



Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy Draft 12/22/10

In May 2010, a preliminary draft of the Citizens Visioning Committee's (CVC) vision is anticipated to be ready for distribution to the community-at-large for review and input. As part of this preliminary draft, a series of recommended strategies will be proposed for each of the ten topic areas. The committee's overall priorities will also be reflected in a summary section that identifies the top priority actions as the county moves forward.

Coinciding with the draft vision's release, a series of outreach activities are proposed to help seek input from residents and stakeholders on the county's vision for the future. Input received during these activities will be synthesized by the consultant and considered by the committee as they work to prepare a final draft of the vision document for consideration by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) during the summer of 2011.

To ensure a consistent message is presented and that input received through individual forums may be easily synthesized, the consultant will prepare a package of materials that may be used in a variety of ways. For example, a summary PowerPoint presentation will be prepared that could be used by different individuals. The presentation could be accompanied by a series of key pad polling questions (at events staffed by consultant) or a brief hard copy questionnaire that could be completed and returned during the meeting. The same information could be adapted for an Online Community Workshop, allowing for us to correlate results from different sources.

RECOMMENDED OUTREACH MECHANISMS

This strategy is designed to capture broad-based input from Johnson County residents and stakeholders, while making the most effective use of available time and resources. Use of a combination of the outreach mechanisms described below is recommended, as opposed to focusing on one or two larger public meetings as the sole means of gathering input. This more strategic approach will allow for targeted input from county residents and stakeholders in all areas of the county and region. Staffing for the various events could vary and will need to be discussed as part of a preferred approach to determine the level of commitment required from committee members, county staff, and consultants. A brief description of each outreach mechanism is provided below.

- **Online Community Workshop**—a Online Community Workshop could be hosted on the project website and remain open for several weeks. This format provides participants with the flexibility to log on and “attend” a workshop at a time that is most convenient for them. On-line polling would be used to record and summarize participant feedback for input into the process. This approach was used early in the visioning process with positive results (Nearly 300 participants logged on, over 200 questionnaires were completed). It is reasonable to expect that with additional noticing, advertising, and outreach, these numbers could be expanded substantially.

- **Community Survey**—if the timing of the county’s next bi-annual community survey aligns with the outreach process, a series of questions related to the visioning process could be included. The last survey was released in June 2009 and resulted in a 41% response rate (1,239 completed surveys).
- **Youth Forum**—the county is in the process of trying to organize a formal Youth Council; however, recognizing that the timing of this group’s appointment may not align with the timing of other outreach efforts planned for the visioning process, a more informal Youth Forum could serve as an alternative means of seeking input from younger residents. The forum would be hosted by CVC members with support from county staff and consultants. Invitees would include representatives from each of the six school districts and from Johnson County Community College—ideally 40-50 youth participants total. The forum could be designed in a fast-paced, interactive, “World Café” format likely spanning a 3-4 hour timeframe. The forum would begin with a brief overview presentation to ground the participants about the process, the key issues facing Johnson County as it plans for the future, and the objective of the forum. Following the presentation, youth participants would be split into small groups and would rotate through each of the ten topic areas (15-20 minutes per topic). Topic area tables would be staffed by 2-3 committee members who would present recommendations for that particular topic and ask participants to respond to a series of related questions. The forum could conclude with a brief key pad polling exercise to gain a sense of the participant’s top priorities for the future.
- **Speakers Bureau**—members of the CVC and/or county staff could schedule a series of meetings with a variety of local community and stakeholder groups throughout Johnson County to present the committee’s preliminary recommendations and seek their input. Ideally, a wide range of interest groups would be targeted related to the ten topics addressed as part of the vision. This option would be time intensive, but would help ensure that key stakeholders are engaged in the process and are given a focused opportunity for input. A meeting “kit” could also be distributed to committee members to allow them to host a series of more informal discussions with small groups of colleagues, neighbors, family, and others as desired.
- **Community Forums**—As an alternative to (or to supplement) the Speakers Bureau option described above, community groups could be invited to a series of two to three Community Forums held in key locations throughout the county. The format of these meetings would be very similar to the Youth Forum described above, but could involve many more participants. Participation in these forums would be by invitation only. An invite list would be generated by CVC members in cooperation with county staff to ensure broad representation and RSVPs would be required.
- **Open Houses**—as a supplement to other events and activities, members of the CVC could host one or more Open House forums to provide a more informal opportunity for Johnson County residents and other project stakeholders to review draft recommendations, have one-on-one conversations with the committee, and complete a brief questionnaire about their preferences and priorities related to the recommendations. Open houses could be combined with other community events and staffed by CVC members and/or county staff using materials provided by the consultant. Key considerations would include the geographic distribution and number of open houses needed to ensure broad representation.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Possible tools that could be employed to promote awareness of the events and activities described above are outlined below. The consultant will work closely with county staff and public information officers to prepare materials and to develop an effective strategy for distribution.

- **Dedicated project website**—a dedicated project website was developed early in the visioning process to provide the CVC, county staff, regional stakeholders, and citizens-at-large access to information and keep them informed throughout (and beyond) the duration of the project. The project website includes the following features: general information about the process; meeting announcements, dissemination of post-meeting notes/summaries; online polls (as part of the Online Community Workshops); and preliminary and final work products. The project website is available at: www.jocovision2030.com.
- **E-mail distribution lists**—utilize e-mail distribution lists available through other county departments and others as appropriate to distribute flyers/invitations to regional stakeholders and the community-at-large indicating that a preliminary draft of the vision is available for public review on the project website and asking for input. Existing CVC social and business networks (e.g., service groups, interest group list serves) should be engaged to increase the visibility of the process and promote input from a diverse segment of the county's population.
- **Social media**—online social networks can be an effective way to engage citizens and stakeholders in the planning process. Johnson County has a Facebook page that could be used as another means of distributing information about the process and opportunities for community input. CVC members may also have access to other Facebook pages through their organizations.
- **Bus Placards**—adapt flyers/invitations for use as placards on the interior of local transit buses.
- **Public Service Announcements**—members of the CVC could produce a 30 second public service announcement notifying residents about the various events and inviting them to participate. The PSA could be televised on the Government and School Channels as well as on local TV stations. It should be noted that in the latest community survey, residents indicated that their primary source of information was television. This would be a cost-effective way to reach residents throughout the county. (*Note: Most TV stations would ask for a two-month lead-time before they would start airing the TV spots.*)
- **Radio/TV talk shows**—CVC members and/or county staff could appear on local radio and TV talk shows to increase awareness of upcoming events and request community input.