



JOHNSON COUNTY 2030

Living Our Vision



Review-Final Draft: July-October 2011

|

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Executive Summary

Johnson County 2030: Living Our Vision

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

This vision document represents a nearly two-year effort on the part of ~~3432~~-member Citizens Visioning Committee to describe the type of place the community would like Johnson County to be in the future, outline a path to help get there, and establish a framework to monitor and track the implementation of the vision over time. It defines a vision for Johnson County that encompasses both Johnson County government and the larger community of interests, but focuses recommended actions on Johnson County government’s role in achieving that vision in cooperation with other entities.

~~To date, the~~ process has included numerous opportunities for community input, including: a dedicated project website, online community workshops, panel presentations, a youth forum, and a community survey. In addition, Citizens Visioning Committee members conducted nearly 20 Speakers Bureau forums with County stakeholder organizations representing a broad range of interest groups. Additional input from a variety of stakeholders and the community at large will be sought over the coming months as the committee works to develop a final report by the end of the year.

This document will be used to guide decisions and actions over the next 10-20 years. While it contains

recommended actions for each topic area, it is not intended to be a detailed step-by-step blueprint for how to carry out each of these actions. That will be determined by ongoing decisions and investments made by County government, institutions, local governments, private businesses and others over time.

Context

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

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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

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

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

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

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

and more resilient as a community over the next ten to twenty years.

Vision & Themes

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

Our Vision:

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

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

Economic Vitality



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

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

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

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

Excellence in Education



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

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

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

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

A Safe, Healthy, and Caring Community



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

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

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

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

A Sustainable Pattern of ~~Growth~~ Development and Redevelopment



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

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

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

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

Efficient and Effective Government



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

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

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

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

A Culturally Rich and Active Community



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

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

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

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

Priority Actions

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

Tracking our Progress Next Steps

As an initial next step to advance the plan’s implementation, the CVC recommends that strategic planning be undertaken within the framework of each of the six themes to:

- Evaluate how well current policies, regulations, and practices support—or conflict with—the vision, guiding principles, and recommended actions for each theme;
- Identify a more detailed set of actions needed to support the recommended actions for each theme;
- Define roles and responsibilities for moving forward; and
- Identify community benchmarks and indicators for each theme that will be used to monitor the implementation of the vision plan over time.

Implementing the plan’s recommendations will require strong leadership on the part of Johnson County government and ongoing collaboration with local municipalities, districts, other governmental and quasi-governmental organizations, private sector representatives, the community-at-large, and many others. Implementation will also require close collaboration among the County’s numerous departments. The CVC encourages the County to work closely with its stakeholders as the implementation of this plan moves forward. In addition to leveraging the County’s resources to address these topics, this approach also reinforces one of the primary themes of this vision document - that Johnson County

is part of a larger “community of interests”, and that many of the challenges and opportunities Johnson County faces as it looks towards the future—resource constraints, socioeconomic and demographic changes, and many others— affect not just Johnson County government, but each entity that comprises the County’s larger community of interests.

Tracking implementation activities is a critical aspect of the monitoring program for this Vision Plan. Implementation monitoring will provide information on the specific steps that the County and its partners are taking to implement the Vision. The County, local governments, institutions, other public agencies, and private sector groups all play an important role in implementing this vision. In order to ensure that progress is occurring on implementing the recommended actions identified in each section, this plan recommends the following steps:

- Develop a Set of Quality-of-Life Barometers That Measure our Progress
- Annual Review Meeting With Citizens Visioning Committee
- Annual Progress Report
- Periodic Update of Living our Vision Report

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

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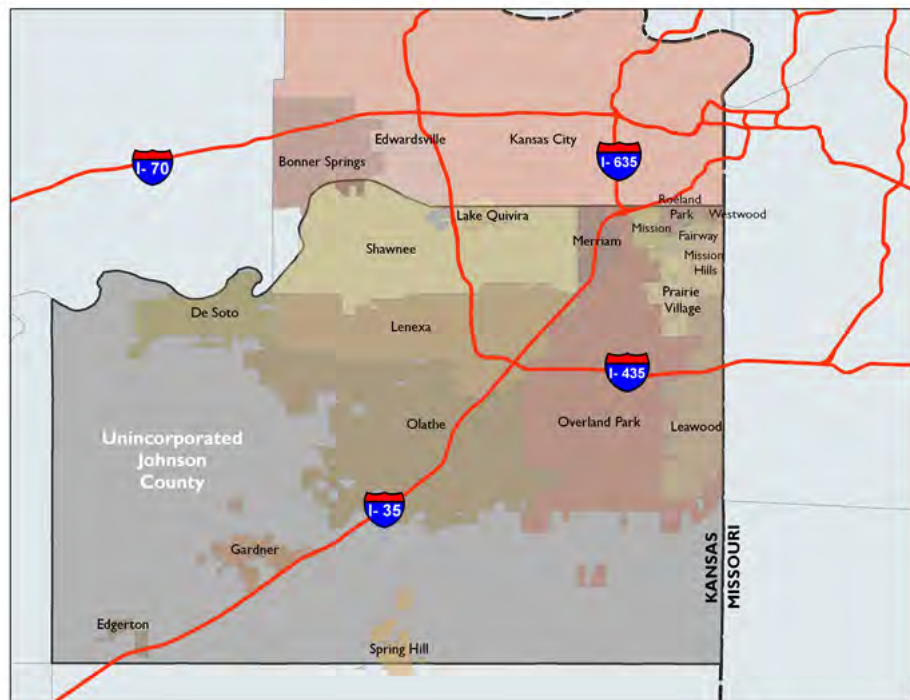
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Preface

Introduction

This report reflects a 20-year vision for Johnson County, prepared by a ~~3432~~-member Citizens Visioning Committee (CVC) based on input from the community-at-large. In reviewing this document, the reader should keep in mind that Johnson County is part of a larger “community of interests” that includes a collection of municipalities, districts, other governmental and quasi-governmental organizations, along with private businesses and institutions. Each of these entities plays an important role in Johnson County’s quality of life and continued success. In addition, many of the challenges and opportunities Johnson County faces as it looks towards the future—resource constraints, socioeconomic and demographic changes, and many others— affect not just Johnson County government, but each entity that comprises the County’s larger community of interests.

Although this report was commissioned by Johnson County government specifically, it defines a vision for Johnson County that encompasses both Johnson County government and the larger community of interests, but focuses recommended actions on Johnson County government’s role in achieving that vision in cooperation with other entities. In essence, this is a vision for the community that focuses on actions that can be taken by County government; of necessity, it recognizes that it will take efforts by many others to achieve this vision.



How this Document is Intended to be Used

This document sets forth a long-term vision for Johnson County, to be used to guide decisions and actions over the next 10-20 years. While it contains recommended actions for each theme, it is not intended to be a detailed step-by-step blueprint for how to carry out each of these actions. That will be determined by ongoing decisions and investments made by County government, institutions, private businesses and individuals over time. It should be considered as a “touchstone” document, with progress reviewed periodically to see if actions taken over time are moving in the right direction toward its vision.

Throughout this report, references to “Johnson County government” or “the County” are intended to refer to Johnson County government specifically. References to “Johnson County” or “the community” are intended to refer to the larger community of interests which includes local governments, districts, other governmental and quasi-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

Introduction

This document is one of the final steps in a more than yearlong effort to develop an updated vision for Johnson County. In the nearly fifteen years since the previous visioning effort was completed, Johnson County has experienced significant growth and changes as a community. Additionally, Johnson County government has implemented a number of the ideas developed by the original committee. As a result, a new Citizen Visioning Committee (CVC) was appointed in September 2009 and tasked with the development of an updated twenty-year vision for Johnson County; a process entitled Johnson County Vision 2030.

Purpose of the Visioning Process

The purpose of this visioning process is to determine what type of place the community would like Johnson County to be in the future, to chart a path to help get there, and to help establish a framework to monitor and track the implementation of the vision over time. This document reflects the community's 20-year vision for Johnson County, based on input from the [3432](#)-member Citizens Visioning Committee (CVC) and the community-at-large, and recommends specific actions for achieving that vision.

This document is not intended to be comprehensive in nature—i.e., it does not supersede the many plans already in place for the numerous departments within Johnson County government, districts, local governments, and other entities that play a role in the community. While this document contains recommended actions for each topic area, it is not intended to be a detailed step-by-step blueprint for how to achieve this vision. That will be determined by ongoing decisions, actions, and investments made by County government, institutions, private businesses and individuals over time. It should be considered as a “touchstone document, with progress reviewed periodically to see if actions taken over time are moving in the right direction toward its vision.

Process Overview

CITIZENS VISIONING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The CVC was appointed by the Board of County Commissioners in September 2009 to develop a vision for Johnson County through 2030. Committee members represent a broad cross-section of interests in the community. During the course of the process, the CVC met monthly to review and discuss background materials and presentations and develop the recommendations provided in this report.



COORDINATION SUB-COMMITTEE

In February 2011, a smaller sub-set of the CVC, the nine-member Coordination Sub-Committee, was established to work with the consultant team between CVC meetings on interim drafts and the outreach process. The Sub-Committee met bi-weekly during the latter portion of the process.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the process, CVC members sought input from a wide range of County stakeholders and the community-at-large both formally and informally. Key elements of the outreach process **completed to date** include:

- **Dedicated Project Website**—a dedicated project website (www.jocovision2030.com) was launched in June 2010 as a way for the community-at-large to learn more about the visioning process, download interim materials, find upcoming events, attend Online Community Workshops, provide written input, and sign up for project updates.
- **Online Community Workshop #1**—an Online Community Workshop was conducted in August 2010 to solicit input from the community on key issues to be addressed as part of the process.
- **Panel Presentations**—CVC members hosted panel presentations by local and regional experts in eleven topic areas: economic development; financing and taxation; social, health, and human services; criminal justice and public safety; education; culture, arts, and humanities; parks and recreation; land use; transportation; other infrastructure; and natural resources and environment to help inform their discussions and recommendations.
- **Youth Forum**—~~In~~ **in** April 2011, members of the CVC hosted a forum for area youth to seek input on their vision for Johnson County in the future. Attendees participated in an on-line questionnaire, a key pad polling exercise, and small-group discussions with CVC members designed to provide the Committee with a youth perspective on a range of topics and a desired future for Johnson County. (Photo to be added)
- **Community Survey**—Johnson County’s biennial Community Survey was conducted in April 2011 and included a series of questions related specifically to the CVC’s work to help inform the process. The same questions were used as part of a polling exercise conducted during the annual State of the County address in March 2011.



During August and September 2011, members of the CVC and the project team **will-hosted** a series of events intended to provide an opportunity for Johnson County residents and other project stakeholders to review draft materials and have provide input on the CVC’s preliminary recommendations. These events **will-include**:

- **Speaker’s Bureau**—members of the CVC ~~will conduct a series of meetings presented draft recommendations to with a variety nearly twenty of~~ local community and stakeholder groups throughout Johnson County to present the CVC’s preliminary recommendations and seek input from a range of interest groups.
- **Community Forums**—the CVC **will-hosted** two Community Forums targeted towards key stakeholder and community groups.
- **Online Community Workshop**—an Online Community Workshop targeted towards the community-at-large **will-be** hosted on the project website for ~~several weeks during the~~ **duration of the** outreach period. ~~Materials for the W~~workshop **materials will** mirrored those presented as part of the Speaker’s Bureau events and the Community Forums to allow for cross-tabulation of results. **Over three hundred people participated in the Online Community Workshop.**

How is this Document Structured?

In addition to this introductory section, this document is comprised of the following sections:

VISION AND THEMES

This section establishes an overarching vision for Johnson County to be built from a strong focus on six themes: Economic Vitality; Excellence in Education; A Safe, Healthy, and Caring Community; A Sustainable Pattern of Growth, Development and Redevelopment; Efficient and Effective Government; and A Culturally Rich and Active Community.

SIX SECTIONS, ORGANIZED BY THEME

These six themes reflect a consolidation of the numerous topics reviewed by the CVC. Consolidation of multiple topics is not intended to diminish the importance of any one topic; rather, it is intended to convey the important role each topic plays in supporting the overarching vision in conjunction with many other topics. It is also intended to convey the importance of collaboration and cooperation between the various departments, agencies, districts, and others responsible for day-to-day decision-making to support the implementation of this vision plan.

