

# Johnson County, Iowa Sustainability Update 2016-2017



*In 2016, the County nearly quadrupled solar-generated electricity for its facilities by adding an 86 kW ground-mounted array to the Administration Building and a 159 kW roof-top array to the Health and Human Services Building.*

To Our County Residents and Visitors:

The County was very busy during the past fiscal year pursuing green initiatives. We completed a great variety of sustainable projects! Please enjoy the highlights showcased in this brochure.

Sincerely, Your Johnson County Board of Supervisors

*Janelle Rettig     Mike Carberry*

*Rod Sullivan     Lisa Green-Douglass     Kurt Friese*

# Johnson County Sustainability

## Hybrid Bus Is a Breath of Fresh Air and Savings

Cleaner air, increased fuel efficiency and less vehicle wear-and-tear—the triple benefit of the hybrid paratransit vehicle SEATS acquired in early 2017. First of its kind in Iowa, the bus reduces wear-and-tear by 80% and increases fuel efficiency by 30%. The County also purchased a hybrid car and a used electric car to make County business trips more sustainable.



## Greener Roads and Bridges



The Secondary Roads Department repurposed three railroad flatcars into a strong bridge for Lower West Branch Road, keeping an estimated 100,000 pounds of steel out of the scrap yard. The department also used 923 tons of recycled materials to pave Wapsi Avenue,

garnering a Green Product Usage Award. In addition, a new exhaust-heated pothole patch box saved money and reduced pollution.

## Bicycle Friendly Business Gold Award for Downtown Campus



In spring 2017 the Administration Building, Health and Human Services Building, and nearly completed Ambulance and Medical Examiner Facility earned gold designation from the League of American Bicyclists for accessible bicycle racks, educational events and Bike to Work Week /One Less Car efforts.

## Sustainability Grants for Non-Profits

The County launched a grants program for certain local non-profit organizations to complete energy efficiency, waste reduction or other sustainability projects. The five organizations accepted for the first round completed building energy audits then added insulation, better air-conditioning or LED lighting (Crisis Center, *right*).



# Highlights: Fiscal Year 2016-2017

## Water Quality and Flood Mitigation

The Board of Supervisors began to actively engage with the Clear Creek Watershed Coalition (CCWC) and participate in the Iowa Watershed Approach. The program includes eight other watersheds (lands where water flows into different rivers). CCWC has received nearly \$4.5 million, including funds to construct ponds, wetlands, terraces and other features that improve water quality.

## Stormwater Management

The solar array project at the Administration Building included soil quality improvement—deep-tine aeration with a layer of compost and seeding for low-grow grass. Now, the soil can better capture stormwater with less mowing and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.



## Solar + Stormwater Earns Leadership Award

The County earned the 1000 Friends of Iowa Best Development Innovative Leadership 2016 Award for its solar array and stormwater management project. In addition, for two County sheds, the County bought 20 solar modules that are part of the Farmers Electric Cooperative Solar Garden. The garden generates the energy, adds it to the electrical grid and gives the County a monthly credit. Add up the solar energy serving County facilities, and it's as if all of the Administration Building electrical use is sun-powered!

## More Habitat-Friendly, Less-Care Roadside

Roadside Vegetation planted another 10 acres of County right-of-way with seeds for 10 grasses and sedges and 27 wildflowers, including three types of milkweed. The long-lived perennials outcompete weeds, control soil erosion and reduce stormwater runoff while providing food for pollinators and habitat for wildlife. To date, an estimated 400 acres of County roadside have been planted with this sustainable prairie planting mix.



# Johnson County Sustainability Highlights: Fiscal Year 2016–2017

## Energy Efficiency and Greenhouse Gas Reduction

A more efficient heating and air conditioning system for the Administration Building improved indoor air comfort—and garnered a \$126,789 MidAmerican Energy rebate, which was deposited into the Sustainability and Energy Reinvestment Fund.

## Sustainability and Energy Reinvestment Fund

The County established this fund in July 2014 to help complete energy-efficiency or other resource-saving projects. Here are some of the FY16-17 supported projects:

- ◆ Three water bottle filler stations, reducing the use of plastic bottles at the Sheriff's Office, the Courthouse and the Health and Human Services Building.
- ◆ Three electrical sub-meters to track energy use at the Secondary Roads and SEATS campus.
- ◆ Soil quality restoration and low-mow grass installed under the Administration Building solar array plus a natural planting at the Jail/Sheriff's Office.



## Less Paper; More Composting

Social Services had a 12% decrease in paper usage compared to the prior year, and 63% lower in the past three years. The Medical Examiner's Office eliminated paper case files, and Human Resources increased the use of electronic scanning. Mental Health/Disability Services also reduced paper use, which reduced postage costs by 12%. In 2017, the County added daily composting to several downtown buildings. This effort expands special event composting that has been in place since 2013.

## Commitment to Honor Paris Agreement

In June 2017 the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to support the Paris Climate Agreement, which aims to prevent global temperatures from rising.

[www.johnson-county.com/gogreen](http://www.johnson-county.com/gogreen)

[greenteam@co.johnson.ia.us](mailto:greenteam@co.johnson.ia.us)

Johnson County, Iowa

*Produced by Planning, Development and Sustainability Department*

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