RE-IMAGINED HUMAN AND SOCIAL SERVICES

BETTER TOGETHER 2030
A SHARED FUTURE FOR JOHNSON COUNTY

AUTHENTIC, VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS AND DISTRICTS

A THRIVING ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM

ALL IN VISION

STRATEGIES FOR A 2030 SHARED FUTURE IN JOHNSON COUNTY, IOWA

A WELL-CONNECTED, MOBILE REGION

CHAMPIONS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

"WE NEED YOU, YOU NEED US,
AND THE STRONGER
WE COLLABORATE,
THE MORE WE'LL ATTRACT
AND KEEP TALENT.
WE ARE ALL IN!"

BARBARA WILSON
PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA





North Liberty Blues & BBQ

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OUR COMMUNITY KNOWS HOW TO LEAD. IT'S PART OF OUR HISTORY. IT'S IN OUR DNA. AS WE LOOK FORWARD TO 2030 WE DRAW INSPIRATION FROM OUR FOREBEARS, WHO SAW THE FUTURE FIRST AND BLAZED TRAILS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

1839 — Iowa Supreme Court "no man in this territory can be reduced to slavery" — 23 years before the U.S. Civil War

1851 — Iowa removes ban on interracial marriage, over 100 years before the U.S. does (1965).

1855 — The University of Iowa opens its doors to men and women on an equal basis, the first state university in the country to do so.

1857 — State of Iowa Constitution ratified including "All men and women are, by nature, free and equal, and have certain inalienable rights."

1868 — Iowa Supreme Court decides that a 12-year old girl could not be barred from a Muscatine school on basis of race, 85 years before Brown v. Board of Education (1954).

1869 — Arabella Mansfield becomes the first female lawyer in the U.S.

1875 — Iowa City's Emma Haddock becomes the first female lawyer to practice in U.S. Federal courts.



Emma H. Haddock

1886 — Emma Haddock and twelve friends organize the No Name Club to study literature.

1905 — George Woodson from Buxton, Iowa, cofounds the Niagra Movement, which becomes the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).



Title IX legislation is passed by Congress and Title IX champion Dr. Christine Grant, the "North Star of Women's Sports" from the University of Iowa, testifies before congress and writes guidelines to ensure Title IX is applied to education and sports, protecting women students and athletes for generations to come.

Iowa Senator Tom Harkin co-authors the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Iowa City becomes one of the first U.S. cities to extend discrimination protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

UNESCO declares Iowa City a "City of Literature."

1972 **1990** **1996** **2008** **2017** **2019** **2021** **2022**

Mazahir Salih is elected to the City of Iowa City Council, making her the first Sudanese-American to hold elected office in the United States.



Iowa City declares itself "the greatest small city for the arts."

Johnson County is renamed for Lulu Merle Johnson, a trailblazing academic, professor, and historian who was the first Black woman to earn a Ph.D. in Iowa and only the tenth in the United States.



African American Historical Museum & Cultural Center of Iowa

University of Iowa powers the state.

93 OF 99
Iowa counties employ teachers trained at the University of Iowa

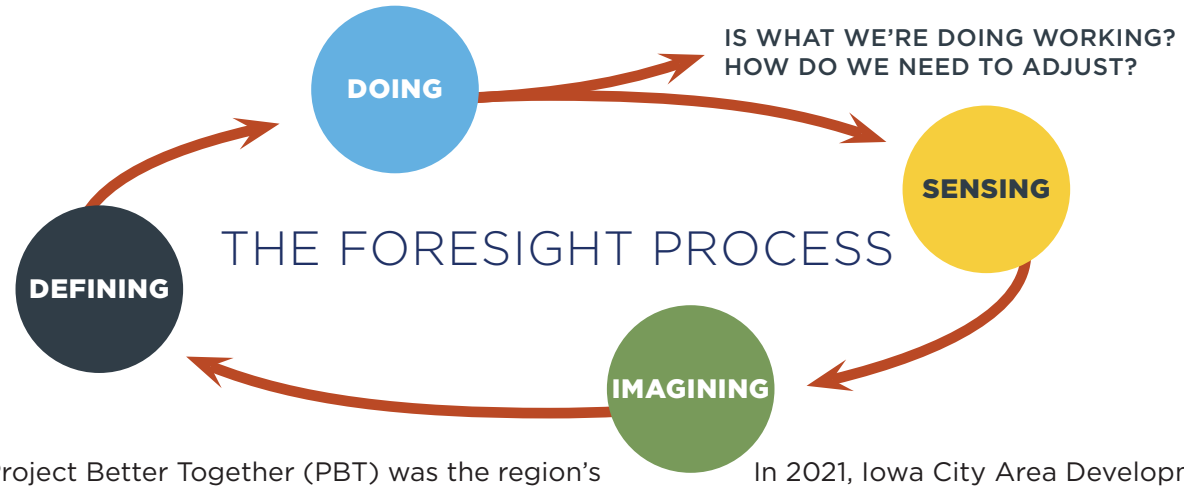
100%
of Iowa's newborns are tested at the State Hygienic Lab

700
of Iowa's businesses have MBA students enrolled at UI

50%
of Iowa's doctors and pharmacists trained at the University of Iowa

8 IN 10
Iowa dentists were trained at University of Iowa Dental School

BETTER TOGETHER 2030 FORESIGHT PROCESS



Project Better Together (PBT) was the region's leadership response to COVID-19. PBT proved that regional cooperation is possible and necessary to achieve success. Better Together 2030 now builds on that momentum and broadens it toward the future: what is possible in the visions we each have for a shared future for our region and communities? This visioning process was launched using key objectives:

1. Develop a clear, **data-driven perspective** of the region's future that includes demographic, economic, technology, political, and environmental trends that affected how our residents live, work, and learn.

2. Include the **voices of immigrants, BIPOC, children**, and others whose voices are often missing at the decision-making table.

3. Define **clear priorities** for the region's future that are:
   a. **Clear** — Residents and regional leaders will understand the vision and their role in it;
   b. **Shared** — No single entity will "own" this plan. The success of the region's future will be shared by a cross section of partners and individuals, and everyone will have an opportunity to play a role; and
   c. **Ambitious** — Better Together 2030 should inspire a sense of what's possible and positively impact all residents.

In 2021, Iowa City Area Development Group, Think Iowa City, Iowa City Area Business Partnership, and the Iowa City Downtown District led the region in forming a Steering Committee to guide the Better Together 2030 Visioning Process, and hired NEXT Generation Consulting with futurist Rebecca Ryan and her dedicated team to facilitate the work. The Steering Committee were liaisons to the communities in which they were known and trusted and succeeded in recruiting as many people as possible to share their stories and ideas for the region's future. In addition, the Steering Committee provided high level guidance, metrics, and insight on critical elements, including the trends affecting the region's shared future. They assisted in connecting to people and communities whose voices have not been heard in past planning processes; and worked to ensure the 2030 vision is a vision for a shared future, with input from the region and all of its communities.



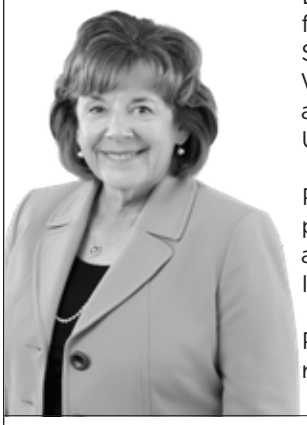
ANGIE JORDAN

Angie Jordan is a native Iowa Citian who has been part of this community for over 30 years. Her pronouns are she, her, and hers; she identifies racially as Mixed. In 2012, while working full-time, Angie started her own small business in knitting instruction to supplement her income. Today, she uses her knowledge and first-hand experience as an entrepreneur, stitches it together with the training from her day jobs, and weaves them into an effort that provides sustained support for those looking to make strong connections towards their goals.