THEME	TOPICS ADDRESSED
<u>Economic Vitality</u>	<u>Economic development, education</u>
<u>Excellence in Education</u>	<u>Education (Pre-K-12 through collegiate, university, and continuing education levels)</u>
<u>A Safe, Healthy, and Caring Community</u>	<u>Criminal justice and public safety; social, health, and human services</u>
<u>A Sustainable Pattern of Development and Redevelopment</u>	<u>Land use, transportation, housing, natural resources and environment, and other infrastructure</u>
<u>Efficient and Effective Government</u>	<u>Financing and taxation, civic engagement</u>
<u>A Culturally Rich and Active Community</u>	<u>Culture, arts, and humanities; parks and recreation; libraries, historic resources; and volunteer opportunities</u>

- ~~Economic Vitality~~
- ~~Excellence in Education~~
- ~~A Safe, Healthy, and Caring Community~~
- ~~A Sustainable Pattern of Growth~~
- ~~Efficient and Effective Government~~
- ~~A Culturally Rich and Active Community~~

WHAT EACH SECTION CONTAINS

Each of the six theme-based sections contains the following:

- *Why this is Important?*—this section provides a brief explanation of why each theme is critical to the future success of the County and its residents. It also conveys the specific topics that are addressed within each theme.

- *What are the Challenges and Opportunities?*—this section contains a brief summary of major trends and key issues that inform and influence recommendations related to each theme. A more detailed discussion of trends and key issues related to eleven different topics: economic development; financing and taxation; social, health, and human services; criminal justice and public safety; education; culture, arts, and humanities; parks and recreation; land use; transportation; other infrastructure; and natural resources and environment, is provided in the Appendix.
- *Our Vision*—the vision statements in this document are intended to be a broad statement of the desired future condition and character of Johnson County within the context of each of the six themes. Each vision statement addresses a desired future that encompasses both Johnson County government and its larger community of interests.
- *What Will It Take To Achieve Our Vision?*—this section contains a series of guiding principles—or statements of core values—that can be used to guide the decisions and actions to be taken to accomplish the desired vision.
- *Recommended Actions*—this section describes recommended actions that define what Johnson County government can do to help achieve this vision. Recommended actions recognize that there are certain actions whose outcomes rely primarily on Johnson County government, and many others that involve the larger community of interests, with whom the County must participate in achieving desired outcomes.
- ~~*Possible Indicators to Track our Progress*—this section identifies possible indicators—either quantitative or qualitative—that provide a simple and reliable means to measure achievement over time. Indicators provided can be used as a reference or as a standard for comparison. Data points reflected in the indicators are currently being tracked by Johnson County government or others in the community to ensure they may be readily updated over time.~~

~~PRIORITY ACTIONS~~

~~This section recommends a series of priority actions—or actions that should be undertaken within the first year of the plan's completion. Note: priority actions will be developed by the committee based on input received during the public outreach process and further discussion amongst the committee during the fall for incorporation into the final plan.~~

~~TRACKING OUR PROGRESSNEXT STEPS~~

~~This section recommends a series of next steps to support the implementation of the plan and to monitor the plan to determine whether it is achieving the desired results. This section contains a summary of recommended actions by theme along with possible indicators associated with each topic. Indicators will continue to be refined over the coming months as this document is finalized.~~

APPENDIX: BACKGROUND AND TRENDS

This section contains detailed background and trends evaluated as a foundation for the Committee's discussions. Information is organized according to eleven topics: economic development; financing and taxation; social, health, and human services; criminal justice and public safety; education; culture, arts, and humanities; parks and recreation; land use; transportation; other infrastructure; and natural resources and environment. This section also contains an explanation of Johnson County government's role in each of these topic areas.

Context

Prior to setting goals and strategies for the future, it is important to understand the context for our vision. Johnson County faces many challenges and opportunities, and a clear picture is needed of the overlapping factors influencing both Johnson County government and the community in order to properly consider the future. While each of the challenges and opportunities identified is grounded in recent trends and in some cases current conditions, their relevance is not limited to today's world. Fiscal, demographic, and population projections all indicate that Johnson County will continue to be faced with similar challenges and trends for the duration of the planning horizon. The opportunity lies in the long-term view that this vision document provides—e.g., what changes can we make today that will help us not just weather temporary setbacks, but also help us become stronger and more resilient as a community over the next ten to twenty years.

Balancing Fiscal Responsibility with Service Expectations

Johnson County government has long prided itself on its ability to provide high quality services in a fiscally conservative way. In the past, the County has been able to meet high expectations of delivering services while maintaining the lowest tax rates of any county in the state, in part because of a steadily growing economy and in part because of fiscally responsible planning. However, fluctuations in the economy and trends pointing to an aging population, rising poverty, and related economic challenges, mean that it will be increasingly difficult to meet the same high service and low tax expectations that were attainable in an earlier era of prosperity and growth. While Johnson County government retains a position of fiscal health and strength, now is the time to be considering the impacts of the County's fiscal realities on its ability to maintain high quality services over the long-term. Simply stated, implementing this vision will likely result in making choices about how to continue to fund services provided by County government, perhaps leading to decisions about which services to continue to fund and which to decrease or increase, balanced by the community's willingness to pay for current or future services.

Adapting to the Needs of a Changing Population

Johnson County has been fortunate to have a very strong economy and housing market. Decades of prosperity have translated into a relatively affluent and self-supporting population. However, fluctuations in the economy combined with changing demographics, an emerging blend of poverty (and near poverty), aging population, limited housing variety, and few non-automobile transportation choices is creating new challenges the likes of which Johnson County has not had to address before. Social issues that used to seem confined to urban areas are now being felt in Johnson County, and a discussion is needed about how to respond to emerging changes and growing issues—many of which will not fully emerge for a number of years (e.g., the full magnitude of an aging population). At the same time, this vision recognizes that some of these changes may represent new opportunities as our population becomes more diverse over time, leading to a more vibrant, inclusive, and culturally diverse community for people of all ages, abilities, and means.



Promoting Cooperation and Building Partnerships

Johnson County includes many different jurisdictions and agencies that influence its quality of life. Within a myriad pattern of municipalities, school districts, and other governments and quasi-government organizations, Johnson County government is but one entity, albeit the only one with true county-wide jurisdiction. In an era when it will be critical to position Johnson County well to remain competitive within the region and on a national stage, it will also be critical for there to be a common “community of interests” among the various jurisdictions in the Johnson County as well as within the larger Kansas City metropolitan region. Coexisting in a complex, two-state region has always been and will continue to be a challenge; however, intergovernmental coordination

efforts will be increasingly important to our continued success. While Johnson County government, the municipalities, the school districts, and others all have a responsibility to manage their own affairs in their best interests, so too is there a need to work together for their common interests in a regional and national market. Fortunately, a strong commitment to cooperation and collaboration already exists in Johnson County and the region at many levels. With this in mind, our vision encompasses both Johnson County government and the larger community of interests, but focuses recommended actions on County government’s role in providing leadership in achieving that vision in cooperation with other entities.



Planning for a Sustainable Future

One of the key issues identified by the committee early on in the visioning process was sustainability. Although there are many different definitions for sustainability, Johnson County government defines it by focusing on the “triple bottom line” of economy, environment and social equity in each decision that it makes. Sustainability fundamentally is about finding more efficient, less wasteful ways of doing things using a variety of strategies for government, businesses, and individuals. The strategies to attain sustainability for Johnson County government and other public entities seek to reduce the carbon footprint by constructing more energy efficient public buildings, incorporating more fuel efficient vehicles in the

County fleet, reducing the amount of solid waste generated, and other targeted strategies. For the private sector it may mean making workplaces more energy efficient and exploring options for more compact, efficient patterns of development. For residents it may mean seeking ways to reduce energy use at home and growing more of your own food in backyard gardens. Sustainability – as a means of seeking a more vibrant future for our community – is an overarching theme that has implications for all aspects of this vision.



Vision and Themes

When asked to describe what they value most about their community, residents of Johnson County most often respond—quality of life. While quality of life means different things to different people—whether access to quality schools and recreational facilities; safe, quiet neighborhoods; a family-oriented community; plentiful jobs or cultural amenities; health care or social services; parks and open space; or something different altogether— a common thread throughout the process of crafting this vision has been the bottom line question of how to maintain and improve quality of life for current and future Johnson County residents.

Within the context of the above question, the Citizens Visioning Committee reviewed trends and key issues and sought input from community stakeholders on eleven different topics: economic development; financing and taxation; social, health, and human services; criminal justice and public safety; education; culture, arts, and humanities; parks and recreation; land use; transportation; other infrastructure; and natural resources and environment.

Our Vision

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

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

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

Themes

Together, the six themes and the desired outcomes described below represent the building blocks of our vision for Johnson County's future. These themes cut across all eleven topics explored by the Citizens Visioning Committee and reinforce the interrelated nature of the issues and opportunities described throughout this document. They represent a need for a more integrated approach to day-to-day decision making at all levels—the need for a clear understanding of how actions in one area of focus affect another and a desire to seek and implement shared solutions. At some levels, this integration and cooperation is already occurring and the themes simply reinforce those linkages and identify new ways to build on what is working. In other cases, the six themes and the recommended actions that accompany them in subsequent sections of this vision document propose new ways to reach beyond what's occurring or expected today and to become more effective and successful as a community in the future.



ECONOMIC VITALITY

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



EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

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



A SAFE, HEALTHY, AND CARING COMMUNITY

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



A SUSTAINABLE PATTERN OF ~~GROWTH~~ DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

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



EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

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



A CULTURALLY RICH AND ACTIVE COMMUNITY

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

Economic Vitality



Our Vision

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

Why is this Important?

The health of Johnson County's economy is a major contributor to the quality of life of its citizens and the County's ability to provide services and facilities helping to make it attractive to new businesses, workers, and residents.

What are the Challenges and Opportunities?

Johnson County is a major contributor to the economy of the Kansas City Metro Area and the State of Kansas and has been the state's largest provider of employment for more than fifteen years. The County's economy is well diversified, yet has more employment concentrated in the high-growth service producing industries than does the nation, state, or metropolitan area. In addition, the many assets that led to Johnson County's growth and prosperity—its educated workforce, strong public schools, infrastructure, and high quality of life—are still in place and will continue to fuel economic growth in the future if they are maintained and enhanced. Trends and key issues that will challenge us as we seek to enhance our economy and our leadership role within the state and region include:

Economic Fluctuations

The next twenty years will likely have economic fluctuations that affect Johnson County and the region. Johnson County's ability to weather future economic cycles will hinge upon its ability to attract and retain a diverse array of employment options.

Emerging Economic Development Clusters

Several major initiatives will help fuel economic development in the future. These include:

- Animal Health Cluster, a regional initiative that stretches from Manhattan, Kansas to Columbia, Missouri;
- Bioscience/life science cluster;
- Advanced energy industries, including recent trends in wind and battery storage;
- Logistics and manufacturing focused on the planned BNSF Intermodal Center in Gardner/Edgerton;
- Advanced health care and medical research;
- Technology and innovation hub; and
- Engineering cluster.

Attracting and Retaining a Strong Workforce through Quality of Life Factors

Increasingly, employers are choosing to locate in communities that offer a high quality of life for residents and access to a full range of amenities, such as arts and culture, parks and recreation, and others as a means of attracting and retaining a strong workforce.

Skills and Workforce Development

Many employers require a specialized workforce to support their operations. Partnerships between employers and local colleges and universities will be increasingly important to ensure training in a range of languages, advancing technologies, and other specialized areas are available to promote the development of a diverse and nimble workforce that reflect the changing needs of area employers.

What Will it Take to Achieve Our Vision in this Area?



Our vision for a vibrant and prosperous economy that allows Johnson County citizens and businesses to thrive is based on the following guiding principles:

EV-P1: BUILD STRONG PARTNERSHIPS AND ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION LOCALLY AND WITHIN THE REGION

Participate in and support strong partnerships and collaboration with the private sector, Pre-K-12 and higher education institutions, local and regional economic development organizations, and arts and cultural organizations, and others as appropriate.

EV-P2: CREATE A BUSINESS-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Create a business-friendly environment through periodic review of regulations and licensing practices to identify and remove potential barriers to business growth and development and the use of incentives to increase the competitiveness of Johnson County.

EV-P3: SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF THE INNOVATION ECONOMY

Support the growth of the innovation economy—largely driven by the intersection of technological innovation and globalization—to set the stage for business development, job creation, and a thriving entrepreneurial environment. Advocate for the advancement of cutting-edge technologies and infrastructure locally and within the region.

EV-P4: FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NIMBLE WORKFORCE WITH DIVERSE SKILLS

Foster the development of a nimble workforce with diverse skills to attract and retain new jobs—focusing on outside recruitment in strategic sectors as well as internal job training, language training, and specialized skills development.

EV-P5: DEVELOP STABLE AND DIVERSE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Work with local and regional partners to develop stable employment opportunities across a variety of industry sectors and at a range of wage levels.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

EV-A1: CONTINUE TO PLAY A SUPPORTIVE ROLE IN AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Continue to play a supportive role in efforts led by economic development organizations at the local, regional, and state level.



