

IOWA CITY 2020 -2021

Strategic Plan Update

January - July 2020



This Strategic Plan intends to foster a more inclusive, just and sustainable Iowa City by prioritizing the physical, mental and economic well-being of all residents

Introduction and Overview

City of Iowa City Organization Profile

City Council

Iowa City is governed by an elected City Council of seven members: four Council members at-large and three District members. The Council is responsible for appointing the City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk.

City Manager

The City Manager serves as the chief administrative officer for the organization. The City Manager implements the policy decisions of the City Council, enforces City ordinances, and appoints City officials, as well as supervises the directors of the City's operating departments.

City Staff

Iowa City employs more than 600 full-time staff members to execute the City Council's policies and provide public services to over 75,000 residents. These include water, sewer, stormwater, garbage and recycling utilities, as well as public services like police, fire, building and housing inspections, parks and recreation, street maintenance, engineering, development services, transportation, communication, and senior services.

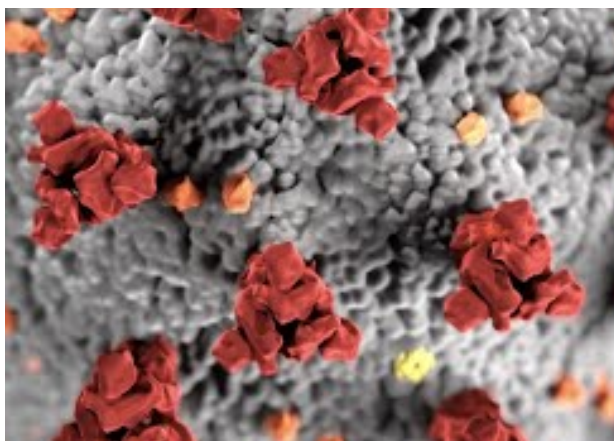


City Council members are, from left:

Pauline Taylor, District A
 Mazahir Salih, At-Large, Mayor Pro Tem
 Bruce Teague, At-Large, Mayor
 Laura Bergus, At-Large
 John Thomas, District C
 Susan Mims, District B
 Janice Weiner, At-Large

Executive Summary

Beginning in March 2020, City Council engaged in a strategic planning process to define the City's top priorities, address significant new projects and initiatives, and establish a broad vision for the City's future. A resolution to formally adopt the 2020-2021 Strategic Plan priorities was approved on June 16, 2020. City staff is responsible for coordinating implementation and execution of these Council goals over the two-year period. Progress updates are released several times annually and posted at www.icgov.org/strategicplan. The following offers highlights from recent Strategic Plan accomplishments.



Community Influences

Iowa City response to major events in 2020

At the start of March, around the time Council initiated strategic planning, the global COVID-19 pandemic directly began to impact the Iowa City community. Continuing pandemic communication can be found on the City's website at www.icgov.org/coronavirus. Much of spring 2020 was spent preparing for, responding to, and recovering from the spread of the virus throughout the area. City facilities and operations were closed or modified as community businesses weathered State-mandated closures, with hopes of resident health returning. The City is still evaluating financial and economic impacts as the community works towards recovery. The City participates in the local Better Together steering committee of business, governments, and other partners, coordinating efforts to speed recovery and create a more inclusive and healthy community. See more at www.icaretogether.com.

At the end of May, the death of George Floyd, in custody of Minneapolis Police Officers, sparked national protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. These demonstrations demanded accelerated change to policing and removing systemic racism throughout the community. City Council responded to community concerns and demands of local protesters with approval of a 17-point resolution of actions. Progress is ongoing and a regularly updated report is available at www.icgov.org/blm.

