



Chapter 3

Local Economy

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Local Economy

3

JOHNSON COUNTY

The rural farms and businesses as well as the urban centers of Johnson County provide numerous economic opportunities for county residents as well as the surrounding areas. The following information highlights the county’s position as a regional economic center and opportunities for continued success.

[section 3.1]

PROFILE

Johnson County’s continued population growth is inextricably tied to the tremendous employment opportunities provided within Iowa City and other urban centers—especially the University of Iowa, Kirkwood Community College Iowa City campus, and many healthcare service providers located in Iowa City. Other major employers include ACT, Inc. (educational testing), Pearson Educational Measurement (educational testing), local school districts, and Hy-Vee (retail) (see Table 1 on the following page).



University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, including the Children’s Hospital wing built in 2016, is one of the largest employers in Johnson County. (Photo credit: University of Iowa Health Care)



Table 1. Johnson County Top 20 Employers (April 2017)

Rank	Company Name	Location	Sector	No. of Employees
1	University of Iowa	Iowa City	Post-secondary education	18,650*
2	University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics	Iowa City	Healthcare	8,704**
3	Iowa City Community School District	Iowa City	Education	2,346**
4	Veterans Health Administration	Iowa City	Healthcare	1,562*
5	Mercy Iowa City	Iowa City	Healthcare	1,559**
6	ACT, Inc.	Iowa City	Educational testing services	1,350***
7	Pearson Educational Measurement	Iowa City	Educational testing services	1,200***
8	Hy-Vee	Iowa City, Coralville	Retail/Grocer	1,166***
9	City of Iowa City	Iowa City	Public administration	1,108**
10	Systems Unlimited	Iowa City	Human services	890*
11	International Automotive Components	Iowa City	Manufacturing - Automotive	750***
12	Rockwell Collins	Coralville	Manufacturing - Electronics	700***
13	General Dynamics	Coralville	Government services	700***
14	Integrated DNA Technologies	Coralville	Manufacturing - Biotech	620***
15	Procter & Gamble	Iowa City	Manufacturing - Personal care	600***
16	Oral B Laboratories	Iowa City	Manufacturing - Personal care	530***
17	GEICO	Coralville	Auto Insurance - Call Center	500***
18	Johnson County Administration	Iowa City	Public administration	435**
19	Centro	North Liberty	Manufacturing - Plastics	399**
20	ALPLA of Iowa	Iowa City	Manufacturing - Plastics	360*

Data collected in 2011(*), 2014(**), and 2016(***)

Source: Iowa City Area Development Group, April 2017
 (<http://www.iowacityareadevelopment.com/build/leading-employers.aspx>)

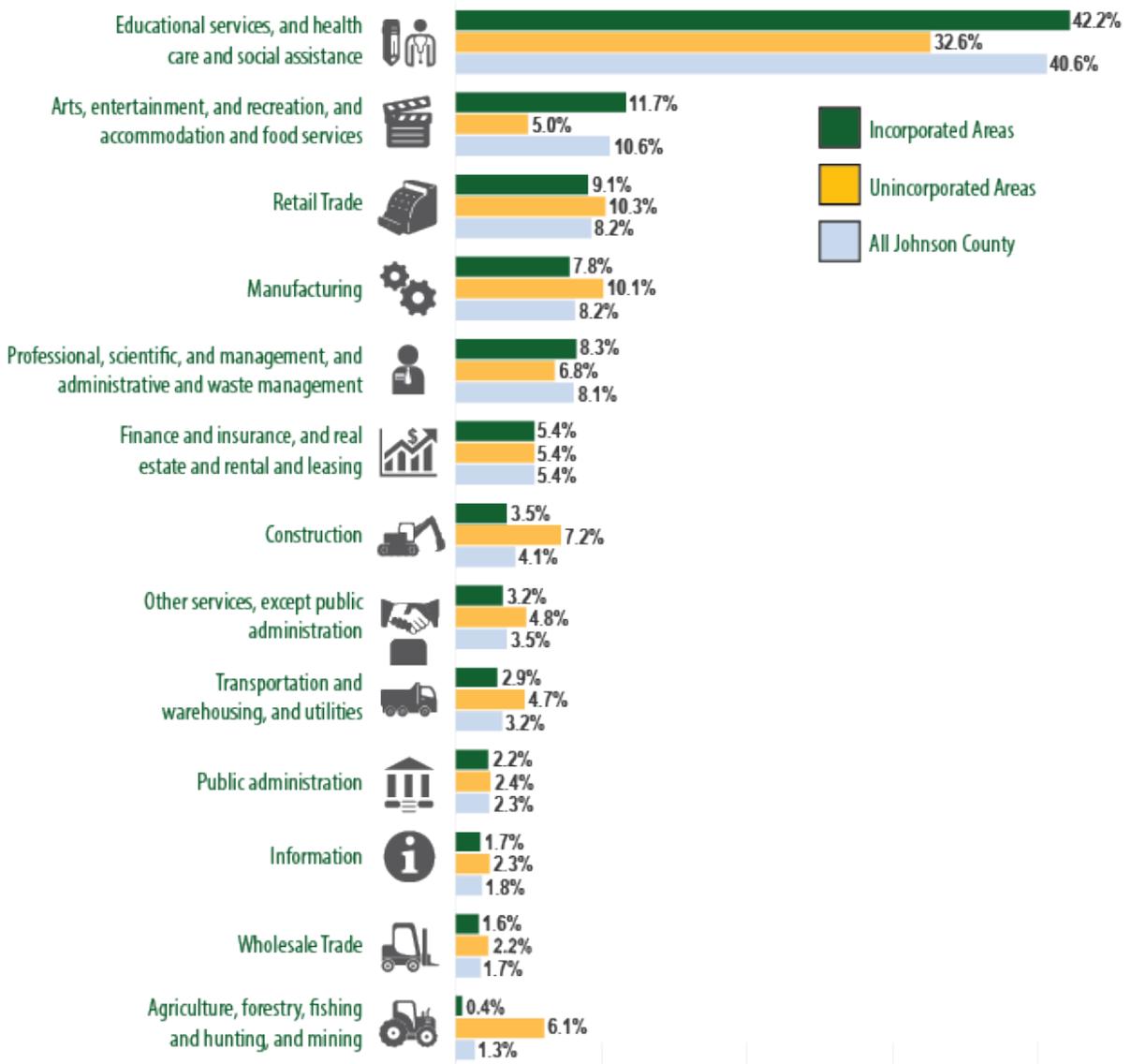


LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

Labor force data from the U.S. Census Bureau provide insights into Johnson County's rural economy. In addition to this county-level data, workforce data for the incorporated areas help show comparisons between where rural and urban residents work.

The largest employer by sector for both rural and urban residents is the education/health industry. Nearly one in three (32.6%) rural residents and nearly half (42.2%) of all urban residents work in this industry that includes the University of Iowa, its hospitals and clinics, Kirkwood Community College, public and private schools, and other medical services including social assistance providers. The arts, entertainment, and recreation services industry (10.6% of the labor forces) and the retail trade industry (10.3%) are the second and third largest industries employing Johnson County residents.

