

APPENDIX: CITIZENS INPUT
COMMITTEE REPORT

CIC REPORT

Presented 8-26-98

Amended 9-2-98

Introduction

In 1997 events lead many concerned community members to question the ability of Franklin County's 1964 *Comprehensive Plan Report* to serve as a useful tool for steering the County into the twenty-first century. The '64 Plan Forecast period was acknowledged to be only twenty years, basically through the end of the 1980s. The plan was also based on certain calculated predictions, many of which have proven to be inaccurate. For example, in terms of population growth the Plan made the following assumption:

“There is no evidence of economic changes which would warrant any assumption that great population changes may be expected”

In recognition therefore of a need to revisit and reevaluate the Planning tool a series of Seminars were scheduled through the coordinated efforts of the Area Planning Commission and the Franklin County Extension service. Professionals from the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service gave public presentations and provided current data reflecting resource management techniques, population growth patterns, development strategies, and economic impact information.

Additional resource material available through a joint effort of the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns, the Association of Indiana Counties and the Indiana Planning Association recommended a procedural model to assist in the formulation of a Comprehensive Plan. The Citizens Input Committee (CIC) was derived from this model as a pioneering effort to involve the community at large in the first stage of the planning process to establish preliminary goal and objectives. Public notice was made seeking volunteers for the CIC and members were selected to represent each township and each town within the County.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The CIC convened its first meeting on April 29, 1998 and thereafter reported as a group at three successive meetings on May 27th, June 24th, and July 22nd. During the periods between these meetings the committee members collected data from the residents of their respective townships and towns which reflected citizens opinion of the County's *Strengths and Weaknesses*. Several methods of data collection were utilized by the committee members including door to door interviews, telephone canvassing, open forum public meetings and special discussion agendas during business and community organization gatherings. The following tables reflect the consensus of the public opinion collected by the CIC. The rankings are ordered in priority sequenced from 1 to 7 for both Strengths and Weaknesses. The underlined items reflect characteristics or issues of special not, (the numeral following any underlined item indicates the number of members having thus designated the item).

Strengths Ballot Results

Rank	Item
1	<p>Small Town Living/Rural Setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Good quality of life, scenery & open space</u> – 4 ▪ <u>Availability to large cities – Access to Interstate & Transportation</u> –2 ▪ <u>Friendly People</u> –2 ▪ <u>Community involvement – people & attitudes, strong church organization</u> ▪ Low taxes (possible mixed blessing) ▪ Historic buildings ▪ Agricultural resources & diversity ▪ Farms ▪ Good, affordable housing
2	<p>(Balanced) Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Potential for planned growth/development</u> – 2 ▪ <u>Agricultural diversity</u> – 2 ▪ Good employment diversity (local & adjacent cities) ▪ Small business opportunity ▪ Low taxes ▪ Utility & sewers ▪ Ground water – Underground reservoir ▪ Good work force ▪ Blessed by tourism
3	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>School system – Modern</u> – 2
4	<p>Agricultural Resources/Rural Setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Agricultural diversity</u> – 2 ▪ <u>Farms</u> – 2 ▪ Location – Access to river for grain ▪ Good economy
5	<p>Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Diverse recreation opportunities</u> – 2 ▪ <u>Natural Resources – Wildlife</u> – 2 ▪ <u>Potential for planned growth</u> ▪ Brookville Lake – Metamora ▪ Ability of a good, friendly, work force ▪ Offering diverse employment opportunities ▪ Availability to larger cities ▪ Emergency service ▪ Historic buildings
6	<p>Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Good work force</u> – 2 ▪ <u>Friendly people</u> – 2 ▪ Diverse culture
7	<p>Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Emergency services</u> – 2 ▪ Utilities & sewer – Availability of groundwater

Weakness Ballot Results

Rank	Item
1	<p>Economics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Lack of Tax Base</u> – 3 ▪ <u>Victimized by tourism, temporary residents – demands services with no income, no property tax on government ground (need additional appropriations)</u> – 3 ▪ <u>Economics – lack of industry, shopping, dollars leaving county, employer wages</u> – 3 ▪ <u>Lack of roads</u> ▪ Comprehensiveness of Emergency Services ▪ Lack of high wage job and business development ▪ Emergency services – depend on volunteers – weak police/fire protection ▪ Economic weakness of Brookville ▪ Over-taxation of AG community ▪ Limited law enforcement access ▪ Utilities – sewage ▪ Limited library system ▪ Growth imbalance ▪ Ability to handle current & future growth ▪ Lack of opportunities for young farmers ▪ Inability to take advantage of available grant money
2	<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Secondary road & bridge quality/maintenance</u> – 2 ▪ <u>Lack of roads – north/south connecting roads to interstate system</u> ▪ <u>Lack of N/S connecting roads to interstate system, Metamora to Batesville</u> ▪ Unplanned development ▪ Long school bus rides ▪ Traffic on Main Street ▪ Topography ▪ Need for comprehensive sanitary and storm sewer policies
3	<p>Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Local Government understaffed, underpaid, under-trained</u> – 3 ▪ <u>Need for enforcement officer for building regulations</u> – 3 ▪ <u>Need for local economic development office</u> – 2 ▪ <u>Consistency of Regulations – Government accountability</u> ▪ <u>Lack of citizen input on County decisions</u> ▪ <u>Zoning and planning (insufficient)</u> ▪ <u>Lack of Farmland Preservation Plan</u> ▪ <u>Need for expanded license branch to cover Batesville/Oldenburg area</u> ▪ Gravel/Mining near residential areas ▪ Drainage issues related to development (continued close relationship between APZ & SWCD)
4	<p>Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Sprawl/Unplanned development</u> – 2 ▪ <u>Growth imbalance – more housing, no industry</u> – 2 ▪ <u>Sewage, water & utilities (telephone)</u> ▪ Comprehensive emergency services ▪ Depend on volunteers – Police & fire protection ▪ Limited law enforcement access

