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COMMUNITY PREFERENCE ANALYSIS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Context
Methodology
- Data Integration
- Committee Formation
- Consensus Index
- Mapping to Comprehensive Plan Elements
- Planning Signals

How to Navigate the Community Sentiment Analysis
Executive Summary
Categories
- Economy (Plan Element)
- Land Use & Development (Plan Element)
- Infrastructure (Plan Element)
- Transportation (Plan Element)
- Housing (Plan Element)
- Community Facilities (Plan Element)
- Natural & Cultural Resources (Plan Element)

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Context

A BG2050 Comprehensive Plan establishes the long-term vision, policy framework, and strategic direction for a community's growth and development. It organizes priorities across core elements, such as housing, infrastructure, economic development, public health, land use, and quality of life, and provides the policy foundation for future zoning decisions, capital investments, and implementation strategies. The BG2050 Comprehensive Plan for the Warren County 2027 comprehensive planning cycle represents a critical opportunity to align long-range planning with documented community priorities and lived experience.

The *What Could BG Be?* engagement and BG 2050 pillar work provide an unprecedented dataset of resident input. However, large-scale civic engagement does not automatically translate into planning language. Comprehensive plans are understandably structured around defined elements, goals, and implementation pathways. To make community input actionable within that framework, the data must be synthesized, categorized, and interpreted in relation to established Plan Elements.

The Community Preferences Analysis undertaken in this phase was designed to perform that translation. Drawing from Polis/Sensemaker voting data, BG 2050 values matrix results, and pillar group deliberations, this analysis identifies favored and unfavored community issues, expressed priorities, and emerging tensions across plan elements. Rather than treating the dataset as a standalone expression of sentiment, this work organizes community input according to the categories and policy structures used in comprehensive planning.

By aligning documented preferences and areas of concern with specific Plan Elements, this analysis ensures that the forthcoming BG2050 Comprehensive Plan is grounded not only in technical expertise and organizational requirements, but also in empirically documented community voice. The result is a planning process that is both data-informed and structurally integrated with the BG2050 initiative.

Methodology

The Community Preferences Analysis was conducted to translate large-scale civic engagement data into a structured format aligned with comprehensive plan elements. As the *What Could BG Be?* (WCBGB?) engagement, BG2050 pillar deliberations, and the values matrix exercise were conducted in different formats and at different stages, this phase required an integrated analytical approach.

Data Integration

The analysis consolidated two primary inputs:

- Polis/Sensemaker voting data from WCBGB?
- BG 2050 pillar group discussions and draft initiatives

These datasets were reviewed together to identify recurring themes, issue clusters, and priority areas. Special attention was given to ideas that appeared consistently across both broad public participation and pillar-level leadership discussions.

Additionally, the analysis from this phase also ensured that we will be able to accomplish a seamless integration of the results from the BG 2050 values matrix prioritization exercises into the next phase of this process.

Committee Formation

To support the next phase of review and ensure continuity between BG2050 and the BG2050 Comprehensive Plan process, a working committee was formed that included representatives from several pillar groups. This committee provides structured feedback on the Community Preferences Analysis and helps validate how findings are translated into Plan elements. Including pillar members ensures that the interpretation of the data remains grounded in the broader civic engagement effort while preparing for the next phase of Vision and Goals development.

Consensus Index

To assess the strength and distribution of sentiment, we developed a **Consensus Index**. Rather than measuring simple popularity, the index evaluates how evenly support or opposition is distributed across respondent clusters.

Each idea cluster was categorized as reflecting:

- **Broad positive consensus** (cross-community alignment)
- **Shared negative sentiment** (cross-community concern or caution)
- **Polarization** (meaningful division across clusters)

This distinction allows planning conversations to differentiate between areas of alignment, areas of shared concern, and areas that may require additional dialogue.

Mapping to Comprehensive Plan Elements

Idea clusters were then systematically mapped onto existing comprehensive plan elements (e.g., housing, infrastructure, economic development, public health, quality of life). Because many ideas intersect multiple domains, mapping focused on primary policy relevance while noting cross-cutting themes where appropriate.

