

DRAFT



Rock Rapids
Vision, Balanced.

Rock Rapids, Iowa Communitywide Strategic Plan

2018-2028

Adopted by _____ on:

[date]

PREPARED BY:



Background

The City of Rock Rapids has successfully completed much of the work within “Vision 2021,” the community’s strategic plan adopted in 2011. Community leaders determined that it was time to reenergize the plan and think anew about the community’s future. Working with the Institute for Decision Making at the University of Northern Iowa, the City of Rock Rapids led the effort to engage the public to understand their priorities for Rock Rapids and to develop a new communitywide strategic plan. Business leaders, employers, entrepreneurs, health and wellness professionals, educators, developers, financial professionals, religious leaders, elected officials, and residents of all ages were invited to participate and offer input through a series of seven targeted focus groups, and a communitywide open forum. The input, along with opinions gathered from a recent community survey and Rock Rapids demographic and economic data was shared with and used by the Plan Development Group to create a new communitywide strategic plan for Rock Rapids.

Plan Development Group

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Priorities for Strategic Change

Stakeholder input was gathered from previous community surveys, focus groups and a communitywide open forum and shared with the Plan Development Group. The group determined that the following areas should be prioritized by the community over the coming years:

- Housing
- Resident Attraction and Retention
- Business Attraction, Retention and Expansion
- Health and Education
- Public facilities and Infrastructure

Implementing Organizations

Community organizations have been identified and assigned as responsible for overseeing implementation of various actions. While Rock Rapids has many organizations, the following publicly supported entities are critical to the success of this plan:

The City of Rock Rapids: responsible for overseeing, monitoring and evaluating the results of each action.

Rock Rapids Municipal Utilities: responsible for community utilities and ensuring adequate service and incentive assistance for business attraction and expansion.

Rock Rapids Development Corporation: responsible for ensuring robust business attraction, retention and expansion efforts and supporting housing development to attract and retain residents.

Rock Rapids Chamber of Commerce: responsible for serving its membership and improving the quality of life for visitors and residents by supporting the maintenance and development of community amenities, and organizing recreational and entertainment events.

Central Lyon Community School District: responsible for maintaining a key community asset and assisting with programs that develop connections between students and the community for long-term resident retention and business growth.

Additional community partners have been enlisted to assist in taking responsibility for the implementation of selected actions within the plan. Those entities include:

- Kids Club
- Lyon County Economic Development
- Lyon County Public Health
- Northwest AEA
- Rock Rapids Council of Churches
- Sanford Rock Rapids
- Avera Health

Strategic Goals, Objectives and Actions

Priority: Housing

Goal 1: Fulfill the community's rental and owner occupied housing needs and ensure that housing is available for residents at any point along the continuum of residential dynamics¹

Objective 1.1: Ensure adequate rental units exist for families (specifically multi-bedroom homes or apartments)

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Review the 2017 Housing Needs Analysis for rental demand and unit recommendations (e.g. list types here)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Development 	In progress/ On going
b. Identify potential lots/parcels to address demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Development 	August 2018
c. Purchase or acquire option on locations as available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development 	August 2019 Ongoing
d. Finalize incentive package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • City of Rock Rapids 	August 2018
e. Recruit developers given needs analysis and land availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development 	In progress/ On Going

¹ People have different housing needs/expectations for housing over their lifetimes:



Objective 1.2: Develop new construction or additional owner-occupied housing options in Rock Rapids

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Review the 2017 Housing Needs Analysis for owner-occupied demand and unit recommendations (e.g. types...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Development 	August 2018
b. Develop or update a plan (with map) that identifies demand type with existing lots/parcels and future land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Development 	FYE 2019
c. Continue development of the four existing subdivisions through RFP and current incentives (TIF, reduced or forgivable lots)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Development 	July 2019
d. Consider the feasibility of modular housing development, including: type and cost of unit, transportation, pad or foundation and installation plus utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development 	FYE 2020
e. Share feasibility information with potential developers and investors, assist with lot identification and possibly financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • RR Municipal Utilities 	September 2018