EV-A2: EXPLORE THE CREATION OF AN ORGANIZATION FOCUSED ON PROMOTING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Explore the creation of a County-led research and development organization—as a “sister” organization of the County Economic Research Institute, Inc. (CERI)—focused on promoting workforce development for Johnson County specifically. Possible roles for this type of organization could include:

- Marketing Johnson County to employers as a unifying entity committed to the collective success of the larger community of interests;
- Recruitment of specialized talent at colleges and universities regionally and nationally;
- Partnerships with Johnson County Community College, Johnson County Education Research Triangle and others;
- Initiating an ongoing survey of employers that hire out-of-town talent to determine the relative importance of Johnson County’s education/schools; physical infrastructure; arts, cultural, and entertainment amenities; public health, welfare, and safety; parks and recreational facilities; libraries; and other quality of life factors in attracting workers.

EV-A3: ENCOURAGE WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Participate in local and regional diversity fairs and other events to support the development of a workforce within County government, other organizations, companies, and institutions within Johnson County that reflects the diversity of the community in terms of its age, ethnicity, and gender.

Possible Indicators to Track Our Progress

In order for this document to be effective, Johnson County government must continually monitor its progress towards achieving the community's vision. The following are examples of indicators (from CERI Johnson County Indicators Report) that could be used to gauge progress in this area:

- Civilian labor force
- Residents employed
- Index of corporate formation
- Unemployment rate
- Growth in assessed value
- Growth in sales taxes
- Value of new construction
- Building permits

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Excellence in Education



Our Vision

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

Why is this Important?

Education has long been recognized as one of the cornerstones of Johnson County's quality of life attributes and is a source of great pride for the community. Johnson County understands that excellent educational opportunities attract and retain residents and foster the family-oriented lifestyle that existing resident's treasure and new residents seek.

What are the Challenges and Opportunities?

All six Johnson County school districts consistently perform at or above the Kansas State Department of Education benchmarks for educational attainment. While Kansas schools traditionally score beyond the national average on standardized tests, Johnson County's school districts consistently exceed Kansas state averages. Trends and key issues that will challenge us as we strive to attain our vision include:

Enrollment Variations

Although total student enrollment in Johnson County has increased over the last twenty years, variations in enrollment have occurred within individual districts. Enrollment variation of growth or decline can be attributed to aging of population in more established areas of the county and new housing developments in other areas attracting younger populations. This pattern of enrollment variation can be anticipated to stabilize over time resulting in continued increase in total student enrollment for Johnson County public schools.



Variations in Resources and Tax Burdens by District

The six districts that serve the County vary greatly in size, number of schools, and enrollment creating challenges due to varying levels of resources and higher tax burdens for districts with lower levels of assessed valuation.

Fluctuations in Funding

Funding sources for school districts have fluctuated over the last several years due to a downward shift at the state level in the maximum millage; a recent declining trend in assessed property values; and continued declines in state funding. Projections indicate education funding will be an ongoing issue at the state and local level for the foreseeable future.

Uneven Proficiencies in Core Curriculum Areas

An increasing concern statewide relates to students entering college without necessary math, reading, or writing skills to succeed. Local school districts and institutions of higher learning are collaborating on pilot programs to administer college placement tests during the sophomore year of high school to identify students needing to improve their proficiencies in core curriculum areas prior to high school graduation.

Demographic Changes

Johnson County's changing population affects governmental services across all levels; however, educational systems face additional challenges with changes in the demographic composition of schools. Special challenges will continue with students from non-English speaking backgrounds from throughout the world.

Post-Secondary, Continuing Education, and Workforce Training

Johnson County residents and employers have access to numerous post-secondary, continuing education, and workforce training opportunities through the Johnson County Community College (JCCC), KU Edwards Campus, and numerous other public and private colleges and universities.

What Will it Take to Achieve Our Vision in this Area?



The following guiding principles represent critical areas of focus as we strive to achieve our vision for the future:

ED-P1: ENHANCE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL RESIDENTS

County government and education leaders will collaborate to discover new ways to support efforts to maintain and enhance educational opportunities for all residents—helping them to reach maximum potential both academically and socially to be productive and contributing citizens of Johnson County.

ED-P2: BUILD NEW AND EXPANDED PARTNERSHIPS

County government and educational systems will work together to foster and strengthen relationships and partnering opportunities between public schools, businesses, county and local government, social, health, and human services organizations, economic development organizations, as well as local colleges and universities to ensure students are prepared for their future.

ED-P3: EMPHASIZE 21ST CENTURY LEARNING SKILLS

Johnson County public school systems will excel and respond in innovative ways to changing times with an emphasis on 21st century learning skills such as emerging technologies, fluency in multiple languages, and strategic workforce development.

ED-P4: EMBRACE THE CHANGING ART OF EDUCATION

Johnson County public school systems will evolve to adapt to and incorporate new educational programs and models that reflect the changing art of education—embracing new technologies, online programs, teaching methods, and other innovative ways to expand student offerings and increase efficiency.

ED-P5: COLLABORATE ON MEANS TO EXPLORE EFFICIENCIES AND MAXIMIZE EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

County government and education entities will collaborate on means to explore efficiencies and maximize educational funding from tax resources to sustain the highest level quality of education for all citizens.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

ED-A1: CONDUCT PERIODIC EDUCATION SUMMITS

Conduct periodic Education Summits to discuss opportunities for collaboration between Johnson County government, local governments, and ~~educational entities~~ local colleges and universities. Possible opportunities to consider as part of the summit include approaching education at a county level rather than at a district level to maximize available resources and promote consistency in resources and programs available to all students.



ED-A2: COLLABORATE ON OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

Collaborate with public school systems at all levels to explore opportunities for consolidated efforts to maximize financial resources within the County to support increase efficiency, and enhance education funding. Possible opportunities to consider include:

- Eliminating duplication in special programs between school districts and allowing students the flexibility needed to share school facilities and access these programs;
- Expanded language programs;
- Expanding the role of Johnson County Community College or other local colleges and universities in providing academic credit access to high school juniors and seniors on campus and at school sites.
- Increasing emphasis on online programs as means of expanding student offerings and reducing staffing needs.

ED-A3: COORDINATE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES RELATED TO MAINTAINING STATE FUNDING QUALITY EDUCATION

Coordinate legislative initiatives between Johnson County government and education systems to maximize efforts in the state legislature to protect, improve, and maintain state funding in state education.

Possible Indicators to Track Our Progress

~~In order for this document to be effective, Johnson County government must continually monitor its progress towards achieving the community's vision. The following are examples of indicators that could be used to gauge progress in this area:~~

- ~~• Funding levels per student~~
- ~~• Enrollment levels~~
- ~~• Student achievement levels~~
- ~~• Kansas Department of Education educational attainment scores~~

A Safe, Healthy, and Caring Community



Our Vision

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

Why is this Important?

Public safety is a high priority for Johnson County residents. The safety and security of our citizens is a significant contributor to the well-being of our community and the reputation of Johnson County as a place to live and raise children. In addition, the physical and mental health of the citizens of Johnson County and the ability of underserved populations to meet their basic needs is important to our overall well-being and quality of life.

What are the Challenges and Opportunities?

Johnson County is experiencing significant growth along with socioeconomic and demographic shifts that include: an aging population, increasing poverty, and increasing diversity. These shifts present both challenges and opportunities:

Increasing Demand for Services and Changing Trends

The demand for social, health, and human services, law enforcement, and emergency services (EMS) is expected to continue to increase. More emphasis is needed on prevention and early intervention.

- **Social, Health and Human Services**—While there has been an acute increase in the near-term due to the current economic downturn, the increasing demand is part of a larger trend that is projected to play out over the next ten to twenty years. The long term trends of suburban poverty, an aging population, declining health related to obesity and chronic disease, and others have been and will continue to accelerate. Elimination or continued reduction in federal or state funding or services will lead to greater gaps in services.
- **Public Safety**—Crime rates in Johnson County are low compared to some other counties in Kansas and the nation; however, reduced resources for other services may lead to public safety concerns. ~~However,~~ Recent trends have presented law enforcement and criminal justice personnel with new challenges, such as increased gang and drug activity, the growing practice of using jails as the default facilities to house the mentally ill and current State legislation that mandates incarceration for certain less serious offenders, and increased challenges in attracting and retaining qualified law enforcement personnel.
- **Emergency Services**—Emergency services call volume has been increasing faster than population growth. This trend is projected to continue, particularly as an increase in demand for EMS services is expected as a result of the County's aging population.

Funding Limitations

Along with increasing demand for services, funding limitations are an increasing challenge for service providers.

- **Public Safety**—Law enforcement officials in Johnson County indicate that maintaining safety at the highest level is their top priority in any economic climate. However, with many departments and agencies facing decreasing budgets and reduced staff, it becomes more of a challenge to meet increasing mandates from both the state and local levels that require additional police work.
- **Social, Health, and Human Services**—With increasing demands for services and flat or declining revenues, the current system of providing social, health, and human services will be difficult to sustain. Elimination or continuing reduction in federal and state funding or services will lead to greater gaps in services and the funding resources to provide these services will be increasingly stressed as part of overall fiscal challenges that the County will likely continue to face.
- **Emergency Services**—The County and its local government partners will need to seek new approaches to meeting emergency service demands as revenues will not likely match increases in demand.

Law Enforcement Recruiting Challenges

Recruiting standards for law enforcement are very high. Increased social acceptance of drug usage and other minor criminal acts reduce the number of plausible candidates. Additionally, many young people do not find the demands and personal limitations of this career desirable. The result is a diminishing pool of acceptable candidates at a time when a large number of existing employees are approaching retirement age. Another challenge is finding the number of minority candidates necessary to reflect the increased diversity of the County population. Without this, cultural and language challenges will continue to grow and segments of the community will experience a disconnect from the entities tasked with keeping them safe.

What Will it Take to Achieve Our Vision in this Area?



The following guiding principles represent critical areas of focus as we look towards the future:

HS-P1: ADAPT TO THE NEEDS OF A CHANGING POPULATION

Innovative strategies and partnerships among federal, state and local governments, nonprofit and for-profit entities are needed to support the expansion and adaptation of services to respond to the community's growth and changing population.

HS-P2: SUPPORT A CROSS-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Challenges related to the provision of social, health, and human, services and public safety are not problems that Johnson County as a unit of government can "solve" – they involve a complex range of socioeconomic and cultural issues and will require a coordinated, full community strategy. County, local, and regional service providers have a long tradition of interagency cooperation and resource sharing. This approach should be a natural default in an effort to increase effectiveness and efficiency and maximize resources that are challenged. Cross disciplinary efforts such as those between law enforcement and corrections and social, health and human services are important to this effort.

HS-P3: EMPHASIZE PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Prevention and early intervention should be a primary theme of a service delivery strategy for social, health, and human services; criminal justice; mental health; and public safety programs. Prevention and early intervention is not only the most effective way to address issues in these areas, but also represents the most fiscally responsible approach, in that failure to address issues at the early stages results in additional demand for social, health, and human services at later stages. Additionally, prevention and early intervention in mental health care programs can contribute significantly in the reduction of incarcerated persons.

HS-P4: SEEK ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION AND SUSTAINED OFFENDER SUCCESS

Jail and prison space are costly to build, and incarceration is an expensive approach to community safety. Other innovative alternatives should be developed and utilized whenever possible. Community safety is enhanced when those who are incarcerated participate in forward- looking re-entry strategies working toward successful reintegration into the community without reoffending.

HS-P5: IMPROVE THE HEALTH STATUS OF OUR COMMUNITY

Be a leader in advocacy and programs to provide health care services to all citizens and strategies to improve the health status of our community. Advocate for Johnson County maintaining and enhancing its role in health care research and innovation.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

HS-A1: SUPPORT HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Support continued investment in public safety and emergency services programs proven to be effective in maintaining the safety and welfare of Johnson County residents. Explore ways in which the County can partner with the Rural Fire District Boards to maintain excellence in fire and emergency service delivery.



HS-A2: ENHANCE EFFORTS RELATED TO PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Continue to enhance and expand efforts related to prevention and early intervention as a core component of a service delivery strategy that promotes a safe, healthy, and caring community—building on best practices and evidence-based practices within the region and across the country.

HS-A3: MAINTAIN AN ACTIVE ROLE IN SOCIAL, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS

County government should continue to maintain an active role in social, health, and human services programs especially when it is demonstrated to be more efficient than having multiple cities deliver programs. However, opportunities to shift discrete responsibilities to the non-profit sector should be evaluated periodically to identify new opportunities for increased efficiency and sharing of resources.

HS-A4: IMPLEMENT ~~BEST PRACTICES IN ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY AND EVIDENCE-BASED~~ PROGRAMS

Support investment in advancing technology, ~~implementation of evidence-based programs,~~ and data-driven decision making in the areas of criminal justice, public safety, and social, health, and human services in order to identify and implement the evidence-based programs (or programs found to be effective based on rigorous evaluations) with greatest potential for the community.

