

CITIZENS' VISIONING COMMITTEE REPORT

Final Report
November 2005



Following is a final report prepared by staff that outlines the accomplishments of the Johnson County Government in implementing the future vision articulated by the landmark Citizens Visioning Committee. The Citizens Visioning Committee was appointed in 1995 and, during a two-year period, developed a series of recommendations that identified the role that could be played by the County Government for the benefit of the Johnson County community by the Year 2020. The Visioning Committee submitted its final report to the Board of County Commissioners in 1997. Since that time, the Board of County Commissioners has conducted an annual joint meeting with the Visioning Committee to review its progress in achieving the goals envisioned by the members of the Johnson County Citizens Visioning Committee. This report, presented in November 2005, summarizes the accomplishments made by the Johnson County Government on those various strategic goals.

A. JOHNSON COUNTY IN 2020

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Restructure the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to enhance opportunities for County leadership that will be necessary to achieve this vision for the future. Among changes that must be considered are the at-large selection of at least one County commissioner; selection of the chairperson (possibly by direct election of the voters) who will serve a full term as chair; and the abandonment of the annual rotation of the chair among the members of the BOCC.*
- ❖ *A key element of County leadership includes education of the public about the critical importance of continuing investment in our schools, County infrastructure, human services and amenities.*
- ❖ *The County must consider and compare the respective merits and costs of private vs. public service providers, and utilize the form that can best and most reasonably deliver the service.*

In November 2000, Johnson County voters adopted a Home Rule Charter for the organization of Johnson County Government, the first of its kind in the State of Kansas. The Home Rule Charter serves as a kind of "county constitution," providing local control over the structure and general operation of the county government. The Home Rule Charter established a modified council-manager form of local government, in which community representation and political leadership by elected officials is combined with the managerial experience and expertise of a professional public administrator.

Under the Home Rule Charter, legislative and policy-making powers of the county government are vested in a seven-member citizen legislature called the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). Six members are elected from each of six separate districts, each of roughly equal population, in order to ensure equitable community representation. The seventh member is elected from a district that is comprised of the entire population and geographic boundary of the county and serves as the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners and Chief Elected Official of Johnson County Government. Together, the BOCC enacts public policies aimed at strengthening and preserving the health, safety, and welfare of the community. All members serve staggered, four-year terms and are elected on non-partisan ballots in even-numbered years.

In addition, voters elect the Sheriff, who serves as the chief law enforcement officer of the county, and the District Attorney, who ensures all laws are faithfully executed and enforced. The Sheriff and District Attorney are both elected to four-year terms and are elected on partisan ballots in even-numbered years. The former elected offices of Treasurer, Clerk, and Register of Deeds were consolidated under the County Manager and converted into operating departments.

The County Manager, appointed by the BOCC, serves as the Chief Administrative Officer of Johnson County Government. In that capacity, he is accountable for organizational performance, achievement, and service delivery in the daily operations of a full-service local government. Working within the policy parameters set by the BOCC, the County Manager—aided by his executive management team—ensures the effective and cost-efficient delivery of top-quality services that respond to local needs based on sustainable principles of public administration.

These structural changes—combined with several internal modifications and operational refinements—have helped the County Government to become a more effective, cost-efficient, citizen-focused organization focused on providing high-quality public service to the people of Johnson County. These changes are in direct response to recommendations first articulated by the Citizens' Visioning Committee, and have helped to pave the way for Johnson County to build upon its national reputation for excellence as we position the community for the challenges of the 21st Century.

One prominent addition to the structure of Johnson County Government has been proposed this year by the County Manager. Specifically, on October 6, the County Manager unveiled a plan to create a Community Affairs division, within the Office of the County Manager, which would be primarily responsible for communicating information about the County Government with community stakeholders, target audiences, the news media, and the general public. This will include providing information on and engaging the public about County services and programs; governmental processes; and identifying opportunities to enhance the image of the Johnson County Government. The plan responds, in part, to recommendations by the Citizens' Visioning Committee and, more recently, feedback gained from the 2005 Citizen Survey, which identified enhanced communications as one of the top five issues facing the County Government.

Beginning in 1998 and continuing through 2002, as a direct result of the Visioning Report, the current and future state of Johnson County's infrastructure system—a critical component of the overall high-quality of life and local economic prosperity enjoyed by Johnson County citizens—became the focus of a report titled *Building and Revitalizing Infrastructure Directly Guarantees Excellence into the 21st Century*, or BRIDGE-21. The report identified several key challenges facing the Johnson County community that ultimately were referred to a blue-ribbon advisory panel called the Infrastructure Advisory Committee. Through the Infrastructure Advisory Committee, Johnson County Government opened a community dialogue on these important subjects in a series of community summits that were part of the Preserving Our Future program. As a result of these summits and the work of the Infrastructure Advisory Committee, the County Government has prioritized its infrastructure plans, including the development of a Strategic Facilities Master Plan to address public facilities and related matters. The BOCC has discussed the possibility of identifying a dedicated funding source for infrastructure needs in the face of continued federal and state reductions in demand-transfer revenues and a steadily growing population. This type of dedicated funding will be absolutely critical to maintain the high quality of life residents have come to expect in Johnson County.

In 2003, the BOCC launched an organizational strategic planning initiative that continues to cascade through each agency and department, providing clear direction and accountability throughout County Government and aligning all operations along four goals identified by the BOCC. Those goals include:

- To be responsible stewards of our taxpayers' money;
- To provide the best possible mandatory and discretionary services;
- To build a "Community of Choice"—a place where people want to live and work; and
- To advance a positive environment that empowers employee innovation and productivity.

As part of this strategic planning process, a series of Community Indicators have been developed, which highlight key challenges and opportunities in the core service areas of the County Government, including: Health and Human Services; Public Works and Transportation; Culture and Recreation; and Public Safety and Judiciary. These Community Indicators examine environmental factors impacting the delivery of services and identify potential solutions to existing

and/or emerging issues. The first Community Indicators Report was presented to the BOCC on May 16, 2005.