Objective 1.3: Promote the rehabilitation of existing housing in Rock Rapids

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Develop a low interest loan program for homeowners to assist with housing rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • City of Rock Rapids 	January 2019
b. Enforce existing housing ordinances to prevent dilapidated housing issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids 	In progress/ On Going
c. Educate the community about existing programs like the NW Iowa Housing Trust Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development 	September 2018

Objective 1.4: Reevaluate the use of housing incentive funds and promote their availability

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Take an inventory of existing incentive funds and sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development 	August 2018
b. Create a matrix of housing incentive opportunity programs (eligibility, amount available, etc.) based upon current need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development 	August 2018

Priority: Resident Attraction and Retention

Goal 2: People and families want to stay in or move to Rock Rapids because services and amenities are attractive and residents are welcomed and supported by the community.

Objective 2.1: Childcare space and hours fit the needs of families in Rock Rapids

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Conduct research to understand the current and future gaps in spaces for each age level, infants to 4 year olds	• Kids Club	Jan. 2019 Annually
b. If more space is needed, identify options for growth (expansion at existing space, recruiting more home providers, new larger or additional center)	• Kids Club	Jan. 2019
c. Prioritize options and identify actions to pursue priorities	• Kids Club	May 2019
d. Explore opportunities for financial subsidies for childcare options (e.g. corporate support, organizations, government)	• Kids Club	May 2019 Annually

Objective 2.2: New residents are welcomed and informed about the community, its resources and opportunities for new residents to become involved

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Work with local employers, utilities and realtors to develop a way to reach new residents with a “welcome system”	• RR Chamber of Commerce • RR Municipal Utilities • Central Lyon CSD • Council of Churches	August 2018
b. Consider a “first responders” program where established family volunteers reach out to new families with a direct invitation to community events or shared community meals	• RR Chamber of Commerce • RR Municipal Utilities • Central Lyon CSD • Council of Churches	August 2018
c. Be intentional about inviting new residents to participation in volunteer opportunities	• RR Chamber of Commerce • RR Municipal Utilities • Central Lyon CSD • Council of Churches	August 2018

Goal 3: Raise the profile of Rock Rapids among current and prospective residents.

Objective 3.1: Residents are retained and new people have moved to the community as a result of targeted marketing

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Marketing plan is completed and new logo is incorporated into print materials, signage and online presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • RR Chamber of Commerce 	September 2018
b. Videos and testimonials are collected that feature: community celebrations, industry, Main Street, schools, river, parks and trails, recreational events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • RR Chamber 	October 2018
c. Videos, testimonials and other community images are distributed widely through the internet, television and other outlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • RR Chamber • Council of Churches • Central Lyon CSD 	Start Distribution by Jan. 2019

Objective 3.2: Elevate the level of two-way communication among city entities, organizations and residents

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Identify persons to take responsibility for community communication distributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Development • RR Chamber • Central Lyon CSD • RR Municipal Utilities 	TBD
b. Put tools in place to maintain ongoing communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Development • RR Chamber • Central Lyon CSD • RR Municipal Utilities 	TBD
c. Inventory local and county level organizations that need to be included in communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Development • RR Chamber • Central Lyon CSD • RR Municipal Utilities 	TBD

Priority: Business Attraction, Retention and Expansion

Goal 4: Rock Rapids is a growing community where new and existing business and industry are succeeding and growing resulting in an increased tax base and new jobs and investment in the community.