Figure 1. Labor Force Characteristics by Industry (2015): Incorporated vs Unincorporated



Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2015)



Based on the county-level data, the agricultural sector involves the fewest jobs, accounting for 1.3% of all employment. However, when parsed out between rural and urban residents, 6.1% of employed unincorporated residents work in the agricultural sector, compared to 0.4% of those in the incorporated areas. This distinction is important as a majority of Johnson County’s rural land is utilized for agriculture including row crop farming and animal operations. Other industries where the share of rural residents is disproportionately greater than the share of urban residents is construction (7.2% rural, 3.5% urban), manufacturing (10.1% rural, 7.8% urban), and transportation, warehousing, and utilities (4.7% rural, 2.9% urban).

Industries that employ proportionally fewer rural than urban residents include the arts, entertainment, and recreation services industry (5.0% rural, 11.7% urban). Much of this can be attributed to the University of Iowa and its various activities attracting visitors to the Iowa City area. Similarly, the difference between rural and urban residents employed in the education/health industry (32.6% rural, 42.2% urban) is also heavily impacted by the University of Iowa and its hospitals and clinics as well K-12 schools such as the Iowa City Community School District, the fifth largest district in the state.

COMMUTER TRENDS

Based on 2015 American Community Survey estimates, nearly 80% of Johnson County’s rural workforce drives to work alone. This is to be expected since employment centers are located primarily in urban areas. At the same time, one in 14 people (7.1%) in the rural workforce has a home-based job, including agriculturally related employment. This is twice the rate of the county’s incorporated areas. It is also interesting to note that 8.9% of rural residents carpooled, only slightly lower than the rate for incorporated areas (9.2%). Access to public transportation in rural areas is limited, and as a result, only 0.5% of rural residents commute using this mode of transportation. Only 0.3% of rural residents currently commute by bicycle, a rate that may grow as more bicycle friendly infrastructure is built.

Table 2. Commuter Trends by Means of Transportation (2015)

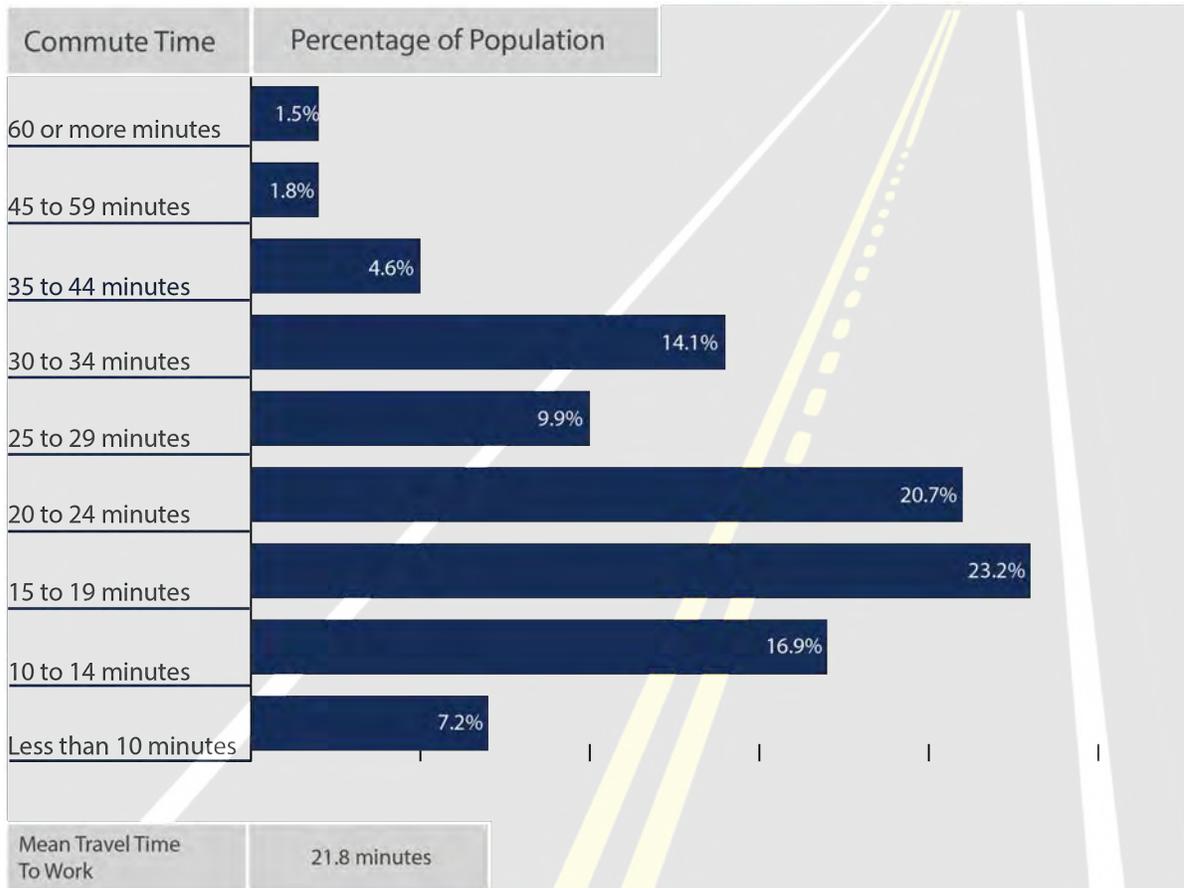
	Incorporated	Unincorporated	Johnson County	Iowa
Workers 16 years and older	64,737	12,535	77,272	1,546,601
MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK				
Car, truck, or van -- Drove alone	64.6%	78.6%	66.9%	80.6%
Car, truck, or van -- Carpooled	9.1%	8.9%	9.1%	8.8%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	7.7%	0.4%	6.5%	1.1%
Walked	10.7%	1.8%	9.3%	3.5%
Bicycle	2.8%	0.3%	2.4%	0.5%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	1.5%	2.9%	1.7%	1.0%
Worked from home	3.5%	7.1%	4.1%	4.5%

Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2015)



The current 21.8-minute average commute time for rural residents is only slightly higher than the countywide average of 18.3 minutes. However, with a growing Johnson County population and additional employment opportunities in neighboring counties, travel times may increase as rush hour traffic on I-80/380 continues to increase. Beside expanding roadways, several solutions could help reduce commute times. Examples include policies that site residential development near employment centers and expanded access to alternative modes of transportation such as public transit, park and rides, and bicycle infrastructure.

Figure 2. Commuter Trends by Travel Time: Unincorporated (2015)



Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2015)