The strategic plan is also changing how we think about the future of County Government and its role in meeting the needs of the community. Each year, the County Manager begins the budget process by asking the following services of policy questions:

1. What services should the County Government provide?
2. Who is the best provider of service?
3. What level of service will be provided to the community?
4. What is an acceptable level of cost for each service?
5. How will the costs of services be financed?

These tough policy questions have become a part of the operating culture in Johnson County Government, providing the framework within which the annual operating budget is developed and presented to the BOCC for its consideration. Over the past five years, staff has analyzed the “core services” of County Government and presented reports and other documentation to the BOCC at strategic retreats, work sessions, and during budget deliberations.

In line with these policy questions, the County Government continues to explore what services it should provide. The Visioning Committee recommended that the merits of private versus public service providers should be explored, and that the form that can best deliver services in the most effective and cost-efficient manner should be pursued. With leadership from the BOCC, the County Manager and his executive team have followed through on this recommendation. Numerous examples of privatization have occurred, in part as a result of these efforts. Each time a determination is made that a non-County vendor could provide the best quality service at the most efficient cost, the County Government has examined how to proceed; that is, through privatization, managed competition, or a variety of other delivery models that maximize private and public sector benefits in delivering the best, most high-quality, cost-efficient service to Johnson County residents. Some examples include: the transition of the operations of the County’s Nursing Center to an independent non-profit organization; the privatization of the food and medical services offered by the Sheriff’s Office and Community Corrections Department; and the provision of transit services through a private vendor. These efforts continue to form a critical aspect of the yearly development of the County’s operating budget.

B. EDUCATION

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Participate in and support initiatives that enhance the quality of public education.*
- ❖ *Encourage renovation and rebuilding of public schools in older neighborhoods.*
- ❖ *Stimulate shared use of facilities among schools, local governments and businesses through planning and zoning policies.*
- ❖ *Encourage continued dialogue among all educational institutions to ensure that lifelong learning opportunities are readily available to all citizens.*
- ❖ *Support development of a coalition of education/training institutes to coordinate workforce needs.*

In 2002, voters elected to enact a countywide quarter-cent retailers’ sales tax to raise funds for local public schools. This economic development sales tax—set to sunset in December 2005—was renewed by voters in 2005 for an additional three years, and will now run through December 2008. Over the course of the six-year term, it is estimated that the sales tax will raise \$100,664,940 for local public schools. And, in accordance with state statutes, a percentage of the sales tax will be provided to the cities in Johnson County, resulting in a net gain of \$58,165,692 for cities during the six-year term of the sales tax. This investment in public education, though not a direct responsibility of the County Government, demonstrates our commitment to sustaining top-quality schools as a key component of the strong local economy enjoyed

by Johnson County's businesses and families.

C. PUBLIC SAFETY

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Appoint a task force to study the further consolidation of County fire/EMS districts and resource sharing among public safety agencies.*
- ❖ *Develop a computer system in cooperation with the cities to track individuals, particularly juveniles, entering the system and the services provided to them.*
- ❖ *Encourage the cities to create an inter-city council of neighborhoods and neighborhood resource centers to support revitalization and redevelopment.*
- ❖ *Expand the County's capabilities to provide cost-effective alternatives to incarceration.*
- ❖ *Initiate County-wide prevention and education programs to help reduce crime and the need for additional jails.*
- ❖ *Ensure state-of-the-art communications systems are available for all public safety agencies in the County.*

The countywide Emergency Medical Services Council, the Johnson County Fire Chiefs Association, and the EMS Committee of the Medical Society meet on an on-going basis to consider system design changes to the local EMS system. The County Government also supports efforts to maximize resources across jurisdictional lines through inter-local and mutual aid agreements. Through these types of inter-jurisdictional partnerships, several advancements have been made. For example, the city of Leawood has transitioned away from providing medical transport through its fire department and has partnered with Johnson County Med-Act for this service. The city of Overland Park and Med-Act operate a shared paramedic service in that municipality to the mutual benefit of both organizations.

In 2004, Johnson County facilitated a series of meetings between the rural fire districts and the adjacent city fire departments in an effort to improve cooperation in the provision of service to all residents, both in the incorporated and unincorporated areas as well as to consider coordinated long-term planning for the rural fire districts. At the direction of the participants, the County Government has assumed a more active role in strategic planning for the future, recognizing that the situations facing each fire district are unique, and will require specific solutions that are applicable solely to the individual district.

With respect to the development of state-of-the-art communications and technology systems for all public safety agencies, Johnson County has been a strong partner with the State of Kansas in efforts to improve systems that facilitate the sharing of information among public safety agencies at the state and local levels. For example, the Kansas Criminal Justice Information System (KCJIS) is an initiative by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) that is now in its ninth year. The KCJIS is a web-based, statewide integrated criminal justice database that contains information shared by criminal justice agencies across Kansas. Information regarding arrests or other incidents provided by law enforcement, disposition records provided by the prosecutors or court systems, and offender supervision information provided by the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC), community corrections programs, and court services are all included and available to public safety agencies throughout the state. The KCJIS system provides access to criminal history information, booking photos, digital fingerprints, sex offender registrations, and other background information. The KCJIS allows for immediate KBI record checks to be run over an Internet connection; these checks previously took weeks or even months.

For adult felons, case supervision information is now available on the Kansas Adult Supervision Population Electronic Repository (KASPER) system, from our Total Offender Activity Documentation System (TOADS) entries. KASPER is a KCJIS initiative maintained by the KDOC, providing information to the public about offenders under KDOC

supervision or the supervision of any of the community corrections programs in Kansas.

The statewide court system, Full Court, includes a supervision component for Court Services which currently uploads into the KCJIS. Johnson and Shawnee counties are both challenged by the fact that each already had their own court information systems and do not use Full Court. Johnson County has a very well integrated information system, called the Justice Information Management System (JIMS), that interconnects the District Courts and Court Services, the Sheriff's Office, the District Attorney's Office and the Johnson County Department of Corrections. Since Johnson County does not use Full Court, a link was built approximately 4-6 months ago that provides disposition information from JIMS into KCJIS. Johnson County Court Services is not yet linked into KCJIS, but will be at some point in the near future.

The Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority has its own information initiative—the Kansas Juvenile Justice Information System (KJJIS). Our juvenile case managers enter case management information into its Community Agency Statistical Information Management System, which then links directly into KJJIS. The KJJIS is similar to the KCJIS in that it provides ready access to statewide information about juvenile offenders; however, it is not currently linked into the KCJIS. Efforts are currently underway and plans are in place to eventually link the two systems in the future.

The Visioning Committee's recommendation to create an inter-city council of neighborhoods and neighborhood resource centers to support revitalization was passed on to the Council of Mayors for action. Rather than forming a separate advisory group, the Council of Mayors chose to develop a resource guide of programs that are available within the various cities. The Council of Mayors has pledged to update this guide on an annual basis. No additional action by the County Government is anticipated on this item.

Johnson County's Corrections Department is in the final stages of increasing its bed capacity at the Adult Residential Center, from 205 to 449 beds. Construction is nearing completion on Building #4, which will add 232 beds. The Programs Building is now open, and remodeling on the existing three residential buildings has resulted in an additional 12 beds being added to the campus. Building #4 is projected to be completed sometime in the second quarter of 2006.

The comprehensive review of juvenile corrections needs has been completed by the Juvenile Corrections Advisory Board (JCAB), and JCAB has been studying the recommendations from the Huskey Study. While the advisory board's focus over the past year has been on developing a Family Resource Center concept—which would include the Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center, Juvenile House Arrest, and a Juvenile Detention administrative area—the population has continued to increase in Juvenile Detention. Expanding Juvenile Detention will be an issue that the BOCC will analyze soon.

Johnson County supports community policing and school resource officer programs which serve to enhance countywide efforts to reduce and manage gang violence and related crimes; develop community partnerships that address quality of life issues, neighborhood crime concerns, and mitigate the incidence of crime; focus upon at-risk juveniles; and facilitate multi-agency services to minimize future offenses. In addition to partnering with neighborhoods, community policing staff also conducts education programs for juvenile offenders. School resource officers educate youth and parents on drug and gang issues. A sub-committee of the JCAB has completed its work on evaluating the Juvenile Needs Assessment Study and has compiled formal recommendations which were presented to the BOCC. One of the primary recommendations was to secure dedicated funding for juvenile services. As a result, the BOCC approved \$153,000 in the County's 2006 operating budget for juvenile crime prevention programs.

The Countywide Communications System (CCS) in Johnson County provides a flexible and reliable voice and data communications infrastructure to over 40 municipal, county, and state agencies. The BOCC has supported ongoing capital improvements to the system to enhance its service capacity and to incorporate emerging technologies needed for improved communications services. The CCS has addressed the Visioning Committee's recommendations, including the incorporation of common radio channels at the city and county level to link agencies in different communities; the implementation of a shared, mobile data communications system for use by law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and Med-Act; and the 2005-2006 effort to design a state-of-the-art communications system to meet the needs of all local public safety agencies for the next 15 years. The County has also approved the construction of a hardened County Communications Center to co-locate both fire, EMS, and law enforcement dispatching services provided by the County Government, and it will also be available for use by municipal police dispatch operations. Occupancy of this facility is

planned for early 2008.

D. LAND USE

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Consolidate zoning boards to ensure consistent land use decisions across the unincorporated area.*
- ❖ *Maintain and reinforce cooperation and collaboration on land use planning among all County jurisdictions.*
- ❖ *Enhance the capabilities and resources of the professional staff to assure the best possible technical analysis of zoning and planning issues as well as consistent and timely code enforcement.*
- ❖ *Mandate regular updates to the County's comprehensive plan and zoning regulations, supported by independent review and with consideration of national trends.*
- ❖ *Encourage innovative land use design by developers and planners consistent with the comprehensive plan.*
- ❖ *Ensure a fair and consistent balance between future development and the creation and preservation of open spaces, parks and recreation areas, and agriculture.*

The County Government has examined ways to streamline zoning and other land use decision-making processes, including the number of zoning boards within the county, as recommended by the Citizens' Visioning Committee. In 1998, the Lexington, Monticello, and Shawnee Township Zoning Boards were consolidated (including a portion of the Olathe Township) and designated as the Northwest Consolidated Zoning Board. At the same time, the Spring Hill and Olathe Township Zoning Boards were also consolidated and designated as the South-Central Consolidated Zoning Board. In December 2002, the Gardner and McCamish Township Zoning Boards were consolidated, and now form the Southwest Consolidated Zoning Board. Today, there are five zoning boards. Oxford and Aubry Township Zoning Boards are the only remaining non-consolidated zoning boards. The Oxford Township has approximately 4 square miles of unincorporated area and the Aubry Township has 46 square miles of unincorporated area.

Examples of continued cooperation and joint planning efforts include participation in the city of Olathe's planning efforts for the Coffee Creek Area; the revision of the *Executive Airport Compatibility Plan* with input from the cities of Olathe and Overland Park; and the completion of the *K-10 Corridor Study Update* (which received a 2005 Excellence Award from the National Association of Counties) that included working with Douglas County and the seven municipal jurisdictions located within that highway corridor.

Outside of these types of project-specific matters, the County planning staff regularly coordinates and consults with our neighboring jurisdictions about planning efforts along the fringe areas as well as development proposals within the unincorporated area that may impact the respective city. For example, some of the collaborative planning approaches can be seen at the Nottingham Creek subdivision located at 175th and Lone Elm Road near Olathe; at the Hunt/Martin Rock Quarry located south of 95th Street near De Soto; and at the new Spring Hill High School located at 199th Street and Ridgeview Road.

Additionally, Johnson County conducted joint meetings with the Douglas County BOCC and its Planning Commission as well as representatives of the city of Lawrence to discuss common planning concerns along the County's western borders. County planning staff also participates regularly in planning projects at the metropolitan level through the Mid America Regional Council.