This step required qualitative interpretation to ensure that community input was accurately translated into the structural categories used for comprehensive planning.

Planning Signals

Within each Plan Element, the analysis identified key planning signals:

- Topics supported by broad agreement
- Topics reflecting shared community concern
- Topics marked by polarization

These signals are intended to inform the Vision, Values, Principles, and Goals-setting phases of the BG2050 Comprehensive Plan and will provide a road map for the next phase of this project. The analysis does not replace deliberation; rather, it provides an empirically grounded starting point for committee-based decision-making.

How to Navigate the Community Sentiment Analysis

The following section presents the Community Preferences Analysis organized by the City-County Planning Commission's established comprehensive plan elements. Each planning category (e.g., housing, infrastructure, economic development, public health, quality of life) includes a linked summary document detailing the relevant idea clusters, agreeability patterns, and identified planning signals within that domain.

Given the scope and scale of the data included, this section is designed for targeted navigation. Readers are encouraged to access the specific planning categories most relevant to their interests or responsibilities. Each linked summary stands on its own and can be reviewed independently.

For those seeking a broader perspective, an Executive Summary is also provided. The Executive Summary synthesizes key observations and cross-cutting patterns across all planning categories, highlighting areas of alignment, shared concern, and polarization that extend beyond any single Plan Element.

Together, these materials allow readers to move between high-level insights and category-specific detail, depending on their needs.

Executive Summary

This report is designed to translate a large body of civic engagement data into a planning-ready structure for the BG2050 Comprehensive Plan. Drawing from Polis/Sensemaker voting data, it organizes community input into the City-County Planning Commission's established plan elements and uses a Consensus Index to distinguish between broad positive consensus, shared negative sentiment, and polarization. The result is intended to support the next phase of vision, values, principles, and goals-setting by providing an empirically grounded starting point for committee-based decision-making, while recognizing that the analysis is meant to inform (not replace)deliberation.

Across the plan elements, a clear pattern emerges: residents generally support growth and investment, but they want both to be more intentional, better coordinated, and more responsive to everyday quality-of-life concerns. The strongest areas of agreement cluster around practical, place-based priorities—better jobs and workforce pathways, infrastructure that is ready before development, walkability and transportation access, more varied and affordable housing, strong schools and libraries, expanded healthcare and mental health services, preservation of farmland and green space, and cultural and recreational assets that strengthen the community's identity. At the same time, the document repeatedly shows more mixed or negative reactions to proposals that feel overly rigid, punitive, speculative, or ideologically charged. Taken together, the analysis suggests that residents favor realistic, inclusive, and community-rooted improvements, while expecting future planning decisions to balance growth with resilience, access, authenticity, and long-term livability.

Last Update: April 8, 2026

Categories

Each major category begins with a high-level summary that highlights the main themes and overall areas of consensus and debate. From there, the individual subcategories are linked to more detailed summaries that provide a fuller overview of findings within each specific subcategory area.

Economy (Plan Element)

The findings show a strong overall consensus in favor of job creation, with residents emphasizing that the community needs not just more jobs, but better-paying jobs and a more diverse economy that is not overly dependent on manufacturing. There is also broad agreement around workforce development, especially for efforts that create clearer pathways from education into careers, such as internships, apprenticeships, and stronger collaboration between WKU and small businesses. Support for entrepreneurship is similarly strong, with residents favoring accelerators, startup support across sectors, incentives for small businesses, and “buy local” approaches that prioritize local enterprises. By contrast, branding Bowling Green as a “tech hub” or “AI capital” does not resonate as strongly: general tech-oriented language receives only mild support, while explicitly AI-centered branding tends to be viewed negatively. One of the clearest areas of opposition is expanded billboard and outdoor advertising along I-65, and residents also react negatively to some of the more extreme or novelty-style proposals.

