

Iowa City 2018-2019 Strategic Plan Report

July 2018



Aerial view of Terry Trueblood Recreation Area Lodge

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SEVEN GOALS

for a more **Inclusive, Just and Sustainable** Iowa City:

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1 Promote a **Strong and Resilient Economy**
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2 Encourage a **Vibrant and Walkable Urban Core**
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3 Foster **Healthy Neighborhoods** throughout the City
- 

4 Maintain a **Solid Financial Foundation**
- 

5 Enhance **Community Engagement and Intergovernmental Relations**
- 

6 Promote **Environmental Sustainability**
- 

7 Advance **Social Justice and Racial Equity**

Introduction and Overview



City Council members are, from left:
Pauline Taylor, District A, Mayor Pro Tem
Kingsley Botchway II, At-Large
Jim Throgmorton, At-Large, Mayor
Rockne Cole, At-Large
Susan Mims, District B
John Thomas, District C
Mazahir Salih, At-Large

City of Iowa City organizational 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 approximately 600 full-time staff members to execute the City Council's policies and provide public services to over 70,000 residents. These include water, sewer, stormwater, garbage and recycling utilities, as well as public services like public safety, building and housing inspections, parks and recreation, street maintenance, engineering, development services, transportation, local cable television programming, and senior services.

Introduction and Overview

Executive Summary:

Beginning in January 2018, 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. The first two sessions held by Council and a facilitator, focused on a review of on-going or committed projects, followed by an evaluation and prioritization of new projects, programs, policies, and initiatives suggested by Council Members. A third work session held with Council and staff refined the proposed strategies.

City staff will be responsible for coordinating implementation and execution of these Council goals over the next two years. A resolution to formally adopt the 2018-2019 Strategic Plan priorities as defined in these three work sessions was approved on March 20, 2018.

Background:

City Council's initial strategic planning goal setting session determined that the seven primary objectives identified for the 2016-2017 Strategic Plan should be continued in the 2018-2019 Plan. A facilitator helped Council members narrow and modify an initial list of more than forty goals to the twenty-five actions identified as the final Strategic Plan. Council further refined their ultimate priorities and initiatives at the March 6, 2018 work session.

The final objectives provide broad guidance for City staff to fulfill and enact the vision and priorities of Council over the next two years. Status update reports are presented each year to Council for review.

City Council Strategic Plan Objectives:

This Strategic Plan intends to foster a more Inclusive, Just and Sustainable Iowa City

1. *Promote a Strong and Resilient Local Economy*
2. *Encourage a Vibrant and Walkable Urban Core*
3. *Foster Healthy Neighborhoods throughout the City*
4. *Maintain a Solid Financial Foundation*
5. *Enhance Community Engagement and Intergovernmental Relations*
6. *Promote Environmental Sustainability*
7. *Advance Social Justice and Racial Equity*



1. Promote a Strong and Resilient Local Economy

- a. Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the current public transit system and implement changes to assure that the service best meets the needs of the entire community
 - b. Effectively market and grow the local food economy
 - c. Through cooperation with the Iowa City School District, Iowa Workforce Development, Kirkwood Community College, Iowa Works, and others, increase opportunities for marginalized populations and low-income individuals to obtain access to skills training and good jobs
 - d. Work with Procter & Gamble and impacted supply chain companies, local economic development organizations, and labor unions to respond effectively to the company's decision to terminate its local production of beauty care products
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Accomplishment Updates

1a Staff has met with Coralville, North Liberty and the University of Iowa to determine their interest in participating in the study. Coralville and the University have expressed an interest. The City is drafting a Request for Qualifications for an experienced transit consultant that will be reviewed by the partnering organizations and the City Council prior to issuance. The City Council has budgeted \$200,000 for the purposed of conducting this analysis.

1b City Council has budgeted \$50,000 towards expanding the local food economy.

Horticulture staff changed the landscaping in approximately thirty round planters located throughout the City to feature edible plants. With signage encouraging harvest and tasting, the public is taking part during the 2018 growing season. Locations include City Hall, City Park, Mercer Park and a few locations in downtown.

Approximately 202 garden plots have been leased for the 2018 growing season throughout three community gardens.



Wetherby community garden plots

What's Next

- Council review of the Request for Qualifications Document.
- Council approval of an agreement with a transit consultant.
- Expected 12-18 month period for public engagement and study before final recommendations are ready.

- Beginner Gardening courses continue at the Recreation division, with four registrants.
- Additional community gardens are being planned at Walden Green and an orchard and garden is planned with the renovation at Creekside Park.
- A series of public meetings were held with Backyard Abundance in summer 2018 to gather input on a new configuration for garden plots at Chadek Green. Final designs, for the 2019 growing season, are being completed. The improved garden will include a variety of plot sizes, additional paths, public gathering space, and a new sculpture.