City of Iowa City
COMMITMENT TO ADDRESSING BLACK LIVES MATTER & SYSTEMIC RACISM
 Resolution No. 20-159



CITY OF IOWA CITY
 UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE

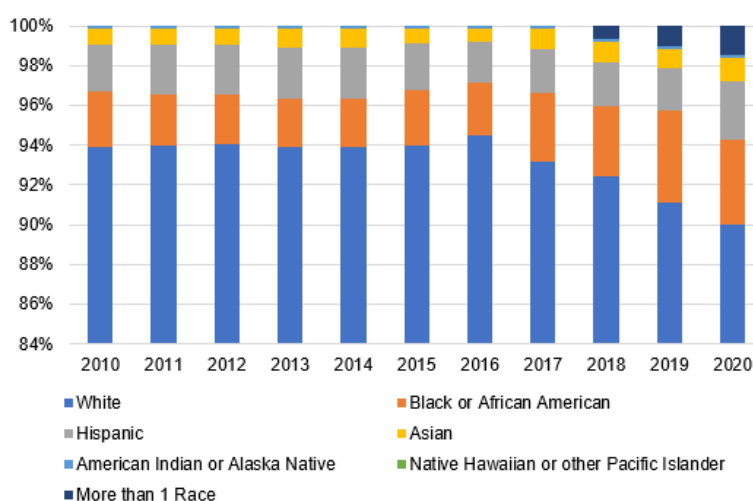
Status Report
 July 2020

Advance Social Justice, Racial Equity and Human Rights

- **Ensure City progress towards increasing diversity of staff in a manner that is reflective of community demographics**

Although the City has made efforts to increase diversity of candidates and evaluating hiring practices over the last several years, this initiative has been propelled to the forefront of City recruitment practices, in response to the Strategic Plan goals and as an action in the approved Resolution in Support of the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Iowa City Permanent Employee Demographics:
Race/Ethnicity
10-Year Historical



- **Develop a coordinated effort across City departments to expand social and recreational programming for special populations**

Although COVID-19 threw a wrench in cultural and recreational programming this spring, plans are in place to expand offerings for a variety of cultural interests and educational support. The Center, closed for in-person classes, found its way to digital programming and support services for older adults. Activities are planned on a monthly basis and have embraced diversity and exploration of new topics. More info available at www.icgov.org/seniorcenter.

- **Complete the phased effort to raise the minimum wage for temporary employees to \$15.00 per hour by July 1, 2021**

Hourly employee wages were raised to \$13.25 an hour as of July 1, 2020. Steps to move all employees to a minimum of \$15 started in 2019, with plans to complete the transition in 2021.

Advance Social Justice, Racial Equity and Human Rights

- **Continue emphasis on human rights-based training for City employees, boards and commissions, and the community**

City staff is completing a report on employee equity training provided prior to June 2020 and will report on this in late summer. The Office of Equity and Human Rights conducted implicit bias training for businesses on July 22 and City and County employees on July 29. Additional implicit bias training for landlords will be held on September 9.



Banners were installed downtown and in Towncrest to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Pride in Iowa City

- **Continue partnerships with community organizations through the City's Social Justice and Racial Equity grant program**

The City's annual SJRE grant programs continue. In February, \$75,000 was awarded to a variety of community agencies. Grantees included Successful Living, Sudanese Community Center, Little Creations Academy, Center for Worker Justice, Antelope Lending Library, The Labor Center, and Inside Out Reentry. More information can be found on the City's Social Justice and Racial Equity Initiatives webpage: www.icgov.org/sjre.

- **Establish priorities and ensure resources for increased access and translation of critical city messages**

During March and April, significant effort was given to ensuring residents were provided vital public health updates in Arabic, French, Spanish, Swahili, and Chinese, in print and video formats. Videos are still available on the City's Facebook page. The newly approved Black Lives Matter Resolution has also been translated and posted at www.icgov.org/blm.

The City has also translated materials related to housing assistance provided for household relief from sustained pandemic impacts. Additional materials are being considered for translation as the City pursues new programs and projects.



Recommandations du CDC pour COVID-19



Mapendekezo ya CDC ya COVID-19
10 weeks ago · 1.1K Views



CDC针对COVID-19的建议
10 weeks ago · 676 Views



Demonstrate Leadership in Climate Action

Adopted *Accelerating Iowa City Climate Actions Report* in April 2020



Electric Buses Funded \$3 Million

granted by the U.S. Department of Transportation to purchase and introduce the City's first-ever electric buses.