Objective 4.1: Rock Rapids has identified targeted industries and businesses and has prepared a menu of incentives for successful recruitment efforts

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Research community needs and workforce availability to identify targeted traded and local industry and businesses (review/consider a target market analysis and laborshed study)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development 	State of Iowa conduction Study for all 99 counties. (August 2019 Annually)
b. Create incentive packages based on targets, including TIF, capital options, abatement, tax credits, RLFs, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • City of Rock Rapids • RR Municipal Utilities 	August 2018
c. Update information on LOIS regarding sites, the community, buildings, add files/brochures/photos and videos featuring assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development 	September 2018
d. Utilize Iowa’s Business Concierge (IASourceLink) to obtain information on recruitment targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development 	Ongoing
e. Reach out to potential targets and site selectors, conduct visits, invite to familiarization tours, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • RR Municipal Utilities 	Ongoing

Objective 4.2: Existing businesses are monitored and served in order to encourage and support success and expansion in Rock Rapids

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Develop a formalized business retention and expansion program with regular visits and surveying of Rock Rapids businesses using a system such as Synchronist to address red flags and offer assistance and available incentives as needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber • RR Development 	September 2019
b. Host workshops, trainings or networking opportunities designed to assist businesses as common needs or areas of interest are identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • RR Chamber • RR Municipal Utilities • Lyon County Economic Development 	January 2019 Ongoing

Objective 4.3: Entrepreneurs and businesses are supported and encouraged to start, stay and/or grow businesses in Rock Rapids

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Review existing loan products for gaps (e.g. start-ups or no building collateral) and consider new products designed to take on a little more risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • RR Municipal Utilities • City of Rock Rapids 	August 2018
b. Form a think tank of community entrepreneurs who discuss local businesses and offer assistance and ideas to promote success and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development • RR Chamber 	January 2019
c. Seek ways to highlight the stories of existing business owners/entrepreneurs to inspire new entrepreneurs and increase awareness within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development • RR Chamber 	January 2019

Objective 4.4: Downtown Rock Rapids is thriving. Storefronts are filled and second story housing options are available

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Continue to offer the façade improvement incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids 	Done. Continue program
b. Conduct a comprehensive parking study to determine need and identify parking opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids 	August 2018
c. Research second story housing tax credit programs offered through IEDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RR Development 	December 2019

Priority: Health and Education

Goal 5: Strengthen the level of engagement, collaboration and dialogue between the Central Lyon Community School District and the community of Rock Rapids

Objective 5.1: Promote a local workforce by intentionally connecting faculty and students to area business professionals to improve awareness of local career opportunities and needs

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Develop program(s) to educate all teachers, guidance counselors, parents and administrators on local job opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Lyon CSD • NW AEA • Entrepreneur Think Tank 	Start process in 2018-2019 school year
b. Create a job shadow or apprenticeship program with the school so that students can experience local job opportunities and small business ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Lyon CSD • NW AEA • Entrepreneur Think Tank 	Start process in 2018-2019 school year

Objective 5.2: Position the Central Lyon Community School District to be a long-term attraction for new families

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Invest in overall school safety and maintenance, while regularly communicating progress and needs with residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Lyon CSD 	In progress Ongoing
b. Develop and promote a long-term term infrastructure and capital improvement plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Lyon CSD 	In progress Ongoing

Goal 6: Ensure individual and family wellbeing throughout the community

Objective 6.1: Become a recognized provider of excellent medical services for the region

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Recruit physicians and healthcare professionals (including dentists and optometrists) to Rock Rapids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avera • Sanford • RR Development 	Fall 2020
b. Increase access to mental health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyon County Public Health • Sanford • Avera 	Fall 2020
c. Develop a regular collaborative forum for all healthcare related service providers to work collectively to position Rock Rapids as a hub for regional care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyon County Public Health • Sanford • Avera 	Fall 2020

Objective 6.2: Improve access to local information on health and wellness related resources and programs

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Conduct an annual inventory of existing organizations' programs offering stewardship assistance, including an assessment of unmet needs of residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyon County Public Health • Sanford • Avera 	Fall 2020
b. Develop an awareness campaign of available services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyon County Public Health • Sanford • Avera 	Fall 2020
c. Develop a community website and calendar to share information on service providers, wellness programs, youth activities and volunteer opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyon County Public Health • Sanford • Avera • RR Chamber 	Fall 2020
d. Educate residents of all ages on healthy lifestyle choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyon County Public Health • Sanford • Avera 	Fall 2020

Priority: Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Goal 7: Develop a Rock Rapids Recreation and Wellness Center

