. adjacent existing land uses.

Bowling Green and Urbanizing Area

- Consider **existing predominant uses**.
- Strengthen and enhance our **downtown**.
- Protect our **stable residential neighborhoods and historic districts**.
- Strengthen our **vulnerable residential neighborhoods**.
- Encourage **revitalization** of transitional and deteriorated areas.
- Encourage more **mixed use, walkable** development.