In order to ensure the capabilities and resources of the professional staff, specific training components are built into performance plans for staff in the Department of Planning, Development & Codes. This helps to assure the best possible technical analysis of zoning, land use, and development proposals and ensures consistent and timely enforcement of County codes. In addition, codes staff have certification testing requirements. Planning staff continues to keep abreast of

the latest changes and trends in land use planning and development through attendance and participation in local, regional, and national training sessions, including conferences hosted by the American Planning Association. A majority of the professional planning staff are members of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

A formal training program concerning was instituted for the members of the Planning Commission and the various township zoning boards. These training sessions have become an annual feature and are well-attended by these “lay planners.” In addition, each member of the Planning Commission and township zoning boards also now each receive a copy of the periodical *Planning Commissioners Journal*.

The Johnson County Building Officials Association was formed approximately five years ago with a vision to promote better uniformity of code enforcement throughout the county, responding directly to recommendations made by the Visioning Committee. The first major undertaking was the creation of the Johnson County Contractor Licensing Program, which provides licensing, accountability, and continuing education for contractors, design professionals, and code enforcement officials in the metropolitan area. The Association has created standardized construction methods for deck construction, braced wall panel design and installation, stucco installation, concrete foundations, and basement finishes to date.

The *Johnson County Rural Comprehensive Plan* underwent a three-year review and extensive update and was officially adopted, as amended, by the BOCC in June 2004. The 2004 revisions included extensive discussions and numerous recommendations regarding quality development and the encouragement of innovative design. One of the eight goals of the revised *Comprehensive Plan* calls for maintaining the sense of community and rural character that exists within the unincorporated area by protecting natural resources and open spaces and by supporting continued agriculture production. The revised Plan sets forth policies that call for continued slow growth that reflects quality development and a “sense of place.” Also in 2004, the revised *Executive Airport Compatibility Plan* was amended as a part of the *Rural Comprehensive Plan*. The Planning Department continues to conduct an annual review of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

At the recommendation of the Planning Commission, the BOCC approved new flood plain development regulations in 2003 and created a new limited commercial zoning district category in 2005. The Planning Commission is currently working on revisions to the County’s rule exception requirements for platting and the creation of a conditional use permit category for allowing replacement dwellings.

The Johnson County Park and Recreation District, as outlined in its long-range master action plan MAP 2020, continues to address the County’s long-term park and recreation needs. Since the adoption of this plan in 2001, the District has acquired 2,617 acres of new park land. This new acreage, combined with the current developed park acreage of 6,568, totals 9,240 acres, which is on course to achieve the MAP 2020 goal of 15,000 County park acreage by the year 2020. The MAP 2020 recommendations serves as the Open Space element of the County’s *Rural Comprehensive Plan*. MAP 2020 includes a comparative analysis of the amount of parkland being set aside in other benchmark communities across the country, and it establishes a goal of 22 acres per thousand residents, as specifically tailored to Johnson County’s current and future requirements.

The successful implementation of MAP 2020 has required continued involvement from existing groups including park and recreation directors and managers of the greater Kansas City metropolitan area, the municipal and township planners of Johnson County, the Stormwater Management Advisory Council, the Mid-America Regional Council, the Parks and Recreation Foundation of Johnson County, and the Kansas Land Trust. Regularly scheduled meetings are held to monitor MAP 2020 progress and to collectively address parks and open space issues.

E. TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Continue the current CARS (County Assistance Road System) program, with funding directed toward roads*

and bridges, to include sidewalks and bike paths associated with such road and bridge projects.

- ❖ *Use CARS as a model for other projects such as public transportation/rail.*
- ❖ *Take leadership in advancing a multi-modal public transportation system.*
- ❖ *Accommodate increasing traffic demand throughout the County, utilizing, improving and extending the existing arterial system as much as possible and specifically recognizing the potential of the New Century Air Center as an important multi-modal transportation and intermodal freight hub.*
- ❖ *Partner with cities to upgrade/maintain infrastructure.*

The BOCC created the County Assistance Road System (CARS) program in 1983 to establish coordinated policies and long-range planning for the construction of roads and bridges within city boundaries. The CARS program provides financial incentive to the cities to work on their major and minor thoroughfares. The CARS program pays 50 percent of a project's construction costs.

Since its initiation in 1984, the County has provided more than \$200 million in CARS funding to the cities in Johnson County, and has helped construct over 250 miles of roads. The CARS program is a national example of inter-local cooperation, with the cities and county working as equal partners in planning and constructing the most effective road network for the benefit of the entire community. The CARS program will be funded at \$15.4 million in FY 2006.

Building on the success of the partnerships established under the CARS program, County staff have continued inter-local cooperative efforts to improve and extend the existing arterial road network into the unincorporated areas through a series of specific corridor studies. These have included:

1) The Northwest Corridor Study-- This study determined the location of a north/south route and two east/west routes to serve the northwestern portion of the county. The recommended alignments were New Kill Creek for the north/south corridor and 111th Street for both east/west corridors. These new arterial alignments were approved by the BOCC in July 2002. The County Government also submitted an Environmental Assessment for these new routes to the Kansas Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration for review. These routes will be added to the County's Comprehensive Arterial Road Network Plan (CARNP) upon a successful completion of the Environmental Assessment, which is projected to be done in spring 2006.

2) The Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant Corridor Study -- This study will determine the location of a north/south route located within the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant. Specifically, the study will focus on Evening Star/Edgerton Road from K-10 Highway to 159th Street. It will be conducted after a development plan has been approved by the BOCC for the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant and contingent upon available funding.

3) The South Metro Connection - The South Metro Connection study will review a connection between US-69 and Cass County's recently approved North Cass Parkway at 183rd and Holmes. It will seek to determine the type of route needed to meet the projected growth in the area. The study area is generally bounded on the west and east by US-69 and Holmes Road and on the north and south by 175th and 199th Streets. The study is currently in progress and it will take approximately two years to determine a preferred alignment and two to four years to complete the required environmental documentation.

4) Truck Study -- In 2004, the Public Works Department submitted a memorandum to the BOCC on the status of the CARNP mandated truck study. The Public Works Department advised that the concerns that had been raised during the CARNP study about the potential increase of "cut-through" truck traffic from the Richards Gebaur airport have not materialized, and that further study at this time was not warranted. Further review of the situation will occur if a problem with "cut-through" truck traffic is encountered in the future.

