

# Introduction 1

## Looking Back – A Brief History of Johnston <sup>1</sup>

The Johnston area got its start in 1846 when Ezekiel Hunt “came west” with his family and established a sawmill near N.W. 58th Street and N.W. Beaver Drive at the present location of the Hawkeye Pallet Company. Over the years, the area had names such as Beaver Creek Settlement, Ridgedale and Huntsville. In later years, the expanded area became known as Johnston Station, named after John Johnston, one of the station agents for the Inter-Urban Railroad, which was developed in 1906.

In 1888 school was held in two locations. Valley School was located one mile east of the present Lawson Elementary School and Ridgedale School was across from the Hyperion Country Club. The Hyperion Field Club was organized in 1900 as a social club. The golf course and clubhouse were added later. The original clubhouse had sleeping quarters in the upper level, “so the gentlemen could enjoy a weekend in the country.”

In the 1920s, experiments with hybridizing corn, conducted by Henry A. Wallace, led to the beginning of Pioneer Hi-Bred Corn Company. By the middle of the 20th century, Pioneer was becoming the leading seed corn producer in the world. The company owned and maintained cornfields and utilized large portions of their land holdings for beef cattle. By the mid-1970s, Pioneer abandoned their beef operation and initiated a land development arm of the business. In the late 1970s, the Green Meadows Planned Unit Development established a mix of homes, businesses and park and open space areas in central Johnston. In 1999, Pioneer Hi-Bred International was acquired by Dupont. Despite the role of Green Meadows in “urbanizing” Johnston, the presence of Pioneer continues to serve as a reminder of the agricultural heritage of the area. In addition to Pioneer, Johnston is the home of a number of landscaping nurseries, the headquarters of the Men’s Garden Club of America and the home of John Deere Credit.

Johnston has a long history of neighborhoods. In 1908, Fruitland Drive (55th Street) and Brennan Drive (57th Street) were constructed. After the roadways were completed and houses were built, the Fruitland Brennan League was formed in 1915 as the first neighborhood association in the area. Scattered residential growth occurred over the next several decades and by 1960, the population in the Johnston area was estimated at 1,460.

Camp Dodge was established in 1909 as a training site for the Iowa Militia. It was named for Major General Grenville M. Dodge of Council Bluffs, Iowa’s most famous Civil War commander. Originally constructed on a 78-acre tract of land, the post had been expanded



*Camp Dodge Red Cross Building - circa 1917*

<sup>1</sup>Sources: History of Johnston, Johnston City Clerk -The Historical and Architectural Development of Camp Dodge, Iowa. Barbara Beving Long - Johnston (Station) Historical Society - The Building of Camp Dodge, History of The Iowa National Guard, CW2 David L. Snook



*Camp Dodge Hospital - circa 1917*



*Camp Dodge Entrance - 2010*

to 570 acres by 1917. On June 15, 1917, a delegation from the U. S. Army Selection Board chose Camp Dodge as one of sixteen regional training camps for the National Army of the United States. Expanded, through lease options, to 6,400 acres, Camp Dodge provided initial military training to recruits (both volunteers and draftees) from Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota.

From July to November of 1917, thirty barracks were built, each a two-story building, 140 feet long, 43 feet wide, and able to accommodate 150 men. Each barracks included a mess hall and an assembly hall. Two headquarters buildings, a 3,000-seat auditorium, a base hospital, three fire stations, post offices, libraries, and railroad depots were also constructed. In addition, there were eight YMCA halls, a YWCA auditorium, a YWCA Hostess House, and centers for such organizations as the Knights of Columbus, the Lutheran Brotherhood, and the Jewish Welfare Service. At peak capacity, Camp Dodge was a self-sufficient community of approximately 40,000 people.

With the end of the war, Camp Dodge had outlived its purpose. Within a few months after the Armistice was signed, only Iowa National Guard members remained at the camp to utilize the facilities. In 1921, the federal government sold much of the camp to the Northwest Lumber and Wrecking Company from Minneapolis. The firm paid \$251,000 for approximately 1,200 buildings. Seven miles of hastily constructed barracks fell to the wrecking ball.

Since World War I, Camp Dodge has continued to serve as the headquarters for the Iowa National Guard. Currently, Camp Dodge is in the midst of another period of expansion. The 1990s saw the construction of the United States Army's National Maintenance Training Center, the new, \$16 million State Area Command (STARC) Armory complex, a new direct support maintenance company training center, a physical fitness center, a 640-soldier battalion support complex, a new maintenance company armory, a regional equipment paint facility, and a new post exchange.

