



Johnson County Youth Forum Summary April 27, 2011

Overview

Youth Forum participants were asked to visit seven topic-focused stations and respond to a series of questions related to each of the topics below.

- 1) Economic Development/Financing and Taxation
- 2) Social, Health, and Human Services
- 3) Criminal Justice and Public Safety
- 4) Education
- 5) Culture, Arts, and Humanities
- 6) Parks and Recreation/Natural Resources and Environment
- 7) Land Use/Transportation/Infrastructure

For each topic, participants were asked to consider the following questions:

- From your perspective as a younger person, what aspect of the topic is most important to you?
- Does the draft vision statement (for each topic) reflect your vision for the future?
- If not, what's missing? What would you like to see changed?

Facilitators from each group were then asked to report to the larger group on two questions

- What were the common themes expressed by participants?
- What surprised you about the responses you received from respondents?

Participant and facilitator feedback is summarized below by topic.

Economic Development/Financing and Taxation

Participant Feedback

- Paying taxes for schools/ quality of life = comfortable paying for that because being used well and providing value and opportunities (5)
- Transparency key for taxes/where they go-need more/better communication on how taxes are spent (3)
- Financial security/job security will be important decision to come back to Johnson County (2)

- Taxes are too high
- Johnson County high taxes that are distributed
- Jobs/spending more -> growth
 - Education, nursing, corporate jobs
 - Growth in bio tech, health care, architectural/engineering
 - Need more creative jobs
 - Animation/gaming
 - Health care/science jobs -> opportunity in Johnson County
 - Place to start careers
- Technology/automation changing economy
- Stable economy
- Johnson County has a lot to offer (metro area)
- How do we maintain excellent k-12 with reduced resources?
- Good place to raise family = job opportunities
- Balance to maintain new and old parts of Johnson County
- Jobs primary determinant in finding geography
- Tie between jobs and locale
- Like culture/density

Facilitator Summary

- What were the common themes expressed by participants?
 - Taxation okay if level of services is high
 - Economic development/jobs a high priority
- What surprised you about the responses you received from respondents?
 - Many participants indicated they plan to return to Johnson County after college

Social, Health, and Human Services

Participant Feedback

From your perspective as a younger person, what aspect of the topic is most important to you?

- Health and medical services –number of hospitals and medical services and availability, accessibility, costs (8)
- Wellbeing counseling
- Informational services for community involvement for volunteering (3)
- Food pantries
- Providing for those who need help (homeless, poor) (2)
- Coordination of services

Does the draft vision statement (for each topic) reflect your vision for the future?

- Yes, in general (5)

- Prevention and early intervention most important (3)
- A little vague
- Implementation—may be different because of money (2)
- Data driven and evidence-based decision making is good (2)
- Self-reliance as abilities allow
- Yes, community involvement
- Effective service delivery
- Coordination of for-profit and non-profit entities

If not, what's missing? What would you like to see changed?

- More community collaboration, coordination – not just government (2)
- More emphasis on human services and volunteering – information about who can help those in need (2)
- Too vague about implementation
- Money issues not taken into account
- Sustainability – how will it maintain itself
- What form will the coordination take?
- How would self-reliance be determined?
- Need for precision of information related to services
- Provide welfare and rehabilitative services without making people feel inadequate
- Should help neighboring communities in need
- Welfare services should be temporary and more strictly enforced
- Affordability of service should be clear
- Technological changes should be taken into account
- Continue school's level of help to special needs children

Facilitator Summary

- What were the common themes expressed by participants?
 - Access and affordability of healthcare important—keen awareness of needs in Johnson County
 - Desire to help those in need through volunteer opportunities
 - Focus on prevention and early intervention
- What surprised you about the responses you received from respondents?
 - Expressed need to be more specific on how the vision will be implemented

Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Participant Feedback

- Feel safe in Johnson County-important to feel safe in your home and neighborhood, maintain what we have (8)

- “You always know they are around”
- Proactive public safety presence
- Not having to worry that something bad would happen and nothing would be done
- Feel law enforcement is efficient and professional
- Coming back to Johnson County in the future -> safety is a big deal
- “Probably have it much better than we think”
- Safe environment = higher property values
- Law enforcement should have a visible presence—changes behavior, shows they care, makes the community safe (7)
- There are instances of law enforcement pursuing minimal problems, e.g., chasing parties (2)
- Cooperation with/safety in schools
 - Get involved in middle school with law enforcement, not just counselors
 - In Schools – SRO’s improve feeling of safety, and contract security (2)
 - Feel safe at school – 4 minute response
 - Proactive programs teaching about drugs and other behaviors
 - Law enforcement at JCCC strong presence
 - A safe place in the school to report problems that might require law enforcement
- Social media
 - Use for reporting and communication not investigation
 - Partner with web sites
 - Texts, web, video, etc.
 - Cyber safety (i.e. bullying) not adequate
 - Too much social media could be a bad thing
 - Instantaneous notification of emergencies
- Ageism – singling out youth – particularly driving
 - Don’t want this to be true but feel it is
 - Profiling is a concern
 - Ageism not always a problem
 - Worried about the Arizona profiling law in KS
- Traffic Enforcement
 - K10 too high speeds and crossovers
 - Concerned about increasing speed limits on KS highways = more enforcement
- Accessibility/response time for emergency vehicles in more rural area
- Access to guns and increasing technology will stretch law enforcement
- Doing the right thing
- Nipping problems in the bud
- More education on what to do in an emergency and who to contact
 - Law enforcement attention in neighborhoods – proactive
- Too many alternatives – need consequences for teenagers