Approximately **\$1 Million** allocated in FY 2021 to implementing climate action initiatives, including energy efficiency, tree planting, and transportation



Finalized agreement as lead agency for multi-jurisdiction study and plan for electric vehicle readiness. Work is to commence in summer 2020.



Launched inaugural year of *Climate Action at Work Business Awards* program, supporting efforts of local organizations.



Hired Climate Action Engagement Specialist to build effective relationships with community organizations and individuals through outreach and development.



Approved addition of 60+ acres of prairie installation in City parks and public spaces. Areas for prairie development were prepared in July, with further preparation to take place towards the fall.



Awarded a total of \$50,000 in Climate Action grants in FY 2020 (6) and FY 2021 (8), contributing to actions by fourteen community groups to implement activities supporting the City's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan.

Demonstrate Leadership in Climate Action

In Progress...

- Completing Transit Study, presentation of outcomes to Council in early fall
- Participating as one of three Midwestern cities in a carbon sequestration study to develop tools and methods to manage carbon
- Completion of methane study for Landfill and Wastewater facilities
- Preparation for launch of community Climate Ambassadors program, inviting residents to learn more about climate initiatives and then actively share, engage, and collaborate with their networks and community to take climate action
- Rehabilitation efforts in the ongoing South District Home Ownership Program incorporate energy efficiency upgrades including efficient appliances and solar panels
- In June, Council amended three industrial urban renewal areas; this is the first step to offering energy efficiency incentives through available tax-increment financing (TIF) funds for industrial properties
- The Iowa City Senior Center is undergoing a space needs study that includes evaluation and recommendation for how to make the building net-zero energy by 2050
- Preparing for imminent solar installations on the rooftop of the new Public Works facility and at Terry Trueblood Recreation Area
- Planning for the inaugural Iowa City Climate Action Fest, coming in September 2020



• Adopt and begin implementation of the Accelerating Iowa City's Climate Actions Report

The Report was delivered to City Council in November 2019, reviewed by the Climate Action Commission in early 2020 and adopted by the current City Council in April 2020. Staff has been busy implementing 35 actions designated in Phase I of the Report and posts a progress report for each action at www.icgov.org/climateaction.

• Track and effectively communicate progress toward reaching the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) carbon emission reduction targets adopted locally by the City Council in 2019.

The City has been tracking its carbon emissions data for over a decade and provides an annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report for public review. Staff is currently finalizing the data for 2019 and will issue this year's report in late summer 2020. Additional measures specific to the City's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan will also be released late in 2020.

Strengthen Community Engagement and Intergovernmental Relations

- Pursue creative engagement techniques with a focus on reaching diverse populations and neighborhoods



Although the 2020 U.S. Census response process kicked off in March 2020, City staff has led a regional group effort to promote the Census since 2018. To prepare for communicating with the hardest-to-reach populations, staff connected with local services providers to help share Census information and created packets of translated materials in four languages. Multiple times during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City worked cooperatively with community members and City Councilors to relay critical public health information in Arabic, Chinese, French, Spanish, and Swahili.

In June, a series of successful outdoor events called Speak Up, Speak Out, were hosted by Mayor Teague and other elected officials at Wetherby Park, Pheasant Ridge Community Center, and Mercer Park. The events encouraged residents to share experiences with racism in Iowa City. Substantial staff effort is going into achieving greater and more effective reach to support response to both the Black Lives Matter movement as well as populations impacted by climate change.



- Initiate a redesign of the City's website

This project is in the planning stage of the procurement process. As staff moves ahead, emphasis will explore opportunities for accessible, user-friendly design, and strategic engagement.