1. Promote a Strong and Resilient Local Economy (cont.)

Accomplishment Updates

- 1c** The City's Economic Development staff is generating an inventory of local and regional efforts to identify gaps in services and potential collaborations. Staff is also working with private businesses to identify workforce needs and barriers to employment.
- 1d** Staff has engaged with Proctor & Gamble officials and connected them with local and state resources to assist with any employees that may be displaced. Staff has worked with ICAD to express strong support for growing Proctor & Gamble's remaining operations and to position the community for attracting new lines of business within the company. Collectively, these groups are also working to aid supply chain companies, which includes helping to determine if new business partnerships can be established to help overcome the anticipated loss in Proctor & Gamble business.

What's Next

- Staff will continue efforts to identify and engage local supporting institutions and businesses that further this initiative.
- A job fair, sponsored by the City of Iowa City and Iowa Works, is planned in Mid-September at the Robert A. Lee Recreation Center. The fair will host twenty companies offering entry, permanent, and part time work.
- Continue to offer support to employees by engaging with Proctor & Gamble to better understand employee needs
- Continually work with Proctor & Gamble and supply chain companies to determine how best the City can assist in growing their operations here in Iowa City.



2. Encourage a Vibrant and Walkable Urban Core

- a. Collaborate with the University of Iowa on its redevelopment of University-owned property located in the Riverfront Crossings District, and on improving the quality, accessibility, and use of the Iowa River Corridor
 - b. Preserve important parts of Iowa City's history by considering the designation of additional buildings as historic landmarks, and, by considering the creation of an historic preservation district for part of the downtown after consulting with stakeholders
 - c. Evaluate existing strategies and consider additional actions to address the need for reinvestment in the city's existing private housing stock
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Accomplishment Updates

- 2a** Staff meets regularly with University of Iowa personnel to discuss planning topics, including the RFC campus and the river corridor. Staff from Iowa City and Coralville are working with the University of Iowa to align current master plans along the rivers and identify ways to strengthen existing plans or fill in missing gaps between the three entities. City staff is also heavily involved in the planning of the Big Splash event along the Iowa River in 2020 that will serve as pivotal point in time for the community to come together to celebrate and care for the river.
- 2b** The City Council has considered two individual landmark designations to date. A historic district designation in the Riverfront Crossings District will be considered by Council in August of 2018. Staff expects that the downtown historic inventory will be ready for public review in August or September.
- 2c** Staff made changes to the UniverCity program to allow for the purchase of duplex properties. The first duplex will be acquired in August. Council also increased the amount of funding per acquisition and rehab in order to expand the pool of potential properties.

What's Next

- Staff will continue to engage with numerous community partners including the University on the Big Splash planning, which will include education, outreach and programs in 2019-20.
- Staff will work with the University and Coralville to further align river planning efforts after the master plan compilation is completed.
- After the University announces its intentions for on-campus housing, staff will engage in further collaborative planning efforts involving the RFC campus area.

- A Council decision on the historic district that is being proposed in the Riverfront Crossings District is pending in August.
- Staff will coordinate a public review of the downtown historic inventory before the Council considers any formal actions.

- Staff will begin a comprehensive assessment of current rehab programs and funding and present Council with findings and recommendations in 2019. Council should provide staff any specific requests that it wants considered during this review.

3. Foster Healthy Neighborhoods Throughout the City

- a. Modify the existing Affordable Housing Action Plan to include new strategies to improve the availability and affordability of housing in Iowa City
- b. Embed the "Missing Middle" concept into the City's land development practices by adopting a Form Based Code for at least one (preferably two) of our neighborhoods
- c. Ensure the next two budgets contain sufficient funds to make meaningful progress toward achieving the goals of the Bicycle Master Plan and Parks Master Plan
- d. Complete an analysis of traffic accident data and identify actions to improve the safety of our roadways for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians

Accomplishment Updates

- 3a** Council increased the affordable housing commitment from \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 in FY 19.

Council adopted an Affordable Housing component to the City's annexation policy in July. Also in July, Council approved a development agreement for the Foster Road extension and development area that leverages an estimated \$2-3 million dollars in affordable housing funds over the next ten years.

Staff has begun preliminary research on new approaches to expand affordable housing efforts in the coming years.

- 3b** Council provided staff direction to pursue a form-based code in the South District. Staff will also have the consultant explore interim measures that can better guide contextual development in the Northside neighborhood.

What's Next

- Council should let staff know if there are any specific proposals or policies that they want to consider as part of this effort.
- Staff will further our research and offer Council recommendations in late 2018 or early 2019.
- Staff will present a consultant agreement to the Council in the early fall.