HS-A5: PROMOTE HIGH LEVELS OF COORDINATION AMONG PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES AND OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

Promote high levels of coordination among local and regional public safety and emergency service providers and social, health, and human service providers to achieve efficient utilization of services and effectiveness in service delivery.

HS-A6: ALLOCATE RESOURCES BASED ON ~~EVIDENCE-BASED~~ OUTCOMES

~~Evaluate opportunities for funding on a case-by-case basis, sustaining programs originally funded by grants if proved to be effective and to provide a high return on investment that is based on evidence-based outcomes. When possible, use data from outcomes and best practice research to determine if resources are allocated to provide a high return on investment. Reallocate resources to achieve the greatest long-term return.~~

HS-A7: ~~AGGRESSIVELY PURSUE GRANT OPPORTUNITIES~~

~~Aggressively pursue grant opportunities to leverage resources available for social, health, and human services programs.~~

Possible Indicators to Track Our Progress

In order for this document to be effective, Johnson County government must continually monitor its progress towards achieving the community's vision. The following are examples of indicators that could be used to gauge progress in this area:

SOCIAL, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES

- Rate of overweight persons and obesity
- Mental health intakes (average/month on an annual basis)
- Total annual dollars allocated to HHS/percent of dollars from grants
- Others to be added

PUBLIC SAFETY

- To be added.



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A Sustainable Pattern of Growth Development and Redevelopment



Our Vision

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

Why is this Important?

For over fifty years, Johnson County has thrived on steady growth fueled by an abundance of land, robust economy, strong public school system, easily accessible transportation network, and demand for the County’s safe, family-oriented lifestyle. With a significant population increase projected over the next twenty years, a more sustainable approach to growth is needed—one that balances the needs of a growing and changing population, economic development, and the protection of the County’s historic and natural resources.

What are the Challenges and Opportunities?

Growth projections for Johnson County remain strong for the next ten to twenty years. In particular, several significant population and employment centers are emerging or planned in Johnson County over the next ten to twenty years, including: the Kansas City Intermodal Center; Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant Redevelopment; and a major concentration of employment along the K-10 Corridor. A sustainable pattern of growth hinges on clear linkages between land use, transportation, infrastructure, and the environment, as well as on the community that the growth is intended to serve. Trends and key issues that will challenge us as we strive to continue to grow in a more sustainable manner include:



Aging Infrastructure

Just as Johnson County's population is getting older, so too is its infrastructure. Roadways, neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and other infrastructure in many older areas are nearing the end of their useful life and will require a certain level of investment to continue to serve the community in the future.

Limited Housing Options

Much of the residential development that has occurred in Johnson County over the past fifty years has been oriented towards families living in detached, single-family homes. As Johnson County's population changes over time, increased diversity in the type, cost, and location of housing will be needed to meet the community's needs.

Sewer Expansion and County Growth Patterns

The Johnson County Rural Comprehensive Plan calls for unincorporated areas to grow slowly and largely remain rural. A key factor in the implementation of this policy is the location of expanded sewer services. Typically sewers have been extended in response to growth pressures in both incorporated areas and unincorporated areas of Johnson County. As Johnson County continues to grow and as fiscal resources for facilities continue to remain tight, it will be increasingly important to maintain the right balance between expansion and improvements of infrastructure facilities to serve new areas with pressing needs for maintenance and upgrades of existing systems.

Limited Transportation Choices

Limited transit service in Johnson County and the region has further reinforced the need for residents to rely on personal automobiles to meet their daily needs. This presents mobility challenges for residents either physically unable to drive or unable to afford to own a car. Reducing the auto-dependence of Johnson County residents and increasing transportation choices available are key themes identified as part of Johnson County Transit's Strategic Plan. Related challenges include: difficulty in transit routing and frequency to serve a dispersed population; improvements needed to



support growth and mobility as new population and employment centers emerge; and funding constraints and competing priorities for transportation improvements.

Protection of Natural and Historic Resources

In recent years, the protection of air and water quality, wildlife habitat, historic resources, and natural green space has played an increasingly important role in discussions within Johnson County and the region. Johnson County residents confirmed their support for programs designed to reduce pollution, conserve energy, and protect water resources as part of Johnson County government's biennial community survey. Key initiatives include MetroGreen, the Mid-America Regional Council's Natural Resource Inventory, and ongoing efforts by the Johnson County Stormwater Management Program to meet updated water quality and non-point source requirements.



What Will it Take to Achieve Our Vision in this Area?



The following guiding principles represent critical areas of focus to promote a sustainable pattern of growth development and redevelopment:

SG-P1: REINFORCE OUR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Continue to advance Johnson County government's sustainability goals through environmental programs, broad community partnerships, innovative policies and regulations, and other initiatives that encourage an overall shift in the way people live and do business in Johnson County. Implement programs that promote energy efficiency, conservation, and the reduction of solid waste within government operations as well as in private businesses and homes.

SG-P2: FOCUS GROWTH IN INCORPORATED AND UNDERUTILIZED AREAS

Encourage compact growth in incorporated and underutilized areas of the community through cooperative efforts with local municipalities. Prioritize growth in and adjacent to emerging population and employment centers to promote the efficient delivery of services.

SG-P3: BALANCE NEW INVESTMENT WITH REINVESTMENT

Partner with local governments, service districts, and private sector providers to ensure adequate and efficient infrastructure service (roads, sewer, water)—recognizing the importance of balancing investment in new facilities with reinvestment in existing infrastructure in established areas of Johnson County.

SG-P4: SUPPORT INCREASED ACCESS TO MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION

Foster and strengthen relationships and partnering opportunities between Johnson County government and local municipalities, transit providers, the Mid-America Regional Council, private investors, and others to support increased access to multi-modal transportation over time as a means of enhancing the region's quality of life, economic vitality, and desirability as a community.

SG-P5: PROMOTE STEWARDSHIP OF OUR LAND AND NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Encourage and promote stewardship of our land and natural and historic resources through environmental advocacy, program support, public education, Johnson County government policies, and day-to-day decision making.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

SG-A1: ADAPT LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION POLICIES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A CHANGING POPULATION

Review and adapt land use and transportation policies and priorities to reflect the changing characteristics of Johnson County's population (aging, fewer families):

- Ensure short-term land use decisions do not preclude future multi-modal opportunities.
- Partner with local and regional home builders, local architects, transportation providers, and social, health, and human service providers to develop innovative and cost effective housing and transportation prototypes to meet the physical, social, and financial needs of existing and future residents.



SG-A2: REINVEST IN ESTABLISHED AREAS OF THE COMMUNITY

Reinvest in established centers, corridors, and neighborhoods as a means to prevent blight, support economic vitality, enhance community character, improve livability, support multi-modal transportation, and promote the efficient delivery of services.

SG-A3: PROMOTE COORDINATED GROWTH IN UNINCORPORATED AREAS

Evaluate the effects of annexation and suburbanization on land use patterns in unincorporated areas of Johnson County to ensure land use policies and development practices support the fair and equitable provision of services, application of city standards to suburban development in unincorporated areas, and a sustainable, orderly pattern of growth.

SG-A3A4: EVALUATE CURRENT SEWER FINANCING STRUCTURE

Evaluate current sewer financing structure to determine if the cost to provide services in certain locations exceeds the revenue generated by associated growth. Explore new service delivery models or financing strategies to balance return on investment.

SG-A4A5: INVEST IN MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION

Explore the identification of new funding sources to support the implementation of multi-modal transportation priorities identified in Johnson County Transit's Strategic Plan.

SG-A5A6: EXPLORE THE CREATION OF A RANGE OF CONSERVATION TOOLS

Explore the creation of a local land trust, conservation/development easements, or other tools in cooperation with local and regional partners as an alternative to preserving open space or historic resources in Johnson County and the region through outright purchase.

SG-A6A7: LEAD BY EXAMPLE WITH REGARDS TO SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Continue to support and expand sustainability initiatives related to County government and the community as a whole, leading by example with regards to energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable building and development codes, and water conservation—while balancing economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits. Work with the private sector to identify and remove potential barriers to sustainable development practices in development and business permitting processes.

Possible Indicators to Track Our Progress

In order for this document to be effective, Johnson County government must continually monitor its progress towards achieving the community's vision. The following are examples of indicators that could be used to gauge progress in this area:

POPULATION/HOUSING/DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

- Population (U.S. Census American Community Survey)
- Housing affordability index (the median household income relative to the income needed to purchase a median-priced house)
- Total land (acres) consumed for development
- Average density (households/acre) of developed areas
- Area of county that is unincorporated (acres/percent)

TRANSPORTATION

- Total vehicle miles travelled
- Vehicle miles per capita
- Transit ridership (total # of trips, transit trip capture)

RESOURCE PROTECTION

- Acres of preserved open lands
- Number of tons of solid waste diverted from landfill

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Efficient and Effective Government



Our Vision

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

Why is this important?

As Johnson County grows, demands for services are expected to increase and will need to adapt to the needs of a diverse and dynamic population. While some of the solutions to these challenges might be new or enhanced revenue sources, the answer also lies in finding ways to meet service needs through greater efficiency – through partnering with other agencies, looking to the private sector in some instances, and identifying and possibly eliminating redundancies in multiple agencies and/or units of government that are providing the same or similar services.

What are the Challenges and Opportunities?

Multitude of Service Providers Impacts Efficiency

Johnson County government is only one of the many service providers within the community—numerous districts, local governments, non-profits, and other organizations provide separate, or in some cases, parallel services. This multitude of services providers presents challenges with regard to efficiency due to the potential for duplication of services in overlapping service areas.

Rising Demand for Services

Demand for services is expected to continue to increase in all program areas and will need to adapt in order to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic population.

Revenue Fluctuations

While demand for government services continues to grow, revenue to fund those services is falling because of a stable tax rate and a temporary decline in property values. A key issue Johnson County government is facing is how to continue to meet a high standard of service in light of future fluctuations in revenues. While the effects of the current recession may be temporary, many believe we have entered a new era of fiscal discipline that is here to stay.

Historically Moderate Tax Burden

According to state wide county tax rates the Johnson County property tax rate is the lowest of the 105 counties in Kansas. A moderate tax burden has provided high levels of service while maintaining low property taxes. Any tax incentives in the future will require a demonstrated need to the Johnson County community that governments are operating very efficiently.

High County Sales Tax Rate

Additional sales tax increases are unlikely for the foreseeable future due to a high current sales tax rate, two recent sales tax approvals for special projects, and a recent sales tax increase at the State level.



What Will it Take to Achieve Our Vision in this Area?



The following guiding principles represent critical areas of focus to promote efficient and effective government:

GOV-P1: CONVENE STAKEHOLDERS TO WORK TOGETHER ON ISSUES OF COMMON INTEREST

As the only entity with true county-wide jurisdiction, Johnson County government is best suited to the role of convening the many different jurisdictions within its geographic bounds to work together for their common interests as they relate to efficient service delivery and quality of life.

GOV-P2: LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Johnson County government will strive to be as efficient and effective as possible in its delivery of high quality services, continually exploring opportunities to maximize available resources through the reallocation of existing County resources, cooperation with partner agencies and other service providers, and other innovative strategies.

GOV-P3: COLLABORATE ON MEANS TO EXPLORE EFFICIENCIES AND PROMOTE COOPERATION

Johnson County government, partner agencies, and school districts will collaborate on means to explore efficiencies, promote cooperation, share resources, and leverage available funding in all service areas.

GOV-P4: SUPPORT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES THAT ARE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE

Support programs and services that promote acceptance, inclusion, and respect for cultural and ethnic diversity. Ensure programs and services are accessible to residents of all abilities and means.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

GOV-A1: CONVENE A PROCESS TO REVIEW CURRENT LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

Johnson County government, in conjunction with its partner agencies and districts, should lead by example—convening a process to review current levels of government and make recommendations about ways to achieve increased efficiency in day-to-day operations that will result in long-term benefits. Possible outcomes from such a process could include:

- A summary of lessons learned provided through Johnson County government and re-evaluated on an annual basis.
- A more formal organization or committee to foster accountability through ongoing discussion and efforts in this area both within Johnson County government and with partner agencies and districts.

GOV-A2: EVALUATE AND IMPLEMENT THE MOST EFFICIENT MEANS OF PROVIDING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES BASED ON EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

Periodically evaluate services and programs with demonstrated support from and benefit to the community based on evidence-based practices. Evaluate services and programs on a case-by-case basis to identify and implement the most efficient means of providing these programs or services through:

- Revenue enhancements;
- Reallocation of existing resources;
- Shifting responsibility to other sectors;
- Variable service model (e.g., use of contract services);
- Consolidation of services;
- Performance measurement; or
- Some combination of the above.