- Some lesser regulations – i.e. alcohol
- Emergency medical a little short south O.P.
- Prevention biggest thing
- Prevention is important but don't want to feel constrained
- Community service options to detention, but it needs to fit the offense and the person
- Proactive engagement with social services
- Rehabilitation to reduce recidivism
- Youth court is a positive thing
- Project skip is a positive thing
- Building support groups around kids who are identified with problems
- Isolating a youth offender – they won't care when they come back and the same problems will keep happening

Facilitator Summary

- What were the common themes expressed by participants?
 - Feel safe in their community and neighborhood and would like to keep it that way
 - Visibility of law enforcement
- What surprised you about the responses you received from respondents?
 - Concerns expressed related to profiling

Education

Participant Feedback

What is working well?

- Course/program variety, levels of classes, specialty and availability, variety of learning opportunities (5)
- Availability of extracurricular activities (4)
 - Expand education and engage students
 - Build relationships with others – act as incentives to stay in school
- Offering of College prep classes; partnerships with JCCC's "College Now" program (3)
- Good teachers – engage students, care for students, and involve students in activities (3)
- Safety! (2)
- Integrating technology
 - Availability of online classes
- Structure, support
- Excellent special needs classes
- Support services good but declining and being cut
- Evidence of budget cuts: Teachers supplies, printing, teachers cuts/covering multiple classes
- Good educational resources and direction even with funding cuts
- Affordability of schools (JCCC)

- Extracurricular activities provided:
 - Knowledge of subject
 - Knowledge of people

What do we like about statement?

- Partnerships between schools, businesses (internships), and colleges (4)
- Will not remain status quo, will continue to change and improve
- “21st Century learning skills” – what does this statement mean?
- Students need more out-of-class guidance to help them focus on academics
- Need to add statement on physical facilities, some are declining, equipment too – some big differences among schools in same district
- Improve diversity participation in events/activities
- Emphasis needs to be placed on the crucial importance of providing state of the art instructional technology

Add to statement?

- Budget needs to be supported, cuts are beginning

What is not working well?

- Cost of books
- More opportunities for student input
- Expand extracurricular activities
- Counsel improper attitudes like bullying

What can be done in the future?

- Continue to expand programming
- Smaller school districts need to explore ways to offer more variety
- Teaching methods

Facilitator Summary

- What were the common themes expressed by participants?
 - Outpouring of support for extracurricular activities—keep you engaged in school, encourage socializing, which means you perform better in the classroom
- What surprised you about the responses you received from respondents?
 - Indicated that partnerships (mentioned in draft vision statement) are critical in education and need to continue in the future

Culture, Arts, and Humanities

Participant Feedback

From your perspective as a younger person, what aspect of the topic is most important to you?

- Johnson County not a culture for arts and culture. Need to go downtown (KCMO) to get cultural amenities – need more opportunities here and more advertising of what is here and what is going on—arts venues, shows, museums, food/music festivals (high schools and other locations) (13) Specific suggestions included:
 - Think downtown-need a Johnson County 1st Friday, Nelson – not Johnson County (2)
 - Indoor theater like Starlight
 - Need more theater opportunities
 - More events targeted to youth 3-18
 - Increase number of places like Plaza! It's a hub... architecture and art define the place
 - Artists studios
 - More venues for art from students
 - Prairie fire museum
 - Community center
 - Parks link to culture
- Arts and culture is a way to help people fit in who may not fit in otherwise—gives people a sense of belonging, awareness of other cultures, and builds confidence (through performance) (5)
- Arts, culture, humanities are important to help students fit in and acquire creative job skills, important to being well-rounded (4)
- Need to add more public art where not expected, malls, roadways, etc. – public art (3)
- More languages, art/music and related culture in public schools – More than just Spanish and French, maybe Chinese and German (3)
- Both education and entertainment--culture second to education (2)
- Lack of diversity in Johnson County—cultural is KCMO (2)
- Could meet more culturally diverse people through arts and culture
- Alternate choices for cultures (well-rounded)
- More arts and culture will make Johnson County a more attractive place to live
- Arts not held in as high an esteem because not exposed to is so much
- Go to arts events often, but not an artist
- Diversity of life

Does the draft vision statement reflect your vision for the future?