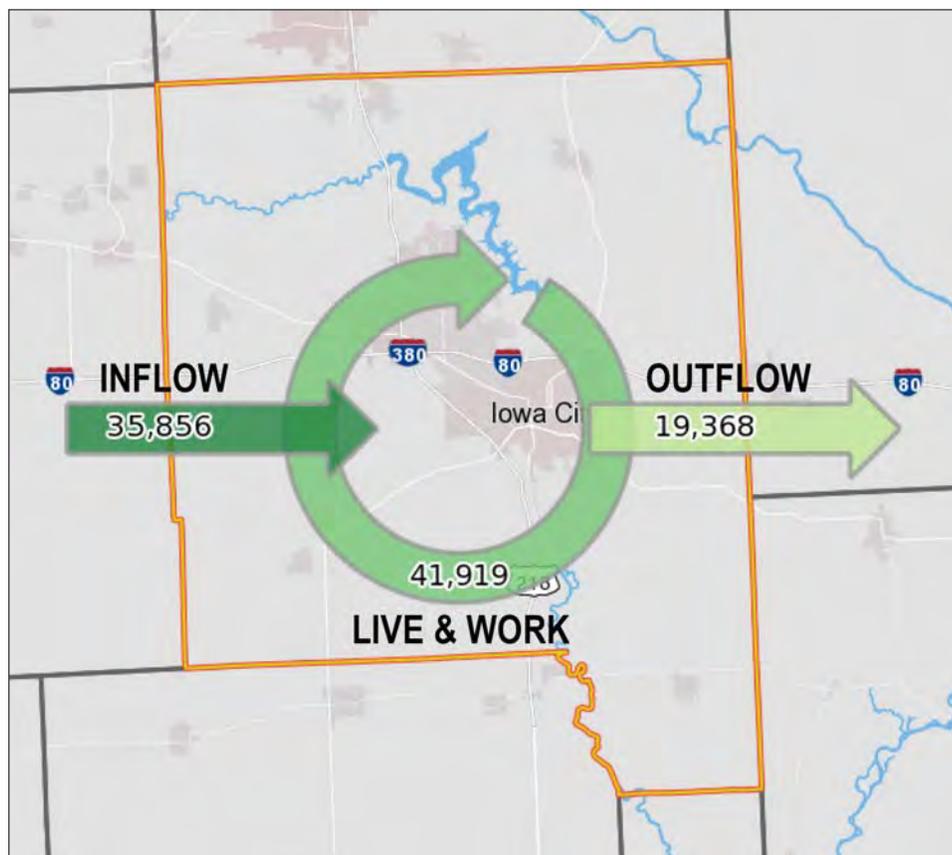


Commuter Inflow & Outflow

Another method to determine commuting patterns is to identify the start and end points of work trips across jurisdictional boundaries. A commute shed is the employment locations of workers who live within an identified area, and a labor shed is the residence locations of workers who work within an identified area.

Figure 3 compares the number of people coming into the county for employment (inflow), the number of people commuting out of the county for employment (outflow), and the number of people who live and work in Johnson County. Of the 77,775 jobs in Johnson County, slightly more than half (53.9%) are filled by Johnson County residents (Table 3). The remaining 46.1% of jobs in the county are filled by people commuting into Johnson County from neighboring counties such as Linn County (10.4%), Washington County (3.9%), and Cedar County (2.7%). Overall, nearly twice as many workers commute into Johnson County for work (35,856) than commute out of the county for work (19,368). Those who commute out of Johnson County commute to neighboring Linn County (13.6%), and as far away as Polk County (2.9%) and Scott County (1.9%) (Table 3).

Figure 3. *Commuter Inflow & Outflow for Johnson County (2014)*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2014).



Table 3. Commuter Inflow & Outflow Analysis (2014)

INFLOW: WHERE PEOPLE WHO WORK IN JOHNSON COUNTY LIVE			OUTFLOW: WHERE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN JOHNSON COUNTY WORK		
Home Location	Number	Share	Work Location	Number	Share
Johnson County	41,919	53.9%	Johnson County	41,919	68.4%
OUTSIDE JOHNSON COUNTY			OUTSIDE JOHNSON COUNTY		
Linn County	8,096	10.4%	Linn County	8,322	13.6%
Washington County	3,011	3.9%	Polk County	1,784	2.9%
Cedar County	2,135	2.7%	Scott County	1,152	1.9%
Muscatine County	2,014	2.6%	Washington County	864	1.4%
Iowa County	1,828	2.4%	Iowa County	717	1.2%
Polk County	1,584	2.0%	Black Hawk County	642	1.0%
Scott County	1,312	1.7%	Muscatine County	612	1.0%
Dubuque County	1,055	1.4%	Dubuque County	502	0.8%
Black Hawk County	744	1.0%	Cedar County	495	0.8%
All Other Locations	14,077	18.1%	All Other Locations	4,278	7.0%
SUBTOTAL	35,856	46.1%	SUBTOTAL	19,368	31.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2014).



EDUCATION

Educational institutions are frequently one of the largest employers in a county, and attract potential employees and businesses. Not only does Johnson County have a large public school system (12 districts), it is also home to the University of Iowa, a major educational institution serving Iowa and beyond. In addition, a satellite campus for Kirkwood Community College provides the county with additional educational opportunities. Both of these centers of higher learning increase daily commuter traffic and attract new residents to Johnson County.

University of Iowa

The University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics and the larger university as a whole are the top two employers in the county with more than 24,000 total employees. In addition, nearly 32,000 undergraduate and graduate students flow onto campus every fall and support the local businesses and, upon graduation, provide a highly educated workforce.

Per the University of Iowa’s Outreach and Engagement data, more than 26,000 alumni reside in Johnson County, which can largely be attributed to the great quality of life and employment opportunities available in the area. Beyond the impact to business and employment in the county, the presence of the university puts pressure on the housing sector in order to accommodate students, university employees, and their families.



The Old Capitol on the University of Iowa Campus. (Photo Credit: University of Iowa)

Kirkwood Community College

The Iowa City campus of Kirkwood Community College provides various degree programs, career programs, professional certificates and diplomas, and continuing education opportunities. Students earning associate degrees who transfer to a four-year university or college, earn affordable credit while jointly enrolled or explore a whole new career. A special partnership between Kirkwood and the University of Iowa makes the transition to a four-year program seamless.



Kirkwood Community College's Iowa City Campus (Photo Credit: Kirkwood Community College)

Primary & Secondary Education

Twelve public school districts fall within Johnson County. Eight of those districts have school facilities within the county. Iowa City Community School District, the fifth largest district in the state, falls entirely within Johnson County.

Table 4 shows the percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch (FRL) for the districts that have a school in Johnson County. Nonpublic enrollment refers to students enrolled at the school district who participate in special accredited college preparatory courses. FRL is determined by household income and the number of persons in said household. For example, a household of four with an income of \$44,995 or below would be eligible for this program. This is used as a key indicator of income disparity between individual schools and school districts. The statewide average of FRL eligible students is 38.4%, which is higher than the rate in all the school districts serving Johnson County. Both Iowa City CSD and Lone Tree CSD free and reduced lunch rates are near the state average at 36.7% and 33.7%, respectively. Solon Community School District at 8.2% has one of the lowest rates of free and reduced lunch eligible students in the state.

Table 4. Certified Enrollment & Free/Reduced Lunch Rates (2016–2017)

District Name	Certified Enrollment	Non-public Enrollment	Total	FRL Eligible
Clear Creek Amana CSD	2,005	24	2,029	19.8%
College CSD	5,087	135	5,222	29.6%
Highland CSD	629	6	635	23.2%
Iowa City CSD	13,982	984	14,965	36.7%
Lone Tree CSD	360	4	364	33.7%
Mid-Prairie CSD	1,258	92	1,350	23.8%
Solon CSD	1,329	21	1,350	8.2%
West Branch CSD	769	12	781	24.2%