South District Plan – Credit: Opticos Design, Inc.

3. Foster Healthy Neighborhoods Throughout the City (cont.)

Accomplishment Updates

3c The FY 19 budget provides funding for numerous projects contained in the Bicycle Master Plan and Parks Master Plan. The spring of 2018 brought the renovation of Cardigan Park and Phases 1 and 2 of Riverfront Crossings Park. Phase 3 at Riverfront Crossings is underway.

Consultants have been selected for parks projects at Lower City Park, Willow Creek Park, and a west side park development, which are included in the FY19 budget.

Summer 2018 will see the initiation of bicycle facilities, including on-street bicycle facilities on Greenwood, Myrtle, Riverside, and Camp Cardinal and 4 to 3-lane conversions allowing bicycle lanes on Mormon Trek Boulevard and Clinton Street.

3d Staff is nearing completion on the data analysis portion of this item. In the next 30-60 days staff will provide the Council a report with findings and preliminary recommendations.

What's Next

- Accessibility improvements are planned at Mercer Park, Tower Court, and Highland Park, along with a field addition at IC Kickers Soccer Park, and the full redevelopment of Creekside Park, soon to begin construction.
- Budget discussions will be underway shortly, identifying more capital projects for the 2020 construction season. Initial proposals for the Capital budget will be received from Council in late August and a draft brought for approval in winter 2019.
- Council will need to consider the report and recommendations and provide staff direction on follow-up steps and timelines.



Cardigan Park



4. Maintain a Solid Financial Foundation

- a. Continue to monitor the impact of the 2013 property tax reform and evaluate alternative revenue sources as determined necessary
 - b. Continue to build the City's Emergency Fund
 - c. Monitor potential changes to Moody's rating criteria and maintain the City's Aaa bond rating
 - d. Continue to reduce the City's property tax levy
 - e. Maintain healthy fund balances throughout the City's diverse operations
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Accomplishment Updates

- 4a** Property tax reform is consistently monitored as the 2013 changes impact the City tax base.
- 4b** The City did not include a deposit to the Emergency Fund in the FY19 budget. So far this year, the only expense from the Emergency Fund was approximately \$221,000 for the purchase of property in flood plains adjacent to Lower City Park.
- 4c** The City experienced a third-party bond rating call in spring 2018 with Moody's rating service. From that call, Moody's maintained the City's Aaa rating. A new element of the Moody's review includes how communities are addressing climate adaptation. Therefore, Iowa City's climate mitigation and adaptation strategies were included in the ratings presentation for the first time this year. The City also increased its capital contributions, resulting in a positive recommendation from Moody's.
- 4d** The City reduced the property tax levy by decreasing the City's debt service levy. This is the sixth consecutive year of debt service levy reduction, resulting in a \$0.15 decrease in the levy.
- 4e** FY2018 year-end fund balances were fairly positive and FY19 outlook also looks healthy for most funds. In FY19, the City implemented a 5% increase in water rates to preserve a balance that will allow for capital infrastructure maintenance.

What's Next

- Statewide efforts by cities to adopt a Local Option Sales Tax has led to changes in the state legislature. The City will consider implications of pursuing LOST as well as how the changes in law may impact Iowa City.
- The City will consider again adding to this fund in the FY20 budget proposal.
- Council has approved the purchase of two more flood plain properties adjoining City Park and closing is expected later in summer 2018.
- The City has just started using a predictive budgeting software technology that allows for specific simulation of City fiscal considerations. Use of this technology will permit Finance Administration to explore opportunities and solutions for addressing areas of concern, according to the Moody's report.
- The City has a debt service plan that, pending unforeseen changes, will allow for possible levy reductions in the next year.
- The City is continuing to monitor fund balances.

5. Enhance Community Engagement and Intergovernmental Relations

- a. Experiment with innovative ways of engaging with diverse populations in person and on social media
 - b. Improve collaborative problem-solving with governmental entities in the region on topics of shared interest
 - c. Improve relationships with the executive branch and legislature by reaching out to legislators and other elected officials and working with City lobbyists
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Accomplishment Updates

5a Communications successfully introduced the use of Facebook Live for streaming City Council meetings and variety of other programs. Viewers can actively comment in real time and engage in dialogue with other viewers. City Cable Channel 4 ensured that a purchase of mobile equipment allowed for better-quality video streaming as the City continues to expand usage of this platform.

The City has also increased the use of digital platforms paired with video and quality print visuals to help communicate complex issues.

City Cable Channel 4 has historically participated in filming many community events, but this year are focused on presenting the stories of neighborhoods, residents, and businesses.

5b Council has initiated a regional discussion on I-380 planning. The first meeting on this topic will be held on August 2nd.