Angie is the founder and director of Banjo Knits Empowerment LLC. As a graduate of Williams College, her educational background is in cultural anthropology and psychology with a cognitive focus. Angie's work experience is a blend of community development, social work, program coordination, and group facilitation with youth and adults.

For almost 15 years, both professionally and personally, Angie has spearheaded neighborhood revitalization, youth empowerment, economic development, and community-building efforts within the Iowa City area.

As an independent consultant through Banjo Knits Empowerment LLC, Angie intentionally weaves together ideas and action to increase access and knowledge to create inclusive communities, and lives in Iowa City with her family.



BARBARA WILSON

Dr. Barbara J. Wilson began her term as the 22nd president of the University of Iowa on July 15, 2021. She earned her bachelor's degree in journalism and her master's degree and PhD in communication arts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She came to Iowa most recently having served as the executive vice president/vice president for academic affairs of the University of Illinois System. Prior to that, she served as head of the Department of Communication, vice provost for academic affairs, executive vice provost for faculty and academic affairs, Harry E. Preble Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and interim chancellor of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. President Wilson was a member of the Illinois faculty at Urbana-Champaign for 21 years. She was also a professor of communication at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the University of Louisville.

President Wilson's research focuses on the social and psychological effects of the media, particularly on youth. She is coauthor or coeditor of four books and over 80 research articles, book chapters, and technical reports. In 2008, she was elected as Fellow of the International Communication Association.

President Wilson is a native of Appleton, Wisconsin. Her spouse, John Lammers, is a retired professor of communication. They have two grown daughters.



KATE MORELAND

Kate graduated from the University of Iowa Law School in 1997 and worked as an attorney doing high conflict divorce work until 2005. She has been an adjunct faculty member at Kirkwood Community College and the University of Iowa College of Law. Kate served as the Development Director for United Action for Youth and as Director of Community Relations for the Iowa City Community School District. Kate is skilled as a public speaker and as a change agent for businesses, communities, and individuals.

Kate is the current President and CEO of the Iowa City Area Development Group and has served on a number of boards. She received an ISPRA Communication award in 2013 and was awarded the *Corridor Business Journal* Forty Under 40 in 2011. Additionally, she received an Ovation award from the Iowa Women's Foundation in 2020.

As a working wife, mother, and dog mom, Kate understands the challenges it takes to follow your highest path.



"In these strategies, I see an emphasis on growth, sustainability, and equity and I think finding a balance among those three is an enormous challenge. It will be interesting to see how we move forward."

COMMUNITY CIRCLE PARTICIPANT

36+
trends sorted by more than 80 participants in the Big Sort

15,183+
votes cast by 566 residents in the All Our Ideas online survey

The Steering Committee was championed by three Tri-Chairs who were each dedicated to encouraging the foresight process while maintaining transparency about how all residents can be engaged, working to ensure that all who wanted to have a voice in the process could be involved. The Tri-Chairs helped ensure the process and participants were taking measured risks, understanding that we wouldn't always get it right, but must continue to lead with a bias towards the future and action, together in a spirit of positive intent and cooperation.

The group collected key metrics and data about our region from area stakeholders and communities and these were processed into trends and data that will impact the region into 2030 and beyond. These trends included specific and measurable data from larger themes across the region of Society, Technology, Economy, Environment, and Politics.

These key trends were then analyzed in the Big Sort on October 15, 2021: a full-day, community-wide sensing activity with over eighty participants, a dynamic workshop designed by NEXT Generation Consulting to help participants sort and prioritize those trends most likely to impact their future and what these future scenarios could and may look like. This Big Sort took place both in-person in a large community space and virtually simultaneously, allowing impactful participation across the community and in real-time.

From these visions of the future, the larger community was asked to move from the imagining phase to the defining phase. In this, people were asked to consider potential crossover levers that could mitigate trends and challenge future trends to maximize our potential, and suggest their own that may have been missing from the conversation up until this point. These levers were both projects that we could accomplish in this decade to help our region reach its potential and also how we should work together to assure our success.

Community members then shared their feedback and opportunities through Community Circles, powered by Angie Jordan and Banjo Knits Empowerment and a widely distributed "All Our Ideas" survey which was dynamic and responsive to a survey taker's choices, giving the participants the opportunity to prioritize competing interests, and gathering over 15,183 votes.

Following this complex process and timeline, the team put this plan to paper to share with a wider audience. This plan sets forth a 2030 vision, guiding principles of how we will work together for a shared future, providing focused work areas for the coming decade, and outlining transformational projects requiring institutional leadership. Throughout the coming years, we will support strategic doing initiatives that support these efforts and focus areas. This vision represents our vision for a shared future.

Barbara Wilson, UI Office of the President, Tri-Chair

Angie Jordan, South District Neighborhood Association, Tri-Chair

David Barker, UI Board of Regents

Zach Wahls, Iowa State Senate

Rod Sullivan, Johnson County Board of Supervisors

Royceann Porter, Johnson County Board of Supervisors

Lynette Jacoby, Johnson County Human Services

Bruce Teague, Mayor of Iowa City

Mohamed Traore, IC Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Mitch Gross, Coralville City Council + ICCSD

RaQuishia Harrington, North Liberty City Council

Katie Knight, United Way

Shelly Maharry, Community Foundation of Johnson County

Andre Perry, University of Iowa

Cady Gerlach, Shelter House

Mark Nolte, GreenState Credit Union

Suresh Gunasekaran, UIHC

Marlen Mendoza, LULAC / COMMUN

V Fixmer-Oraiz, Astig Planning

Dave Schwindt, Iowa City Police

Miguel Cohen Suarez, Iowa City High School Student

Krisha Kapoor, Iowa City High School Student

Kelly Hayworth, City of Coralville

Geoff Fruin, City of Iowa City

Ryan Heiar, City of North Liberty

Matt Degner, ICCSD

Josh Schamberger, Think Iowa City

Nancy Bird, Iowa City Downtown District

Kim Casko, Iowa City Area Business Partnership

Kate Moreland, Iowa City Area Development Group, Tri-Chair

Monica Nieves, Think Iowa City, Project Manager

Peter Matthes, University of Iowa

OUR THREE GUIDING PRINCIPLES ARE OUR COMMITMENTS TO EACH OTHER.

They provide clarity, inspiration, and inclusion for how we'll work together toward 2030.

REPRESENTATIVE LEADERSHIP
to dismantle systemic inequity and deepen a culture of inclusion and belonging

COLLABORATION
among public, private, nonprofit, neighborhood and University players to develop innovative scaled solutions

GROWTH MINDSET
with the willingness to try new things — because growth and skill are improved with effort and persistence

THE VISION IS OUR NORTH STAR.

It illuminates our work and provides direction for the community's efforts.

2030 VI

OUR FIVE FOCUS AREAS ARE OUR NO-KIDDING, GET-'EM-DONE PRIORITIES.

These have the power to positively transform our communities and will help us manage future disruptions.

I. CHAMPIONS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1. **Make the Iowa River a signature attraction for residents and visitors**
2. **Deepen partnerships between the University of Iowa and regional stakeholders to develop and execute sustainable environmental practices and clean, renewable energy**

II. AUTHENTIC, VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS AND DISTRICTS

3. **Empower and fund neighborhoods to identify their assets and opportunities, and leverage their community's uniqueness**
4. **Experiment with superior affordable home design, while supporting affordable housing initiatives as an economic development priority for the region**
5. **Ensure all neighborhoods have affordable child care**



SION

5 Focus Areas for 2030

11 Transformational Projects requiring collaborative leadership

Does not include Strategic Doing projects that will support focus areas

III. A WELL-CONNECTED, MOBILE REGION

6. Invest in a reliable, regional transit system

7. Ensure all residents have affordable high-speed internet

IV. A THRIVING INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM

8. Locate and invest in innovation zones and creativity centers where a network of writers, artists, musicians, educators, and entrepreneurs live and work together

9. Implement the inclusive economic development plan developed

10. Create an upskilling strategy to increase wages and build a talent pipeline for future growth

V. RE-IMAGINED HUMAN AND SOCIAL SERVICES

11. Use Circles, Strategic Doing, Collective Impact, and other participatory models to identify and empower solutions at the most local level

I. CHAMPIONS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Johnson County has a long history of environmental stewardship.

