



JOHNSON COUNTY 2030

Living Our Vision



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

Johnson County 2030: Living Our Vision

Johnson County is part of a larger “community of interests” that includes numerous municipalities, districts, other governmental and quasi-governmental organizations, along with private businesses and institutions. Each of these entities plays an important role in Johnson County’s quality of life and continued success. In addition, many of the challenges and opportunities Johnson County faces as it looks towards the future—resource constraints, socioeconomic and demographic changes, and many others— affect not just Johnson County government, but each entity that comprises the County’s larger community of interests.

This vision document represents a nearly two-year effort on the part of 34-member Citizens Visioning Committee to describe the type of place the community would like Johnson County to be in the future, outline a path to help get there, and establish a framework to monitor and track the implementation of the vision over time. It defines a vision for Johnson County that encompasses both Johnson County government and the larger community of interests, but focuses recommended actions on Johnson County government’s role in achieving that vision in cooperation with other entities.

To date, the process has included numerous opportunities for community input, including: a dedicated project website, online community workshops, panel presentations, a youth forum, and a community survey. Additional input from a variety of stakeholders and the community-at-large will be sought over the coming months as the committee works to develop a final report by the end of the year.

This document will be used to guide decisions and actions over the next 10-20 years. While it contains recommended actions for each topic area, it is not intended to be a detailed step-by-step blueprint for how to carry out each of these actions. That will be determined by ongoing decisions and investments

made by County government, institutions, local governments, private businesses and others over time.

Context

Prior to setting goals and strategies for the future, it is important to understand the context for our vision. Through a detailed assessment of trends and existing conditions, the Citizens Visioning Committee identified four overarching challenges and opportunities that Johnson County faces:

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Balancing Fiscal Responsibility With Service Expectations – In light of changing fiscal and economic realities, how will the County continue to provide high quality services?

Adapting to the Needs of a Changing Population – What will the County need to do to respond to and take advantages of changes in our population (aging, increasing poverty, more ethnically diverse, etc.)?

Promoting Cooperation and Building Partnerships – What actions are needed to strengthen the County’s public and private sector partnerships and to enhance its leadership position in Johnson County and the region to achieve this vision?

Planning For a Sustainable Future – What steps should the County take to lead us towards a more sustainable future (economy, environment, and social equity)?

Fiscal, demographic, and population projections all indicate that these challenges and opportunities will continue to be relevant for the duration of the planning horizon. A key opportunity lies in the long-term view that this vision document provides—e.g., what changes can we make today that will help us not just weather temporary setbacks, but also help us become stronger and more resilient as a community over the next ten to twenty years.

Vision & Themes

At the most basic level, our vision describes the kind of place we would like Johnson County to be over the next twenty years. While the vision and themes described below reflect many of the characteristics for which Johnson County is recognized today—they also reflect a clear consensus among the Citizens Visioning Committee that we must not take for granted that the things we value about Johnson County will be there for our children and grandchildren tomorrow. Preserving our quality of life and achieving our vision for the future will require deliberate actions, collaboration, innovation, creativity, and—above all—strong leadership on the part of Johnson County government.

Our Vision:

Johnson County will be a community of choice – an inclusive, culturally and economically diverse community – nationally recognized for its quality of life, innovation, and exceptional leadership. This vision will be built from a strong focus on six themes:

- 1. Economic Vitality*
- 2. Excellence in Education*
- 3. A Safe, Healthy, and Caring Community*
- 4. A Sustainable Pattern of Growth*
- 5. Efficient and Effective Government*
- 6. A Culturally Rich and Active Community*

Economic Vitality



Johnson County will have a healthy and resilient economy that can attract and retain the creative workforce and leading edge companies needed for economic prosperity.

To help achieve this vision, the guiding principles set out to build strong partnerships, create a business-friendly environment, support the growth of the innovation economy, foster the development of a diverse and nimble workforce, and develop stable and diverse employment opportunities.

To support economic vitality, this plan recommends the following actions:

- Continue to play a supportive role in area economic development efforts,
- Explore the creation of an organization focused on promoting workforce development, and
- Encourage workforce diversity.

Excellence in Education



Johnson County's educational system from Pre-K-12 through collegiate, university, and continuing education levels will be recognized as one of the most distinguished and respected in the nation—providing all residents the opportunity to learn, live, and work in Johnson County.

To work toward this vision, the guiding principles focus on enhancing educational opportunities for all residents, building new and expanding partnerships, emphasizing 21st century learning skills, embracing the changing art of education, and collaborating on means to explore efficiencies.