GOV-A3: DEVELOP AND SUPPORT LEADERSHIP THAT REFLECTS THE DIVERSITY OF THE COUNTY

Through recruiting outreach, appointments, and mentorship programs, work with partner agencies and districts to develop and support leadership that reflects the ethnic and gender diversity of the community.

GOV-A4: STRENGTHEN THE VOICE OF JOHNSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT AND THE COMMUNITY WITHIN THE REGION

Strengthen the voice of Johnson County government and the community within the region through an increased emphasis on the role of Public Information Officers and others in conveying the importance of Johnson County, including business, government, culture, education, and human services.

GOV-A5: ENCOURAGE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Provide a range of opportunities—through committee appointments, volunteer positions, mentorship programs, partnerships with other agencies and districts in Johnson County and the metro region, and other civic engagement activities — for citizens to participate in and learn about Johnson County government.

GOV-A6: ESTABLISH A REVIEW SCHEDULE TO TRACK THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VISION PLAN

Provide opportunities for the Citizens Visioning Committee to meet with Board of County Commissioners to review and discuss implementation of the vision plan as well as opportunities for the community-at-large to track progress through the County's website. An annual review schedule is recommended for the first five years following the vision plan's completion along with periodic review opportunities for the life of the plan.

GOV-A7: PROMOTE AN OPEN AND TRANSPARENT PROCESS

Promote open communication and a transparent process by providing a centralized access point for the public to monitor County government's annual progress towards adopted goals.

Possible Indicators to Track Our Progress

In order for this document to be effective, Johnson County government must continually monitor its progress towards achieving the community's vision. The following are examples of indicators that could be used to gauge progress in this area:

- Sales tax revenues
- Total assessed real and personal property value
- Number of county employees (FTE)
- Number of county employees (FTE) per capita
- Minority representation on elected and appointed boards, commissions, and committees.

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A Culturally Rich and Active Community



Our Vision

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

Why is this Important?

Providing opportunities for residents of all ages, abilities, and means to access a diverse range of programs and amenities—both locally and within the region, contributes to Johnson County's richness as a community, its health and well-being, and its economic vitality.

What are the Challenges and Opportunities?

This section provides an overview of the challenges and opportunities we face as we seek to foster a culturally rich and active community:

Increasing Demand and Expectations for Quality of Life Amenities

Increasingly, employers and residents are choosing to locate in communities that offer a high quality of life and access to a full range of services and amenities—arts and cultural programs, parks and recreational facilities, and libraries. Additionally, existing residents value and have come to expect exceptional levels of service in these areas or access to them within the region. Continued support for and enhancement of Johnson County’s quality of life amenities are key issues for consideration as the population grows and changes over time.

Encouraging Active Lifestyles

Johnson County’s exceptional parks and recreational facilities contribute significantly to quality of life and community character. In addition, they play an important role in the health and wellness of the community by encouraging regular physical activity and social interaction. Beyond the recreational benefits, physical activity has become increasingly important as obesity and diabetes rates continue to climb and impact our health care system. Balancing resources needed to address the following issues and keep up with a growing population will continue to be a challenge unless new tools and funding sources are identified:



- **Parkland Acquisition**—While the amount of parkland in the County has increased dramatically, continued focus on the implementation of ~~established~~ targets ~~established by MAP 2020~~—which identifies to meet the future park and recreation needs for Johnson County—is ~~needed-necessary~~ to ensure the needs of both existing and future residents can be met.
- **Access to Undeveloped Parkland**—As additional parkland is secured for future generations, access and amenities must also be developed to make these lands available for public use. This is particularly an issue in underserved areas of the community.
- **MetroGreen Implementation**—Johnson County and the Johnson County Parks and Recreation Board were integral players in MetroGreen, a regional plan to develop an interconnected system of public and private natural areas, greenways and trails linking communities throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. While the plan has strong support, implementation at the local level has been slow due to resource limitations.

Adapting to Change

Changes in technology, the County’s population, and the publishing industry have required that the Johnson County Library shift into a more multi-dimensional mode that extends beyond books to online access, business development, and support for students and underserved populations. These changes will translate into changes in facility needs over time.

Recognizing the Past While Looking Towards the Future

Johnson County’s rich history sets the stage for the quality of life that residents value today. Promoting an awareness and understanding of the community’s history and historic resources plays an important role in planning for the future.

What Will it Take to Achieve Our Vision in this Area?



The following guiding principles represent critical areas of focus to promote a culturally rich and active community:

COM-P1: FOSTER A COLLECTIVE APPROACH TO QUALITY OF LIFE AMENITIES

Support efforts to sustain and enhance local and regional assets—arts and cultural programs, libraries, and parks and recreational facilities— as part of the overall “package” of amenities that contributes to the County’s cultural richness, economic vitality, and quality of life.

COM-P2: PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL RESIDENTS TO LEAD HEALTHY AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

Johnson County government recognizes the value resident’s place on high quality parks and recreational facilities and the important role these facilities play in the health and wellness of the community. Continued expansion of and increased access to these facilities will be a priority, with an emphasis on underserved populations and areas of the community.

COM-P3: DEVELOP MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES

Foster programs and facilities—arts and cultural, libraries, language training, historic resources, parks and recreation, and others that provide a variety of benefits to the community—cultural enrichment, education, health and wellness, workforce development, and support for underserved populations. Collect and monitor data on attendance to evaluate successful institutions and programs.

COM-P4: SUPPORT EFFORTS THAT RAISE THE ARTS/CULTURAL PROFILE OF THE COUNTY AND REGION

Encourage and support expanding existing arts and cultural opportunities in Johnson County and the creation of new venues and opportunities that raise the arts/cultural profile of Johnson County and metropolitan Kansas City and promote economic vitality.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

COM-A1: ~~IDENTIFY NEW FUNDING OPTIONS TO~~ SUPPORT INCREASED ACCESS TO PARKS AND RECREATION

~~Identify new funding options to~~ support the continued development of the County's parks and recreational facilities. Prioritize expansion and increased access to parks and recreational facilities in underserved areas of the community.



COM-A2: ENCOURAGE ~~THE IDENTIFICATION OF~~ BROAD-BASED ~~SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MECHANISMS~~SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS

Encourage arts and humanities organizations to work collaboratively in ~~identifying and~~ building broad-based ~~sustainable funding mechanisms~~ support for the arts and arts-related initiatives in Johnson County.

COM-A3: ~~DEVELOP A FLEXIBLE AND INNOVATIVE MODEL FOR~~ PROMOTE INNOVATION IN THE DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICES

~~Develop a flexible model for~~ Promote innovation in the delivery of library services ~~that to~~ responds to the changing needs of the community and to changing technologies:

- Concentrate resources on creating multi-dimensional library facilities that meet a variety of community needs—access to literature through a variety of media, workforce training, education, community gathering spaces, and others.
- Identify opportunities to incorporate library “portals” or small-scale facilities as part of other public or private developments in strategic locations rather than relying solely on stand-alone facilities.

COM-A4: IDENTIFY NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY

Coordinate with organizations and groups that engage volunteers and promote community service, philanthropy, and positive change to develop a central clearinghouse for information about volunteer opportunities and to identify new ways to involve the community's youth, under-represented populations, and others in community service activities.

COM-A5: SUPPORT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES THAT ARE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE

Support programs and services that promote acceptance, inclusion, and respect for cultural and ethnic diversity. Ensure programs and services are accessible to residents of all abilities and means.

Possible Indicators to Track Our Progress

In order for this document to be effective, Johnson County government must continually monitor its progress towards achieving the community's vision. The following are examples of indicators that could be used to gauge progress in this area:

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Age, sex, race (U.S. Census American Community Survey)
- Poverty rates (food stamp enrollment - KS Department of Social Services)

PARKS AND RECREATION

- Acres of improved parkland (total and per capita)

ARTS AND CULTURE

- Attendance at arts, cultural, and recreational facilities

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Next Steps ~~Priority~~ Actions

~~While the vision and recommended actions on the previous pages are intended to have an immediate and lasting influence on decision making within Johnson County government, not every recommended action can be addressed at once. Each of the six themes and associated recommendations outlined in this report is equally important and plays an essential role in the implementation of the community's vision. Therefore, implementation of the vision should be approached in a comprehensive manner. Initial steps to advance the plan's recommendations should be taken in all six areas, rather than narrowing the focus to a particular recommended action or theme. This section recommends a series of next steps to support the implementation of the plan and to monitor the plan to determine whether it is achieving the desired results. This section recommends a series of priority actions—or actions that should be undertaken within the first year of the plan's completion. The monitoring process should include opportunities for the Citizens Visioning Committee to meet with Board of County Commissioners to review and discuss implementation of the vision plan as well as opportunities for the community-at-large to track progress through the County's website. An annual review schedule is recommended for the first five years following the vision plan's completion along with periodic review opportunities for the life of the plan.~~

Strategic Planning to Advance Recommended Actions

~~As an initial next step to advance the plan's implementation, the CVC recommends that strategic planning be undertaken within the framework of each of the six themes to:~~

- ~~• Evaluate how well current policies, regulations, and practices support—or conflict with—the vision, guiding principles, and recommended actions for each theme;~~
- ~~• Identify a more detailed set of actions needed to support the recommended actions for each theme;~~
- ~~• Define roles and responsibilities for moving forward; and~~
- ~~• Identify community benchmarks and indicators for each theme that will be used to monitor the implementation of the vision plan over time.~~

~~Implementing the plan's recommendations will require strong leadership on the part of Johnson County government and ongoing collaboration with local municipalities, districts, other governmental and quasi-governmental organizations, private sector representatives, the community-at-large, and many others. Implementation will also require close collaboration among the County's numerous departments. The CVC encourages the County to work closely with its stakeholders as the implementation of this plan moves forward. In addition to leveraging the County's resources to address these topics, this approach also reinforces one of the primary themes of this vision document - that Johnson County is part of a larger "community of interests", and that many of the challenges and opportunities Johnson County faces as it looks towards the future—resource constraints, socioeconomic and demographic changes, and many others— affect not just Johnson County government, but each entity that comprises the County's larger community of interests.~~

In some instances, such as education, the County's primary role during the strategic planning process may be as a convener, with much of the expertise and input and ultimately implementation of this vision coming from actions by the school districts and other educational institutions. On other topics such as growth and redevelopment, the county will be more directly involved in the actions, but may want to involve the development community, neighborhoods, business organizations, and others as appropriate. In addition to area stakeholders, industry experts or other outside resources might be engaged in this process to provide an objective perspective on potentially controversial topics and to increase awareness of national best practices in each theme area that may be applicable and readily translated to Johnson County. For example, an informational presentation by an industry expert focused on national best practices in the area of "Efficient and Effective Government" and outlining steps other communities have taken to enhance (or measure) their efficiency and effectiveness may be a useful tool in a strategic planning process for that area.

Monitoring Implementation of the Vision Plan

Tracking implementation activities is a critical aspect of the monitoring program for this Vision Plan. Implementation monitoring will provide information on the specific steps that the County and its partners are taking to implement the Vision. The County, local governments, institutions, other public agencies, and private sector groups all play an important role in implementing this vision. In order to ensure that progress is occurring on implementing the recommended actions identified in each section, this plan recommends the following steps:

- **Develop a Set of Quality-of-Life Barometers That Measure our Progress** – As indicated below in our recommendation related to an Annual Progress Report, the CVC recommends that the County should develop a set of indicators that can be used to evaluate progress being made towards the overall objectives of this vision. These should be developed by county staff, working with key stakeholders to ensure that they reflect the most appropriate measures for each of the six vision themes.
- **Annual Review Meeting With Citizens Visioning Committee** - To ensure ongoing participation by CVC members in the implementation review process, an annual meeting to review the progress report should be convened between the CVC and Board of County Commissioners for at least the first five years following adoption of the report.
- **Annual Progress Report** - An annual progress report should be prepared by County staff to review progress made towards implementing recommended actions in each of the theme areas during the previous year. It is recommended that this report incorporate a summary of progress towards a series of key indicators or community benchmarks developed for each theme. Ideally, this progress report would be presented as part of the annual State of the County address to help increase awareness of the report among the community-at-large and to promote accountability.
- **Periodic Update of Living our Vision Report** – This document should be updated on a periodic basis to ensure that it continues to reflect the vision of County citizens and leadership. Ideally, the Vision report should be updated every 10 years to reflect changing circumstances.

Recommended actions will be developed by the committee based on input received during the public outreach process and further discussion amongst the committee during the fall. These recommendations will be incorporated into the final plan.

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Tracking Our Progress

The concept of monitoring progress towards the desired future is integral to the implementation of this vision. Progress should be monitored regularly—ideally each year—to determine whether implementation is occurring and whether it is achieving the desired results. This section outlines a suggested approach to monitoring both implementation of the vision plan (i.e., are the recommended actions moving forward) and outcomes (i.e., is Johnson County government moving in the right direction), towards the vision. The monitoring process should include opportunities for the Citizens Visioning Committee to meet with Board of County Commissioners to review and discuss implementation of the vision plan as well as opportunities for the community at large to track progress through the County’s website. An annual review schedule is recommended for the first five years following the vision plan’s completion along with periodic review opportunities for the life of the plan.

