



# 42024 BARLOW

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2014



Created by the residents of Barlow, Kentucky with assistance from the Kentucky League of Cities.







# 42024 Barlow Community



The 675 residents of Barlow recognize that times are changing and their community needs to change with the times. While the city has diligently cared for local infrastructure and kept pace with upgrades to water and other necessities, city leaders desire to work on the overall quality of life for the citizens of the city.

With assistance from the Kentucky League of Cities Community Consulting Advisors, city officials set about inviting the people living in the 42024 zip code to tell them what they'd like to see for the future. The following report features their ideas, suggestions and visions for the future of Barlow.



# 42024 Barlow Community



## What Citizens Value Most about 42024 Barlow

- ◆ The people, particularly the children
- ◆ It's home
- ◆ Small town feel, neighbors and friendliness
- ◆ Churches and schools
- ◆ History of community
- ◆ Location, convenience – middle of where you need to be
- ◆ Farmers



## Strengths

- ◆ Safety
- ◆ History of area
- ◆ Hometown values
- ◆ Only 15 minutes from airport, 2 hours from a major airport – anyplace in the world I want to be I can be



## Weaknesses

- ◆ No local grocery store
- ◆ Availability of gas stations
- ◆ Banks
- ◆ More of community coming together to help those in need
- ◆ Few small businesses
- ◆ Plan to grow and place to grow, spearhead it and finance it
- ◆ Road improvements – paving, fixing
- ◆ Better outlet and inlet – bridges obsolete, infrastructure
- ◆ Community Center
- ◆ Abandoned houses and properties need to be cleaned up
- ◆ Everyone take responsibility and not blame others for problems
- ◆ Sidewalks – new and old
- ◆ Old trestle on South 4th Street needs to be replaced or torn down
- ◆ Community cleanup day
- ◆ Need children playing signs
- ◆ Need emergency system for town – weather
- ◆ Speed bumps – inner-city streets
- ◆ Assistance to clean gutters, maintenance for elderly
- ◆ Jobs
- ◆ People don't shop local

# 42024 Barlow Community

## Opportunities

- ◆ If we work together, we can accomplish a lot
- ◆ Do something with the old school
- ◆ Sign at corner of U.S. 60 at four-way stop – let them know we have businesses
- ◆ Wayfinding signage
- ◆ New senior citizen center – pay a little more attention to what we have
- ◆ All is possible if we love each other enough and work together
- ◆ Water
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Package liquor store
- ◆ Access to grants
- ◆ Seed money for new businesses in Barlow – Angel Investors for startups
- ◆ Lending library
- ◆ Need someplace for community residents to gather and talk
- ◆ Promotion of hunting and fishing
- ◆ Filling up empty houses – about 30 abandoned houses in Barlow
- ◆ Need basic stores – gas/convenience store
- ◆ Transportation for those who can't drive
- ◆ Hospital
- ◆ Truckers – this is a truck route – gas stations, rest area
- ◆ Law enforcement officers live in the city
- ◆ Change route of U.S. 60
- ◆ New business is possible
- ◆ Pool hall
- ◆ Anything medical
- ◆ High speed Internet – fiber cable
- ◆ Quality of water – is there an industry related to this opportunity

- ◆ Need a drug store
- ◆ Good infrastructure
- ◆ Capitalize more on hunting and fishing
- ◆ Railroad beds into walking trails
- ◆ RV park
- ◆ Trail head for Ballard County Wildlife Management Area
- ◆ ATV rental, equipment rental – like Gilbert, WV



## Threats

- ◆ Aging population – no new people moving in
- ◆ Redirection of U.S. 60
- ◆ If something is not done, we will die
- ◆ Drug addiction
- ◆ Afraid that Post Office will close
- ◆ Need solidarity – unity of vision
- ◆ Youth leaving community
- ◆ Lack of activity for youth
- ◆ Local industry closing – is local paper mill closing