Council continues to be active participants in the quarterly joint government meetings.

5c During the 2017-2018 state legislative session, Iowa City worked with lobbying firm Carney and Associates to monitor and advocate the Council's legislative priorities in Des Moines. At the end of the session, most major concerns, such as preserving the backfill had positive or neutral outcomes for the City.

Relationships with local legislators remain productive and several contacts were made with current legislators as well as with district candidates during the primary campaign.

What's Next

- As projects and programs are promoted to the public, an increased concentration on the development of marketing plans has elevated City communications. Use of polling, prize giveaways, and other incentives have been received positively. The division will continue to work with City departments to create effective marketing and engagement opportunities.
- The Cable division will continue to seek opportunities to share information that impacts a diverse group of community members.

- Council needs to identify the topic areas that they wish to address.
- Staff is not currently pursuing other actions under this objective.

- The City's lobbyists continue to attend meetings and events with legislators from across the state prior to the next legislative session in the fall.
- A community tour with area legislators, Council, and staff is being planned. The tour is planned to share the latest improvements to parks, facilities, and notable development projects, related to State financial support and local needs.

6. Promote Environmental Sustainability

- a. Adopt an effective Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and ensure the next two budgets contain sufficient funds to facilitate achieving its goal
 - b. Support efforts to increase the reach of the Parks and Recreation Foundation
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Accomplishment Updates

6a The Climate Action and Adaptation draft is complete, has been presented to Council and released for public review. A successful community meeting was held on July 11, 2018 and gathered more feedback and garnered excitement for Plan implementation.

Several projects already budgeted in FY18 and FY19 but also recommended in the just-released Climate Plan are underway, including initiation of the transit study, a refuse and recycling route study, public building improvements, bicycle facilities, and installation of electric vehicle charging stations. Additionally, the Plan calls for the development and sharing of public information and engagement tools. The Plan includes a community toolkit to get the City started but more City-specific tools are already being drafted.

6b This goal remains in a planning stage.

What's Next

- Implementation will continue based on feedback from the community meeting on July 11. Community efforts will be initiated by City staff, the Climate Action Steering Committee members, and the public, to focus efforts upon the most impactful plan recommendations.
- For the FY20 Budget planning process, staff will request that Council prioritize recommended Plan actions.



Climate Meeting participants discuss barriers and solutions

- Parks and Recreation will work in fall 2018 to discuss these efforts with the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Accomplishment Highlight

In spring 2018, the Parks & Recreation Staff, with help from the Green Iowa AmeriCorps team, was awarded a prestigious designation in the Sports Turf Managers Association's Environmental Facility Certification Program.

At the time of application, there were just thirty facilities in the United States and Spain that have this designation. The certification recognizes sports turf managers and their designated facility for environmental best management practices, including reduction in pesticide and fertilizer use, storm water management, reduction of water use and availability of recycling. In addition, the facility has also seen upgrades to LED lighting, programmable thermostats, and occupancy sensors.



7. Advance Social Justice and Racial Equity

- a. Support organizations and efforts that provide services to people experiencing and recovering from trauma and crisis related to mental health and substance abuse
 - b. Consider a policy to limit city business to vendors that pay all employees a wage of \$10.10 or higher
 - c. Explore expanded use of a racial equity toolkit within City government, embedding it within city department and Council levels
 - d. Consider elevating hourly staff wages to \$15/hour or more within two years
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Accomplishment Updates

- 7a** The Council has budgeted sufficient funds to be active partners in the Countywide Behavioral Access Center planning. The County is leading the land acquisition effort and there is an active steering committee leading the project forward.
- 7b** This goal remains in planning stages.
- 7c** From August 2016 to August 2017, five city departments, including Neighborhood and Development Services, Police, Human Resources, Finance, and Human Rights evaluated current and potential procedures, policies, programs or services using a racial and socioeconomic equity review toolkit. This process will continue throughout 2018.
- 7d** This goal remains in planning stages. Staff has done preliminary research and assessment of cost implications to the City.

What's Next

- Staff will work with the steering committee and governmental partners on any funding or operational agreements needed to move the project forward.
- Council should convey to staff any specific projects or policies that it wants to consider outside of the Behavioral Access Center project.
- Finance will take the first steps in assessing the number and type of vendors used by the City. Staff will determine how such a policy could be implemented.
- A memo regarding the next implementation phase for the equity toolkit was included in Council's July 5, 2018 information packet. Use of the equity toolkit is expanding to four additional departments in 2018, including Parks and Recreation, Fire, the Housing Authority, and the Iowa City Public Library.
- Cost analysis will be provided to Council for an upcoming Work Session discussion. Direction is needed prior to the FY20 budget planning process begins.