Source: Iowa Department of Education, 2016–2017 Certified Enrollment

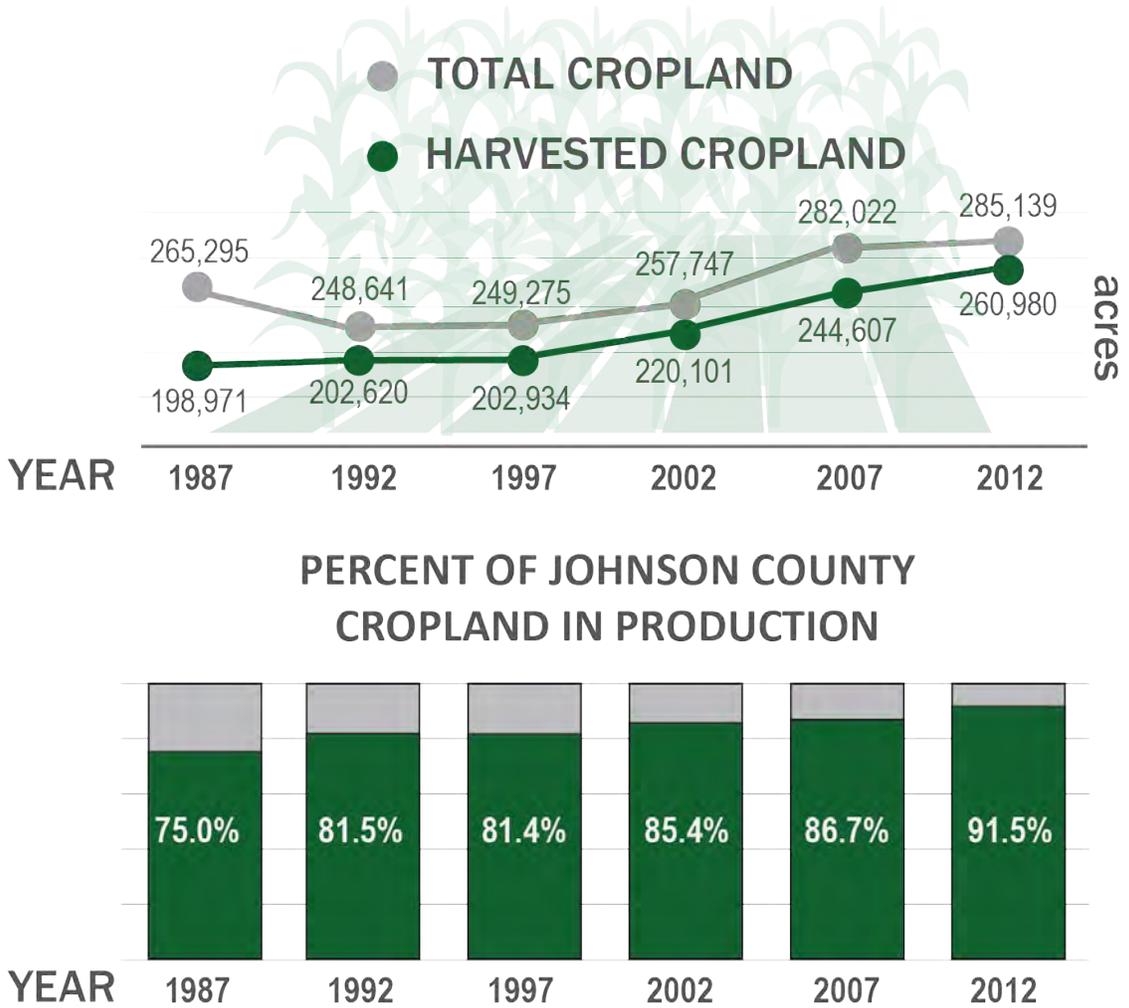


AGRICULTURAL PROFILE

An agricultural profile reveals the influence of agriculture on a county's economy. The identity and economy of Johnson County's unincorporated areas are historically linked to agriculture. Today agriculture continues to be the primary land use in the unincorporated portions of the county. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture collects data about the agricultural industry throughout the country.

Figure 4 compares the acres of harvested cropland versus the total cropland available since the 1987 USDA Census. Overall, the share of harvested cropland has increased 31% over the past three decades with an increased level of production from 75% in 1987 to 91.5% in 2012. It is important to note that a wide range of factors impact the amount of harvested cropland in any given year, such as weather, so numbers tend to fluctuate.

Figure 4. Agricultural Trends (USDA Census): Cropland



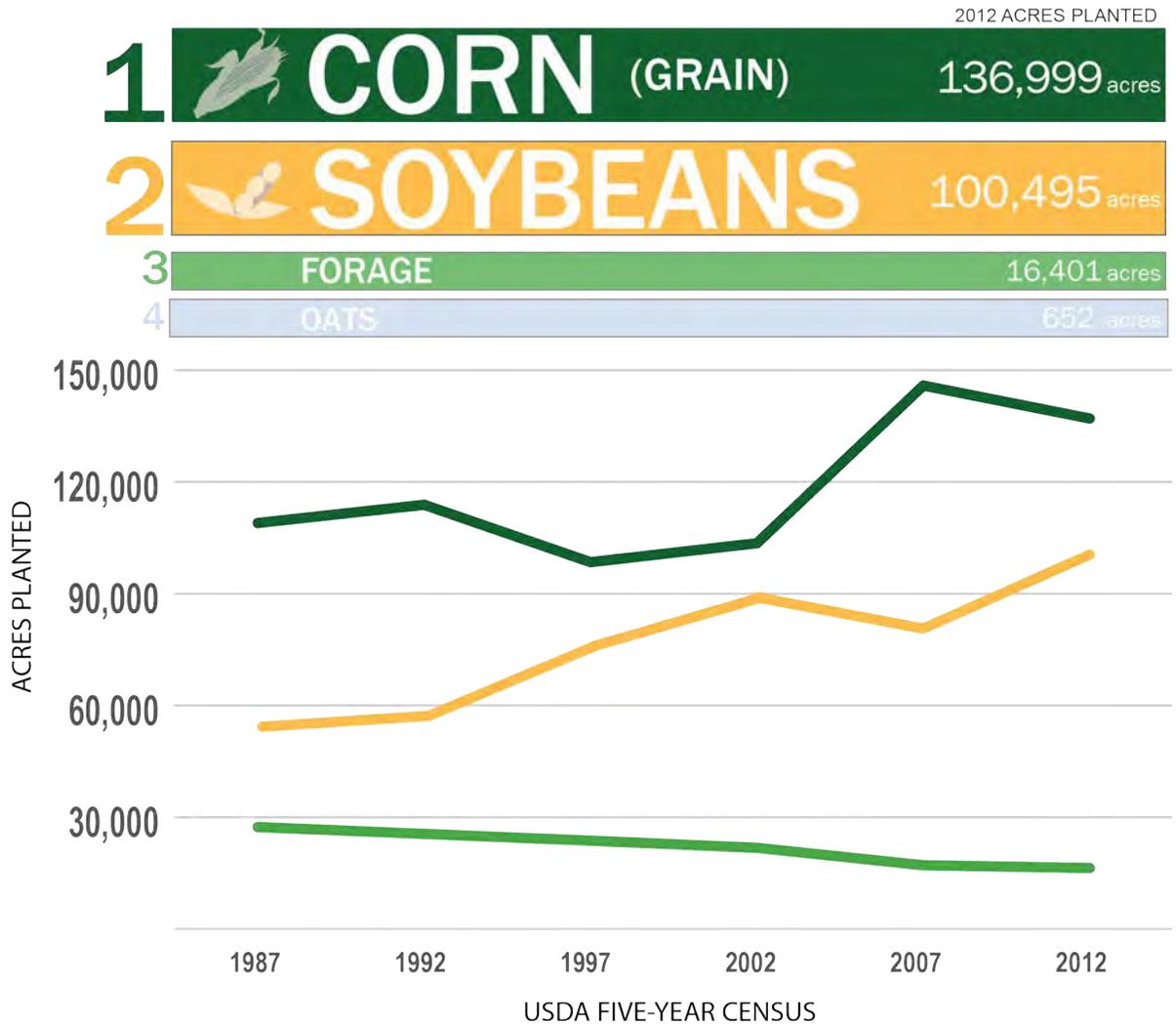
Source: USDA Five-Year Census (1987–2012)



The growth of the ethanol industry and international demand for commodities, especially soybeans and corn, has helped bring about a resurgence of the agriculture economy since 2007. Johnson County has seen much of its growth concentrated in these markets with increased acreage dedicated to soybean and corn for grain production. Corn bushel harvests hit an all-time high of 24.5 million bushels in 2007 and then declined 31.1% in 2012 to 16.9 million bushels. Soybean harvest yielded an all-time high in 2012 with 4.6 million bushels, up 19% from the 2007 USDA Census results. Agricultural censuses alternate collecting data in even and odd years, so crop rotation between soybeans and corn may create some fluctuation in the numbers.