Strengthen Community Engagement and Intergovernmental Relations

• Work collaboratively with other local governments and strengthen ties with our state and federal elected delegation

The City maintains regular communication with its elected delegation, which has been valuable through frequent changes and updates regarding state and federal policy during the COVID-19 crisis. In the past, the City has held meetings with our local delegation to review and communicate local issues and plans to schedule an event this fall, prior to the state legislature returning to session.

Local municipalities have been gathering regularly to work through response and recovery for the COVID-19 crisis. In addition to regular communication between cities, public health, and emergency management, a multi-jurisdictional group of business, government, healthcare, and higher education leaders, called Project Better Together, has been meeting since May 2020 to coordinate local efforts to assist businesses, support residents, identify solutions, and promote cohesive messaging related to economy and health. Earlier this summer, the group surveyed the community to help them create a "transformed future for our community with greater economic diversity, growth, inclusivity, resilience, and well-being for all."

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS.

بحاجة إلى أفكارك

NECESITAMOS SUS IDEAS.

Support for International Students

Faced with news in July that the U.S. Government may rescind student visas for international students later this year, the City Attorney signed onto an Amicus Brief with other major cities to stay the injunction against the ICE policy change in favor of allowing international students to stay in our community and continue their education.

Ultimately, the Federal Administration withdrew the controversial policy.

City Council Listening Posts

Go Digital

Later this summer, City Council members will hold their first online community Listening Post. In order to keep City business progressing through the pandemic, City Council meetings and many City Board and Commission meetings have been held online, accommodated public participation online and by phone, and broadcast through the City's social media and City Channel 4.

Invest in Public Infrastructure, Facilities and Fiscal Reserves

- **Carefully prepare for significant financial challenges projected during the final years of State property tax reform mandates through FY 2024**

The City has spent several years monitoring financial projections in order to remain fiscally agile in future years. Mandated statewide property tax reforms will continue to reduce property tax payments from multi-family properties through FY 2024. Additionally, impacts upon commercial and rental markets by the spring COVID-19 crisis are still being observed. Implications of lower demand for these properties indicate that municipal tax revenues could see reductions from property valuations assessed lower than in recent years.

- **Consider establishing a cost of development framework that can help guide decisions on how best to accommodate future growth**

Council will need to undertake further discussion to develop this initiative.

- **Strive to continue to reduce the City's overall property tax rate**

City Council approved an overall tax levy rate reduction of \$0.06 in FY 2021. This is the ninth straight year that the property tax levy has been decreased.

\$15.77

FY 2021 Tax Levy Rate

- **Evaluate Local Option Sales Tax and other alternative revenues that may be needed to achieve Iowa City's strategic objectives and reduce reliance on debt and property taxes**

Council discussion is still forthcoming. Planning for a referendum or alternative revenue takes time and preparation. Concerns regarding long-term impacts from COVID-19 will also be a consideration.

• Develop a long-term plan to improve the pavement condition of City streets

In order to prepare the City for discussions about current pavement condition and future plans, the Engineering division worked with a consultant to conduct a comprehensive, citywide pavement analysis. The analysis will help develop a multi-year plan for recommended type and location of street repair. A report will be made to City Council in fall to establish future action.

Recognizing the need for enhanced street repair, the City amended \$800,000 into the FY 2020 Capital Improvement Budget for annual pavement rehabilitation. This support for road projects will be useful, as the City is estimating receipt of approximately 20% less in State Road Use Tax funding, due primarily to pandemic impacts.

Aaa Moody's Bond Rating

Maintained May 2020

• Initiate physical and financial planning efforts to modernize and expand critical public facilities

The FY 2021 Budget includes funding to develop a Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, allowing the City to envision and plan spaces for future recreation and aquatics activity.

The Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center is currently undergoing an assessment of necessary ADA updates and historic preservation needs, as well as a space needs study. As part of this evaluation, is the first City facility being evaluated for net-zero emissions capability, which supports the City's goal to reduce carbon emissions. Taking further climate action, the City's newly finished Public Works Street and Water division facility will soon host rooftop photovoltaic solar fixtures. Solar will also be added to the main facility at Terry Trueblood Recreation Area.