5) Triggers Study-- The Triggers Policy was adopted by the BOCC in 2002. One of the objectives of CARNP is to ensure that road construction is prioritized and that major road improvements are made based on need. This required a policy to

objectively prioritize when improvements were needed for CARNP routes; that policy is the “Triggers Policy.” The Triggers Policy is a priority mechanism that reviews select data—such as traffic volume, accident statistics, and surrounding development—to generate a prioritized list of roadways that require upgrading or improvement. This prioritized list is then used to determine the County’s five-year Federal-Aid plan.

6) Right of way preservation policy— The Public Works Department has developed a policy for acquiring rights-of-way in the county. In addition to obtaining rights-of-way through dedication, the Public Works Department has a fund with approximately \$3 million that can be used to purchase strategic properties in order to protect future road alignments.

In the area of transportation, Johnson County Government has made many successful, progressive strides in the past several years.

In her 2005 State of the County Address, Commission Chairman Annabeth Surbaugh announced the creation of six task forces—called the Future-Focused Forums—to focus on future-oriented, policy-level issues facing the Johnson County community. Each task force, operating under the leadership of a district commissioner, is focusing on a specific area and is developing goals and objectives to accomplish within that area for consideration by the BOCC. The commissioner leading the task force is responsible for the task force’s work program and provides periodic reports to the BOCC. Second District Commissioner John Patrick Segale was selected to lead the Transit and Transportation Task Force, which is investigating future transportation planning issues, which are a major concern facing the community. The task force is identifying and prioritizing concerns and formulating potential solutions based on a collaborative exchange with local and area stakeholders.

Johnson County Transit completed Phase I of the I-35 Commuter Rail Preliminary Engineering Study in 2002. Findings from Phase I included cost estimates of more than \$100 million to implement and \$4 to \$6 million to operate a commuter rail program along I-35 between Olathe and downtown Kansas City, Missouri. The I-35 Fixed Guideway Study, reviewing commuter rail and exploring additional options for the corridor, was launched in September 2004 with an expected completion date in early 2006.

The Murray L. Nolte Transit Center opened in July 2001. The 30,000 square foot facility houses the staff, contract operations, and maintenance for Johnson County Transit.

Johnson County Transit has participated in the development and continued planning of Smart Moves—a regional approach to the metropolitan area’s transit systems that was jointly developed by Johnson County Transit, the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, the Unified Government Transit Services, and the Mid-America Regional Council. In essence, the Smart Moves initiative envisions a regional transit system that connects metro residents and visitors to employment, residential areas, retail, medical, and other area attractions, providing maximum mobility and easy access from all points within the larger, metropolitan community. A regional funding source—administered by an elected body of regional participants—would provide new revenue sources to build and operate the regional transit system. Enabling legislation for a regional transit funding program is currently being drafted by MARC. The expanded transit system would be a combination of existing services provided by the three current providers, as well as new local services and new regional connectors utilizing express systems on highways and arterials. A collaboration study is currently underway to explore how the three providers can be combined for management and operational efficiencies. The BOCC has endorsed the Smart Moves plan.

F. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Study the feasibility of disproportionate tax incentives or infrastructure spending to foster new development of older areas to maintain their desirability as places to live and work.*
- ❖ *Support economic forecast and other programs that foster development of technology and industry.*
- ❖ *Utilize the assets at New Century and Executive Airports to their full potential, with a particular focus on New Century as a full-feature airport and business center.*

The BOCC approved initial funding to provide more than \$6 million over the next three years to improve the stormwater system for Rock Creek in the city of Mission. The improvements will be made between Lamar Avenue and Roeland Drive to alleviate flooding that occurs along the creek and enhances one of Northeast Johnson County's oldest commercial and residential areas along Johnson Drive. The County's share of the funding will come from its Stormwater Management Program. The Stormwater Management Advisory Council recommended funding the project over a three-year period at an annual cost not to exceed \$2.1 million. Additional annual requests for the remainder of the project funding will require separate approval by the Board in future years. The amount represents roughly one-third of the estimated total project cost of \$19 million. This project will allow a flooded area to be developed for future economic development use. It is one example of the type of interlocal cooperation that represents a direct investment by the County Government in local economic development efforts that contribute to the improvement of the entire community.

In addition to these kinds of direct investments, the County Government also support economic development and related initiatives in a number of ways. For example, the County Economic Research Institute (CERI) began as an agency of the County Government. Over time, CERI was transformed into a separate nonprofit organization that provides economic development services to cities, businesses, and public and private sector interests alike. CERI develops an annual "economic primer" that presents the latest available statistics from federal and state agencies about the Johnson County economy and its growth, including: population growth, job growth, business growth, growth in earnings, tax base, education, economic structure, employment, and private sector payroll, among other factors. In addition, CERI compiles and publishes a bi-weekly update of regional economic statistics.

Recognizing that the Enterprise Center of Johnson County (ECJC) is a vibrant economic development engine for the county, creating jobs and businesses, the County Government has continued to provide supplemental financial support to ECJC to ensure programs and services are maintained. This is another excellent example of how the County Government contributes—indirectly—to economic development efforts in Johnson County.

In order to continue utilizing the assets at New Century AirCenter and Executive Airports for full economic advantage, the Airport Commission completed a feasibility and market study for scheduled airline service at the New Century AirCenter in the spring of 2001. The results showed that airline service was not likely in the foreseeable future due to numerous factors, but primarily because of excess capacity at Kansas City International, a relatively small market area, no terminal facilities available at New Century, poor highway access to the planned terminal area, and general turmoil in the airline industry. The planned update to the Airport Master Plans was delayed from 2000, due to FAA funding issues. The master plan update is currently underway, however, and is approximately 60 percent complete. It is anticipated to be presented to the BOCC for its consideration in early 2006. No significant changes are anticipated in the Executive Airport plan; however there will be some major changes in the airfield layout at New Century AirCenter.

Traffic at both airports declined modestly since 2000, due largely to a combination of circumstances, including tighter security requirements on general aviation following the tragedy of September 11, 2001; increased insurance costs for aircraft owners and pilots; and high fuel prices. The dramatic changes in airline operations and security resulting from the September 11 terrorist attacks have made it even more improbable that New Century will see airline service. As a result, the New Century master plan is being revised to remove the passenger terminal area and to resize and relocate the

planned second north/south runway onto existing airport property. This will cause a significant change in the land use plan for the area on the east side of the airport.