Building on that commitment — and coupled with the University of Iowa's innovation and applied scholarship — Johnson County will be one of the most environmentally responsible, resilient and climate-ready regions in the country.



1. Make the Iowa River a signature destination for residents and visitors

The floods in 1993 and 2008 caused us to turn our backs on the Iowa River. The river didn't love us, so we decided we weren't going to love it either. We gave each other space. 12 miles from the Coralville Reservoir dam to the south edge of Iowa City, while healthily maintained, were largely ignored. A community that loves natural outdoor recreation, as evidenced by the hundreds of miles of trails in Johnson County, has not embraced the beauty of the winding river that cuts through its own heart.

That is about to change.

The Iowa River Destination project, which includes Clear Creek, will finally unite the plans and dreams of Iowa City, Coralville, the University of Iowa, and Johnson County into a singular blueprint that connects how we will interact with, embrace, and love the river once again. Boat access ramps, trails, amphitheaters, a skate park and bike track, to possible whitewater rafting, zip lines, and a signature brilliant pedestrian bridge will call to residents and visitors alike. These gathering places allow for new, unexpected experiences that will further private investment nearby.

The Iowa River will become a transformational attraction and gathering spot for residents and visitors to:

- Experience the River directly through canoe, kayak, paddleboard, and paddleboat rentals;
- Participate in the River's care and maintenance through volunteer and civic efforts; and
- Enjoy the River as the setting for dynamic community events, e.g. Riverfront art, music and cultural gatherings

BEST PRACTICES

ROCK RIVER ROCKFORD, IL



In 2007, the City of Rockford made a clear decision to face towards the Rock River, not turn their back on it, and transform it into a destination that could be enjoyed by all. The River Edge Development Zone offers tax increment financing, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) development assistance and job creation, and brownfield revitalization. Today, the River is a gathering place for the entire community and anchors many destinations for locals and visitors.

https://rockfordil.gov/city-departments/community-and-economic-development/economic-development/river-edge-zone/

2. Deepen partnerships between the University of Iowa and regional stakeholders to develop and execute sustainable environmental practices and clean, renewable energy.

Our community has all the ingredients to be a national role model for sustainability through partnership.

- The University of Iowa's Engineering School and Mubeen Research Group are converting garbage into sustainable energy, producing renewable hydrogen using sunlight and water, and working on energy storage solutions to decrease dependency on fossil fuels.
- Iowa City's Climate Action & Adaptation plan is accelerating the City's efforts to reach net-zero carbon by 2050.
- The Eastern Iowa Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness Plan will help the region transform its vehicle fleet and reduce carbon emissions.
- Wings 2 Water and other partnerships are helping reduce nutrient runoff, restore local water quality, and eliminate the Dead Zone.



First ever area electric bus

AUTHENTIC, VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS AND DISTRICTS

II.

What makes a place special? People.



When people gather — for work or pleasure, for meals or time with friends, to experience something new or something familiar — they imbue that place with their energy and give it a distinctive personality. By 2030, we envision our community with dozens of neighborhoods, arts and creative districts, downtown and retail districts, and entertainment districts with personalities that are authentic, vibrant and eclectic — as diverse as the community itself.

Our communities' residents overwhelmingly support this idea. Over 500 residents cast over 15,000 votes about the area's future. The overwhelming favorite:

Build strong, authentic commercial neighborhoods with arts & culture, mobility, affordable housing, environmental stewardship, and more.

The foresight process made clear that neighborhood districts and centers are one of the primary building blocks of the Better Together 2030 planning framework and a lens of our future projects and work. We start with people first and break down the silos of individual disciplines to get at how people want to LIVE, WORK, PLAY, and BELONG in our communities.

"IOWA CITY IS A CITY BUILT BY ARTISTS FOR EVERYONE. LET'S KEEP THAT GOING."

BARBARA MCFADDEN & TOM ROCKLIN

3. Empower and fund neighborhoods to identify their assets and opportunities, and leverage their community's uniqueness.

The South District Neighborhood Association (SDNA) is a compelling example of what happens when neighbors work together to identify their unique assets, needs, and opportunities.

The SDNA started as an idea: neighbors working together to stay informed and collaborate on ways to encourage positive community engagement. The SDNA was so engaging in the area, the commercial neighborhood decided to support and back the formation of a Self-Sustaining Municipal Improvement District. The SD SSMID is governed by local property owners and neighbors in the district. A SSMID is a tool that leverages taxes and fees paid on certain properties in a specified district that can be used for improvements and services, often creating business growth and revitalizing neighborhoods.

The SSMID that formed in the South District is in its beginning stages and is one example of what is possible across Johnson County, when neighbors work together to define a vision and plan for their own economic development and prosperity. Supporting this newly formed SSMID as it develops is a priority of the 2030 vision and similar transformational projects ahead. A complete toolkit for SSMID development is available at the Iowa Economic Development Association, https://www.iowaeda.com/UserDocs/SSMIDFinalReport.pdf

SOUTH DISTRICT

"The South District has grown significantly. It has changed, and is changing, in a great direction. It takes a village, and I want people to know that the South District is a village. And we're helping each other to grow in every avenue, in every aspect."

TASHA LARD
OWNER OF JD BEAUTY SUPPLY, PEPPERWOOD PLAZA



Nancy Bird (ICDD), Jason Jordan, (South District resident), Angie Jordan, Todd Means (Midwestone Bank), Tasha Lard and Eric Harris (a South District resident) at MidWestOne Bank on collecting signatures for the SSMID petition that passed unanimously by the City Council in January 2022.
— courtesy of Angie Jordan

Another example of unique neighborhood engagement and development is the North Liberty Neighborhood Ambassador Program.