Figure 5 displays the 25-year trend for corn, soybean, and forage, the top three harvested crops in the county, and highlights the top crops planted in 2012. Corn and soybeans have continued to dominate the market with steady growth of acres planted over the past 30 years. Markets including forage have experienced a decline during this period.

Figure 5. Crop Trends (1987–2012)



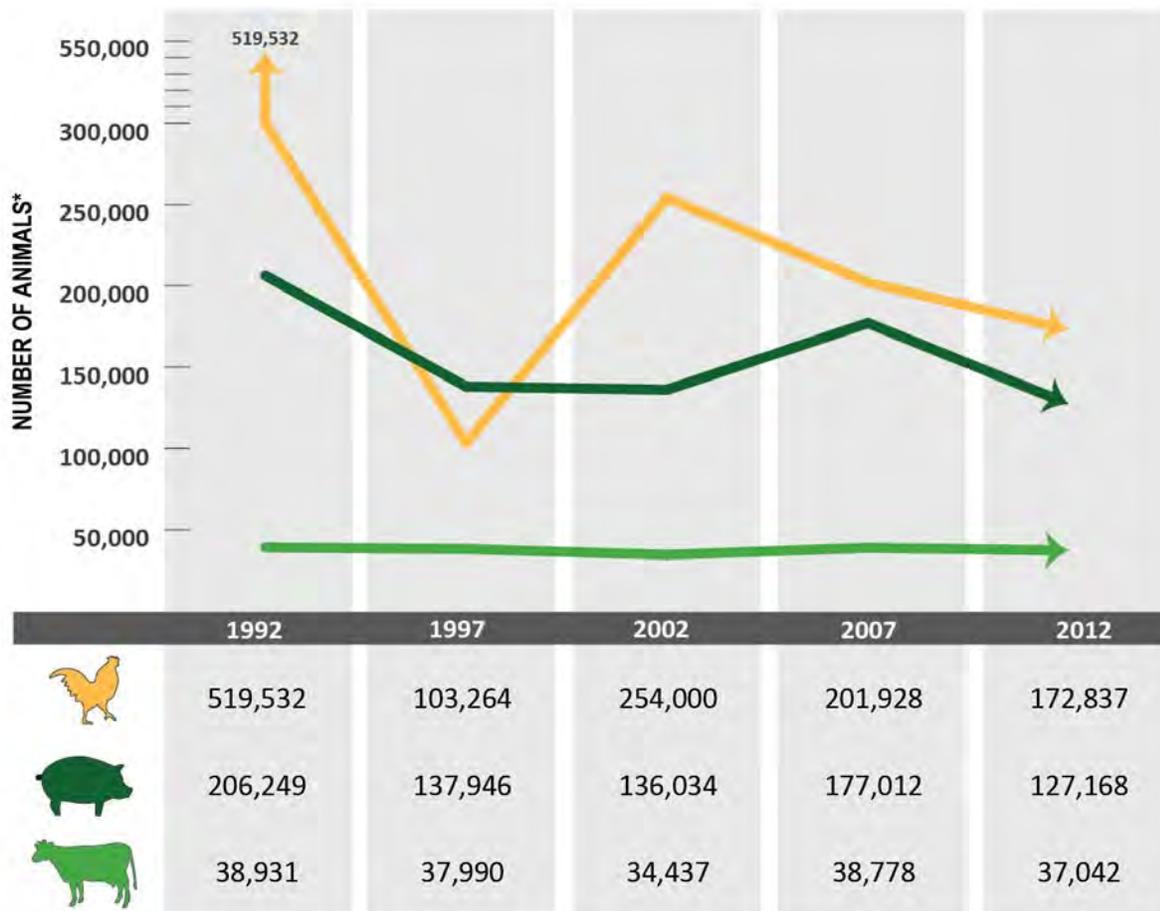
Source: USDA Five-Year Census (1987–2012)



Another way to evaluate agricultural trends is to examine the total land in farms. Based on USDA Five-Year Census data, land in farms has shown similar trends as total cropland and harvested crop land over the past 20 years, increasing from 299,120 acres in 2007 to 328,672 acres in 2012.

As seen in Figure 6, poultry (layers and broilers), hogs, and cattle and calves (beef and dairy) are the primary livestock raised in Johnson County. Poultry has fluctuated the most, experiencing an 80.1% decline between 1992 and 1997 with a slight rebound since then. Hog inventory has experienced a similar but more steady decline, from 206,249 head in 1992 to 127,168 in 2012. Overall, cattle and calves have remained relatively steady throughout these five-year census estimates.

Figure 6. Livestock Trends (1992–2012)



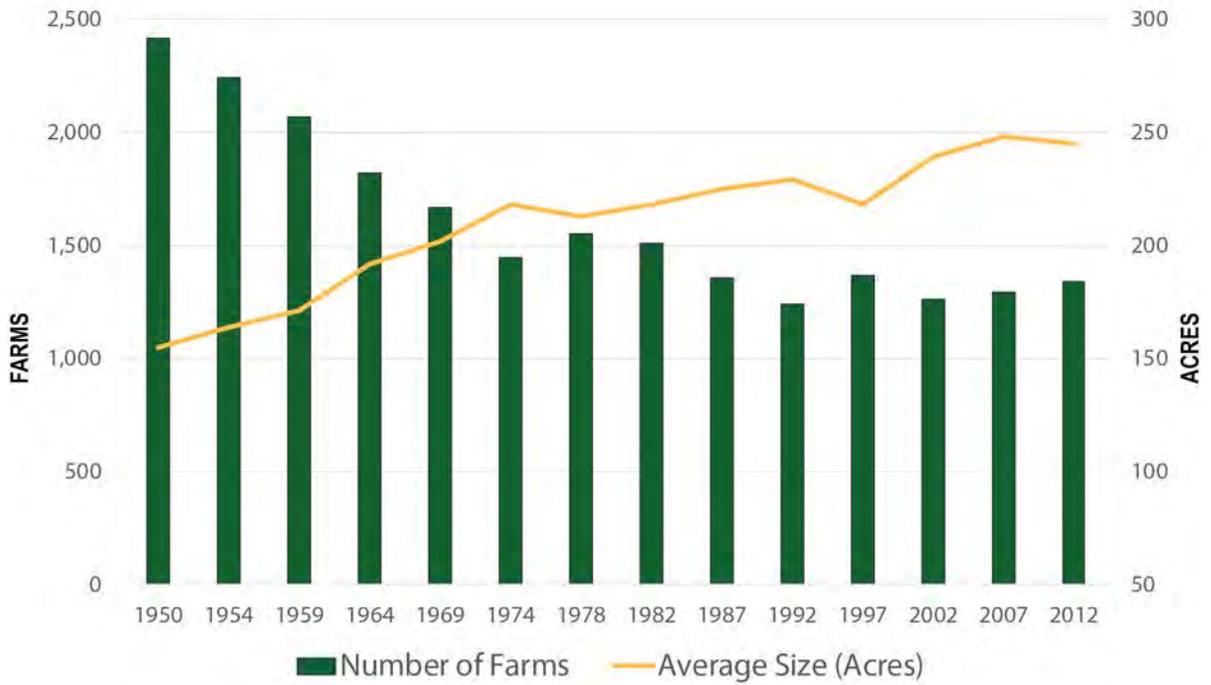
*Chart not to scale.