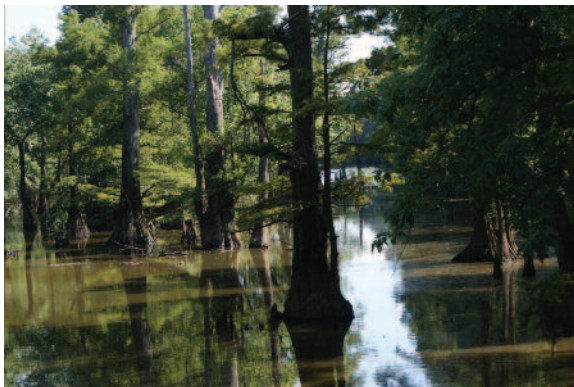
# What Can We Do?

## REIMAGINE BARLOW

Use what you have to put yourselves on the map! Most people don't have any idea that Barlow is within walking distance of Kentucky's swamplands. These swamplands have all kinds of unique features for visiting, which leads to numerous cultural attractions including food, music, art and more. You must be bold enough to reimagine what Barlow could be, if you really set yourselves on a great path.

### Here's How

For Barlow to succeed, you must identify what sets you apart from every other city. What makes your city unique should be your primary focus. This idea is reflected in the following recommendations.



### Unique to Barlow

#### Cypress Swamps

- ◆ Indigenous only in this region of Kentucky
- ◆ Designated already as a National Wildlife Management Area
- ◆ Already being marketed by Kentucky Great River Road Region (KYGRRO), and Ballard County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism
- ◆ Easy access



### Entrepreneurial Spirit

- ◆ Already have vibrant businesses
- ◆ Existing traffic through town
- ◆ Local energy and enthusiasm
- ◆ Available infrastructure and Wi-Fi
- ◆ Ability to capitalize on natural resources

### Opportunities for Success

Capitalize on what makes Barlow unique and a great place to stop, shop, stay a while, make a living and enjoy a great quality of life.

# What Can We Do?



## Strategies for Success

### Gateway to Swamp Country

Name it and claim it – Barlow is the entrance to cypress swamps within walking distance of the center part of town. This concept relates to the proposed entry sign design on page 13, and beautification efforts mentioned on page 7. The city may wish to plant cypress trees all over town, and begin marketing the concept on the website and through tourism outlets.

Encourage local businesses to connect to this concept, for example:

1. Restaurants and food sales might include

menu items such as swamp slaw, swamp burgers, or swamp salsa;

2. Bed and breakfasts and Airbnb (a website where people can go to rent out lodging) might provide local history and/or wildlife packages, connecting tourists to local entertainment venues; and
3. Develop a swamp-themed homecoming jamboree festival with music, art and food tied to nature and/or bike tours with guides.

Some additional businesses that would likely come alongside these initial efforts may include wildlife and outdoor outfitters, bike supplies and repair, art retreats and supplies, photography classes, crafts made from swamp stuff, perhaps even swamp beer.

The following areas of focus were identified by local citizens as a pathway to success.

1. Beautification
2. Economic Development
3. Eco and Adventure Tourism
4. Housing
5. Health and Wellness



before

#Swamptown@barlowky



after

Steve Austin

# 1. Beautification

Almost every discussion about the future of Barlow included the desire to be welcoming, clean and attractive. Just as you do in your home when you expect company, you get your house in order. For Barlow to put its best face forward it must get spruced up.