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fragmented interest – social & economic ▪ Illegal trash dumps ▪ Ability to handle current & future growth (schools, finances, zoning, utilities, roads) ▪ No local news/central source of communication on a regular basis ▪ Enforcement of traffic rules
5	<p>Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>No income from lake affecting emergency services (volunteerism), traffic problems & road conditions, limited law enforcement – 2</u> ▪ <u>Youth recreation programs/facilities</u> ▪ Unplanned development ▪ Decay of historical buildings
6	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Long Distance from school</u> ▪ <u>Youth recreation program</u> ▪ <u>People resistant to change</u> ▪ Opportunities related to special needs, class size
7	<p>Reality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Resistant to change</u> ▪ <u>Long distance school bus ride</u> ▪ Too close to population center

Focus Groups

Following the initial data collection the CIC members were divided into smaller round table discussion groups, each being assigned to consider one of the following special focus categories.

1. INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES
2. RECREATION
3. EDUCATION
4. ECONOMICS
5. HOUSING
6. LAND USE

The categories included topics identified from the community surveys as well as some key issues facing the planning goals at large. The round table groups considered the extensive community survey items relevant to their category topic and translated the data into 10 year and 20 year objectives. The following Group ideas and statements are a product of this exercise.

Group 1 – Infrastructure and Utilities

General Statement – Enhance and direct development in clusters to preserve farmland and open space and control population density.

Ideas:

- Institute cluster development plan
- Install water/sewer concurrent with peoples arrive (on-site sewage treatment)
- Combine infrastructure planning and land use/zoning planning
- Accommodate existing businesses with better roads and bridges

- Road to Batesville, similar to SR 1
- Cleaner streets, sidewalks, roads

Group 2 – Recreation

General Statement – Increase recreation opportunities for county residents (youth and adults) and increase the revenue to the county derived from out-of-county visitors.

Ideas:

- Form a county park network (maintenance, planning, scheduling of events)
- Promote/enhance current recreational facilities
- Provide youth “hang out” centers
- Provide lodging at the lake (tourist), also community lodge by lake
- Tax recreational visitors for county income
- Provide bike/rollerblade trail(s)

Group 3 – Education

General Statement – The general feeling is that the education system in Franklin County is good. However, the following concerns were mentioned:

- Increase opportunities to allow 75-90% graduating students access to college/technical schools, through increased readiness and access to satellite classes, other means of increasing accessibility, increase early access to guidance counseling.
- Provide new middle school facility near high school and elementary school complexes.
- Improve facilities to accommodate special needs students more effectively.

Group 4 – Economics

General Statement – The well-being of natural and human resources should be of prime importance when planning economic growth. Economic growth should take the geography and population density of Franklin County into consideration.

Ideas:

- Improved tax strategy that encourages market development, helps to keep revenue in the county, enhances employment opportunities for county residents and manages agricultural, industrial, and commercial business growth.
- More high wage jobs
- Enhance performance by county government
- Taxes re-invested in the community

Group 5 – Housing

General Statement – We would like to see minimum standards instituted and enforced concerning size and quality of new housing construction both in single and multi-family dwellings. We also want to institute and enforce regulations dealing with the deterioration of existing housing and to control the density of abandoned buildings and lots.

Ideas:

- Encourage appropriate housing location
- Tighter control on manufactured housing

- Minimum building standards to affect the quality of construction and size for new construction
- Encourage more nursing homes and senior citizen housing
- Minimum living conditions for existing housing – regulated through public health department
- Institute time limit on abandoned buildings. Update or raze abandoned structures. Improve upkeep of premises.

Group 6 – Land Use

General Statement – Zoning policies should be designed to deliver maximum benefits for the county and to identify and preserve key sites for waste and water treatment sites, landfill, utilities, commercial sites, etc., matching uses to location based on land characteristics.

Ideas:

- Land use policy needs to support the other development needs related to housing, commercial, agriculture and recreation
- Future farmland preservation policies should be considered in land use decisions
- Encourage neighborhood associations

Conclusions

It is recognized that population growth and development are inevitable.

Careful management of the factors and effects of this reality are essential to preserving the quality of life and business in Franklin County.

A Comprehensive Development Plan is an effective and appropriate administrative tool for this management responsibility and that without the adoption of such a plan it will be virtually impossible to protect the quality of life and business in Franklin County.

The data collected through the CIC efforts constitutes the most comprehensive collection of citizen observation and opinion presently available and as such represents the voice of the community. The Committee encourages all future participants in this planning process to utilize this information. It is our understanding that the next step in the development of a comprehensive plan is the selection of a professional consultant. Members of the CIC welcome the opportunity to meet with the consultant throughout the process. A list of those who have expressed interest is attached.

The Citizens Input Committee of Franklin County, Indiana respectfully submits this report to the Board of Commissioners for their review and adoption. We express our appreciation for the Board's consideration of this document which represents a union of spirit and task between Private, Public and Educational sectors of our community.