Today, Camp Dodge serves as a major troop training facility covering over 4,300 acres. Because a substantial portion of Camp Dodge remains in a natural state, it doubles as the eleventh largest wildlife refuge in the State of Iowa.

## **Looking Forward – Johnston 2030 Comprehensive Plan**

The comprehensive plan for Johnston confirms a vision for the community that has been carried forward for over 40 years. Established in 1969, Johnston has grown to a population of over 16,000. The growth of the community has been guided by a comprehensive plan since the first plan was drafted in 1974. That plan saw minor updates in 1984 and again in 1992 and then was rewritten in 1998. Minor updates to the 1998 plan occurred in 2003 and 2006.

The Johnston 2030 Comprehensive Plan continues many of the community's past planning traditions and initiatives but also furthers new ideas and directions. The comprehensive plan serves as a guide for the ultimate growth and development of the community and it outlines the set of tools needed to move Johnston toward achieving consistency with its vision. The focus of Johnston's comprehensive plan is on the area defined by current boundaries and anticipated future annexation areas. It also recognizes Johnston's place in the Des Moines Metropolitan Region and reflects regional development objectives, policies and investments. The plan is organized in the following manner:

1. *Introduction – provides an introduction to the comprehensive plan, a brief look at Johnston's history, a discussion of Iowa Smart Planning and information on the public's involvement in the planning process.*
2. *Johnston in 2030 – presents Johnston's vision and guiding principles which serve as a basis for the remainder of the plan.*

3. *Community Context – provides a summary of the social, economic and physical features and forces that influence land use and community development patterns.*
4. *Natural Resources – presents information on Johnston’s land and water features.*
5. *Land Use – describes the community’s desired land use and development patterns and looks in more detail at specific focus areas located throughout the community.*
6. *Transportation – addresses road and transit improvements required to accommodate Johnston’s next decade of growth.*
7. *Housing – presents information on Johnston’s housing supply and plan recommendations to meet existing and future needs.*
8. *Parks and Recreation – presents an analysis of Johnston’s park system with specific recommendations for future neighborhood and community parks.*
9. *Utilities – outlines needed improvements to Johnston’s sanitary sewer, water and storm water systems.*
10. *Implementation – identifies how the plan will be implemented to achieve the community’s vision by identifying strategic actions.*

## **Why is the 2030 Comprehensive Plan Important?**

As the primary guide for community growth, the comprehensive plan is the single-most important collection of policies and action steps that help guide local decisions. It is intended to be a dynamic document that is regularly reviewed and updated. The comprehensive plan:

- » *Establishes a future vision based on a thorough community input process.*
- » *Influences the form, pace and location of new development.*
- » *Protects property investments by ensuring consistency and compatibility of land uses and development policies.*
- » *Promotes the maintenance and enhancement of existing neighborhoods and commercial districts.*
- » *Determines and reinforces approaches for protecting natural resources and open space.*
- » *Guides the community in investment decisions for capital expenditures related to roads, utilities and parks.*
- » *Provides the basis for zoning regulations, subdivision ordinances and other land use and development related controls.*

Johnston’s commitment to its comprehensive plan goes beyond the practices of most communities. The Johnston Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board is an appointed citizen commission charged with oversight of the plan. The Board played a key role in the preparation of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan and will be involved in the review of any future amendments and the formulation of recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council.

## **Iowa Smart Planning**

### **Comprehensive Planning Principles**

The Iowa Smart Planning bill was signed into law in 2010. The bill articulates 10 Iowa Smart Planning Principles for application in local comprehensive plan development and



*'Help Wanted' flyer invited Johnston residents to participate in the planning process in October of 2009.*



*'Take a Look' flyer invited Johnston residents to offer input on the comprehensive plan in March of 2010.*

public decision-making. It also provides comprehensive planning guidance for cities and counties. Included below are the ten principles and a commentary on Johnston's inclusion of the principles in the Johnston 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

### **1. Iowa Smart Growth Principle - Collaboration**

Governmental, community and individual stakeholders, including those outside the jurisdiction are encouraged to be involved and provide comments during the deliberation of planning, zoning, development and resource management decisions and during implementation of such decisions.

#### **Johnston's 2030 Plan Addresses Collaboration**

Johnston's comprehensive planning process actively sought input from a wide variety of stakeholders, both within and outside of the community. Additionally, key elements of the plan were reviewed with adjacent communities as well as county and state agencies. Input during the planning process was gathered in community meetings, on-line surveys, written comment cards and communications involving social networking including Twitter.

### **2. Iowa Smart Growth Principle – Efficiency, Transparency and Consistency**

Planning, zoning, development and resource management should be undertaken to provide efficient, transparent and consistent outcomes.