## What citizens said on September 18th

- ◆ Monument for welcome sign
- ◆ Gazebo on the other side of four-way stop sign
- ◆ Welcome and leaving signs from Paducah and Wickliffe
- ◆ Clean old buildings up
- ◆ Hanging baskets in downtown
- ◆ Cleaning up town – signs, paint
- ◆ Yard of the month – with incentives
- ◆ Start small – paint building, fill cracks
- ◆ Beautify corner lot at four-way stop
- ◆ Clean and attractive

## Ideas!

### Specific cleanup ideas from citizens on October 21st

1. Paint the Golightly Building on the south wall, wash the windows and the siding on the front of the building, kill the weeds growing around building, and take down cattle fence.
2. Beautify the barbeque stand area, add picnic tables and landscape around area and tree.
3. Remove the storage buildings from the former implement lot by the barbeque stand, cut weeds, clean up area.
4. Beautify and remove concrete barriers in parking lot of Ballard County Clinic.
5. Empty trash cans by Corner Café.
6. Old Barlow school building needs to be demolished or repurposed.
7. Repaint south wall on Price's Gas building or touch up sign.
8. Fix up, paint old Boyd house.
9. Fix up, weed, clean up yard at Pill home.
10. Have a "Yard of the Month" award.
11. Boys around town could help older people decorate outside or help clean up their yards.
12. Blacktop alley from Highway 60 all the way behind the clinic to Wall Street.
13. Clean up Gerald Wells' theater building.
14. Find out future plans for old Jones Funeral Home.
15. Clean up around CutMart, spray weeds.
16. Clean up around house next to CutMart.



# 1. Beautification

## Other strategies to consider:

- ◆ Identify potential locations for welcoming signs coming into the city from Paducah and Wickliffe. Look at other cities' signage and assess which styles are most desirable for Barlow. Design the desired style of welcome sign, seek cost estimates, and procure funding. Install as soon as possible. Remember to keep the signs freshly painted and in good repair as time goes by.
- ◆ Establish quarterly or biannual cleanup days for the community.
  - Market and promote ahead of time.
  - Promote the use of the dumpster provided free of charge by the city.
  - Provide volunteer assistance to homebound residents to help remove unsightly or unneeded items from their properties.
  - Encourage youth/teens to participate, work through scouts and/or church youth groups.
- ◆ Organize a walking review of the city.
  - How do the fire hydrants, fences, signs, sign posts, curbs, parking stripes and hand rails along bridges or walkways appear? Have they been painted in recent years? Are they in need of being replaced? Is there need for any of these elements where there are none currently?
  - Develop a priorities list and create strategies for correcting problems. Organize volunteers and get started. As you clean up something, take pictures! Celebrate your successes by showing the before and after photos at your next public or volunteer meeting.
  - Contact property owners of other eyesores and offer to assist in cleaning them up. Check with hardware stores for discounts and line up senior citizens and youth to help clean up the town.
  - With the help of someone in a wheel chair, and/or using a baby stroller, walk through the city and identify areas that need to be made more accessible. Create strategies of how to improve, seek funding, and establish a timeline for implementing.



# 1. Beautification

- ◆ Organize a drive-by review of your city. Ask someone from out of town to accompany you.
  - When you sit at a stop light or drive through an intersection in the downtown, what draws your eye or captures your attention?
  - Are there signs that are distracting and unnecessary? Are there signs that should be there that aren't? Do tourists, horse trailers, buses or tractor trailers know where to park? Is there a place for them to park?
  - Are there street signs at each corner telling you what street you're on? Are all one-way signs in place and visible? Are they fresh or worn out?
- ◆ Work with a partner such as the Ballard County Chamber of Commerce, Welcome Wagon, churches, homemakers groups or the realtors association, and begin a campaign to improve neighborhood properties.
  - Create a recognition program to applaud homeowners' efforts to clean up their properties. (Find out what the city of Mayfield has done.)
  - Organize a working crew to assist elderly or disabled homeowners in repairing their properties.
  - Develop financial incentives for property improvements. (Get ideas from Horse Cave, Shelbyville, Frankfort, Plantation and Carrollton.)



## 2. Economic Development



before

#Swamptown@barlowky

after



Steve Austin

Citizens have a laundry list of businesses they'd like to see back in Barlow. For businesses to thrive there must be critical mass. Three significant businesses currently within the center of town are Harris Engineering, Cedar Chips and Hillbilly Stills. What other businesses might support what they are already doing?