Excellence in education has long been recognized as one of the cornerstones of Johnson County's quality of life. To continue this trend, the plan recommends the following actions:

- Conduct periodic education summits,
- Collaborate on opportunities to support and enhance educational funding, and
- Coordinate legislative initiatives related to maintaining state funding.

A Safe, Healthy, and Caring Community



Johnson County will be a safe, secure, and healthy community that offers all residents the opportunity to live productive lives and be as self-reliant as their abilities allow.

To work toward this vision, the guiding principles seek to adapt to the needs of a changing population, develop a holistic approach, emphasize prevention and early intervention strategies, and seek alternatives to incarceration and sustained offender success.

A safe, healthy, and caring community is a high priority for Johnson County residents. To maintain and improve this, this plan recommends the following actions:

- Support high quality public safety and emergency services,
- Enhance efforts related to prevention and early intervention,
- Maintain an active role in social, health, and human services programs,
- Identify and implement best practices in advancing technology and evidenced-based programs,
- Promote high levels of coordination among public safety agencies and other service providers,
- Allocate resources based on evidence-based outcomes, and
- Aggressively pursue grant opportunities.

A Sustainable Pattern of Growth



Johnson County will be recognized for its balanced approach to growth and resource protection—adapting and evolving to meet the community’s changing needs for housing and transportation, while protecting and enhancing the natural and historic resources, neighborhoods, and parks and recreational opportunities that make it a unique and desirable place to live.

To work toward this vision, the guiding principles center on reinforcing our commitment to sustainability initiatives, focusing growth in incorporated and underutilized areas, balancing new investment with reinvestment, supporting multi-modal transportation, reducing solid waste, and promoting stewardship of our land and natural and historic resources.

With a significant population increase projected over the next twenty years, a more sustainable pattern of growth in Johnson County is essential. The plan’s recommended actions include:

- Adapt land use and transportation policies to meet the needs of a changing population,
- Promote coordinated growth in unincorporated areas,
- Evaluating the current sewer financing structure,
- Invest in multi-modal transportation,
- Explore the creation of a range of conservation tools, and
- Lead by example with regards to sustainability initiatives.

Efficient and Effective Government



Johnson County government will be a leader among its peers in efficient and effective government—maintaining the high levels of service residents have come to expect while constantly striving for new and innovative ways to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic community.

To work toward this vision, the guiding principles focus look to convene stakeholders to work together on issues of common interest, lead by example, collaborate on means to explore efficiencies and promote cooperation, and support programs and services that are inclusive and accessible.

An efficient and effective government will be imperative to serve the growing population’s demand for services. This plan recommends the following actions:

- Convene a process to review current levels of government,
- Evaluate and implement the most efficient means of providing programs and services based on evidence-based practices,
- Develop and support leadership that reflects the diversity of the county,
- Strengthen the voice of Johnson County government and the community within the region,
- Encourage civic engagement,
- Establish a review schedule to track the implementation of the vision plan, and
- Promote an open and transparent process.

A Culturally Rich and Active Community



Johnson County's richness as a community will be defined by its diversity of people and ethnicities and its use of arts and cultural programs, parks and recreation facilities, volunteer opportunities, historic resources, libraries, and institutions to enrich the lives of residents and promote a community that is active and engaged in its surroundings.

To work toward this vision, the guiding principles center on fostering a collective approach to quality of life amenities, providing opportunities for all residents to lead healthy and active lifestyles, developing multi-dimensional programs and facilities, and supporting efforts that raise the arts/cultural profile of the county and region.

To achieve a culturally rich and active community, this plan recommends the following actions:

- Identify new funding options to support increased access to parks and recreation,
- Encourage the identification of broad-based sustainable funding mechanisms for the arts,
- Develop a flexible and innovative model for the delivery of library services,
- Identify new ways to engage all sectors of the community, and
- Support programs and services that are inclusive and accessible.

Priority Actions

While the vision statements and recommended actions on the previous pages are intended to have an immediate and lasting influence on decision making within Johnson County government, not every recommended action can be addressed at once. A series of priority actions—or actions that should be undertaken within the first year of the plan's completion—will be developed by the committee based on input received during the public outreach process and further discussion amongst the committee during the fall. These recommendations will be incorporated into the final plan.

Tracking our Progress

An essential element of this plan is to ensure that progress is made toward the desired future of Johnson County. Thus, indicators will be identified for each theme to help measure progress toward recommended actions. The plan contains a preliminary list of possible indicators in each area, which will be refined and incorporated as this plan is finalized.