Objective 7.1: Assess the overall demand and feasibility of a community owned recreation and wellness center

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Develop and/or expand a rec center project committee	• RR Chamber	Fall 2019
b. Tour facilities in other communities to explore amenities, project development and funding, challenges to be overcome, level of community support and operational/management models	• Rec Center Project Committee	TBD by committee
c. Survey area residents about interests, needs, frequency of use, membership fees and other key aspects of the project	• Rec Center Project Committee	TBD by committee
d. Determine a budget and secure funding for an engineering/architectural firm to guide and oversee project exploration	• Rec Center Project Committee • City of Rock Rapids	TBD by committee
e. Inventory and assess existing recreation and wellness assets in Rock Rapids and how a new facility could positively and/or negatively impact these programs or offer new partnerships and collaborative opportunities	• Rec Center Project Committee • City of Rock Rapids	TBD by committee
f. Develop recommendations on possible sites for the new or expanded facilities	• Rec Center Project Committee • City of Rock Rapids	TBD by committee
g. Prepare recommendations to the City of Rock Rapids and other key organizations including project scope, estimated budget and potential funding sources	• Rec Center Project Committee	TBD by committee

Objective 7.2: Secure funding for project construction and early stage operations

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Recruit a Rec and Wellness Center fundraising task team to work with the project planning committee	• Rec Center Project Committee	TBD by committee
b. Develop a project budget for construction and the first three years of operation	• Rec Center Fundraising Task Team	TBD by committee
c. Launch fundraising efforts for the new facility (e.g. capital campaign, grants, bonding and all other available options)	• Rec Center Fundraising Task Team	TBD by committee

Objective 7.3: Open the new Recreation and Wellness Center

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Develop an operational plan for all programming, promotion, members services and maintenance of the new facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Chamber • Central Lyon CSD • Rec Center Project Committee 	TBD by committee
b. Hire staff for the new facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids 	TBD by committee
c. Undertake a community-wide membership drive in advance of the opening of the facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Chamber • Central Lyon CSD • Rec Center Project Committee 	TBD by committee

Goal 8: Expand Rock Rapids' system of biking and walking trails

Objective 8.1: Implement plan for trails expansion

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Develop a trails development committee under the City of Rock Rapids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Development 	August 2018
b. Develop a trails improvement plan including funding strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails Committee 	TBD by committee
c. Promote plan and annual progress to the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • Trails Committee 	TBD by committee

Goal 9: Streets, sidewalks and gateways are aesthetically pleasing and in good condition.

Objective 9.1: The SW retention basin is converted to a wet pond to improve the aesthetics at that gateway

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Conduct an engineering study to determine cost and scope of project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids 	July 2018
b. Research funding sources for the conversion (DNR, IDALS, USDA, State Revolving Fund, etc.) work with COG or RC&D for assistance in funding search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids 	

Objective 9.2: Streetscape improvements are made in the downtown area

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Replace lighting along Main Street and some side streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Municipal Utilities 	October 2018
b. Make sidewalk repairs and renovations for safety and handicap accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids 	Fall 2021
c. Conduct a "First Impressions" visitor exchange to get feedback on the downtown and other areas of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Chamber 	April 2019
d. Assess needs and install Wayfinding signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Rock Rapids • RR Chamber 	October 2018

Objective 9.3: Roadways throughout the town are long-lasting, in good condition and (where feasible) can accommodate bicyclists

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Continue the replacement of city streets with concrete per city street plan	• City of Rock Rapids	5 year plan in place. Ongoing
b. When replacing streets, add trail width where applicable	• City of Rock Rapids	5 year plan in place. Ongoing

Goal 10: City staff are readily accessible to the public and better communication between departments enhances overall services

Objective 10.1: City staff and Council Chambers are housed in one location

Action:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
a. Evaluate needs for consolidated government offices	• City of Rock Rapids	2023
b. Examine options (build new, use existing, etc.)	• City of Rock Rapids	2023
c. Determine plan of action and budget (option, engineering/architect, funding sources)	• City of Rock Rapids	2023