### What citizens said on September 19th

- ◆ Old Williams house B&B
- ◆ Restaurant
- ◆ Public market on road from Paducah
- ◆ Small business
- ◆ Senior assisted living area with drug store, park
- ◆ Medical clinic – lab work, imaging services
- ◆ Local processing plant – deer
- ◆ 36 acres – gazebo, walking area, assisted living and walkway, two lanes
- ◆ Pick 'n Grin and antique store
- ◆ Gas station
- ◆ Library
- ◆ Dry cleaners
- ◆ Doughnut and pastry shop
- ◆ Gas/grocery
- ◆ Car wash
- ◆ House across from Barlow House – B&B



## 2. Economic Development

- ◆ Senior citizens center
- ◆ Cedar Chips & Hillbilly Stills – good draw for town
- ◆ Village Green on the corner
- ◆ Craft shop – local crafts only
- ◆ Public market – on other side of BBQ stand
- ◆ Dollar Store
- ◆ Game processing plant
- ◆ Redevelop downtown – farmers market, signage, gazebo
- ◆ Sisters and Friends – consignment/community sales pavilion, mini-grocery
- ◆ Development fast food restaurants
- ◆ Public market
- ◆ National chain store
- ◆ Small businesses in downtown Barlow
- ◆ Outdoor café
- ◆ Medical support facility
- ◆ Gas Station – truck stop – outside of town
- ◆ Hillbilly Stills tours
- ◆ Use wildlife as a draw

### What Students Said:

Eleven students at Ballard Memorial High School from the Barlow zip code participated in an open discussion about the future of Barlow as part of the strategic planning process. We asked “what would you like to have in Barlow that is not currently available?”

- ◆ Gas station
- ◆ Food service/restaurant
- ◆ Shopping
- ◆ Red box like the one in LaCenter located here in Barlow
- ◆ Gym, place to work out, exercise, play basketball
- ◆ Better sidewalks along Highway 60
- ◆ Hiking trails with easier access
- ◆ Conservation outpost for conservation, offer training such as gun safety
- ◆ Starbucks or some type of coffee shop with internet connections
- ◆ Youth center after school
- ◆ Paint ball games and corn maze, things for young people to do
- ◆ Park equipment needs to be upgraded for safety reasons
- ◆ An event to bring everyone into town – need more participation than Barlow Days – nothing for young people to do. Students suggest the following be added:
  - Basketball game, perhaps a pick up tournament
  - Corn hole tournament
  - Inflatables
  - Need to host the event in a larger space, not enough room

## 2. Economic Development

Citizens developed these specific ideas on October 21st

1. Vote Barlow wet – investigate laws.
2. Start changing minds in the Ballard Wildlife Management Area.
3. Work with the state to develop trails and environmental attractions.
4. Secure Barlow as hub and entrance into the Ballard Wildlife Management Area:
  - a. Canoe rental;
  - b. 4-wheeler license; and
  - c. Fishing permits.
5. New Barlow sign saying “The Entrance into the Ballard County Wildlife Management Area.”

Businesses suggested by Ballard Memorial High School students included:

- ◆ Taxidermist
- ◆ Hunting clubs
- ◆ Fishing and hunting license point of sale
- ◆ Bait and tackle
- ◆ Gym
- ◆ Food service/convenience store/gas station
- ◆ Coffee shop
- ◆ Internet café



## 2. Economic Development

### Other strategies to consider:

Take advantage of the fiber optics located in Wickliffe to offer free Wi-Fi to all the downtown. Use the computer stations set up by Murray State University as a gathering place for residents. Offer coffee, get local restaurants or caterers to sell pastries. Stay open in the evening.



Repurpose empty buildings as business incubators

- ◆ Recruit entrepreneurs with ideas
- ◆ Promote/advertise
- ◆ Streamline licensing procedures
- ◆ Provide small business training
- ◆ Seek mentors such as SCORE to assist new business owners

Inventory existing available properties and assess condition. Are their available properties for new businesses? What needs to be done to bring them up to code? Are they listed with a realtor?