Source: USDA Five-Year Census (1992–2012)



Although the number of farm operations has been declining since 1950, the average size of a farm operation has increased. Advances in technology and farm practices, along with land costs, contribute to this trend. In general, fewer farmers are needed to produce higher yields of certain crops.

Figure 7. Number of Farm Operations & Average Size of Farm (USDA Census): 1950–2012



Source: USDA Five-Year Census (1950–2012)



Local Foods & Small Farm Operators

The food system has significant, daily impacts on the residents of Johnson County in terms of the environment, local economy, employment, transportation system, public health, and waste. For these reasons, Johnson County is involved in supporting and building local food systems to create a healthy, intact food system. Local food systems can lessen resource inputs, promote workers' rights, preserve the natural environment, and contribute to public health. The advancement of a local food system will enhance rural and urban economic development, increase access to healthy, clean food, and help build equity throughout the county.

To better support the local food system, in fall 2015, the Johnson County Board of Supervisors created a local foods position. The coordinator works closely with the board, county planners, and community partners to increase local food production and access in Johnson County.

LOCAL FOOD is food grown, processed, and consumed locally. What "locally" means is subject to interpretation and is a relative term, thus Johnson County will develop its definition of "local food" as the county proceeds with defining its local food system and writing its local food plan.

The Kalona Amish Community

Johnson County is home to a large portion of the Kalona Amish community, which at approximately 1,200 members is often reported to be one of the largest Amish communities west of the Mississippi.

Farming is a way of life for the Kalona Amish community. Many operate standard cow dairies with a significant contingent of milking goats. Row crops are also a dominant farming activity for the Kalona Amish, who use tractors equipped with metal wheels for field work.

JOHNSON COUNTY HISTORIC POOR FARM

MASTER PLAN

In October 2016, the Johnson County Board of Supervisors selected HBK Engineering to complete Phase One and subsequently Phase Two of the Johnson County Historic Poor Farm Master Plan. For Phase One, HBK completed a site analysis at the farm that focused on three contributing historic buildings, current land uses, and previous planning efforts. For Phase Two, the consultants set a timeline and action steps related to concept development.

When implemented, the Johnson County Historic Poor Farm will be comprised of a county park focused on historic preservation, conservation, recreation, and charitable food production as well as incorporate a location for a permanent farm operation, farm incubator, and a housing component.



Agritourism

Agritourism, a growing trend, allows visitors to experience a working farm that generates supplemental income for the owner or operator through the creation of value-added activities and products. Agritourism can include farm stands or shops, self-pick orchards, farm stays, tours, on-farm classes, fairs, festivals, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, Christmas tree farms, wineries, youth camps, hunting or fishing, guest ranches, and more. Johnson County currently has several agritourism businesses serving local residents and visitors alike.

Agritourism also supports other Johnson County goals, including bolstering local food production, expanding a sustainable, resilient, and diverse economy, and preserving agricultural land. Supporting new agritourism opportunities will help Johnson County realize these goals while further empowering the entrepreneurial spirit of the agricultural sector.

AGRITOURISM IN JOHNSON COUNTY



Source: <http://www.geyersovenbreadandpizza.com>

Geyer's Oven Bread & Pizza

The Geyer's farm, located south of Oxford off Black Hawk Ave SW, becomes a community gathering place every other Thursday evening throughout the summer months. Visitors are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets and enjoy all-you-can-eat pizza in the garden.

Cedar Ridge Vineyards

Cedar Ridge Vineyards is a family-owned winery, distillery, and event space nestled in the beautiful countryside just outside Swisher. Award-winning wines and internationally recognized spirits are produced on-site at the only winery/distillery in Iowa.



Source: <https://www.crwine.com/>



[section 3.2]

PRIORITIES: LOCAL ECONOMY

Priorities were determined based on public input, feedback from the Board of Supervisors, and input from the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC). A full summary of input is included in Appendix B contained in Volume 2 of this plan.

PRIORITIES

While many of the major employment centers are within the incorporated areas, the strong agricultural traditions and recreational amenities continue to be driving factors for rural economic growth. A greater interest in how food is sourced and produced, along with the picturesque agricultural settings, plays a key role in growing agritourism.

Agricultural Economy

First, and foremost, supporting the agricultural economy is key to the future success of Johnson County. There has been an emphasis on using sustainable agricultural practices as the preferred method of growing Johnson County's food. Johnson County hopes to encourage greater use of best management practices, such as buffer strips and other sustainability practices to limit excess nutrients from entering local waterways.

Support for Local Food & Agritourism

Continuing the theme of agriculture, support for local foods in Johnson County is very strong. However, many local food producers face challenges unique to Johnson County when getting their farm started. While a small segment of the population, this group of farmers is important to the production of local produce and other products that many Johnson County residents say they want. Changes to the zoning code could alleviate some of these barriers and open new economic opportunities through agritourism, benefiting these farmers as well as the county as a whole.

Agricultural Exemption

Similar information on agricultural exemption is presented as a key issue in the plan introduction.

Per the Iowa State Code (chapter 335, section 335.2), no zoning regulation or ordinance shall be applied "to land, farm houses, farm barns, farm outbuildings or other buildings or structures which are primarily adapted, by reason of nature and area, for use for agricultural purposes, while so used." The property is exempt from all zoning and building permit regulations (see Code of Iowa 331.304.3b). In Johnson County, at the time of the 2018 comprehensive planning process, properties must be 40 or more acres, zoned agriculturally, and used agriculturally to gain agricultural exemption. As a result, a Johnson County farmer who does not operate on greater than 40 acres is required to meet the requirements of the zoning code and get building permits for all structures. Farmers on more than 40 acres are not subject to zoning and building regulations.

Even though the State exempts farms from zoning and building regulations, it has provided few guidelines as to what should be eligible for agricultural exemption. Johnson County's current agricultural exemption rule has proven to be a successful tool in preserving farmland and limiting residential sprawl. At the same time, it creates a barrier for farmers who need fewer acres and would like to reside on the property. The County will explore strategies to change the agricultural exemption to accommodate a wider variety of farms.



Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO)

There are strong feelings for and against CAFOs in Johnson County. Of primary concern are the water quality and other environmental impacts that may be related to these operations as well as the confined conditions of the animals. Advocates in support of CAFOs state that these concerns are alleviated when facilities operate according to best practices and that confinement operations are an efficient and effective means to provide animal products to a growing population. As of November 2017, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' publicly available database on Animal Confinements lists 56 permitted operations within Johnson County, of which 46 are shown as "active." There are also an unknown number of small animal feeding operations, because permitting is not required.