#### **Johnston's 2030 Plan Addresses Efficiency, Transparency and Consistency**

Johnston clearly articulated its vision for the future in the early stages of the comprehensive plan. The community's review and support of the vision and guiding principles was accomplished in a transparent process that allowed continuous review, input and modification. The vision and guiding principles set the stage for the specific elements of the comprehensive plan that collectively promote future development of the community in a manner that equitably benefits all residents and local businesses.

### **3. Iowa Smart Growth Principle – Clean, Renewable and Energy Efficient**

Planning, zoning, development and resource management should be undertaken to promote clean and renewable energy use and increased energy efficiency.

#### **Johnston's 2030 Plan Addresses Clean, Renewable and Energy Efficiency**

The Johnston 2030 Comprehensive Plan focuses on energy efficiency by seeking to establish a long-term land use pattern that efficiently connects the places where people live, play and work. The plan advocates an efficient mix of future housing densities and the strategic placement of land uses interconnected by roads, transit and non-motorized means of travel.

### **4. Iowa Smart Planning Principle - Occupational Diversity**

Planning, zoning, development and resource management should promote increased diversity of employment and business opportunities, promote access to education and training, expand entrepreneurial opportunities and promote the establishment of business in locations near existing housing, infrastructure and transportation.

#### **Johnston's 2030 Plan Addresses Occupational Diversity**

Johnston supports and encourages occupational diversity. The comprehensive plan

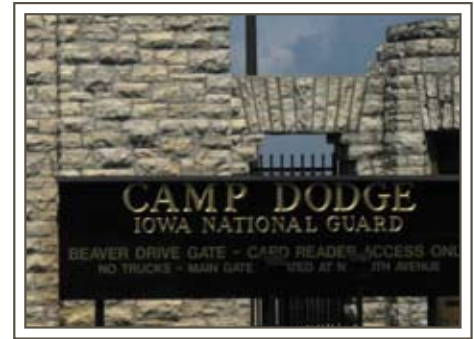
allocates land that is suitable in size and location for a variety of different types of businesses and services. Business locations are connected to residential areas by an extensive planned network of trails and walkways.

### **5. Iowa Smart Planning Principle - Revitalization**

Planning, zoning, development and resource management should facilitate the revitalization of established town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that conserves land, protects historic resources, promotes pedestrian accessibility, and integrates different uses of property. Remediation and reuse of existing sites, structures, and infrastructure is preferred over new construction in undeveloped areas.

#### **Johnston's 2030 Plan Addresses Revitalization**

Johnston's oldest commercial and residential neighborhoods lie along and east of Merle Hay Road. Revitalizing core commercial business areas and enhancing the vitality of older residential neighborhoods is a major initiative of this plan. Johnston will continue to focus on needed revitalization efforts while ensuring efficient development of vacant land.



*Stonework - Camp Dodge Entrance sign*

### **6. Iowa Smart Planning Principle – Housing Diversity**

Planning, zoning, development and resource management should encourage diversity in the types of available housing, support the rehabilitation of existing housing, and promote the location of housing near public transportation and employment centers.

#### **Johnston's 2030 Plan Addresses Housing Diversity**

The Housing section of this plan clearly articulates the city's interest in maintaining a diverse base of housing that meets the needs of both existing and future Johnston residents. Since Johnston is only provided minimal regional public transportation at the present time, the city will work with Des Moines Area Regional Transit (DART) to expand service as warranted by resident and employer/employee needs.



*City intersection marker*

### **7. Iowa Smart Planning Principle – Community Character**

Planning, zoning, development and resource management should promote activities and development that are consistent with the character and architectural style of the community and should respond to local values regarding the physical character of the community.

#### **Johnston's 2030 Plan Addresses Community Character**

Community character can be conveyed in a number of ways. Johnston's 1998 Comprehensive Plan identified themes for much of Johnston's public realm – entries, boulevards, medians, intersections, etc. Identified improvements draw from some of the elements of Johnston's history such as stone abutments at Camp Dodge and the agricultural heritage of the community represented by Pioneer Hi-Bred International's research fields. Policies in the current plan continue to emphasize and expand these community character elements. Johnston's Green Days celebration will also continue to serve as a reminder of the historic agricultural roots of the community.



*City entry sign*

### **8. Iowa Smart Planning Principle – Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection**

Planning, zoning, development and resource management should emphasize protection, preservation, and restoration of natural resources, agricultural land, and cultural and historic landscapes, and should increase the availability of open spaces and recreational facilities.

## ***Johnston's 2030 Plan Addresses Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection***

Two chapters of the Johnston 2030 Comprehensive Plan directly address this principle. The Natural Resources chapter contains background information and policies supporting the preservation and enhancement of natural resources. The Parks and Recreation chapter of the plan calls for expanded parks and open space as the community grows in the future.