Partner with existing businesses (Harris Engineering, Hillbilly Stills and Cedar Chips) and determine what types of businesses would support or enhance theirs.

Look at nearby communities and see what types of businesses are thriving. Are any of them a fit for your city? Would they consider a second location?

Working with eco-adventure tourism professionals, determine what businesses would add value to the environmental focus. In addition to hunting and fishing, think about ATV and canoe outfitters, tack supplies, the needs of hikers and bicyclists.



Work with economic partners to develop a multi-faceted incentive program for property and business owners.

Create trail head in downtown Barlow and connect trail system from downtown to the Wildlife Reserve, the senior citizens complex, and to the river.

Work with Kentucky Economic Development Cabinet to identify potential opportunity for an expanded truck stop to include overnight parking and accommodations.

- ◆ Identify possible location, preferably close to where bridge traffic converges.
- ◆ Integrate Kentucky Tourism Cabinet to assist in promoting.
- ◆ Establish web presence for Barlow.



If a truck stop is not financially feasible, consider developing a small "Welcome to Kentucky" facility offering restrooms and a walking path for travelers to stretch their legs. This might be done in conjunction with the gathering area where coffee and computers are available.



### 3. Eco and Adventure Tourism

Residents know they are in the catbird seat for wildlife and game. What some may take for granted is the unique element of the cypress swamps. This unusual natural landscape provides a novel approach to greater tourism development.

#### What citizens said:

- ◆ Park
- ◆ Lake Street – trail next to railroad
- ◆ Walking tour of Barlow – history of community
- ◆ Walking trail – out from the Monroe House
- ◆ Wildlife area out toward preserve
- ◆ Hunting and fishing
- ◆ Horseback riding
- ◆ Trail riding
- ◆ Rental cabins for hunters
- ◆ Bike/walk path –Dynamite Road
- ◆ Kiddie water park
- ◆ Zip line, 4-wheeler park toward the bottom
- ◆ Wildlife tourism – local kids and visitors
- ◆ Community athletic facility
- ◆ Horse riding trail Tourism – to attract business
- ◆ ATV/horseback riding
- ◆ Identified buildings for loading sites for ATVs and horses
- ◆ Activities for kids – water slide, pool
- ◆ Motel for hunters
- ◆ Game processing



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# 3. Eco and Adventure Tourism

## Strategies to Consider

- ◆ Capitalize on what you already have. Create walking and driving tour brochures to highlight history, architecture, the river, trails, and of course, the cypress swamps. Tie these trails into KYGRRO for broader marketing.
  - Organize events around historic properties, and tie in landscapes such as cypress swamps and wildlife areas to expand what you offer.
  - Develop consistent signage that identifies Barlow’s unique places on the tours. Integrate the KYGRRO logo to help promote Barlow’s tourism draws as part of the River Road Scenic Byway.
- Cross promote at each location by providing a sign showing and telling about another stop on the tour.
- Investigate Kentucky’s Trail Town designation and concepts. Visit thriving Trail Town cities such as Damascus, Virginia for ideas. Use downtown Barlow as the trail head for all trails to begin in town.
- ◆ Water trail development is important in order to take advantage of the cypress swamps.
  - Partner with the KYGRRO, Environmental Protection Cabinet, Department for Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Management, Wildlife Reserve officials and other partners to provide guided tours. Become the protectors and advocates of the swamps.
  - Offer a viable, comfortable, and easily accessible location for small groups (bird



watching, painters, writing groups, environmentalists, students at MSU and WKU, and kayak enthusiasts) to use as a gathering space for training on environmental issues related to the ecosystem of your region. Establish multiple day seminars and promote through partnering entities.

- Reach out to Murray State University and Western Kentucky University, and discern how you might partner with education, to bring students to Barlow for hands-on experiences.
- ◆ Organize a partnership with KYGRRO, Ballard County Chamber of Commerce, tourism, hunting clubs, and Kentucky Department of Tourism professionals to capitalize on existing wildlife/game reserve as a tourism/economic development draw.