- Employment
    - Employment Density & Projected Growth
    - Top Employers
    - Commuting Pattern of the Workforce
    - Unemployment
- Poverty Status

Land Use & Development (Plan Element)

The land-use findings show very strong support for protecting farmland and preserving green space, with residents treating agricultural land, tree canopy, and natural areas as essential to the community’s long-term identity and quality of life. Residents are generally open to growth, but they want it shaped more carefully—favoring infill, redevelopment of vacant properties, walkability, and stronger design and environmental standards over unchecked sprawl, poorly planned apartments, or repetitive subdivisions. There is also broad enthusiasm for strengthening local food systems, including farmers' markets, farm-to-table dining, CSA programs, and other ways of making agriculture a visible and practical part of everyday community life. Support remains strong for integrating nature into development through native landscaping, environmental restoration, flood planning, and riverfront improvements that connect recreation, ecology, and downtown identity. At the same time, more extreme or overly theatrical ideas (such as aggressive land reversion, heavy-handed redevelopment, or novelty-style agricultural concepts) tend to face resistance, suggesting that residents value preservation, authenticity, and balanced planning over disruptive or gimmicky approaches.

- Existing Land Use
- Development Patterns
    - Rezoning Activity
    - Building Permit Activity
    - Density
    - Available Land for Development
- Impact on Agriculture

Infrastructure (Plan Element)

The infrastructure findings show strong consensus that growth should only move forward when core systems are ready, with residents emphasizing that sewer, stormwater, drainage, and related utilities need to be addressed before or alongside new development. Flooding, sinkholes, and water protection are among the most urgent concerns, with clear support for planning, floodplain management, and requiring developers to account for drainage and infrastructure impacts early in the process. Residents also strongly favor green infrastructure (such as tree planting, greenways, rain gardens, native landscaping, and reducing excess pavement) as a preferred strategy for managing runoff, improving water quality, and strengthening resilience. In the energy and utilities space, there is broad support for solar, energy efficiency, and climate-resilient infrastructure, but residents generally prefer incentives and flexible transition strategies over universal mandates or large centralized projects. Finally, digital connectivity is increasingly understood as essential infrastructure, with strong support for reliable access, transparent public information systems, and equitable service access for underserved neighborhoods, seniors, and people with disabilities, while more polarizing issues such as fluoride, nuclear energy, and some surveillance-related tools generate more mixed reactions.

- Wastewater
- Water
- Stormwater
- Electric
- Natural Gas
- Fiber Optics & Telecommunications

Transportation (Plan Element)

The transportation findings show that traffic congestion (especially along Scottsville Road) is one of the community's most immediate concerns, and residents strongly favor addressing it proactively through smarter traffic management, road maintenance, drainage improvements, and infrastructure that keeps pace with growth. At the same time, walkability emerges as one of the clearest priorities in the entire dataset, with overwhelming support for more sidewalks, safer crossings, ADA access, and connected pedestrian networks linking neighborhoods, parks, schools, downtown, and the riverfront. Residents also broadly support bike lanes, greenways, and trail expansion, but they prefer protected, continuous, and practical infrastructure over fragmented investments, and support becomes more mixed when projects require major tax increases or significant tradeoffs with car access. Public transit is strongly framed as an equity

and quality-of-life issue, with clear support for more reliable, inclusive, and better-connected bus service that serves seniors, lower-income neighborhoods, industrial workers, and people without cars. Regional passenger rail and improved airport access generate especially strong enthusiasm—particularly connections to Nashville and other regional destinations—while large-scale bypasses, airport relocation, high-speed rail, and speculative ideas like flying cars or self-driving infrastructure receive a more mixed or negative response, suggesting residents favor realistic, integrated improvements over costly or futuristic visions.