## ***9. Iowa Smart Planning Principle – Sustainable Design***

Planning, zoning, development and resource management should promote developments, buildings, and infrastructure that utilize sustainable design and construction standards and conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through the efficient use of land, energy, water, air and materials.

## ***Johnston's 2030 Plan Addresses Sustainable Design***

Policies and action steps in the Johnston 2030 Comprehensive Plan advocate sustainable design. Specific action steps address the use of new green building materials and technologies, promoting recycling, and sustainability evaluations addressing materials, energy use, operating costs and lifecycle replacement costs for new facilities.

## ***10. Iowa Smart Planning Principle – Transportation Diversity***

Planning, zoning, development and resource management should promote expanded transportation options for residents of the community. Consideration should be given to transportation options that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel and improve air quality.

## ***Johnston's 2030 Plan Addresses Transportation Diversity***

The Transportation, Land Use, and Parks and Recreation chapters of the Johnston 2030 Comprehensive Plan work together to ensure development of a diverse transportation system. The plan highlights required roadway improvements to relieve congestion, addresses an expanded future transit system and identifies approximately 26 miles of new trails that will connect to the 32 miles of trails that exist in the community today. The plan also encourages expansion of Johnston's current 52 mile sidewalk system.

## **Comprehensive Plan Elements**

In addition to the 10 Iowa Smart Planning Principles, the legislation also outlines 13 elements that may be included in a comprehensive plan. The elements are:

- » *Public Participation*
- » *Issues and Opportunities*
- » *Land Use*
- » *Housing*
- » *Public Infrastructure and Utilities*
- » *Transportation*
- » *Economic Development*
- » *Agricultural and Natural Resources*
- » *Community Facilities*
- » *Hazards*
- » *Intergovernmental Collaboration*

## » Implementation

The Johnston 2030 Comprehensive Plan directly and/or indirectly includes all of these optional comprehensive plan elements.

## Planning Process

The Johnston 2030 Comprehensive Plan is as much about the planning process as it is the printed plan itself. Attitudes and opinions change over time as does the direction from political leadership. If the planning process has involved the full community, the comprehensive plan becomes stronger in its application. It is unrealistic to expect that every land use or development decision will receive complete agreement from all affected parties. Because the planning process was all inclusive and included a wide range of opinions, the comprehensive plan becomes the unifying element for such decisions. The following is a brief overview of the planning process.

**Organize the Effort:** One of the initial tasks oriented various participants in the planning process and began collecting information about Johnston. This task included initial guidance from Johnston's Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board and Planning and Zoning Commission; collectively, the 20+ member steering committee for the effort. The steering committee met almost monthly throughout duration of the planning process. An initial community open house was held in the Johnston Public Library on October 27, 2009, to explain the process and solicit initial ideas about the future growth of the community. A project specific website was established and updated throughout the process and Twitter was used to reach wider segments of Johnston's population.

**Define the Context:** The second major task focused on developing an understanding of the physical, economic, social and natural forces that influence Johnston. Understanding Johnston's position in the greater Des Moines Metropolitan Area was also a key part of this task.

**Explore and Define the Vision:** This task involved the collection of opinions in face to face meetings as well as from web-based input. Using the Vision and Guiding Principles articulated in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan as a base, the Vision and Guiding Principles were evaluated and modified by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board and Planning and Zoning Commission with concurrence by the Johnston City Council.

**Explore the Possibilities for Future Growth:** This task included the preparation and analysis of alternative future growth scenarios stemming from community input and the examination of the land and forces influencing future development. Land use, transportation, natural resources, market conditions, parks and open space, topography and employment opportunities were all considered in drafting the scenarios. This task featured a project design charrette including representatives of the project consulting team, city staff and members of Johnston's City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board and Park Advisory Board.

**Converge on a Preferred Alternative:** Alternative concepts and ideas were presented at a public open house on March 30, 2010, which was attended by approximately 100 people. Using input from this meeting as well as web-based feedback, guidance from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board and the Planning and Zoning Commission as well as additional technical analyses, a preferred alternative was selected for development as Johnston's 2030 Land Use Plan.

**Prepare the Final Plan – Seek Approvals:** This final task included assembling a complete draft of the plan for public review. Reviews included those conducted by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board and Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council and the Park Advisory Board. A community open house was held on October 21, 2010, prior to final modifications, a formal public hearing and adoption by the Johnston City Council.



*Community Meeting #1*



*Design charrette*



*Comprehensive plan tent at the Johnston Farmers Market*