In line with recommendations by the Citizens' Visioning Committee, the Airport Commission has been very successful in leveraging its assets and improving operating revenues, such that, as of 2005, the airports are totally self-funded. No County General Fund monies are included in the current or future airport budgets, other than a small amount of delinquent tax collections from the 2004 budget. These are successes for County Government, and reflect efforts to continue efforts to build upon the economic opportunities both the Executive and New Century airports present to the community.

G. NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Acquire more parkland and plan for greenspace and recreational resources such as biking/hiking trails in advance of development.*
- ❖ *Create an Environmental Advisory Council to bring citizens and staff together in support of a long-term view of environmental issues impacting the County.*
- ❖ *Encourage greater cooperation among the Johnson County Conservation District, the Environmental Department and the Cooperative Extension Service to place more emphasis on environmental education. Take a leadership role in state and metropolitan environmental initiatives.*

The County Government promotes environmental awareness through a variety of initiatives and events sponsored by several departments, including Earth Day celebrations, America Recycles Month, and World Water Monitoring Day, among many others. The 2005 regional Earth Day celebration took place at Shawnee Mission Park, and included free vehicle gas cap testing by the Environmental Department. These gas cap tests were also offered free of charge as part of the County's Sesquicentennial Celebration in September this year.

Another of the Future-Focused Forum task forces created in response to Chairman Surbaugh's 2005 State of the County Address is the Environmental, Energy and Sustainability Future-Focus Work Group, which is charged with addressing natural resource issues of concern to the community. First District Commissioner C. Edward Peterson leads this task force, which includes representatives of local and area businesses, government agencies, civic and nonprofit organizations, as well as the public at large. The task force has initially focused its efforts on reducing air pollution in Johnson County in order to avoid regional violations of the federal ozone (smog) standard. A number of County departments interested in air quality issues are participating, including the Transit, Environmental, and Public Health departments, and the Johnson County K-State Extension Council. The task force may take on additional environmental issues as interest warrants.

State funding for the Local Environmental Protection Program (LEPP) has stabilized, although amounts are inadequate to support significantly expanded water quality initiatives. As the County's LEPP funding recipient, the Environmental Department has formed a LEPP coordinating committee with that includes representatives from the Conservation District, the Extension Council, and other interested entities. The committee has supported the development of some new environmental education materials related to private sewage treatment systems and is also discussing water quality issues, such as the development of stream setback and illicit discharge ordinances, stormwater management "best practices," and proper disposal of household hazardous waste.

Other education and outreach efforts—either led by or involving the County Government—continue. Because resources for environmental education and outreach are limited, collaborative partnerships are essential to progress. For example, the Environmental Department and the Extension Council are active participants in the County's ozone (smog) reduction efforts, including the distribution of educational materials and the sponsorship of various air pollution workshops targeted at small businesses. The Extension Council, Environmental Department, and Conservation District cooperate on a

variety of issues pertaining to soil, air, water, and environmental quality issues in general. Staff routinely make referrals and collaborate on answering consumer questions ensuring the best resources and the most current information is distributed.

H. HUMAN SERVICES

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Encourage the business community to invest in workplace benefits such as health insurance, child and elder care, as well as encouraging employees to volunteer time in their home communities.*
- ❖ *Place increasing priority on prevention and early intervention services to curb crime and reduce the need for other services.*
- ❖ *Initiate a formal review of County-delivered services to eliminate and revise services that duplicate other efforts.*
- ❖ *Plan with the voluntary and private sectors for the changing needs of older adults in response to their growing percentage within the County population.*

In response to statewide juvenile justice reform, Johnson County formed a Community Planning Team in early 1998 to redesign the local juvenile justice system. Annabeth Surbaugh, then serving as the Third District Commissioner, was appointed as the convener of the planning team, which was guided by an executive committee and aided by other community members serving on six additional committees. The Planning Team issued a Comprehensive Strategic Plan in November 1998 that advocated an objective, balanced approach to juvenile justice administration. The strategic plan included elements of prevention, intervention, and sanctions. In October 1999, the Planning Team reconvened to assess actions taken in response to its plan and developed an update which demonstrated that the public schools, non-profit sector, and local governments were committed to the goal of reforming juvenile justice. No formal follow-up or additional reviews of the Comprehensive Strategic Plan have been conducted since 1999, largely because the Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority has not developed guidelines and procedures for conducting such a review. However, in 2003, members of the Juvenile Corrections Advisory Board (JCAB) worked closely with United Community Services to informally review the Comprehensive Strategic Plan to identify those components deemed most essential and most feasible for implementation. Their work was primarily for the purpose of determining priorities for local Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG) funding allocations. These priorities were also combined with the Juvenile Needs Assessment Study recommendations, which have been closely studied and evaluated by a JCAB subcommittee over the past year. The subcommittee made a formal presentation to the BOCC in May 2005 which outlined two specific areas of need within the current juvenile criminal justice system: first, the need to construct a Juvenile Services Center campus and, second, the need for a dedicated annual funding allocation for juvenile services. Both recommendations were submitted as part of the 2006 budget process.

While the Capital Improvement Program request for a new Juvenile Services Center campus was tabled for one year, the BOCC did approve partial funding in 2006 in the amount of \$153,951 to supplement and/or enhance existing programs and services for juveniles and their families in the community. It is anticipated that both requests will be resubmitted for the 2007 budget.

In response recommendations by the Visioning Committee, the BOCC retained a consultant in 1998 to conduct a formal review of the provision of human services in Johnson County. A community summit was held in February 1999 to receive input from providers as well as the general public, and a final report was presented in May 1999. As a result of the study, the County Government formed the Human Services Coalition, which includes several County departments; state agency representatives; and non-profit organizations providing human services to Johnson County residents. The mission of the coalition is to coordinate services offered by the County Government's human services departments and agencies in order to assure residents fair and equal access to much-needed health and human services in a high-quality, cost-effective manner. The coalition meets monthly to collaborate on services being offered, share information, and work

on issues of mutual concern. The coalition also works on other collaborative efforts, such as shared legislative initiatives, employee training, public awareness campaigns, and client trend analysis.