On August 11, 2016, the Johnson County Board of Supervisors sent a letter to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources expressing concerns regarding the regulation of CAFOs. The Board also passed a resolution in support of a statewide moratorium on permits for new CAFOs in 2017.

Commercial & Industrial Development

Johnson County has long held the belief that higher intensity commercial and industrial development should be located in or adjacent to cities, in areas where facilities can be served by urban utilities and are near the local workforce. This sentiment remains; however, there is interest in siting lower intensity nonresidential uses in rural areas with existing commercial or industrial uses, near unincorporated villages, at major intersections, and within the two-mile fringe areas of the incorporated cities.



[section 3.3]

GOALS, STRATEGIES & ACTION STEPS: LOCAL ECONOMY

All goals, strategies, and action steps were developed based on the priorities discussed above and the information collected through the public input process, input from the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC), and feedback from the Board of Supervisors. To see a summary of input (including survey results) regarding Local Economy, please see Appendix B contained in Volume 2 of this plan.

DEFINITION: Below are definitions of each term and how they will be used in the Implementation Plan section of the comprehensive plan.

- **Goal:** A desired outcome based on the values of the public and elected officials.
- **Strategy:** The approach you take to achieve a goal.
- **Action Step:** The specific steps you take to achieve a strategy.

FORMAT: Each goal (e.g. ECON 1) is presented with corresponding strategies (e.g. Strategy 1, Strategy 2) and action steps (e.g. Action 1, Action 2).

LOCAL ECONOMY 1 – This is an example of a Goal’s formatting.

Strategy 1 – This is an example of a Strategy’s formatting.

Action 1 – This is an example of an Action Step’s formatting.

Action 2 – This is an example of an Action Step’s formatting.

Action 3 – This is an example of an Action Step’s formatting.

LOCAL ECONOMY 1 – Foster a diverse and resilient local economy.

Strategy 1 – Support industries that complement and enhance the existing local economy.

Action 1 – Identify targeted industries that support a livable wage and a clean energy economy.

*WHAT IS THE **CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY**? The Pew Charitable Trusts (2009) states: “A clean energy economy generates jobs, businesses and investments while expanding clean energy production, increasing energy efficiency, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, waste and pollution, and conserving water and other natural resources.” Pew additionally explains that this economy cuts across five categories: (1) Clean Energy; (2) Energy Efficiency; (3) Environmentally Friendly Production; (4) Conservation and Pollution Mitigation; and (5) Training and Support.*

**Strategy 2 – Accommodate rural businesses that provide employment and consumer opportunities that improve the livability of Johnson County in appropriate areas.**

- Action 1 – Develop agritourism zoning regulations to allow greater flexibility for value-added agriculture activities.
- Action 2 – Develop neighborhood commercial zoning regulations to allow low-intensity commercial activities.
- Action 3 – Support efforts to expand telecommunication infrastructure for rural areas (e.g. high-speed Internet).
- Action 4 – Support the local food industry in Johnson County.

WHAT IS A **NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL ZONE**? This zone would allow small-scale and low-intensity retail and service uses that support nearby residential areas including, but not limited to, beauty salons, tourist shops, office space, and repair shops.

Strategy 3 – Promote the county’s natural amenities and livable communities to attract new economic activities.

- Action 1 – Use economic development and tourism promotion organizations as a resource to promote Johnson County.
- Action 2 – Highlight quality-of-life rankings and other awards on the Johnson County website.
- Action 3 – Partner with local cities and regional entities to promote and recruit targeted industrial clusters that benefit the local economy and support the quality of life in Johnson County.

WHAT ARE **TARGETED INDUSTRY CLUSTERS**? An industry cluster is a group of firms, and related economic institutions, that are located near one another and that draw productive advantage from their proximity and connections. According to the Iowa City Area Development Group (ICAD), the targeted industry clusters for Johnson County include:

- *Advanced Manufacturing*
- *Educational Services*
- *Autonomous Vehicle Systems*
- *Information Technologies*
- *Biotechnology*
- *Natural Products*
- *Data Centers*
- *Renewable Energy*

Strategy 4 – Encourage partnerships between business and educational institutions to advance job skills and promote labor retention.

- Action 1 – Explore using County facilities as resource centers to connect businesses with local experts.
- Action 2 – Promote the resources provided by the University of Iowa, Kirkwood Community College, and other major institutions to attract and retain businesses.
- Action 2 – Coordinate with community school districts in the county to provide and promote educational opportunities for primary and secondary students.



LOCAL ECONOMY 2 – Ensure that new and expanding commercial and industrial uses will follow the County’s adopted Economic Development Plan.

Strategy 1 – Update and maintain an Economic Development Plan for unincorporated Johnson County.

- Action 1 – Clearly define Johnson County’s role in economic development.
- Action 2 – Include Economic Development Areas in the Future Land Use Map.
- Action 3 – Obtain a Target Industry Analysis.

Strategy 2 – Regularly review and update the Economic Development Plan and its policies.

- Action 1 – Review economic development best management practices and economic development areas on the Future Land Use Map at least every five years upon adoption.

LOCAL ECONOMY 3 – Encourage sustainable agricultural activities.

Strategy 1 – Explore methods to accommodate smaller farming operations.

Strategy 2 – Support farmers who wish to maintain and expand agricultural activities in accordance with the goals of this plan.

- Action 1 – Support local, state, and federal programs designed to assist sustainable farming operations.
- Action 2 – Support conservation and natural resource management programs.

Strategy 3 – Promote and support local food and small farm operations.

- Action 1 – Continue to provide staff support for local food and agritourism activities.
- Action 2 – Continue to support resident engagement to improve discussion and action on food and agricultural initiatives in Johnson County.
- Action 3 – Support efforts to develop infrastructure and programs that encourage public institutions, restaurants, and other entities to purchase more locally grown food.
- Action 4 – Explore flexible zoning regulations to encourage local food production.
- Action 5 – Explore food hub and food enterprise options that include food processing, packaging, and storage.
- Action 6 – Collaborate with cities to encourage food production opportunities, such as community gardens, within city limits.



LOCAL ECONOMY 4 – Provide opportunities for sustainable commercial and industrial activities that enhance livability and are compatible with surrounding land uses.

Strategy 1 – Revise the site plan review process to address varying levels of intensity.

Action 1 – Incorporate scalable rules for size and intensity in site plan review to allow for appropriate review of smaller developments.

Action 2 – Create and use a matrix to provide multiple ways to achieve compliance with site plan regulations.

Strategy 2 – Direct large-scale commercial and industrial development projects to the cities and Urban Growth Areas, where utilities, services, transportation, and other infrastructure are (or can be) readily available.

Action 1 – Coordinate with local and regional business and economic development organizations.

Strategy 3 – Direct smaller-scale, less-intensive commercial and industrial development projects to cities, unincorporated villages, or economic development areas as identified in the Future Land Use Map (see Chapter 5 Land Use).

Action 1 – Identify and review development opportunities within the unincorporated villages.

Action 2 – Engage residents and update village plans accordingly.



IMPLEMENTATION: LOCAL ECONOMY

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

The implementation table presents the strategies and action steps developed for each of the plan elements: Sustainability, Local Economy, Infrastructure and Amenities, and Land Use. There are three components in each table: Strategy/Action Step, Timeframe, and Collaborating Partners.

Goals, Strategies & Action Steps

The goals, strategies, and action steps presented are the same as those presented earlier in this chapter under “Priorities and Goals.”