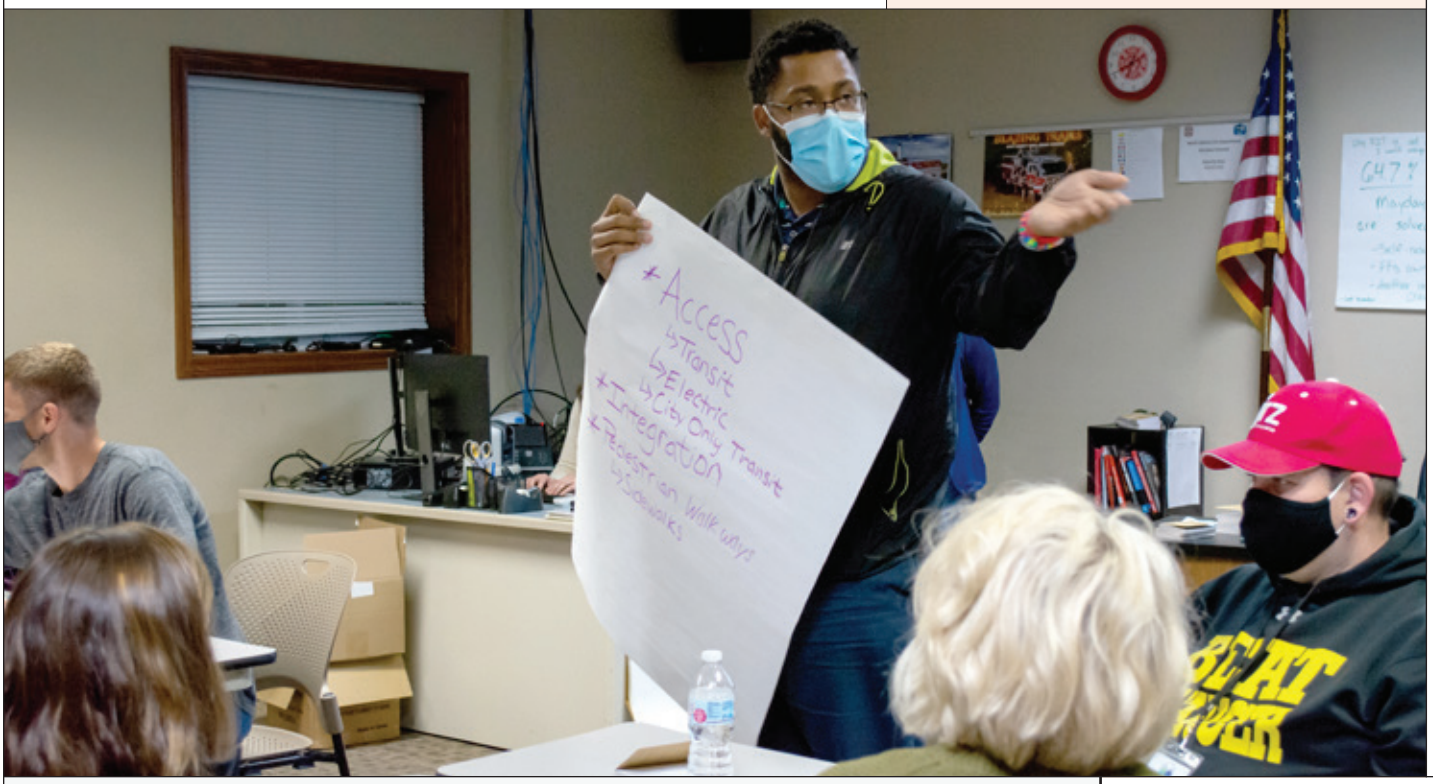
North Liberty's Neighborhood Ambassadors program aims to close the information gap between the city and residents and strengthen community connection by partnering with on-the-ground local volunteer leaders. Local government can seem monolithic, and its operations are often opaque. The Neighborhood Ambassador program helps lift the curtain by proactively explaining operations and decision making that impact residents and their neighborhoods. The partnership with these 40 to 50 resident volunteers strengthens information sharing, builds trust and increases connection between the city's residents, their neighborhoods and the local government.

Recruitment started in 2020, with the program fully implemented on Jan. 1, 2021. The initial class of 64 applicants were interviewed by staff and volunteer members of the Communications Advisory Commission. 41 ambassadors were appointed.

GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

THE PROGRAM AIMS TO:

- Heighten the community spirit of helping others.
- Enhance sense of community safety.
- Increase city information equity.
- Increase the number of positive engagements between city staff and residents.
- Foster future local government leaders.
- Increase neighborhood-level problem solving, such as parking, barking, shoveling, mowing, noise and firework concerns.



AT THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR, AMBASSADORS REPORTED:

- 100% had a greater understanding of how the city works.
- 94% had more personal pride of their neighborhood.
- 100% felt more in the know of city happenings.
- 100% felt more comfortable reaching out to city staff.
- 100% had a greater appreciation for community development.
- 89% felt more connected to their neighbors.

Neighborhood Ambassadors have met quarterly with city staff and elected officials; received monthly update emails from communication staff; taken behind-the-scenes tours of our public works, police, fire, parks and water treatment facilities; hosted neighborhood events with staff support; engaged in comprehensive planning exercises; run for elected office; shared city news and feedback; and lead and participated in critical community building both citywide and within their neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Ambassadors are volunteers passionate about advancing the quality of life for their neighbors. These on-the-ground local leaders partner with the city to help close the information gap between the city and residents, build community through gatherings and projects, and connect neighbors to each other and to community resources.

While Neighborhood Ambassador partnership is still new, it has already caught some domestic and international attention. The City has been approached by



representatives of Rockville, Md., Gunnison, Colo., and a German consulting company hired by the Government of Dubai to advise on community engagement efforts to share details and lessons learned about our program.

Strong, long-lasting, productive, respectful, trusting relationships take time, intention, and effort. The Neighborhood Ambassador program, and the partnership with volunteer leaders, has already shown positive results and a strong foundation for community building in North Liberty.

One of several additional ways to build authentic and vibrant neighborhoods is through the arts. While the Iowa City area is on its way to becoming the Greatest Small City for the Arts and has many powerful examples of art and creativity, where is the next "Roosevelt Row"? How can strengthening creative and innovative initiatives further distinguish neighborhoods from one another? How can the Iowa Writers Workshop and UNESCO's designation as a City of Literature extend into the community to make people more connected and attached?



BEST PRACTICES

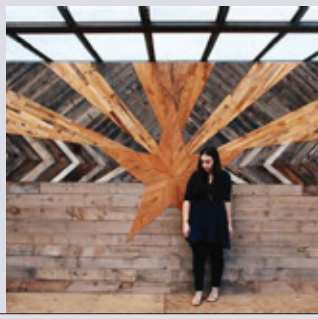


ROOSEVELT ROW PHOENIX, AZ

Roosevelt Row in Phoenix, AZ, has a mission — to advance arts-focused initiatives for artists, entrepreneurs, and residents, cultivating creative space within a sustainable Roosevelt Row Arts District. This distinctive neighborhood is powered by collaboration and the generous support of volunteers.







Iowa City and Johnson County have powerful examples of art and creativity

- **The Iowa City Downtown District's public art initiative** invites local artists to submit work that is highly original, gives a strong sense of place, and has a timeless quality. Doors Downtown, Iowa City Mural Project, and Benchmarks are excellent examples of enabling local artists to add authenticity and eclectic flair to the community.

- **The University of Iowa's** commitment to Hancher Auditorium and its new Office of Performing Arts and Engagement demonstrates UI's commitment to helping Iowa City become the best small city for the arts.

- **The City of North Liberty's Storm Drain Art Project** began in 2018 with art from students from Penn Elementary and Liberty High School. Storm drains are the mouths to rivers and lakes, and when pollutants enter the storm drains, they can easily be carried into waterbodies. Murals found on storm drains throughout North Liberty remind the public the important role these drains play in Iowa's water quality and our responsibility to keep them clean.

- **The Iowa River Landing Sculpture Walk** in Coralville is made up of eleven sculptures by Iowa artists highlighting the Iowa Writer's Library, a collection of UI Writers' Workshop pieces maintained by the Coralville Public Library. The installation is at the Hyatt Regency Hotel & Conference Center and made possible through an Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs Great Places grant and City of Coralville funds.







This focus area invites the region to flip its perspective from a community that values creativity to becoming a community that centers creativity in everything it does — from how it solves wicked problems to who is invited to collaborate and shape the future. Imagine 2030 — when artists and entrepreneurs are helping solve social issues, when the entire community is engaged in creating its shared future.

Putting our people together in new ways will help us reinvent and reimagine more authentic and vibrant places. Through neighborhood audits, the environment, housing, mobility, the economy, and social service needs can be identified for problem-solving at the community-wide level.

Possible types of neighborhood centers in our community

- **Growth Center(s)** have a primary regional role. They have dense existing jobs and housing, high quality transit service, and are planning for significant growth. They serve as major transit hubs for the region and provide regional services and serve as major civic and cultural centers.

- **Mixed Use Neighborhood Centers** play an important community role, with existing jobs and dense housing, high quality transit service, and community-driven plans for making the district authentic. These centers may represent areas where major investments — such as high-capacity transit — offer new opportunities for growth. Each could have a designated innovation center.