Actions and Indicators

The table below provides a summary of the recommended actions outlined throughout this report for each of the six themes. Each theme area is accompanied by a series of possible indicators that may be used to track its implementation over time; however, indicators are not listed for every action since some recommended actions may not translate to a quantifiable measure. Possible indicators identified represent data already being tracked by Johnson County government or others to ensure that measurements suggested are readily available.

Note: Possible indicators identified below are preliminary and will be refined over the coming months. Indicators are grouped by topic now and will likely be assigned to specific actions at a later date to provide a more direct linkage between the two.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	POSSIBLE INDICATORS
Economic Vitality	
EV-A1: Continue to Play a Supportive Role in Area Economic Development Efforts	From CERI Johnson County Indicators Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Civilian labor force ● Residents employed ● Index of corporate formation ● Unemployment rate ● Growth in assessed value ● Growth in sales taxes ● Value of new construction ● Building permits
EV-A2: Explore the Creation of an Organization Focused on Promoting Workforce Development	
EV-A3: Encourage Workforce Diversity	

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	POSSIBLE INDICATORS
Excellence in Education	
ED-A1: Conduct Periodic Education Summits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding levels per student
ED-A2: Collaborate on Opportunities to Support and Enhance Educational Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enrollment levels ● Student achievement levels
ED-A3: Coordinate Legislative Initiatives Related to Maintaining State Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kansas Department of Education educational attainment scores
A Safe, Healthy, and Caring Community	
HS-A1: Support High Quality Public Safety and Emergency Services	<p>Social, Health, and Human Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rate of overweight persons and obesity
HS-A2: Enhance Efforts Related to Prevention and Early Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mental health intakes (average/month on an annual basis)
HS-A3: Maintain An Active Role In Social, Health, And Human Services Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Total annual dollars allocated to HHS/percent of dollars from grants
HS-A4: Implement Best Practices in Advancing Technology and Evidence Based Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Add others... <p>Public Safety</p>
HS-A5: Promote High Levels of Coordination Among Public Safety Agencies and Other Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To be added.
HS-A6: Allocate Resources Based on Evidence-Based Outcomes	
HS-A7: Aggressively Pursue Grant Opportunities	
A Sustainable Pattern of Growth	
SG-A-1: Adapt Land Use and Transportation Policies to Meet the Needs of a Changing Population	<p>Population/Housing/Development Patterns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Population (U.S. Census American Community Survey)
SG-A-2: Promote Coordinated Growth in Unincorporated Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing affordability index (the median household income relative to the income needed to purchase a median priced house)
SG-A-3: Evaluate Current Sewer Financing Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Total land (acres) consumed for development
SG-A-4: Invest In Multi-Modal Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Average density (households/acre) of developed areas
SG-A-5: Explore the Creation of a Range of Conservation Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Area of county that is unincorporated (acres/percent)
SG-A-6: Lead by Example With Regards to Sustainability Initiatives	<p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Total vehicle miles travelled ● Vehicle miles per capita ● Transit ridership (total # of trips, transit trip capture) <p>Resource Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acres of preserved open lands ● Number of tons of solid waste diverted

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	POSSIBLE INDICATORS
Efficient and Effective Service Government	
GOV A1: Convene a Process to Review Current Levels of Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sales tax revenues ● Total assessed real and personal property value ● Number of county employees (FTE) ● Minority representation on elected and appointed boards, commissions, and committees.
GOV A2: Evaluate and Implement the Most Efficient Means of Providing Programs and Services Based on Evidence Based Practices	
GOV A3: Develop and Support Leadership that Reflects the Diversity of the County	
GOV A4: Strengthen the Voice of Johnson County Government and the Community Within the Region	
GOV A5: Encourage Civic Engagement	
GOV A6: Establish a Review Schedule to Track the Implementation of the Vision Plan	
GOV A7: Promote an Open and Transparent Process	
A Culturally Rich and Active Community	
COM A1: Identify New Funding Options to Support Increased Access to Parks and Recreation	<p>Demographics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Age, sex, race (U.S. Census American Community Survey) ● Poverty rates (food stamp enrollment — KS Department of Social Services) <p>Parks and Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acres of improved parkland (total and per capita)
COM A2: Encourage the Identification Of Broad-Based Sustainable Funding Mechanisms for the Arts	
COM A3: Develop a Flexible and Innovative Model for the Delivery of Library Services	
COM A4: Identify New Ways to Engage All Sectors of the Community	
COM A5: Support Programs and Services that are Inclusive and Accessible	

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Appendix: Background and Trends

This Appendix contains a brief overview of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and trends for Johnson County along with a summary of key issues, opportunities, and constraints. [It also contains an overview of Johnson County government's role in each topic area.](#) This information served as foundation for the committee's discussions during the visioning process. Each of the following topic areas is addressed:

- Economic Development;
- Financing and Taxation;
- Social, Health and Human Services;
- Criminal Justice and Public Safety;
- Education;
- Culture, Arts, and Humanities;
- Parks and Recreation;
- Land Use;
- Transportation;
- Other Infrastructure; and
- Natural Resources and Environment.

Economic Development

Context and Key Issues

This section provides an overview of the key issues that will help shape the future of the County's economy.

LEADING ROLE IN THE REGION'S ECONOMY

Johnson County is a major contributor to the economy of the Kansas City Metro Area and the State of Kansas. Since 1995, Johnson County has been the state's largest provider of employment. The pace of employment growth has been remarkable: from 1997 to 2007 the Johnson County economy added an average of 24 net new business establishments per month accounting for 87 percent of the total employment growth in the state.

DIVERSE ECONOMY

Johnson County's economy is well diversified, yet has more employment concentrated in the high-growth service producing industries than does the nation, state, or metropolitan area. Over the past decade, Johnson County has experienced a net increase of almost 2,800 private sector employers, accounting for 66% of the total business growth in the 15-county Kansas City MSA (source: The Johnson County Advantage 2010, County Economic Research Institute, Inc.).

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

The recent economic downturn has affected Johnson County in a number of ways, due to impacts on the real estate/construction market and on the financial services market. As of the beginning of 2011, the County is again seeing job growth, but at a rate that is slower than growth in the labor force. Total residents employed in Johnson County continue to decline, from an average of 283,916 persons in 2009 to 277,993 in 2010 (source: Johnson County Indicators February 2010, County Economic Research Institute, Inc.). 2010 unemployment averaged 6.0% in Johnson County, considerably below the national rate of 9.6% for 2010.

QUALITY OF LIFE ATTRIBUTES CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

The many assets that led to Johnson County's growth and prosperity - its workforce, infrastructure, and high quality of life - are still in place and will continue to fuel economic growth in the future.

EMERGING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CLUSTERS

Several major initiatives will help fuel economic development in the future. These include:

- Animal Health Cluster, a regional initiative that stretches from Manhattan, Kansas to Columbia, Missouri;
- Bioscience/life science cluster;
- Advanced energy industries, including recent trends in wind and battery storage; and
- Logistics/manufacturing, focused on the planned BNSF Intermodal Center in Gardner/Edgerton.

Johnson County's Economic Development Partners

While Johnson County government does not have its own economic development entity, it is supportive of economic development organizations at the local, regional and state levels:

- At the local level, Johnson County government works closely with each municipality and the many Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Councils that represent them.
- At the regional level, Johnson County works with a number of organizations, including the Kansas City Area Development Council, The County Economic Research Institute (CERI), and The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC).
- Statewide, the Kansas Department of Commerce focuses its efforts on business attraction and retention working in conjunction with local development agencies.

- Advanced health care and medical research;
- Technology and innovation hub; and
- Engineering cluster.

Skills and Workforce Development

Many employers require a specialized workforce to support their operations. Partnerships between employers and local colleges and universities will be increasingly important to ensure training in a range of languages, advancing technologies, and other specialized areas are available to promote the development of a diverse and nimble workforce that reflect the changing needs of area employers.

Financing and Taxation

Context and Key Issues

This section addresses financing and taxation issues. Key topics include the relationship between county taxes and spending, trends, how fiscal planning occurs, and challenges for the future.

LOW AD VALOREM (PROPERTY) TAX RATE

The 2010 County property tax rate is 23.213 mills. The total millage covers the County taxing district-17.715 mills; the Library's taxing district-3.15 mills; and the Parks and Recreation's taxing district-2.346 mills. According to state wide county tax rates the Johnson County property tax rate is the lowest of the 105 counties in Kansas.

COUNTY SALES TAX RATE

The current sales tax rate in the County increased in July 2010 to 2.225% and is in addition to the 5.3% Kansas State sales tax. The individual cities have variable sales tax rates that range from 6.525% to 8.275%. In 2009, both the Public Safety Sales Tax II and the Johnson County Education Research Triangle Authority tax were approved. Coupled with the State's recent sales tax increase, additional sales tax increases are unlikely for the foreseeable future.

RISING DEMAND FOR SERVICES

From 2000 to 2010 the County's population increased by approximately 93,000 people. Commercial and business development paralleled this trend, placing an ever-increasing demand on the services provided by the County. This is supported by trends at the libraries and parks with higher circulation rates and facility usage, and by projected increases in service demands from an aging and more diverse population.

TEMPORARY DECLINE IN PROPERTY VALUATIONS AND NEW BUILDING STARTS

After several years of decline, property valuations are beginning to increase. The Appraiser's 2011 Revaluation Report shows that the total appraised market value for property in Johnson County grew by 0.87 percent from 2010 to 2011, increasing from 56.9 billion dollars to 57.4 billion. This increase comes after two consecutive years of decline in reappraised residential values and three consecutive years of decline in commercial values. Because of decreased valuations, the estimated amount generated by one mill of property tax was placed at \$7.34 million in 2011, which is a decrease of \$440,000 from 2010. The combined effect of these trends is that while demand for County services continues to grow, revenue to fund those services is falling because of a stable tax rate and declining property values, although property values appear to have stabilized. A key issue the County is facing is how to continue to meet a high standard of service in light of declining revenues.

Johnson County Budget at a Glance

Johnson County government collects property taxes, sales taxes, and services fees in order to fund operations of County services and programs and for construction of capital improvements. Capital improvements include construction and maintenance of County facilities, properties, and infrastructure including government facilities, roads, utilities, parks and recreation, and libraries. In fiscal year 2010 (January 1-December 31, 2010) the County's budget is \$778 million including budgeted expenditures of \$628.9 million with budgeted reserves of \$144.3 million (about 18.5 percent).

Social, Health, and Human Services

Context and Key Issues

Johnson County is experiencing socioeconomic and demographic shifts that include: an aging population, increasing poverty, and increasing diversity. Each of these shifts present challenges related to the provision of social, health and human services now and in the future.

INCREASING DEMAND FOR SERVICES

The demand for social, health, and human services is expected to continue to increase. While there has been an acute increase in the near-term due to the economic downturn, the increasing demand is part of a larger trend. The long term trends of suburban poverty, an aging population, declining health related to obesity, and others have been and will continue to accelerate. Elimination or continuing reduction in federal and state funding or services will lead to greater gaps in services.

LIMITED FUNDING OPTIONS

The funding resources to provide social, health, and human services will be increasingly stressed as part of overall fiscal challenges that the County will likely continue to face.

CHANGES IN SERVICE DELIVERY NEEDED

With increasing demands for services and flat or declining revenues, the current system of providing social, health, and human services is not sustainable. A new model of social, health, and human services delivery is needed. More emphasis is needed on prevention and early intervention.

What Is The County's Role In Providing These Services?

Johnson County Government funds and operates four agencies/departments that deliver social, health and human services. In addition to County funding, the agencies/departments receive federal and state funds, and for some programs, client fees.

- **Developmental Supports**—the Agency provides an array of community-based programs and supports to children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As Johnson County's Community Developmental Disabilities Organization (CDDO), the Agency also offers a single point of entry for those seeking developmental disability services, determines eligibility for services, and coordinates a network of nearly 400 Johnson County agency and individual affiliate providers. Medicaid is the primary funder.
- **Health Department**—the Department serves as the statutory health department for the County. Services are delivered at two sites and include immunizations, disease containment, health education, child care facility inspections, health services and prenatal care.
- **Human Services**—the Department includes programs that address basic needs for the general population and programs that address unique needs of specific populations. The County operates six multi-service centers dispersed geographically across Johnson County; these centers provide emergency assistance for basic needs, including utilities. This Department manages the subsidized housing program, and helps with minor home repair and weatherization. Utility assistance and home repair are supported with funds from various cities in Johnson County. The Area Agency on Aging, a federally supported program, is operated by the department, as well as assistance for individuals with disabilities (including deaf).
- **Mental Health Center**—the Center is a licensed Community Mental Health Center by the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and functions as the mental health safety net for county residents. Programs include 24-hour emergency services; outpatient services; services to adults with severe and persistent mental illness; services to children with severe emotional behavioral problems and their families; substance abuse residential and outpatient services; and services in county correctional facilities. Medicaid is a primary funding source. Client fees are charged based on the client's ability to pay.