Johnson County Government has established several ongoing, long-term processes to create a stronger safety net for vulnerable and at-risk populations within the county. This includes programs designed for older adults sponsored by County Government as well as partnerships between the County and outside volunteer, non-profit, and private organizations.

The Area Agency on Aging updated its long-range plan each year based on service needs of the frailest older adults to assist them in remaining active in the community and staying in their homes. The Human Services and Aging Department provides numerous programs for the elderly, such as Meals on Wheels and Catch a Ride program, both of which are primarily staffed by volunteers, and which have both been recognized and awarded at national levels as model programs. The Human Services and Aging Department has also created programs focused on nutrition, in-home services, and educating elderly citizens on issues related to their stage in life. In addition, the Department collaborates with state and non-profit organizations through the Human Services Coalition, which is described above. In addition to other efforts, the coalition has fostered partnerships that have produced successful programs such as 50+ program in the County's Parks and Recreation District. Furthermore, there are currently more than 600 volunteers contributing to the success of these efforts, many of them from the business community, who volunteer regularly in our programs to support our senior population.

I. CULTURE, ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Convene private sector leaders within the metro arts and business communities to explore the concept of a cultural arts foundation*
- ❖ *Work in collaboration with major arts organizations in the metropolitan area to minimize duplication while improving access to cultural events for Johnson County residents.*
- ❖ *Support and enhance the continued excellence of the County's libraries and museums consistent with the growth and evolving needs of our citizens.*

The County Government recognizes the role of the arts and humanities in promoting a high quality of life in the community. The Johnson County Library and the Johnson County Museum are both nationally recognized for their continued excellence. The Arts Council of Johnson County has received continued financial support from the County and works collaboratively to promote the arts and humanities. Grants for historical preservation and promotion are reviewed annually by the Heritage Trust Fund Grant Review Board and are awarded to local governments and non-profit organizations in Johnson County. These grants represent a significant investment in local history and a commitment to promoting culture, arts, and humanities within the community.

In 2005, the County celebrated its sesquicentennial—or the 150th anniversary of its founding—with a “Birthday in the Park” Community Festival at the Shawnee Mission Park. More than 11,000 people came together on September 17, 2005, to celebrate the shared history, development, and successes of Johnson County and to reconnect with friends and neighbors. A leadership committee appointed by the BOCC, aided by staff, coordinated the participation and involvement of numerous arts organizations and historical societies, related non-profit organizations, and local and area government agencies as part of the celebration commemorating the milestone anniversary.

Of course, the County Government continues to encourage arts and humanities organizations to work collaboratively in identifying and building sustainable funding mechanisms for the arts and arts-related initiatives in Johnson County.

J. COUNTY RELATIONSHIPS

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Convene a council of city and County elected officials and appointed board members to discuss implementation of the vision.*
- ❖ *Increase the involvement of both the Commission and County staff in metropolitan initiatives.*
- ❖ *Continue to demonstrate strong County leadership in MARC.*
- ❖ *Initiate an annual Hands Across the Metro forum to discuss metropolitan issues.*

Johnson County Government continues to play a very active role in national, state, and regional initiatives, providing key leadership in the identification and resolution of common challenges and advocating for the interests of Johnson County.

In 2005, responding to a proposal outlined in the Chairman's State of the County Address, the Board of County Commissioners formed six task force groups that were charged with studying and making recommendations on future policy issues facing Johnson County. Each of the six commissioners—acting as chair of their respective task force—have been working with the community to provide input, direction, and advice on these key subjects, and the task forces have included the involvement of mayors and city councilmembers, business and civic leaders, and other community stakeholders, focused on solving some key community challenges. In this way, the Johnson County is partnering with leaders in the local community to sustain Johnson County's top ten rank in the 2004 study by the American City Business Journals that ranked the top communities across the United States for their overall quality of life based on statistical indicators.

The Chairman and the Members of the Board of County Commissioners, the County Manager and staff continue to provide leadership in regional issues, primarily through active membership and leadership positions with the Mid America Regional Council (MARC), the regional association of city and county governments and the planning organization for the bi-state region. Johnson County representatives serve on several policy committees at the MARC, including, but not limited to, the MARC Board of Directors, Air Quality Forum and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Committee, Regional Homeland Security Coordinating Committee, Public Safety Communications Board and User Committee, Kansas City Metro GIS Committee, Total Transportation Policy Committee, Aviation Committee, Managers Roundtable, Regional Association of Public Information Officers, and others. In addition, Johnson County is represented on the Bi-State Commission, the Kansas City Area Development Council, and is an active participant in numerous other forums dealing with issues facing the regional metropolitan community. Additionally, the Chairman of the Board and the County Manager have participated in Kansas City Chamber of Commerce sponsored visits to other cities to study national metropolitan success stories that could be implemented in the Kansas City metro area.. This kind of exposure ensures that Johnson County is well-represented within the metropolitan community and has a strong voice in issues that affect the overall well-being of Johnson County as a member of the metropolitan community.

Johnson County is a member of the Kansas Association of Counties (KAC) which provides a voice for the interests of county governments and represents their positions with State Government throughout the year. In 2004, an amendment to the KAC bylaws provided that a majority of the governing body would be composed of county commissioners, thereby ensuring that the interests of citizens—as represented by their elected officials—would be clearly conveyed to the KAC Board of Directors. Also that year, under the leadership of Johnson County Commission Chairman Annabeth Surbaugh and Sedgwick County Commissioner Tom Winters, the Kansas Urban Counties Consortium was launched as an off-shoot of the KAC. The Urban Counties Consortium provides a forum for the chief elected officials from the five urban-designated counties in Kansas to discuss common issues and develop shared legislative positions on items facing their respective communities. With leadership from the Urban Counties Consortium, KAC has developed a separate “urban track” of courses for its annual conferences, providing educational workshops and forums on topics of interest to urban communities and offering networking opportunities for representatives from those urban counties.