- **Iowa River Centers**
  The Iowa River will have important human connections to the waters of the Iowa River that serve as a focal point for recreation, renewable energy, environmental stewardship, and watershed management. Biking and walking trails to Iowa River beaches, fishing holes, amphitheaters and other types of activity centers could connect in deliberate ways to support a regional system of neighborhoods.

- **University of Iowa Center**
  The University's campus is its own center of important academic, creative, and residential life for students. UI has a ten-year master plan to make significant improvements in the student union, the hardscape, buildings, and usability that touch the edges of each city in Johnson County with opportunities to work collaboratively to improve transportation and housing.

- **Industrial, Research & Innovation Centers** cluster and preserve lands that have significant value to the region and potential for future job growth. These large areas of commercial lands serve both big and small employers and host significant infrastructure for large concentrations of jobs. These areas hold significant opportunities to improve the quality of the environment and transportation to and from for those that work there. The Coralville Research Park and the Iowa City Industrial Park may be ripe for additional innovation.

Designating centers will help focus and guide the region's livability index in an integrated and coordinated manner.

BEST PRACTICES

PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL

The Puget Sound Regional Council (Washington) began using centers — places that were dense with people — as an organizing principle for its economic development in 2018. Focusing economic development efforts in designated centers maximizes opportunities for authentic, people-oriented places that result in high quality of living while also improving mobility in the region. In our communities, many such places exist and new places are emerging.



4. Experiment with superior affordable home design while supporting affordable housing initiatives as an economic development priority for the region.

Affordable housing rose to the top of the priorities for all participants in this foresight process and it was consistently described in each of the five focus areas as critically important to sustainable community development in our region. The 2030 vision undertakes supporting affordable housing initiatives as an economic development and community development priority for the region, understanding that housing is a central, critical, and essential right for every individual in our community to thrive.

We live in an age where architects and designers are innovating better use of space and materials to deliver more affordable, efficient and liveable multi-family homes and developments. We also live in a community with affordable housing advocates, organizations, and developers who understand the need and have the will to make this a priority. Our region also boasts incredibly creative and innovative entrepreneurs. With these pieces, our community has the tools to make superior affordable housing a reality for Johnson County in 2030.

Any innovation in the home construction industry will require a partnership with local builders, architects, and local government. With the median Johnson County home price averaging $171 per square foot, home-ownership is out of reach for many families. Using new methods that are being championed elsewhere, housing can be both more affordable and more environmentally sensitive. The following examples of technology in housing for multi-use homes show what is possible for Johnson County.



AFFORDABLE AND SUSTAINABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Montava, an agriurban development in Fort Collins,

Colorado is being developed on the principles that rose to the top of our 2030 visioning process: walkability, bicycle friendly, complete community, improved public health, all through blended housing types and accessible housing development. This development is a central example of what is possible in a large University town with neighboring agricultural lands and centralizing and improving increased amenities in these locations.

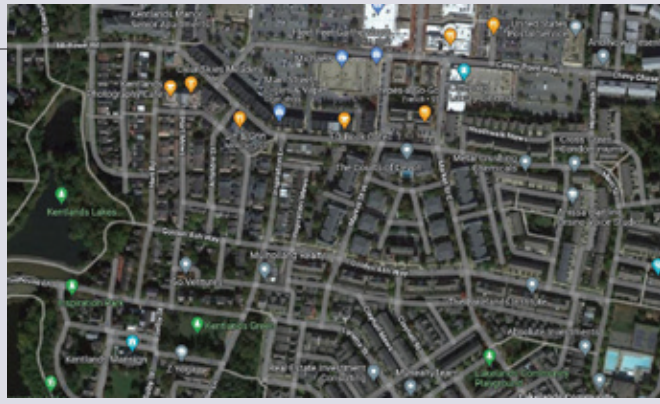
Image from https://www.montava.com/



The Kentlands, another similar community to Montava,

in Gaithersburg, Maryland, demonstrates that the integration of small/medium/large single family and townhomes is possible, and blends seamlessly in close proximity. This nontraditional approach to modern development, mixed with sustainable affordable housing techniques brings incredible promise for 2030.

Kentlands image credit to Montava - “Complete Community: Connected, Mixed Use, Diverse”



Community First! Village built on its successes with

New Story in nearby Tobasco, Mexico. A builder in Austin, TX turned its focus towards building the one-of-a-kind cluster of six 3D printed houses in collaboration with nonprofit Mobile Loaves and Fishes as part of the Community First! Village in late 2019 and early 2020.



5. Ensure all neighborhoods have affordable child care.

"The child care shortage in Iowa touches everyone — not just parents. Providers spend a great deal of time nurturing and caring for our children but are often met with low wages and a lack of benefits in return — leading to fewer providers. For every available slot in Iowa, there are 3 children needing care. This substantial deficit in care forces many parents to leave the workforce and stay home with their children. When the workforce suffers, our economy suffers. Child care is a community issue, therefore we must come together to address it."

DAWN OLIVER WIAND
PRESIDENT/CEO,
IOWA WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION

The shortage of child care is a national issue, and one that hits close to home.

Iowa has more households with all parents working than any other state in the country. Iowa also has too few options for high quality, affordable child care. The pandemic has only made the situation worse, and the ripple effect is further complicating our workforce shortage and adding an additional barrier to the economically disadvantaged members of our community. Iowa's child care crisis not only hurts our families. It costs the state close to $1 billion each year in lost tax revenue, employee absences, and turnover.

Neighborhood leaders like 4CS of Johnson County work with government, education, and business leaders and can to develop strategies that meet their neighborhood-specific needs by tapping and tap into federal and state programs designed just for that purpose: and to ensure all neighborhoods have high quality, affordable child care.

The State of Iowa's Child Care Task Force made two important contributions to this 2030 goal for Johnson County: retention bonuses for the child care workforce, and shared services for child care business owners. More work is needed, but the vision is clear: families in Johnson County will have affordable child care by 2030.

The Johnson County Child Care Coalition has been meeting since 2019 to develop actionable initiatives that address access to affordable, high quality child care in our community. The Coalition is made up of many community stakeholders, including the Iowa City Area Business Partnership, Iowa City Community School District, 4Cs of Johnson County, CCR&R, ECI, Johnson County Social Services, Kirkwood Community College, the Iowa Women's Foundation, and many others. As the pandemic impacted parents and providers, the coalition's work pivoted to meet immediate needs of essential workers and providers. In July of 2021, the Coalition came back together to reassess the challenges and needs of the child care industry and parents post-COVID. The Coalition identified the following priorities for their work moving forward:

- **Build a Refugee/Immigrant Early Childhood Educator Pipeline** that serves those communities in a culturally sensitive way
- **Develop a High School Child Development Associate Academy** to encourage students to think about career opportunities in Early Childhood Education
- **Address wages and benefits** for child care providers in order to professionalize the profession
- **Business Investment into Child Care Solutions** to address the long term sustainability of child care for our workforce

A WELL-CONNECTED, MOBILE REGION

III.

This focus area is about two ways that people connect:

IN-PERSON

Residents want a connected and integrated public transit system.

This has co-benefits with Focus Area 1: Champions of the Natural Environment — because it reduces the region's carbon footprint and promotes wellbeing, and with Focus Area 2: Authentic, vibrant neighborhoods — because transit oriented development boosts neighborhoods economies.

DIGITALLY

Johnson County residents need reliable high-speed internet access.

This is a critical lesson learned from the pandemic. It enables students to learn from home, elders and others receive telemedical services, and employees to work from home. It also enables our highly skilled workforce to work for any company in the world, increasing our region's prosperity — Focus Area 4: A thriving economic ecosystem.