Upcoming Improvement Projects

Streets planned for rehabilitation include

2020

- McCollister Boulevard
- N Gilbert Street
- Bloomington Street
- South Dodge Street
- Muscatine Avenue
- Hollywood Boulevard
- Benton Street
- Taft Avenue*
- Camp Cardinal Road*

**Chip Seal*

Planning Phase

- Rochester Avenue
- Benton Street
- Court Street
- American Legion Road

Foster Healthy Neighborhoods and Affordable Housing Throughout the City

- **Identify new efforts to expand and adapt the City's affordable housing and neighborhood improvement strategies to meet long-term needs throughout the community**

Council's June 2020 resolution supporting the Black Lives Matter movement includes a call for a new comprehensive plan to promote housing affordability throughout the City. As Council receives community feedback to address new actions for this topic, staff continues to promote and complete existing housing initiatives, such as owner and rental rehabilitation programs, the South District home ownership program, and pursues new ventures, such as the partnership with Habitat for Humanity, given the go-ahead in early July.

In mid-spring, the City contributed \$50,000 for Covid-19 Relief to support individuals ineligible for state and federal financial assistance. This funding assisted with utility and housing costs, distributed through the Shelter House.

At its July 21 meeting, City Council agreed to provide \$25,000 to the Center for Worker Justice to disperse as needed to assist households with essential household needs. Assisted households must be impacted by COVID-19 but otherwise ineligible for other state and local benefits programs.

Staff is also working on code amendments to reduce the cost and complexity of building new homes.



The longest mural in Iowa City, located along Broadway Street, was conceptualized over the last two years and painted in early summer 2020 by South District residents

\$1 million budgeted for Affordable Housing initiatives

- **Continue implementation of the Parks Master Plan and complete an accompanying Recreational Facilities Master Plan**

Accomplished FY 2020

- Playgrounds at Willow Creek and Villa Parks
- ADA improvements at Court Hill, Happy Hollow, and College Green Parks

In Progress Summer 2020

- Playgrounds and shelters at Wetherby, Scott, Fairmeadows, and Napoleon
- Adventure playground at Lower City Park
- Minor improvements at Harlocke Hill, Ryerson, Oak Grove, Black Spring, Hunter's Run, and Brookland Parks
- Field additions at Iowa City Kickers Soccer Park

FY2021 budget includes funding for development of a Recreational Facility Master Plan

- **Monitor and report biannually on building and rental permit trends in the former rental cap neighborhoods**

Staff is preparing information to present updates to Council in 2020.

- **Support neighborhood activities and improvements that create vibrant, creative spaces and inspire a sense of place and community**

Efforts to support this initiative are on-going. Significant public art endeavors have been popping up throughout town, sourced by everyone from the Iowa City Downtown District, to the Public Art Advisory Committee, to the South District Neighborhood Association. Additional efforts will likely be spurred by response to the Black Lives Matter movement.

- **Consider and adopt the South District form-based code and ensure it can be adapted to other parts of Iowa City**

In early July, a revised draft code and regulating plan was received from the consultant, Opticos. Planning is currently reviewing and revising the draft for public and stakeholder review. Several amendments to code and comprehensive plan may be needed prior to review by the Planning and Zoning Commission, but the South District Form Based Code will tentatively be ready for rezoning in fall 2020.

Enhance Community Mobility for All Residents

- **Continue implementation of the City's Bicycle Master Plan and pursue Gold Bicycle Friendly Community status from the League of American Bicyclists**

The City has made significant improvements to its bicycle network over the last several years with the conversion of lanes to allow on-street bicycle lanes and the addition of bicycle boulevards and paths, including completion of lanes on Foster Road. The City will apply for a new Bicycle Friendly Community designation in August.