Finally, at the national level, Johnson County is well-represented as an active member of the National Association of Counties (NACo), a full-service national organization representing and advocating for the interests of county governments at the federal level. The Chairman and Members of the Board of County Commissioners serve—or have

served—as members of the NACo Board of Directors and several of its Policy Steering Committees. These Policy Steering Committees shape national positions contained in NACo’s *American County Platform*, the official legislative and policy platform used by NACo in delivering the county government message to the White House, the Congress and the American public. Additionally, commissioners and staff serve on a myriad of NACo affiliate organizations that provide educational, networking, and development opportunities. In 2004, Johnson County was admitted as a member of the NACo Large Urban County Caucus, which is a bipartisan coalition of elected county officials that represent the interests of the nation’s 100 largest urban counties.

K. FINANCING AND TAXATION

Recommended Actions:

- ❖ *Study financial budgets and staffing on a periodic basis to prevent layering bureaucratic creep. This review should seek to justify the appropriateness and benefits for personnel every five years.*
- ❖ *Advance a bond issue, if necessary, funded by a specifically dedicated tax to boldly prevent the decline of the County’s older infrastructure. The County would serve as the catalyst for this initiative, which would require matching funds from cities and/or property owners.*
- ❖ *Appoint a blue-ribbon panel by July 1, 1998, to recommend criteria for city/County infrastructure improvements and financing methods.*
- ❖ *Publish the County financial statement annually, including a brief summary of revenues, expenses, cash flows, number of full and part-time staff, and the year-end population of the County, as well as a comparison to previous years.*

Significant revisions have been made to the budget and its development process to highlight the efficient use of County resources. The “Budget at a Glance” document and the “Budget Summary” brochure contain high-level financial information that gives the public an overview of the County Government’s annual spending plans. As well, the budget now includes detailed information on departmental goals, objectives, and performance measures. In an effort to control internal growth, the County Manager appointed a Personnel Review Committee that is assigned the responsibility of reviewing all requests for new personnel and recommending specific approvals, which may be included in the proposed budget by the County Manager.

Johnson County Government was awarded the coveted AAA bond rating, one of only 40 counties of the more than 3,000 counties in the United States to receive that recognition. The AAA bond rating reflects the County’s diverse and expanding local economy, which participates in the larger Kansas City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA); its above-average wealth levels; and the strong financial operations of the County Government, supported by conservative management and established fiscal policies as well as its moderate level of debt.

As discussed earlier in the report, the Infrastructure Advisory Committee was formed in 2001 as a blue-ribbon panel to prioritize infrastructure improvements and recommend financing methods. The final report recommended a combination of sales and property taxes to serve as a dedicated infrastructure funding source. That included the use of the last available quarter-cent sales tax. However, in 2002, voters elected to dedicate that sales tax to local public schools. That sales tax is now set to sunset in December 2008. Consequently, the County Government is continuing to explore alternative financing methods to fund its significant long-term infrastructure needs.

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As we move forward, there are a number of challenges facing Johnson County that will need to be addressed which could significantly impact financial projections. Perhaps most critical at this time is the structural budget deficit facing Johnson County. In the 2006 Operating and Capital Budget, the BOCC made substantial progress in addressing this

deficit, but challenges will persist in future budget years. Assuming a constant mill levy in 2007, financial projections indicate the need for 2.0 mill levy increase in 2008 to offset full operating impacts of the Adult Detention Center expansions, and growth of service costs over time. According to multi-year budget projections, the FY 2006 and FY 2007 budgets will return the General Fund Reserve to an adequate range near the targeted reserve amount. Less excess reserves will be available in future years to meet one-time needs or to address one-time needs or emergency situations. To prevent the need for significant mill levy increases in future years, staff recommends continued focus on addressing the structural deficit. Clearly, this presents significant challenges to the County Government in maintaining the level of services and programs provided today, much less the potential for enhancing those existing services or developing new programs in response to community needs.

While the County addresses those budgetary challenges, it must simultaneously improve its public safety services to meet the growing demands of the community. The County recognizes that public safety is more than housing prisoners in our jails. It includes patrol and investigation, the operation of the crime laboratory, community-based corrections programs, 911 emergency communications, countywide emergency medical services, emergency preparedness and homeland security. Public safety also includes the judiciary services provided by the District Court, District Attorney and other court services. Efforts to preserve and enhance public safety are seen in numerous facilities studies to enhance the Adult Detention Centers, Juvenile Correction facilities, and the Courthouse. In addition to extensive capital needs, increases in public safety staffing and programming needs continue to strain existing resources. All of these services—under the umbrella of public safety—continue to be identified as a primary factor in Johnson County’s rank as a premiere “community of choice”—a place people want to live and work. To maintain that status, additional revenue will be needed to finance the existing operation and expansion of public safety services now and into the near future.

At the same time, the County Government must identify and secure a dedicated funding source for its capital needs. The current Capital Improvement Program (CIP) does not include a dedicated revenue source for major infrastructure projects, such as the Facilities’ Capital Replacement Plan and the Information Technology Infrastructure Maintenance. These are important elements of a “community of choice.” The five-year requested total capital cost exceeded \$1 billion dollars for the first time in 2005. Without a dedicated revenue source, it is unlikely progress will be made on the future capital and operational needs of Johnson County Government.

Despite these challenges, Johnson County Government continues to be recognized as a leader in innovative, cost-efficient, effective local government, which is reflected in the numerous local, state, regional, and national awards that have been received during the past two decades. Looking to the future, Chairman Surbaugh has indicated that she will convene a summit of local elected officials to discuss the needs of the community—the first of its kind to occur in Johnson County. The summit will provide a forum for elected leaders to generate and share ideas, to strengthen the network between the County and the cities and its other partners, and to identify issues that are of common concern to the full community.

As this report illustrates, the Citizens’ Visioning Committee laid the initial groundwork that has helped to launch Johnson County to a prominent place at the proverbial table at local, state, regional, and national levels, earning a well-deserved reputation for excellence, innovation, and progress. What began as a discussion among 25 citizens about what the future of their community could look like has resulted in the development of a Community of Choice. It’s a place we’re all proud to call home.