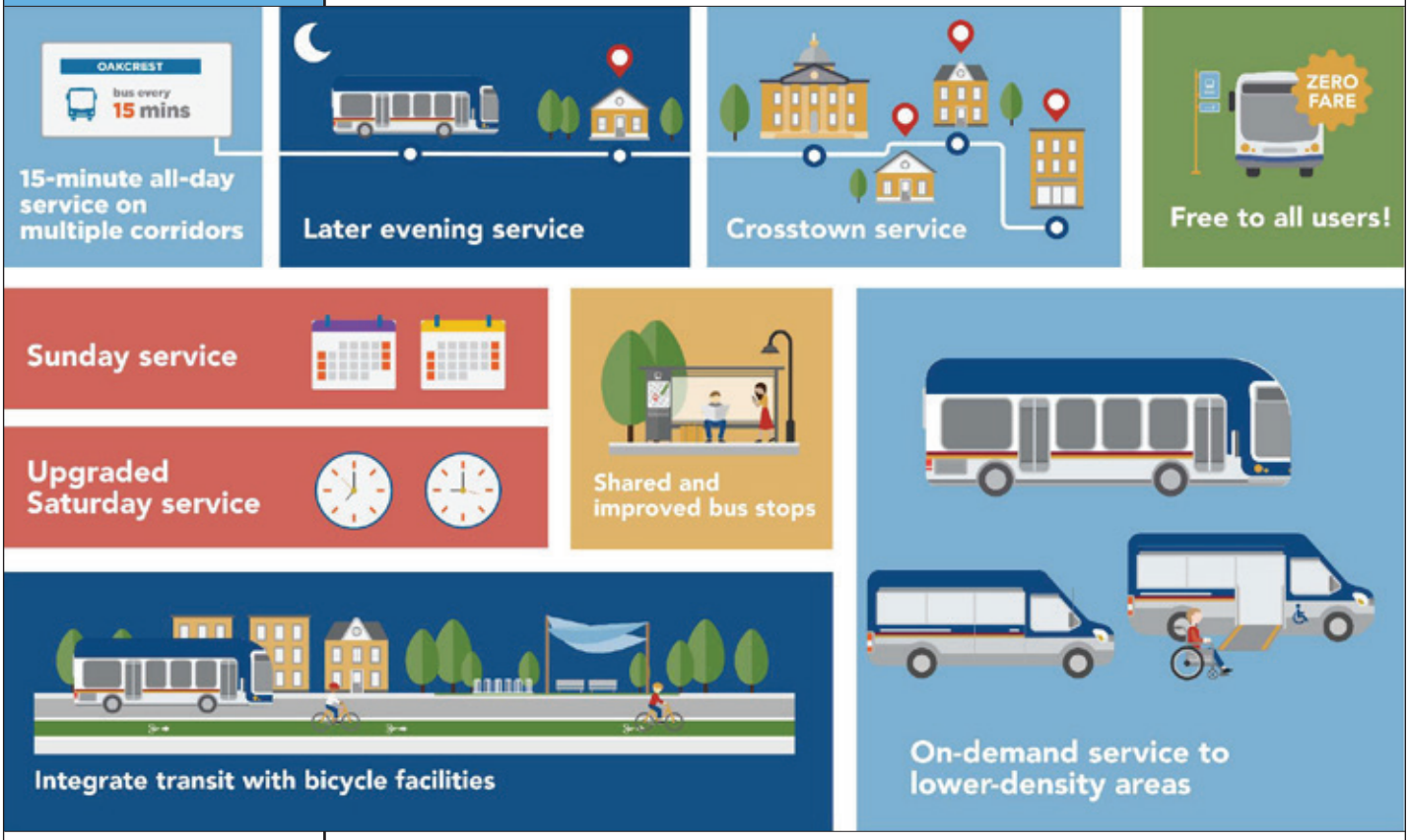
Each requires infrastructure.



6. Invest in a reliable, regional transit system.

The Iowa City Area Transit Study is a well-researched plan that included public participation, the City of Coralville, the City of Iowa City, and the University of Iowa (CAMBUS). This study collected over 4,000 responses and had over 200 attendees give comments at public meetings. The plan's summary is a tremendous starting point for the 2030 vision in this focus area — one that was responsive to public participation, financially responsible, and increases effectiveness. Our region is also lucky enough to boast an already established planning board that connects and provides leadership, expertise, and services to the member communities within Johnson County. And now that the City of Iowa City has already undertaken a move to electric buses, we are well on our way to make sustainable transit more dependable for those who rely on it, and an easier choice for others!

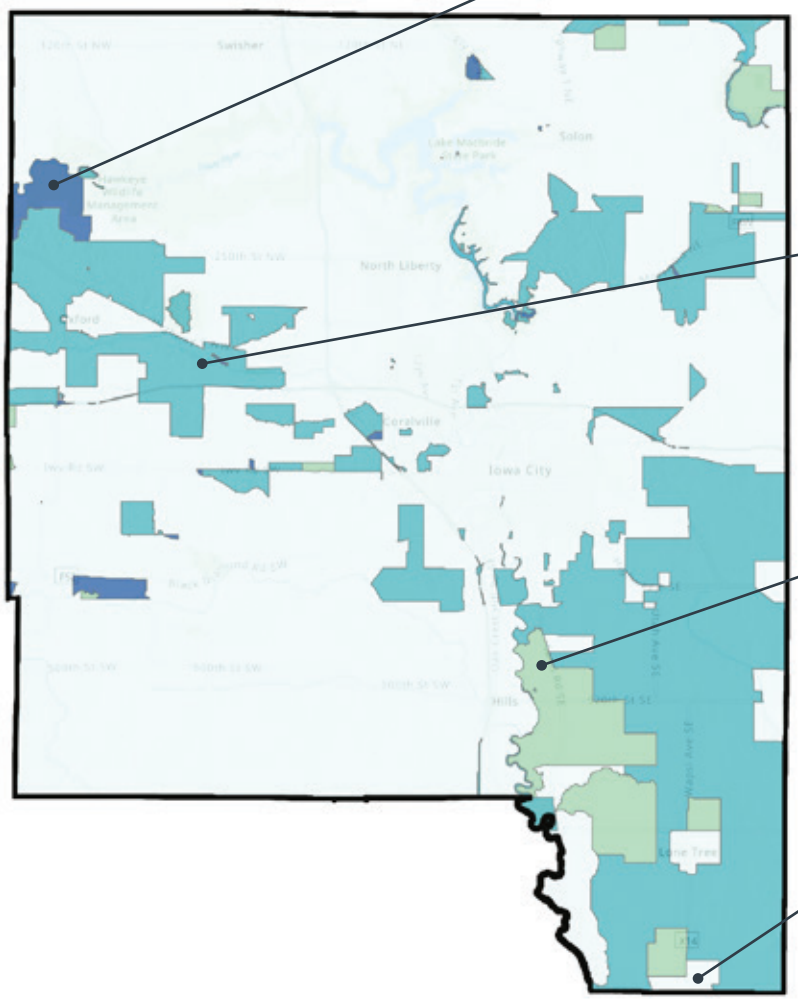
Vision for Transit: Interconnection, Regional, Innovative



IOWA CITY AREA TRANSIT STUDY
RE-IMAGINE YOUR RIDE

7. Ensure all residents have affordable high-speed internet.

Iowa ranks 43rd among all states in internet speed. The most recent map of Johnson County (below) shows that much of the county has adequate speed, but many residents have poor internet connectivity. Closing this gap is a matter of equity, and economic growth. Our community understands this and this is echoed by Iowa's Chief Information Officer, Matt Behrens.



BLUE
If a broadband block is blue, a download/upload speed of less than 25/3 was materially and meaningfully available within that broadband block. Also, a blue broadband block will represent blocks without materially or meaningfully available service. This is a Targeted Service Area (TSA) with a Tier 1 designation.