- Good statement
- Too generic and wonderful – needs detail
- Cultural focus – lean about culture of County residents
- Advertise – schools, Facebook, radio (popular music)

- Old to young at events
- Like vision, public art good, public art on roadways would break up monotony
- Keep broad – market it all better
- Like public art, its accessible, becomes part of fabric of community
- Arts mission statement good

If not, what's missing? What would you like to see changed?

- Not add “needed for exceptional economic prosperity”

Facilitator Summary

- What were the common themes expressed by participants?
 - Arts and culture play an important role in helping kids adjust/fit in—give them a sense of belonging and promotes cultural awareness
 - In schools, need to have more emphasis on languages
- What surprised you about the responses you received from respondents?
 - Needs to be more marketing about what's going on in the community to promote involvement and volunteerism

Parks and Recreation/Natural Resources and Environment

Participant Feedback

- Need more/increased awareness of volunteer opportunities and programs to increase community ownership of parks and facilities (10)
 - Environmental activities with the schools in the area
 - Highway/park cleanup
 - Working with high schools on different projects
 - Tree planting
 - Better communication – awareness
 - Awareness re: trash, cleanliness
 - Volunteer initiatives – environment
- Streamway parks—inter-connected biking, running, and hiking trails (9)
- Need more recycling locations countywide and curbside pickup in neighborhoods—should not cost more to do the right thing (6)
- Places in parks for family activities, programmed activities, and entertainment (6). Specific suggestions included:
 - Playgrounds
 - More shelters and parks
 - Festivals
 - Activities for all ages
 - Healthy activities

- Lighted parks/trails for a sense of security
- Camping at parks
- Sports at parks
- Picnics
- Fishing
- Outdoor recreation
- Control pollution, take care of our resources and natural environment: rivers, streams, air and water (5)
- Dog parks – off leash areas (3)
- More local parks/neighborhood parks/neighborhood gathering places (3)
- Maintaining the natural resources, natural beauty, fields and amenities (3)
- Preserving natural features and some open space when building new neighborhoods (3)
- Arboretum (2)
- Solar and wind for energy savings—youth expect “green” approaches (2)
- Maintain the facilities, clean up trash (2)
- Safety – lighting
- Parks = different atmosphere
- Staying in parks – connected
- Health and human service related to parks
- Easy access to parks
- More parks in rural areas (Spring Hill)

Facilitator Summary

- What were the common themes expressed by participants?
 - Strong support for parks system, heavily used for outdoor recreation and family gatherings
- What surprised you about the responses you received from respondents?
 - Would like to see more emphasis on sustainability (e.g., recycling, renewable energy)—younger generation expects these things to happen, does not view it as an option

Land Use/Transportation/Infrastructure

Participant Feedback

- Public Transportation
 - Need public transportation – no choice now – have to drive – would use to go downtown – gas too expensive – train, not buses
 - Public transportation should be more convenient and easy to use – should be encouraged, reliable schedules (2)
 - People don’t use buses if not convenient, because they already have cars—question whether they would use it (3)

- People won't need buses in the future
- Public in KCMO used street cars effectively – do something similar
- Government should invest in public transit – would pay taxes for it (2)
- Never used public transit – might use it
- Good public transit would attract people
- Gas prices will make public transportation appealing
- Public transit will help reduce pollution
- Everything is so spread out public transit would take too long
- Would be very expensive to cover all areas – elevated rail would be required
- Roads and Other Infrastructure
 - K-10 corridor is too dangerous already – limit growth there
 - Good roads but condition can be improved
 - Make sure to focus money on roads that need to be improved and used most
 - Infrastructure – continue good system we have, expand solar and wind, important to maintain in good shape
 - Johnson County infrastructure better than KCMO – keep it maintained
 - All neighborhoods should have sewers
 - Infrastructure – everything wireless/internet based technology will be important
- Important to maintain quality of life—open space, green space, views, and rural areas (5)
- Land Use
 - Don't be restrictive
 - People are moving south so it is hard to stop—good resources, land and schools—good to have choices (3)
 - Good idea to rehab existing/older areas (3)
 - Be good to rehab old parts of Olathe
 - Reuse is good if there is a need to rehab but there should be a balance
 - Business and commercial development in highest use for land – most growth potential
 - Important to have inexpensive housing
 - Land use is most important – finite resources
 - Use land as efficiently as possible
- Sustainability
 - Infrastructure should be more energy efficient and green – would be willing to pay more – solar, recycling
 - Add specific reference to each vision statement about sustainability
 - Water will be big issue – water quality focus
 - Storm water runoff from parking lots should be addressed – permeable asphalt
 - Look for green solutions – solar, wind
 - Make community more aware of sustainability

Facilitator Summary

- What were the common themes expressed by participants?
 - No consensus—support for both new development and redevelopment/reinvestment in older areas
 - Desire to make infrastructure more sustainable and “green”
- What surprised you about the responses you received from respondents?
 - Most willing to pay more to get the services they want