



**Union County Comprehensive Plan
Steering Committee Meeting #1 Summary
April 7, 2020 | 5:00 – 7:00
Virtual Go-To Meeting**

MEETING SUMMARY

A. INTRODUCTION

The first Union County Steering Committee was held on Tuesday, April 7 at 5:00PM. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the Stay-at-Home mandate, the meeting was held as a virtual Go-To meeting. Participants were invited to join the call from a conference call number and/or video link. The project team kicked off the meeting by introducing the American Structurepoint staff members that will be working on the Union County project. Following that, steering committee members could introduce themselves using the chat features or speaking during the meeting. Members from the Union County Area Planning, Union County Community Foundation, and Union County Economic Development Corporation attended the meeting. The project team followed up with members that weren't able to participate in the meeting with digital copies of the meeting materials and a follow-up survey. The first portion of the meeting concluded with an explanation of "Comprehensive Planning 101" and discussion related to the steering committee's expectations for the planning process.

Overall, attendees feel the planning process and final plan focus on:

- Expanding and capitalizing on Tourism as many people visit Brookville Lake and Whitewater State Park each summer.
- Outlining how Union County is unique.
- Providing specific action steps for implementation.
- Empowering local leaders to make big moves.
- Improving arts, culture, and placemaking throughout the County.
- Aligning with the Community Foundation efforts.

B. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project team explained how their planning approach focused on a community-driven planning process and an asset-based approach. The goal is to facilitate a planning process that is meaningful, relevant, and inclusive, while providing opportunities for the community to be informed, heard, and empowered. Additionally, the project team strives to create a document that reflect the interests of the community and outlines measurable action steps to assist in implementation. The project team

outlined the tentative project schedule while recognizing the challenges around the COVID-19 outbreak and public engagement. Because Union County received a planning grant from the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), a draft of the final plan has to be submitted to OCRA by the end of September.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

An essential part of a steering committee kick-off meeting is making sure the members understand their role and responsibilities as steering committee members. The purpose of a steering committee is to guide the development of the plan and act as a sounding board for ideas before sharing information with the general public. There will be 3 meetings throughout the planning process. Additionally, members will be asked to review draft deliverables, attend and encourage others to participate in public engagement opportunities, and complete the online surveys.

D. COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The project team recognized that we are in a unique situation with social distancing and the Stay-at-Home mandates. The project team is committed to evaluating and exploring new methods of engagement. Traditional public engagement tools including public meetings, online surveys, social media campaigns, and the project website. The project team expressed interest in using an app called Poll Everywhere and interactive mapping to gather feedback during video meetings. The first public engagement meeting is expected to take place in mid-June.

E. NEXT STEPS

The project team will be working to collect and analyze existing conditions data, finalizing the project website, and preparing for the next upcoming steering committee meeting in May. The committee was asked to read the steering committee handbook, tell their friends and family about the planning process, and help identify potential social media partners.

It is expected that members may feel uncomfortable about speaking out during a conference/video call. For this reason, a follow-up survey was sent to committee members with open-ended questions regarding assets and challenges. The following sections offer a brief summary of the feedback collected.

- Words like quaint, rural, and old-fashioned were used to describe Union County today.
- When asked to describe their community vision for 2040, participants provided the following ideas:
 - Economically sound with a home-town feel and housing to support the needs of Union County.
 - Union County as a place to live, work, and place with things to do, nice subdivisions, recreational amenities at Whitewater State Park, reliable internet, family-friendly activities, and thriving school districts.
 - A community that can grow with water and sewer services outside of town limits.
- Participants identified low crime, education, natural resources, affordable housing, local businesses, small-town atmosphere, safety, and friendliness as things that make Union County great.

- The Union County Foundation, local churches, and the Union County Public Library were organizational-based assets in Union County.
- The courthouse, public parks, and Brookville lake are place-based assets in Union County.
- The low cost of living and community events held by the school district were other things identified as community assets.
- Improvements are needed related to downtown, including improved water quality, internet service, and housing conditions.
- County leadership and communication between entities were identified as challenges.
- Other challenges noted include:
 - There is limited transportation options for specific population including bus transit.
 - The ownership of land by the federal and state government creates a tax base problem for the county.
 - Union County needs more housing.
 - The Economic Development Corporation could use additional staff.
 - Utility infrastructure needs to be expanded outside of town limits for growth.
 - Placemaking efforts are lacking and needed to attract people to the county.
 - Union County needs to enhance and expand the parks and recreation opportunities that exist.
 - Union County needs more housing, has a lot of low-income housing, and struggles with housing quality.