BLUE-GREEN
If a broadband block is blue-green, a download speed of greater than or equal to 25 mbps but less than 50 mbps was materially and meaningfully available within that broadband block. This is a TSA with a Tier 2 designation.

LIGHT GREEN
If a broadband block is light green, a download speed of greater than or equal to 50 mbps but less than 80 mbps was materially and meaningfully available within that broadband block. This is a TSA with a Tier 3 designation.

TRANSPARENT/WHITE
If a broadband block is transparent/white, a download speed of greater than or equal to 80 mbps was materially and meaningfully available within that broadband block. These broadband blocks are non-TSAs, and are ineligible to receive State incentives.

IV. A THRIVING INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM

Johnson County punches above its weight class in education and the economy.

Its strong K-12 school system and award-winning postsecondary programs at Kirkwood College and the University of Iowa give it a powerful educational foundation. On top of that are built strong entrepreneurial ecosystems like the Iowa Edtech Collaborative anchored by ACT and Pearson, and the emerging MedTech and Biotech cluster.

"THE STRONG PERFORMANCE OF IOWA CITY'S WORKFORCE, AND THE COMMUNITY'S CULTURE OF INNOVATION WERE IMPORTANT FACTORS IN MAKING THIS DECISION FOR OUR FUTURE."

JASON JACKSON, PLANT MANAGER, P&G IOWA CITY BEAUTY CARE ANNOUNCING P&G'S DECISION TO STAY AND EXPAND IN JOHNSON COUNTY



8. Locate and invest in innovation zones and creativity centers where a network of writers, artists, musicians, educators, and entrepreneurs live and work together.



Johnson County has a strong coworking scene including MERGE in Iowa City; Cowork at 808 in Coralville, PUBLIC SPACE ONE (PS1), the Fab Lab in Iowa City, the North Liberty CoLab, and the Multicultural Development Center of Iowa's BIPOC Business Accelerator Program.

Imagine if learning was viewed as a lifetime pursuit. Where skills were developed through practice, immersion, and integration in our community. Knowledge was created and shared throughout the community, by the community, in our neighborhoods, in our civic centers and coffee shops, as well as our classrooms. A community that serves as the Classroom of the Future.

Now imagine if all of these efforts and organizations were part of a connected network where innovators, students and artists worked side by side. Where arts, education and entrepreneurship influenced each other.

BEST PRACTICES

GAINESVILLE INNOVATION DISTRICT



The Gainesville Innovation District is a walkable urban tech and business community located two blocks from downtown and two blocks from UNF, the nation's 6th-ranked public university. It offers premium office, restaurant, lab, and retail space — ideal for 9-to-5 and everything in between. Students, pop-up retailers, artists, and entrepreneurs live and work here, which creates a density of people and ideas.

9. Implement an inclusive economic development plan

"How you see people, is how you treat people. How you treat people, is who they become..."

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

Inclusive growth is economic growth that raises standards of living for broad swaths of a population, especially those who've been historically underserved.

How is inclusive economic development different from traditional economic development?

Inclusive growth means economic growth that creates employment opportunities and helps reduce poverty. It means having access to essential services in health and education by the poor. It includes providing equality of opportunity and empowering people through education and skill development.

Our communities are making investments in inclusive economic development that should be promoted and supported across the community, so that the region can reach its potential.

Astig Planning's Inclusive Economic Development Plan is underway as of this writing. More information is here: https://www.astigplanning.com/basic-01

Johnson County's new Economic Development Plan targets unincorporated areas, villages, and smaller towns. The County's commitment to equitable economic development touches on several factors that are interchangeable with inclusive economic development: "Equitable Economic Development promotes the belief that all communities have the right to exist in a pollution-free, inclusive and just economic environment that is free from persistent and systemic discrimination. This can be achieved through comprehensive and community-engaged public action and investment that intentionally removes structural barriers and sustainably expands opportunities for all communities."

"Local leaders and economic developers should prioritize quality of life strategies over tax incentives and lax regulation. The long-standing Midwestern community economic development strategy of low taxes, business incentives, and loose environmental regulations usually doesn't work, and has often proven disappointing to communities that have given away tax dollars and reduced business standards without seeing substantial returns. Low business taxes often hide a hidden opportunity cost by reducing available funding for local schools and other public amenities."

BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

"The concept that growth will 'trickle down' to the poor and most disadvantaged among us has been proven to be fundamentally flawed. Instead, we have learned that when we invest in making economies more equitable from the bottom up, or the middle class out, economic growth is likely to be better for everyone's pocketbooks, for longer periods."

ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

The Rockefeller Foundation defines inclusive economies by five inter-related characteristics: participation, equity, growth, sustainability, and stability with related, measurable indicators that can be used in Johnson County to evaluate progress.

Inclusive economies expand opportunities for more broadly shared prosperity, especially for those facing the greatest barriers to advancing their well-being.

INCLUSIVE ECONOMY	
EQUITABLE	A. Upward mobility for all.
	B. Reduction of inequality.
	C. Equal access to public goods and ecosystem services.
PARTICIPATORY	D. People are able to access and participate in markets as workers, consumers, and business owners.
	E. Market transparency and information symmetry.
	F. Widespread technology infrastructure for the betterment of all.
GROWING	G. Increasing good job and work opportunity
	H. Improving material well-being.
	I. Economic transformation for the betterment of all.
SUSTAINABLE	J. Social and economic well-being is increasingly sustained over time.
	K. Greater investments in environmental health and reduced natural resource usage.
	L. Decision-making processes incorporate long-term costs.
STABLE	M. Public and private confidence in the future and ability to predict outcome of economic decisions.
	N. Members of society are able to invest in their future.
	0. Economic resilience to shocks and stresses.

10. Create an upskilling strategy to increase wages and build a talent pipeline for future growth.

One way that Johnson County can address its talent shortage and help residents who require human or social services is to find ways to help them get their foot on a rung of the economic ladder.

- National statistics indicate that up to one-fourth of those who are not employed have a disability that they report prevents them from taking a traditional job. Making jobs more accessible can bridge that gap.
- In Johnson County, immigrant and refugee communities face barriers that can be addressed. The same is true for people who have experienced homelessness, incarceration, or other known structural barrier to participation in the traditional economic playing field.
- Kirkwood College's Training Pathways and forthcoming facility master plan will help more people attain the skills and credentials required by the region's growing economy.
- Support career development initiatives in schools.

"We are a community that knows how to do hard things. We had the highest COVID vaccination rate in Iowa. We survived a 500 year flood with no deaths. We passed the largest school bond in Iowa history.

This — All In! — is our next big thing. We not only CAN do this; we MUST do this. We need to leave a legacy for our kids and theirs."

ROD SULLIVAN
JOHNSON COUNTY



RE-IMAGINED HUMAN AND SOCIAL SERVICES

V.

Our community's commitment is to be a great place for all people.

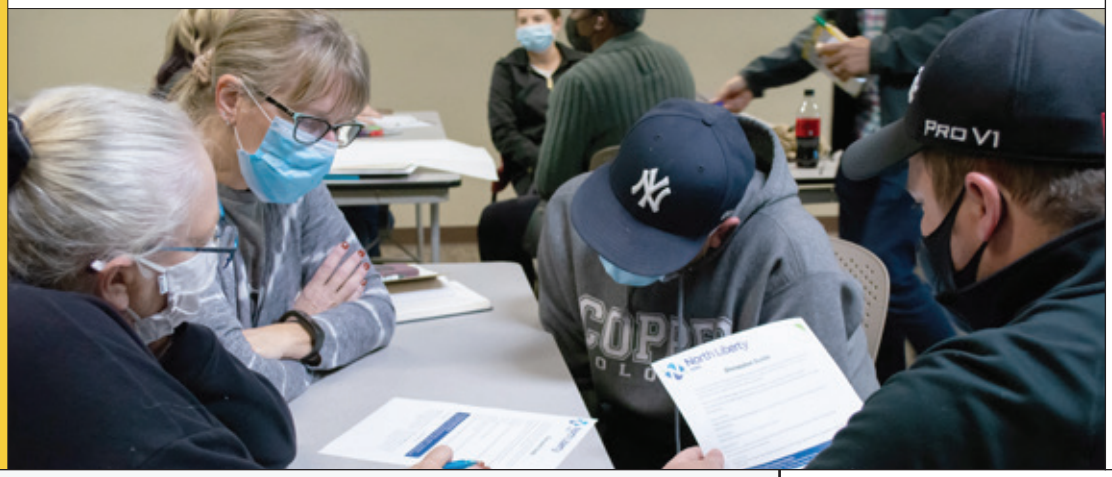
That means ensuring access to physical, mental, and economic well-being for all. To fulfill this, we must commit to look at how our community funds, supports, and encourages those committed to helping our residents in cycles of poverty.