- Roads
    - Congestion
    - Commuter Patterns
    - Safety
    - Freight
    - Bridges
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities
    - Pedestrian Facilities
    - Bicycle Facilities
    - Bicycle & Pedestrian Crashes
    - Future Planning
- Automobile Alternative Transportation
- Air Service

Housing (Plan Element)

The housing findings show very strong support for expanding the range of housing options in Warren County, especially missing-middle housing, starter homes, accessible units, senior housing, and other forms of development that create more choice without relying too heavily on large apartment complexes. Residents consistently favor building within existing developed areas through infill, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment of vacant properties before expanding outward into farmland, and they want housing growth to be paired with stronger planning, infrastructure coordination, and higher construction and maintenance standards. Affordability is a major concern (particularly for renters, seniors, people with disabilities, and lower-income households). While there is broad agreement on the need for more affordable and supportive housing, opinions become more mixed on specific policy tools such as rent regulation, mandates, or tax-based solutions. The community also strongly supports compassionate, service-based responses to homelessness, including shelters, housing transition programs, wraparound services, and housing-first strategies, while showing less support for punitive or segregating approaches. At the same time, there is a clear underlying preference for ownership opportunities over rental-heavy growth, and while moderate downtown density and mixed-use redevelopment are acceptable to many residents, high-rise towers, unrestricted vertical expansion, and some implementation details around funding or specialized housing programs remain more polarized.

- Product Demand
- Housing Gap Estimates
    - Rental Housing Gap Estimates & Product Demand
    - For Sale Housing Gap Estimate & Product Demand

- Availability
    - Rental Housing Supply
    - For Sale Housing Supply
- Special Needs Populations
    - Homeless
    - Elderly
    - Persons with a Disability
    - Veterans
- Household Trends & Projections
- Affordability / Attainability

Community Facilities (Plan Element)

The community facilities findings show strong support for investing in the core systems that make Warren County safe, healthy, and family-friendly, with residents consistently prioritizing preparedness, public safety, healthcare access, education, parks, libraries, and basic social services. A major through-line is that residents want stronger community capacity, including more EMS and fire support, better disaster readiness, expanded healthcare and mental health services, well-funded schools, and reliable institutions like public libraries that function as everyday civic anchors. Green space, parks, trails, and riverfront connections are also treated as essential civic infrastructure, with broad support for preserving natural areas and creating safe, connected, nature-forward spaces that improve quality of life. Across education, libraries, workforce development, and social services, residents favor practical investments that expand opportunity, self-sufficiency, and access, especially when tied to youth, lifelong learning, mobility, and neighborhood-level inclusion. At the same time, more punitive, highly prescriptive, or culture-war-coded proposals, whether related to policing, schooling, homelessness, or social inclusion, tend to generate more mixed or negative reactions, suggesting that residents broadly support stronger systems and services, but are more divided on ideological framing or hardline implementation approaches.

- Public Safety
    - Law Enforcement
    - Warren County Regional Jail
    - Fire Protection
    - Disaster & Emergency Management
    - Ambulance Service
- Education
    - K-12
        - Bowling Green Independent School System
        - Warren County Public Schools
        - Private School Options
    - Higher Education
- Parks & Recreation
- Public Library
- Health & Wellness
    - Hospitals & Medical Facilities

    - Fitness Facilities
- Social Services
    - Special Needs Populations
    - Veterans Services & Resources
    - Seniors & Elderly Services
    - Other Helping Agencies & Services

Natural & Cultural Resources (Plan Element)

The natural and cultural resources findings show that protecting green space is one of the community's strongest shared priorities, with residents consistently supporting the preservation of natural areas, expanded access to nature, and continued investment in green space as growth continues. There is also broad enthusiasm for strengthening the community's connection to the riverfront, with strong support for river access, paddling, riverwalk connections, and recreation that enhances identity and public use while keeping a clear nature-first focus. Beautification is another major area of agreement, especially through expanded tree canopy, greener corridors, and visible improvements that reduce the dominance of asphalt and improve everyday quality of life. On the cultural side, residents clearly view arts, heritage, and historic preservation as essential parts of Bowling Green's identity, with especially strong support for practical, accessible cultural investments such as museums, family-friendly indoor attractions, downtown events, public art, music venues, and restoration of historic properties. At the same time, more rigid mandates, large-scale entertainment concepts, or more divisive cultural proposals tend to produce mixed reactions, suggesting that residents favor authentic, usable, and place-based improvements over all-or-nothing solutions or more polarizing wish-list ideas.

- Natural Features
- Cultural Resources
    - Historic
    - Museums, Art & People