### 3. Eco and Adventure Tourism

- Audit current conditions of the reserve and the facilities.
- Further develop relationships with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife and other partners in the community.
- Collaborate to develop an action plan to include both short-term and long-term goals for the reserve.
- Approach existing processing business and determine potential for an alternate location, closer to the reserve.
- Seek out ideas from other state parks that are flourishing with trail development and use. (Pennyrile State Park is a Kentucky Trail Town example.)
- Ask youth organizations (scouts, church groups and ball teams) to assist in trail development.



- ◆ City of Barlow should explore community activities for youth.
  - Work with KLC to identify sources of funding for community centers, splash parks and other recreational activities.
  - Collaborate with local schools to take advantage of all resources in expanding what you can offer to your local citizens.





## 4. Housing

Families may be drawn to Barlow as new development occurs and if there are things for them to do. Having an updated, quality inventory of housing is important to entice younger families to the community.

### What citizens said:

- ◆ Multi-family housing
  - ◆ Senior citizens area with new development
  - ◆ Senior citizens
  - ◆ Old school – could be apartments
  - ◆ Assisted living
  - ◆ Senior center/assisted living
- Ask local real estate professionals to assist in determining current needs and what future opportunities may exist for additional housing.
  - Identify potential properties for market-rate housing opportunities.



### Strategies to consider:

- ◆ Work with Purchase Area Development District and KLC to identify funding options for a housing study to evaluate the housing market in the community and assess housing needs, particularly related to market-rate housing. This study may also include the feasibility of developing the old school into apartments or other housing units.
  - ◆ Use the housing study to conduct a housing inventory to:
    - Identify properties that need attention (dilapidated, foreclosed and abandoned) and develop plans on how to proceed.
- ◆ Evaluate annexation opportunities that provide additional areas within the community that are conducive for new home construction.
  - ◆ Work with state affiliates to investigate funding options for housing. For example:
    1. Blight/Affordable Housing/Rehabilitation – Kentucky Housing Corporation – [www.kyhousing.com](http://www.kyhousing.com)
      - a. GAP Pool Financing Grants – Open deadline
      - b. Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDO) – Consider establishing a CHDO to implement a comprehensive housing strategy
      - c. HOME Program – new construction, rental, rehabilitation
    2. Housing and Community Investment - Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati - <https://web.fhlbcin.com/Pages/fhlbcin.aspx> - FHLB has many housing and community investment programs including:
      - The Affordable Housing Program (AHP)
      - Welcome Home Program (WHP)
      - Community Investment Programs (CIP)
      - Zero-Interest Fund (ZIF)
      - Accessibility Rehabilitation Program (ARP)

## 5. Health and Wellness

One specific strategy was generated from the citizens during the public meetings. A proposed design is shown herein to provide an idea of how to incorporate community needed amenities through a senior citizens development.

- ◆ Work with current private developer to develop the senior citizens property with a park setting, a senior center, a drug store, gas and grocery provider, walking paths, lighting, and landscaping.
- ◆ Connect this senior complex with walking paths to the center of town and to the Ballard Wildlife Management Area.

### Other strategies to consider:

The aging population provides an opportunity to stimulate the economy in the following areas:

- ◆ Assisted living facilities
- ◆ Extended care
- ◆ In-home care

- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Health care professionals
- ◆ Certificate programs
- ◆ Assess current health-related services and determine gaps.
  - Interview countywide health care professionals to learn what is missing might be provided by local people.
  - Determine what is needed and develop steps for moving forward.
  - Work with local schools to provide hands-on learning opportunities for local students, steering them toward health-care careers.
- ◆ As noted in previous recommendations, connecting to walking, hiking, biking, ATV, and water trails provides recreational opportunities for citizens of all ages.



Steve Austin

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