In addition to funding support for County operated programs, the County provides support to Evergreen Living Innovations (nursing home) and KSU Extension Services. Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation is responsible for operating core safety net services, such as child welfare and public assistance. A wide range of nonprofit and for-profit organizations address a variety of residents' needs. These include, but are not limited to health care, early learning programs, child care and youth development.

Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Context and Key Issues

This section addresses key issues that will affect criminal justice and public safety in the future.

PUBLIC SAFETY AS A TOP PRIORITY

Law enforcement officials in Johnson County indicate that maintaining safety at the highest level is their top priority, and the community indicates their support for this objective through recent surveys. However, with many departments and agencies facing decreasing budgets and reduced staff, it becomes more of a challenge to meet increasing mandates from both the state and local levels that require additional police work.

CHANGING FACE OF CRIME

Crime rates in Johnson County are low compared to other counties in Kansas and the nation. However, crime in Johnson County has become complex and violent in nature. Gang and drug activity continues to grow throughout Johnson County and this has an adverse impact on police, corrections, prosecution, and jail resources. Criminal populations in jails (juvenile and adult) increased steadily between 1994 and 2004 and are projected to continue to increase steadily for the next 15 years as the population grows. Since 2005, the upward trend in criminal populations has leveled off somewhat and has appeared to stabilize. As a result, proposed jail expansion plans have been deferred until future years, but funding will still need to be provided for them in the future.

EXTERNAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GROWTH IN INCARCERATED POPULATION

Other factors contributing to the increase in criminal populations include the growing practice of using jails as the default facilities to house the mentally ill and current State legislation that mandates incarceration for serious and multiple DUI offenders.

INCREASE IN EMERGENCY SERVICES RESPONSES

Over the past ten years, emergency services (EMS) call volume has been increasing at a rate of six percent annually—nearly three times the rate of population growth in the County. This trend is projected to continue over the next ten to twenty years, particularly as an increase in demand for EMS services is expected as a result of the County's aging population. The County and its local government partners will need to seek new approaches to meeting emergency service demands as revenues will not likely match increases in demand.

RECRUITING CHALLENGES

Recruiting standards for law enforcement are very high. Increased social acceptance of drug usage and other minor criminal acts reduce the number of plausible candidates. Additionally, many young people do not find the demands and personal limitations of this career desirable. The result is a diminishing pool of acceptable candidates at a time when a large number of existing employees are approaching retirement age. Another challenge is finding the number of minority candidates necessary to reflect the increased diversity of the County population. Without this, cultural and language challenges will continue to grow and segments of the community will experience a disconnect from the entities tasked with keeping them safe.

What Is The County's Role In Providing These Services?

Key elements of Johnson County's Criminal Justice/Public Safety System include:

- **Sheriff/Police**—Johnson County's 20 cities are served by 14 city police departments and the Johnson County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff is an elected position which serves unincorporated areas of Johnson County and provides administration of the jail. In addition, the Sheriff's Office provides other services including the crime lab and CSI services, civil processing, criminal warrants and dispatch for some Johnson County Communities.
- **District Court**—The District Court consists of 24.5 District Court and Magistrate judges and in 2010 presided over 56,000 case filings. The Court Services Department provides juvenile and adult services including "standard" probation supervision, as well as other court ordered programming including a domestic relations unit that serves the civil courts.
- **District Attorney (DA)**—the DA is elected and oversees all criminal and juvenile case prosecution, victim services, the adult diversion program, Child in Need of Care (CINC) cases of abuse and/or neglect, violations of the Kansas Consumer Protection Act, involuntary mental commitments, and expungments.
- **Department of Corrections (DOC)**—the DOC provides adult and juvenile services. Adult services include pre-trial screening, probation intensive supervision and the Adult Residential Center that serves as the site for work release, the Therapeutic Community and house arrest. Juvenile services include oversight of JIAC, probation intensive supervision, case management of juvenile offenders placed in state custody and the Juvenile Detention Center and house arrest.
- **Med-Act** provides county-wide Emergency Medical Service (EMS) with Advanced Life Support (ALS) capability.
- **Johnson County Emergency Communications Center (ECC)**—the ECC manages and dispatches fire and emergency medical (EMS) calls for service for County Med-Act, all twelve fire departments in the County, and Miami County EMS.
- **Fire response** in rural portions of Johnson County is provided by Johnson County Fire Districts 1 and 2 and Northwest Consolidated Fire District. Consolidated Fire District 2 serves Northeast Johnson County and the cities of Fairway, Mission, Mission Hills, Mission Woods, a small contracted area of Overland Park, Prairie Village, Roeland Park, Westwood and Westwood Hills. Other cities in Johnson County provide standalone fire departments.
- **Emergency Management and Homeland Security**—the County, by state statute, is the emergency management coordination point for all of Johnson County.

Education

Context and Key Issues

This section provides an overview of the key issues influencing the future of education in Johnson County.

HIGH COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS AND LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT

In Johnson County, quality public education is a source of great pride for the community. All six school districts consistently perform at or above the Kansas State Department of Education benchmarks for educational attainment. While Kansas schools traditionally score beyond the national average on standardized tests, Johnson County's school districts consistently exceed Kansas state averages.

ENROLLMENT VARIATION

In 2009/2010 there were an estimated 86,041 students enrolled in Johnson County schools, and the County's population forecasts indicate that the district populations are growing, particularly those at the edges of the suburban rural transitions. Although total student enrollment in Johnson County has increased over the last twenty years, variations in enrollment have occurred within individual districts. Enrollment variation of growth or decline can be attributed to aging of population in more established areas of the county and new housing developments in other areas attracting younger populations. This pattern of enrollment variation can be anticipated to stabilize over time resulting in continued increase in total student enrollment for Johnson County public schools.

VARIATIONS IN RESOURCES AND TAX BURDENS BY DISTRICT

The six districts that serve the County vary greatly in size, number of schools, and enrollment, from just under 3,000 students (Spring Hill) to more than 25,000 (Olathe and Shawnee Mission). This difference creates challenges due to varying levels of resources and higher tax burdens for districts with lower levels of assessed valuation.

FLUCTUATIONS IN FUNDING

Funding sources for school districts have fluctuated over the last several years for many reasons. First, the state shifted the maximum mills from 35 mills to 20 mills in 2005. Second, funding is based on assessed property values, which have been on a three year declining trend due to recent economic conditions. Third, all school districts are experiencing continued declines in state funding due to reductions in state resources. In addition, a shift in Johnson County budget priorities in recent years resulted in reallocation of a County sales tax for education to other projects. Projections indicate education funding will be an ongoing issue at the state and local level for the foreseeable future.

What Is The County's Role In Education?

Six unified school districts serve the population of Johnson County including: Blue Valley, Spring Hill, Gardner-Edgerton, De Soto, Olathe, and Shawnee Mission. The school districts are operated by independently elected boards, and are separate governmental entities from the County. As such, the County has a very limited role with respect to primary and secondary education. Johnson County residents and employers have access to numerous post-secondary, continuing education, and workforce training opportunities through the Johnson County Community College (JCCC), KU Edwards Campus, and numerous other public and private colleges and universities.

COLLEGE PREPARATION

An increasing concern statewide relates to students entering college without necessary math, reading, or writing skills to succeed. Local school districts and institutions of higher learning are collaborating on pilot programs to administer college placement tests during the sophomore year of high school to identify students needing to improve their proficiencies in core curriculum areas prior to high school graduation.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

As demographic changes in Johnson County affect governmental services across all levels, educational systems face additional challenges with changes in the demographic composition of schools. Special challenges will continue with student from non-English speaking backgrounds from throughout the world. In addition to requirements for language learning instructional staff, achievement requirements of No Child Left Behind do not allow sufficient time to develop student assessment competencies affecting overall school adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Culture, Arts, and Humanities

Context and Key Issues

This section provides an overview of the key issues that will help guide future efforts in the area of culture arts, and humanities.

CREATING A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL LIBRARY EXPERIENCE

The Johnson County Library's Capital Improvement Plan (2009) targets three areas: customer service, spaces, and underserved populations. Changes in technology, the County's population, and the publishing industry have required that the Library shift into a more multi-dimensional mode that extends beyond books to online access, business development, and support for students and underserved populations. These changes will translate into changes in facility needs over time.

ARTS EDUCATION

Decreased funding for K-12 Education and increasing enrollments may result in future cuts to art and music programs in Johnson County schools. These cuts would impact students without access to private lessons most.

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING A STRONG WORKFORCE

Increasingly, employers are choosing to locate in communities that offer a high quality of life for residents and access to a full range of arts, cultural, and recreational amenities as a means of attracting and retaining a strong workforce. Currently, Kansas is ranked 47th out of 50 states in its ability to retain people (American Community Survey).

What Is Johnson County's Role In Culture, Arts, And Humanities?

Johnson County provides support for the following programs/organizations:

- **Johnson County Museum**—the primary agency responsible for the stewardship of the local history and unique cultural assets. Aside from the Museum Facility and its collections, the Museum is responsible for inventory and oversight of the County's historic landmarks and sites, as well as for a strategic plan for protection of the community's historic and cultural resources.
- **Johnson County Library**—the County's award winning system is notable for its high efficiency, low overhead, resources, and exceptional customer service and programs—which include providing business resources for local entrepreneurs and job seekers and after school support for students.
- **Johnson County Public Art Program**—which sets aside 1 percent for arts on newly constructed major capital projects.
- **Johnson County Heritage Trust Fund**—established in 1990, the program provides resources for completion of important special projects related to the preservation of the County's cultural heritage.
- **The Arts Council of Johnson County** – the arts advocacy group in Johnson County, whose mission is to enhance the quality of life in Johnson County by serving as the voice for the arts community.

Johnson County also works with numerous other organizations focused on the arts, local historic and cultural preservation and interpretation activities including: Arts Council of Johnson County; Central Resource Library; Johnson County Archives; Kansas State Historical Society; National Archives-Central Plains; Johnson County Community College; and Olathe Public Library.

Parks and Recreation

Context and Key Issues

This section provides an overview of the key issues that will affect the County's parks and recreational facilities in the future.

PARK LAND ACQUISITION

Aligning Johnson County's park acreage standards with national targets is a key recommendation of MAP 2020, the Johnson County Park and Recreation District's Master Action Plan. In 2010, JCPRD's parks acreage had increased by 66 percent (from 6,396 to 9,649 acres) and acres of park land per 1,000 residents increased from 14.2 to 17.3 between 2000 and 2010. While these numbers represent considerable success towards MAP 2020's implementation, JCPRD still falls short of its goal of providing 22 acres per 1,000 residents and is projected to remain 3,000 acres shy of reaching this goal by 2020 based on current funding levels.

PARKLAND DEVELOPMENT

As additional park land is secured for future generations, access and amenities must also be developed. As of 2010, only 55 percent of the JCPRD's existing park acreage was open to the public. Balancing resources needed to expand access with those needed to acquire additional park land will continue to be a challenge for the JCPRD for the foreseeable future unless new funding sources are identified.

METROGREEN IMPLEMENTATION

Johnson County and the Johnson County Parks and Recreation Board were integral players in the creation of MetroGreen, an interconnected system of public and private natural areas, greenways and trails linking communities throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. While the plan has strong support within the region, implementation has been largely left up to local municipalities who have been facing increasingly strained budgets. Unless other implementation tools are identified, implementation will continue to be slow and opportunities for future linkages connections may be lost.

HIGH COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

Johnson County residents clearly value services provided by the JCPRD, as they ranked them first when asked which County services should receive the most emphasis over the next two years as part of a 2009 Community Survey. Continued growth of the system and maintaining the exceptional levels of services currently enjoyed as the population grows are key issues for consideration.

Who Provides Parks And Recreational Facilities In Johnson County?

The Johnson County Park and Recreation District (JCPRD) is responsible for the planning and management of parks and for the development of future parks, including nature preserves, playgrounds, picnic shelters, water recreation, sports facilities, ball fields, and equestrian facilities and trails. The JCPRD maintains and manages several large regional parks and many athletic and special purpose facilities that are a major attribute to the community and provide opportunities to sponsor tournaments, and provide athletic training, as well as preserving and protecting natural resources in the County. In addition to the JCPRD's parks and facilities, each of the local municipalities also has parks and recreational facilities.

Land Use

Context and Key Issues

This section provides an overview of the key issues that will affect the County's land use patterns in the future.