Timeframe

An approximate timeframe to complete each action step was determined by staff evaluation. This evaluation considered existing or future funding capacity, expertise and technical capacity of existing staff, and the potential for acquiring additional expertise or technical capacity. The assigned timeframes are estimates; it may take less or more time for any given action step to be completed. Here are the four timeframes:

- Ongoing: Existing strategies that are on a regular cycle or will continue
- Short-term: < 2 years
- Mid-term: 2 to 5 years
- Long-term: > 5 years

Collaborating Partners

Implementation of the plan strategies involves the actions and decisions of entities other than county government. The success of the comprehensive plan’s vision is dependent on the County’s ability to identify these partners, reach out, and maintain ongoing communication and coordination. The implementation tables identify suggested collaborating partners; additional organizations may be identified over time and partners that are not listed are not excluded from future collaboration. For policy and ordinance development, there will be ample opportunity for input through public hearings and meetings.

The following key works for all implementation tables; some abbreviations may not appear in every chapter:

- **BOS:** Johnson County Board of Supervisors
- **CSD:** Community School Districts
- **CVB:** Iowa City/Coralville Convention & Visitors Bureau
- **ECICOG:** East Central Iowa Council of Governments
- **EMA:** Johnson County Emergency Management Agency
- **FEMA:** Federal Emergency Management Agency
- **FSA:** Farm Service Agency
- **ICAD:** Iowa City Area Development Group
- **IDNR:** Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- **I-DOT:** Iowa Department of Transportation
- **IT:** Johnson County Information Technology
- **MPOJC:** Metropolitan Planning Organization of Johnson County
- **NRCS:** Natural Resources Conservation Service
- **PDS:** Johnson County Planning, Development & Sustainability
- **SEATS:** Johnson County SEATS Paratransit
- **SWCD:** Johnson County Soil & Water Conservation District
- **WMA:** Watershed Management Authorities



ECON 1 – Foster a diverse and resilient local economy.		
STRATEGY/ACTION STEP	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATING PARTNERS
Strategy 1 – Support industries that complement and enhance the existing local economy.		
Action 1 – Identify targeted industries that support a livable wage and a clean energy economy.	Long-term	BOS, cities, ICAD
Strategy 2 – Accommodate rural businesses that provide employment and consumer opportunities that improve the livability of Johnson County in appropriate areas.		
Action 1 – Develop agritourism zoning regulations to allow greater flexibility for value-added agriculture activities.	Short-term	PDS
Action 2 – Develop neighborhood commercial zoning regulations to allow low-intensity commercial activities.	Short-term	PDS
Action 3 – Support efforts to expand telecommunication infrastructure for rural areas (e.g. high-speed Internet).	Ongoing	PDS, Secondary Roads, telecom providers
Action 4 – Support the local food industry in Johnson County.	Ongoing	BOS, PDS, Food Policy Council
Strategy 3 – Promote the county’s natural amenities and livable communities to attract new economic activities.		
Action 1 – Use economic development and tourism promotion organizations as a resource to promote Johnson County.	Ongoing	BOS, cities, ICAD, CVB
Action 2 – Highlight quality-of-life rankings and other awards on the Johnson County website.	Ongoing	BOS, IT
Action 3 – Partner with local cities and regional entities to promote and recruit targeted industrial clusters that benefit the local economy and support the quality of life in Johnson County.	Long-term	BOS, cities, ICAD
Strategy 4 – Encourage partnerships between business and educational institutions to advance job skills and promote labor retention.		
Action 1 – Explore using County facilities as resource centers to connect businesses with local experts.	Ongoing	BOS, PDS, ICAD, CSD, Food Policy Council
Action 2 – Promote the resources provided by the University of Iowa, Kirkwood Community College, and other major institutions to attract and retain businesses.	Ongoing	BOS, cities, ICAD, U-Iowa, Kirkwood
Action 2 – Coordinate with community school districts in the county to provide and promote educational opportunities for primary and secondary students.	Ongoing	CSD



ECON 2 – Ensure that new and expanding commercial and industrial uses will follow the county’s adopted Economic Development Plan.

STRATEGY/ACTION STEP	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATING PARTNERS
Strategy 1 – Update and maintain an Economic Development Plan for unincorporated Johnson County.		
Action 1 – Clearly define Johnson County’s role in economic development.	Mid-term	BOS
Action 2 – Include Economic Development Areas in the Future Land Use Map.	Short-term	PDS
Action 3 – Obtain a Target Industry Analysis.	Long-term	ICAD
Strategy 2 – Regularly review and update the Economic Development Plan and its policies.		
Action 1 – Review economic development best management practices and economic development areas on the Future Land Use Map at least every five years upon adoption.	Mid-term/ Ongoing	PDS

ECON 3 – Encourage sustainable agricultural activities.

STRATEGY/ACTION STEP	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATING PARTNERS
Strategy 1 – Explore methods to accommodate smaller farming operations.		
Strategy 2 – Support farmers who wish to maintain and expand agricultural activities in accordance with the goals of this plan.		
Action 1 – Support local, state, and federal programs designed to assist sustainable farming operations.	Ongoing	BOS, USDA, NRCS, IDNR, FSA, agricultural/farmer organizations
Action 2 – Support conservation and natural resource management programs.	Ongoing	BOS, Conservation, NRCS
Strategy 3 – Promote and support local food and small farm operations.		
Action 1 – Continue to provide staff support for local food and agritourism activities.	Short-term/ Ongoing	BOS, PDS, Food Policy Council
Action 2 – Continue to support resident engagement to improve discussion and action on food and agricultural initiatives in Johnson County.	Ongoing	BOS, PDS, Food Policy Council
Action 3 – Support efforts to develop infrastructure and programs that encourage public institutions, restaurants, and other entities to purchase more locally grown food.	Mid-term	BOS, PDS, Food Policy Council
Action 4 – Explore flexible zoning regulations to encourage local food production.	Mid-term	PDS, Food Policy Council
Action 5 – Explore food hub and food enterprise options that include food processing, packaging, and storage.	Long-term	BOS, PDS, Food Policy Council, ICAD
Action 6 – Collaborate with cities to encourage food production opportunities, such as community gardens, within city limits.	Ongoing	cities, Food Policy Council



ECON 4 – Provide opportunities for sustainable commercial and industrial activities that enhance livability and are compatible with surrounding land uses.		
STRATEGY/ACTION STEP	TIMEFRAME	COLLABORATING PARTNERS
Strategy 1 – Revise the site plan review process to address varying levels of intensity.		
Action 1 – Incorporate scalable rules for size and intensity in site plan review to allow for appropriate review of smaller developments.	Short-term	PDS
Action 2 – Create and use a matrix to provide multiple ways to achieve compliance with site plan regulations.	Short-term	PDS
Strategy 2 – Direct large-scale commercial and industrial development projects to the cities and Urban Growth Areas, where utilities, services, transportation, and other infrastructure are (or can be) readily available.		
Action 1 – Coordinate with local and regional business and economic development organizations.	Ongoing	BOS, PDS, cities, ICAD
Strategy 3 – Direct smaller-scale, less-intensive commercial and industrial development projects to cities, unincorporated villages, or economic development areas as identified in the Future Land Use Map (see Chapter 5 Land Use).		
Action 1 – Identify and review development opportunities within the unincorporated villages.	Short-term	PDS
Action 2 – Engage residents and update village plans accordingly.	Mid-term	BOS, PDS, village communities