Examining what a healthy community looks like for all, including those most vulnerable, is an imperative that we must keep at the forefront of the 2030 vision. We must redefine how we fund and align priorities for: essential human and social services, innovative solutions, and social entrepreneurship to create methods with the greatest collective impact.

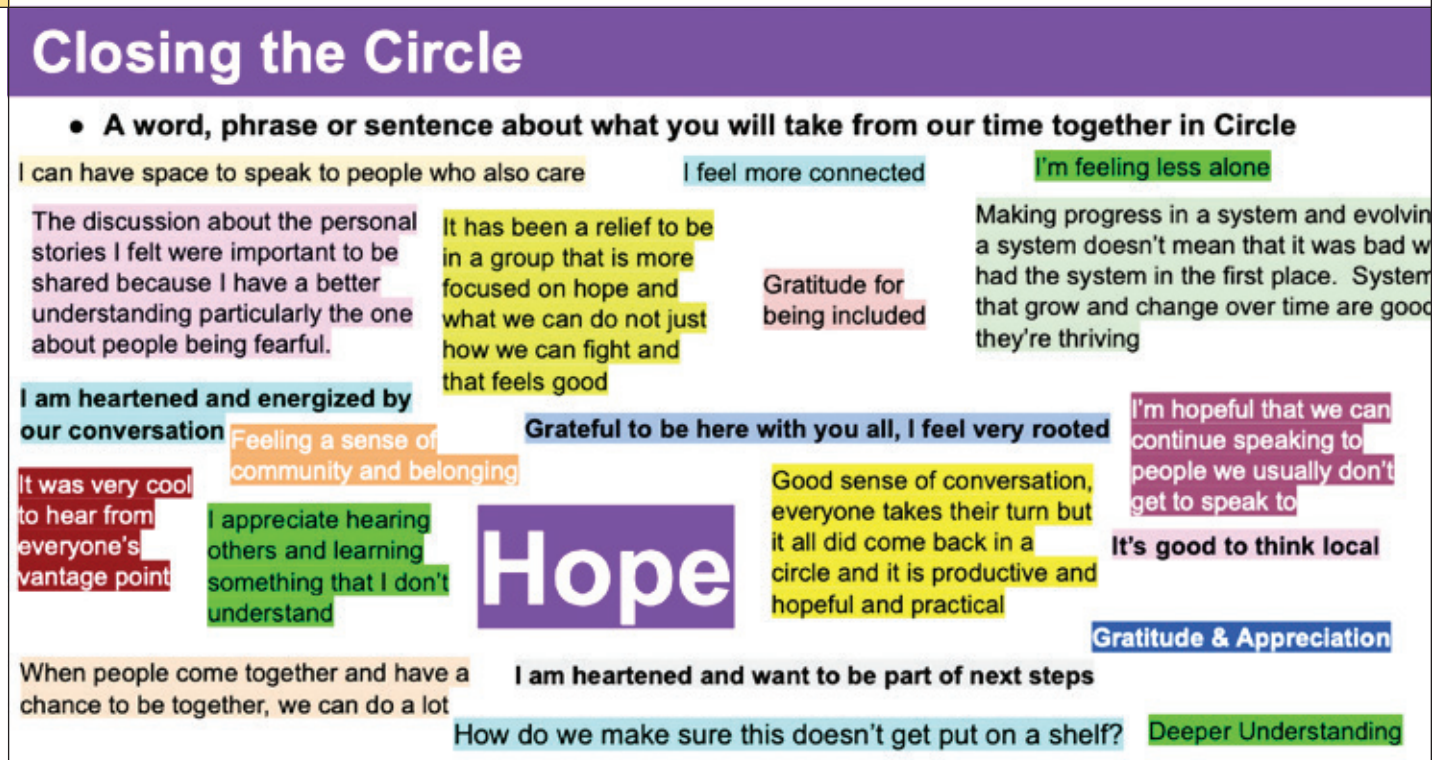
11. Use Circles, Strategic Doing, Collective Impact, and other participatory models to identify and empower solutions at the most local level.

As society's problems become more complex, new models of problem-solving are emerging. In Johnson County, Circles and Strategic Doing are already in use and having noticeable effects.

Circles are being used in the schools — and were used to produce this plan — because they create an environment where all voices matter, hierarchy is flattened, and healing, connections and community building are fostered. Circles are a critical antidote feelings of isolation and disempowerment that many people experience.



In the image below, we capture some of the relief and wonder that people felt after participating in the Circles that produced this plan.



Strategic Doing is a way to identify projects and partnerships that require no permission and no money. Strategic Doing has dozens of trained practitioners in Johnson County and will be used to develop additional projects for this All In Vision Plan.

Collective Impact is an intentional way for multiple nonprofit or social service organizations to work together, share responsibility for measurable improvements, and solve complex problems. It was pioneered in Cincinnati to improve public education outcomes.

Collective Impact is now in use around the world, addressing a large array of issues.

As Johnson County pursues its vision to be a creative capital, it must commit to creative ways to reimagine human and social services.

As we tackle our community's wicked problems, we recognize that we need more dynamic and responsive ways of collaborating, ideating, piloting, and creating results.

Whenever possible, solutions should be generated by those as close to the problem as possible. In the same way that an innovation zone will wrap-around services for entrepreneurs, we need social innovation zones that wrap-around services for our social innovators.

THANK YOU!

Thank you to the 30 participants and 3 Circle Keepers who participated in five, two-hour Community Circles to share their stories and truths living in Johnson County and how their future dreams fill them with hope. Participants included nonprofit organizations in childcare, youth LGBTQ+, returning citizens, and at-risk youth plus neighborhood association leaders, entrepreneurs of color, women entrepreneurs, senior citizens, church leaders, neighborhood council leaders, environmental planners, conflict resolutions service providers, retired education staff, entrepreneurial support providers, city government, and ICCSD high school youth.

Thank you to the 80 Big-Sort Participants and 566 residents who cast 15,183 votes on ideas to make Johnson County a more special community for future residents.



City of Iowa City
UNESCO City of Literature

North Liberty
Iowa

Coralville

Johnson County

Iowa City Community School District

IOWA

Community Foundation of Johnson County

United Way
United Way of Johnson & Washington Counties

IC
Iowa City Downtown District

Iowa City Area Development
Designing Our Future

Iowa City Area Business Partnership

Think Iowa City
A Collection of Curious Communities

BETTER TOGETHER 2030

A SHARED FUTURE FOR JOHNSON COUNTY

ALL IN VISION

STRATEGIES FOR A 2030 SHARED FUTURE IN JOHNSON COUNTY, IOWA

Access this report online

Johnson County's Better Together 2030 partnership used Strategic Foresight to explore its future, define its vision, and identify its focus areas.

The process was facilitated by Rebecca Ryan, APF, and her team. RebeccaRyan.com.

Report design: Benson & Hepker Design