CONTINUED GROWTH IN UNINCORPORATED AND INCORPORATED AREAS

Although development permits in both unincorporated areas of Johnson County and incorporated cities have been down in recent years as a result of the current economic downturn, this lull is not anticipated to last. Growth projections for Johnson County remain strong. Household growth in Johnson County as a whole is projected to increase by 38 percent (from 220,609 to 304,713) between 2010 and 2030. Household growth in unincorporated areas of Johnson County is projected to increase nearly 139 percent (from 15,916 to 37,971) during the same timeframe. (Source: MARC, 2010)

EMERGING POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

Several significant population and employment centers are planned in Johnson County over the next ten to twenty years, including:

- **Kansas City Intermodal Center**—Planning is underway for a major new intermodal facility in Southwest Johnson County. Located along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) transcontinental line near Edgerton, the development will occupy nearly 1,000 acres and will include the intermodal facility in addition to large-scale warehousing, processing, and distribution for products arriving from west coast ports.
- **Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant Redevelopment**—Clean-up efforts to support the redevelopment of the 9,000 acre Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant as a community with significant residential, institutional, and open space components were recently suspended due to funding limitations; however, adopted plans for the area remain a key component of Johnson County's Rural Comprehensive Plan.
- **K-10 Corridor**—Significant investment in infrastructure and new development has been made along the K-10 Corridor over the past 20 years. As a result, the corridor has emerged as a major employment center for animal health, biosciences, and research facilities.

REVITALIZATION OF EXISTING AREAS

The need to balance growth in new areas with revitalizing older areas of Johnson County has been a major topic of discussion in recent years. Revitalization of existing areas presents opportunities for targeted infill and redevelopment in established areas, higher intensity development, a broader mix of residential, retail, and employment uses, and strategic transit investments. In Johnson County, revitalization has been focused within incorporated cities and along major travel corridors, such as the Metcalf Corridor in Overland Park, where policies and regulations have already been adopted by the city to support more intense, mixed-use development.

Land Use Planning in Johnson County

Land use planning in Johnson County is addressed at three levels:

1) **Unincorporated Areas**—guided by the policies of the Johnson County Rural Comprehensive Plan. The goals, policies, and actions in the Plan are based on a 10-point planning framework:

- Continued Slow Growth in the Unincorporated Area
- Natural Resources Protection
- Continued Agriculture Production
- -“Sense of Community” and “Sense of Place”—Development Quality
- Limited Housing Choices
- Fiscal Responsibility—Adequate and Cost Effective Infrastructure and Public Services
- County/City Coordination
- Public Services and Utility Coordination
- Quality Transportation
- Predictability and Public Involvement

The Plan also includes more detailed policy guidance for five subareas: Sunflower Army Ammunition Plan; Lone Elm Vicinity Plan, Blue Valley Plan, K-10 Highway Corridor Area Plan, and New Century Air Center Comprehensive Compatibility Plan.

2) **Incorporated Cities**—which fall under the purview of local municipalities, most of which have a comprehensive plan to guide land use decisions at a local level.

3) **Region**—the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) works with local governments, transit providers, area stakeholders, and the public to plan for a coordinated regional vision.

Transportation

Context and Key Issues

This section provides an overview of the key issues that will affect the County's transportation facilities in the future.

REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

As new population and employment areas, such as the BNSF Intermodal Center, K-10 Corridor, and Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant redevelopment emerge, improvements to the transportation system will be needed to support growth and maintain mobility within the region and to points beyond.

FUNDING CONSTRAINTS AND COMPETING PRIORITIES

With steady growth projected to continue in Johnson County over the next ten to twenty years, the need to increase transportation options in the region has been a major focus of discussion. Numerous planning efforts have been undertaken in recent years to explore a range of multi-modal travel options; however total federal and state funding for roads has remained static since 2001 and not enough resources are available to fund all of the recommended improvements within the planning horizon. KDOT is currently working with five counties—Johnson, Douglas, Leavenworth, Miami, and Wyandotte—to build consensus on funding priorities.

INCREASING TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

The Kansas City Region has a high number of roadway miles per capita as related to other metropolitan areas, which has provided residents in unincorporated areas of Johnson County with the ability to enjoy the quality of life afforded by a more rural lifestyle while still being able to drive quickly and easily to the region's cultural and employment centers and amenities. Limited transit service in Johnson County has further reinforced the need for residents to rely on personal automobiles to meet their daily needs. This presents mobility challenges for residents either physically unable to drive or unable to afford to own a car. Reducing the auto-dependence of Johnson County residents and increasing transportation choices available are key themes identified as part of Johnson County Transit's Strategic Plan.

Transportation in Johnson County

➤ The *Johnson County Infrastructure and Transportation Department* coordinates the County's transportation needs with local cities and the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). The Comprehensive Arterial Road Network Plan (CARNP) identifies the locations, types, rights-of-way, and construction standards of future road improvements needed in the rural southern and western portions of the County for the next 20 years. Through the County Assistance Road System (CARS) program, Johnson County works with municipalities to help fund capacity improvements, major maintenance, system management, bridges, and route enhancements.

- *Johnson County Transit (JCT)* provides public transportation in Johnson County. Vehicles are owned by JCT and operated by a private contractor. JCT administers ~~three types of transit service: The JO, Local Link Services, and Special Edition. The JO, which provides fixed-route commuter express public transportation, The JO-Special Edition, provides demand-response curb-to-curb transportation service, and SWIFT (Sheltered Industrial Fixed Transportation) service that provides home to worksite commute trips for Johnson County Developmental Supports clients.~~

2. JCT also administers a type of Local Link service open to the general public in Shawnee (Shawnee CityRide), DeSoto (FlexRide), and Spring Hill (Spring Hill Shuttle). JCT also administers a type of Local Link service open to the general public in Shawnee (Shawnee CityRide), DeSoto (FlexRide), and Spring Hill (Spring Hill Shuttle).
3. KDOT oversees the State Highway Program, Other Modal Programs, the Transportation Revolving Fund, and the Local Transportation Program.

DISPERSED POPULATION

Much of the growth that has occurred in both incorporated and unincorporated areas of Johnson County over the past fifty years has been built at relatively low intensities. The dispersed population resulting from established land use patterns creates significant challenges for transit providers in terms of routing, frequency, and efficiency. As Johnson County considers the future of its transportation system, it must also consider how proposed land use patterns will support—or hinder—travel in the future.

TRANSIT TIMING AND FUNDING

The START Taskforce recently recommended to the Board of County Commissioners that the implementation of the Johnson County Transit Strategic Plan be extended over a longer period of time than originally proposed due to funding constraints. The Taskforce also recommended exploring a variety of funding options to help accelerate the proposed timeline.

Other Infrastructure

Context and Key Issues

This section provides an overview of the key issues that will help shape the County's infrastructure investments over time.

MAINTAINING BALANCE BETWEEN EXPANSION AND MAINTENANCE

As the region continues to grow and as fiscal resources for facilities continue to remain tight, it will be increasingly important to maintain the right balance between expansion and improvements of infrastructure facilities to serve new areas with pressing needs for maintenance and upgrades of existing systems.

SEWER EXPANSION AND COUNTY GROWTH PATTERNS

The Johnson County Rural Comprehensive Plan calls for unincorporated areas to grow slowly and largely remain rural. A key factor in the implementation of this policy is the location of expanded sewer services. Typically sewers have been extended in response to growth pressures both within incorporated areas and in unincorporated areas of the County.

MEETING FUTURE REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

While the Johnson County Stormwater Management Program has been a successful model to date of County/city collaboration, the region faces new challenges to meet updated water quality and non-point-source requirements.

Infrastructure Providers in Johnson County

- Wastewater Treatment is provided by Johnson County Wastewater (JCW), a County department that operates under the direction of the Board of County Commissioners and the County Manager. JCW has seven treatment plants located throughout the Johnson County Service Area. Combined, the treatment plants are designed to serve over 500,000 people in the service area.
- Stormwater management is provided by the Johnson County Stormwater Management Program, which partners with Johnson County cities to fund the planning, design and construction of projects to alleviate flooding and improve water quality issues from the broad countywide level of the watershed.
- Potable water is primarily provided by WaterOne, the largest water district in Johnson County. The district covers sixteen cities in Johnson County. Its water infrastructure includes 3,000 miles of transmission and distribution mains, which cover a service area of more than 270 square miles. The system's current treatment capacity is 180 million gallons per day and the record usage was recorded at 148 million gallons per day back in 2003. Other water districts in Johnson County include DeSoto, Olathe, Edgerton, Spring Hill, Rural Districts No. 6 and No. 7.

Natural Resources and Environment

Context and Key Issues

This section provides an overview of the key issues that will help shape the future of the County's natural resources and environment.

PUBLIC INTEREST IN AND SUPPORT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

In recent years, the protection of air and water quality, wildlife habitat, and natural green space has played an increasingly important role in discussions within Johnson County and the region. Johnson County residents confirmed their support for programs designed to reduce pollution, conserve energy, and protect water resources as part of the 2011 Community Survey.

COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Johnson County has been leading the way on sustainability in the region with the creation of its first Sustainability Committee in 2004 and the evolution of these discussions into its current Sustainability Program. Continuing to advance Johnson County's sustainability goals related to the protection of natural resources and the environment will require broad community partnerships and an overall shift in the way people live and do business in Johnson County.

REDUCING SOLID WASTE

The Johnson County Landfill receives most of Johnson County's municipal solid waste and a large portion of the municipal solid waste from surrounding counties. It is the only landfill in Johnson County licensed to accept such waste. If population and consumption continue to grow and the amount of waste generated is not reduced, landfill capacity will continue to shrink and waste disposal costs could become unaffordable. The Johnson County Environmental Department has been working to implement a variety of programs to help reduce solid waste in order to extend the life of existing landfills, including a "pay as you throw" program; however, Johnson County currently lags behind the national average in solid waste recycling (23% vs. 34%).

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION THROUGH OPEN LANDS PROTECTION

MetroGreen is a plan for an interconnected system of public and private natural areas, greenways and trails linking communities throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. While this program primarily focuses on open lands protection as greenways along the region's waterways, it has also increased awareness about the many environmental benefits—such as improved air quality, water quality, wildlife habitat preservation associated with preserving lands along the region's waterways. It has also increased awareness of the many economic benefits conservation provides—ranging from higher property values to tourism benefits. Although its primary policy focus is on parks and recreation, the Johnson County Park and Recreation District Master Plan (MAP 2020) also provides policy guidance related to the County's many natural resources and is a capital plan for parks, recreation, and open space.

IDENTIFICATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MARC has developed an inventory of digital map data showing valuable natural resource assets and ecological features in the region. This effort is intended to provide a framework for environmental planning at local and regional levels. The newly consolidated environmental data will help local communities proactively conserve or restore natural resources during the development process.

What Is The County's Role Protecting Its Natural Resources And The Environment?

Several entities play an important role in protecting the quality of Johnson County's air, water, and other natural resources. These include:

- **Johnson County Park and Recreation District (JCPRD)**—in addition to its responsibilities related to the planning of management of parks and recreational facilities and the development of future parks, JCPRD is responsible for preserving and protecting natural resources in the County.
- **Johnson County Stormwater Management Program**—Stormwater management is provided by the Johnson County Stormwater Management Program, which partners with Johnson County cities to fund the planning, design and construction of projects to alleviate flooding and improve water quality issues from the broad countywide level of the watershed.
- **Johnson County Solid Waste Management Committee (SWMC)**—the SWMC plans for solid waste through the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). The SWMP addresses storage, collection, transportation, processing, and disposal of all solid waste generated in the County. The plan also identifies waste reduction measures such as recycling and composting. Johnson County Landfill, Inc., which is privately owned and operated by Deffenbaugh Industries, is the disposal site for the County.
- **Johnson County Environmental Department (JCED)**—Since 1982, JCED has provided services that protect public health and the environment from pollution—air, water, and land. While the JCED's role is primarily regulatory, the department provides considerable technical assistance and works in close coordination with other county departments and local municipalities. JCED also conducts numerous education and outreach activities to inform the public about environmental issues and to promote an understanding of their role in protecting the County's resources.
- **Johnson County Sustainability Program**—Since the Sustainability Committee was first established in 2004, Johnson County has been evolving its sustainability discussions—and actions. The scope of this program includes: greenhouse gas inventory and tracking; building design and construction; energy efficiency and conservation in buildings; environmentally preferable purchasing; waste reduction; education and outreach; wastewater cogeneration projects; fleet operations; information technology; and organizational and community sustainability strategy framework.

At a regional level, the Mid-America Regional Council's (MARC) main environmental program areas of air quality, watershed management, solid waste management, and green infrastructure bring community partners together to address regional environmental issues in a cooperative setting. MARC also works with several broad-based environmental initiatives in cooperation with Johnson County and other partners, including: MetroGreen and the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI).