Projects planned for summer and fall 2020

- Buffered Bike Lanes:
 - Dodge Street and Burlington Street
- Designated Bike Lanes:
 - McCollister Boulevard extension
 - Southgate Avenue
- 4 to 3 conversion (adds bike lanes):
 - Keokuk Street
- Bike Boulevards:
 - Sandusky Avenue / Taylor Drive
 - Summit Street
 - Bowery and Prentiss Streets
 - 7th Avenue
 - Sheridan Avenue



Enhance Community Mobility for All Residents

- **Complete the Iowa City Area Transit Study, pursue recommended changes, and evaluate implementation outcomes, to ensure community needs are met by system changes**

A Transit Study officially kicked off on August 27, 2019 with the City of Coralville and the University of Iowa as partners in a coordinated effort to improve area transit services. After significant public engagement over the past year, selected consultant Nelson Nygaard and City staff are finalizing the study. Proposed implementation models will be presented to City Council in late summer or early fall, with initiation of system changes planned for 2021. As implementation takes place, demand and user needs will be closely monitored.

- **Ensure ease and safety of travel for residents and visitors through expansion of accessibility measures, improved connectivity, and use of adopted complete streets design standards**

City efforts continue to ensure requirements for accessibility are installed with each new road and sidewalk project. The City's Complete Streets policy contributed to the project adding sidewalk along a section of Rochester Avenue to allow better pedestrian access between neighborhoods, downtown, and local schools and business. Connectivity will be furthered as the City implements changes to the transit system and promotes neighborhood investments that contribute to walkability.



Transit study recommendations are expected in early fall

Underway

- Curb Ramp Improvements
- McCollister Boulevard Extension with bike lanes

In Planning

- Mid-block crossings on Muscatine Avenue between 1st Avenue and William Street
- Rochester Avenue Reconstruction
- American Legion Road Reconstruction
- Benton Street resurfacing with bike lanes





Promote an Inclusive and Resilient Economy Throughout the City

- **Through collaboration with local partners, increase opportunities for marginalized and low-income populations to obtain access to skills training, good jobs and affordable childcare**

The City executed a memorandum of understanding with Kirkwood Community College for their ESL expansion program and are keeping in touch about changes in delivery due to the pandemic.

City staff continues to attend Refugee Alliance meetings to share information and grow relationships.

Staff is also working with the Business Partnership, ICAD, and the Iowa City Downtown District on possible programs for Minority-owned business advancement. One such program is the review and revision of the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Economic Development Fund.

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- **Encourage healthy, diverse, and sustainable economic activity throughout Iowa City, including taking steps to invigorate neighborhood commercial districts and create new small neighborhood commercial nodes**

Staff is also finalizing details for the Urban Revitalization Tax Exemption area, granting businesses a tax exemption on new value created. This program focuses on neighborhood and commercial areas along Highways 6 and 1 corridor.

A City Council work session is needed to explore text amendments to facilitate more neighborhood commercial in residential areas.

Promote an Inclusive and Resilient Economy Throughout the City

- **Effectively support growth and promotion of small locally-owned businesses, women and minority-owned businesses, and the local foods economy**

The Food Love program was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Its premise is to have local restaurants prepare food to-go at cost, for non-profit organizations feeding residents impacted by losses related to the pandemic. This program, coordinated in part by City staff, benefited local entrepreneurs and residents.

Several projects related to the local food economy were funded with Climate Action grants, including free farmer's market produce boxes delivered to areas of low income, purchase of a potato-planting machine, to support healthy food choice of varying cultural preferences of people in our community. Another climate grant supports the introduction of a "local foods passport" to encourage patronage at restaurants with menu options using locally produced food.

Future initiatives in support of the Black Lives Matter resolution will spur additional conversations and engagement with local businesses owned by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).



Concern for public health at large gatherings made the City reconsider its traditional Farmers Market. With community partner Field to Family, the City's Parks and Recreation Department initiated an online ordering and mobile pickup version of the Farmers Market. It was incredibly successful and often sold out market pickup times within hours. Due to this success and lingering health concerns, this format will be continued through the rest of the 2020 Farmers Market season.

The City continues to make progress on these goals and new information is frequently shared. Find more detailed information about each of these initiatives at www.icgov.org.