

Housing 7

Introduction

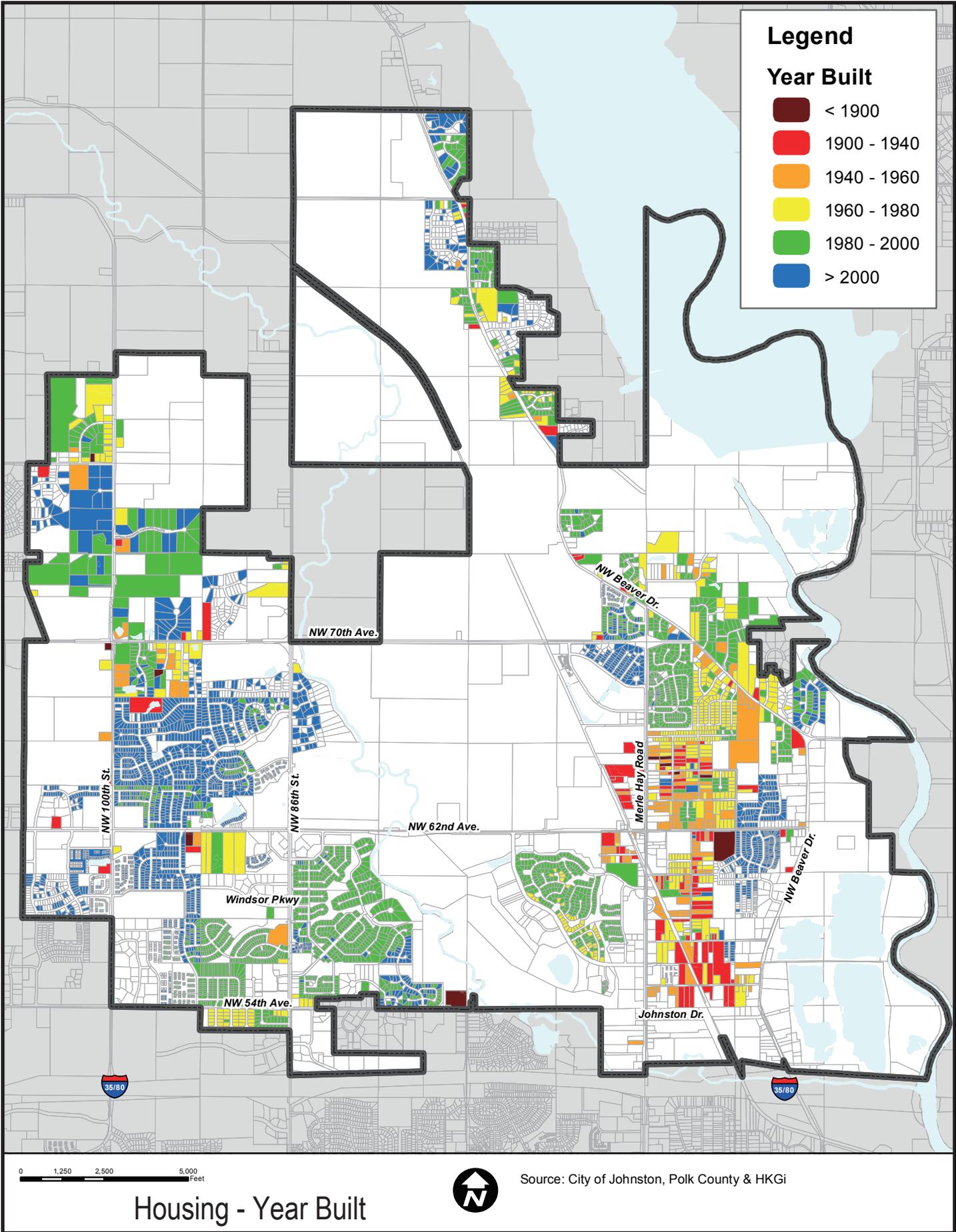
Housing is the dominant form of development in Johnston. Almost 60% of Johnston's 2030 Land Use Plan is earmarked for residential uses. The housing supply plays an important role in shaping the community. To a large degree, the size, form and type of housing units determines who lives in Johnston. The quality and character of Johnston's neighborhoods plays an important role in shaping the identity of the community and its stature as a place to live in the greater Des Moines Metropolitan Area.

Including housing policies and initiatives in the comprehensive plan is appropriate for two reasons. First, the housing needs of a community are not completely met by private market forces, land use planning and land use controls. Community plans and ordinance controls create the framework for private land development; land development that is almost universally profit-driven. Private market forces need to be supplemented by programs and funding sources that bridge the financial gaps of providing housing for segments of the community that can't afford market-rate housing. Accordingly, this chapter can help identify housing needs and provide a foundation for local decision making to guide residential development and redevelopment efforts in Johnston.

The second reason that housing is addressed in this plan is to meet the intent of recent Iowa Smart Planning legislation enacted by the Iowa Legislature. The Smart Planning legislation defines components that are suggested content for comprehensive plans. These components are presented as ten Smart Planning principles, one of which addresses housing. The housing principle addresses housing diversity. It states, "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."

The legislation further states that when developing or amending a comprehensive plan, "objectives, policies and programs to further the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods and new residential neighborhoods and plans to ensure an adequate supply of housing that meets both the existing and forecasted housing demand. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may include an inventory and analysis of the local housing stock and may include specific information such as age, condition, type, market value, occupancy, and historical characteristics of all the housing within the municipality. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may identify specific policies and programs that promote the development of new housing and maintenance or rehabilitation of existing housing that provide a range of housing choices that meet the needs of the residents of the municipality."





Legend

Year Built

- < 1900
- 1900 - 1940
- 1940 - 1960
- 1960 - 1980
- 1980 - 2000
- > 2000

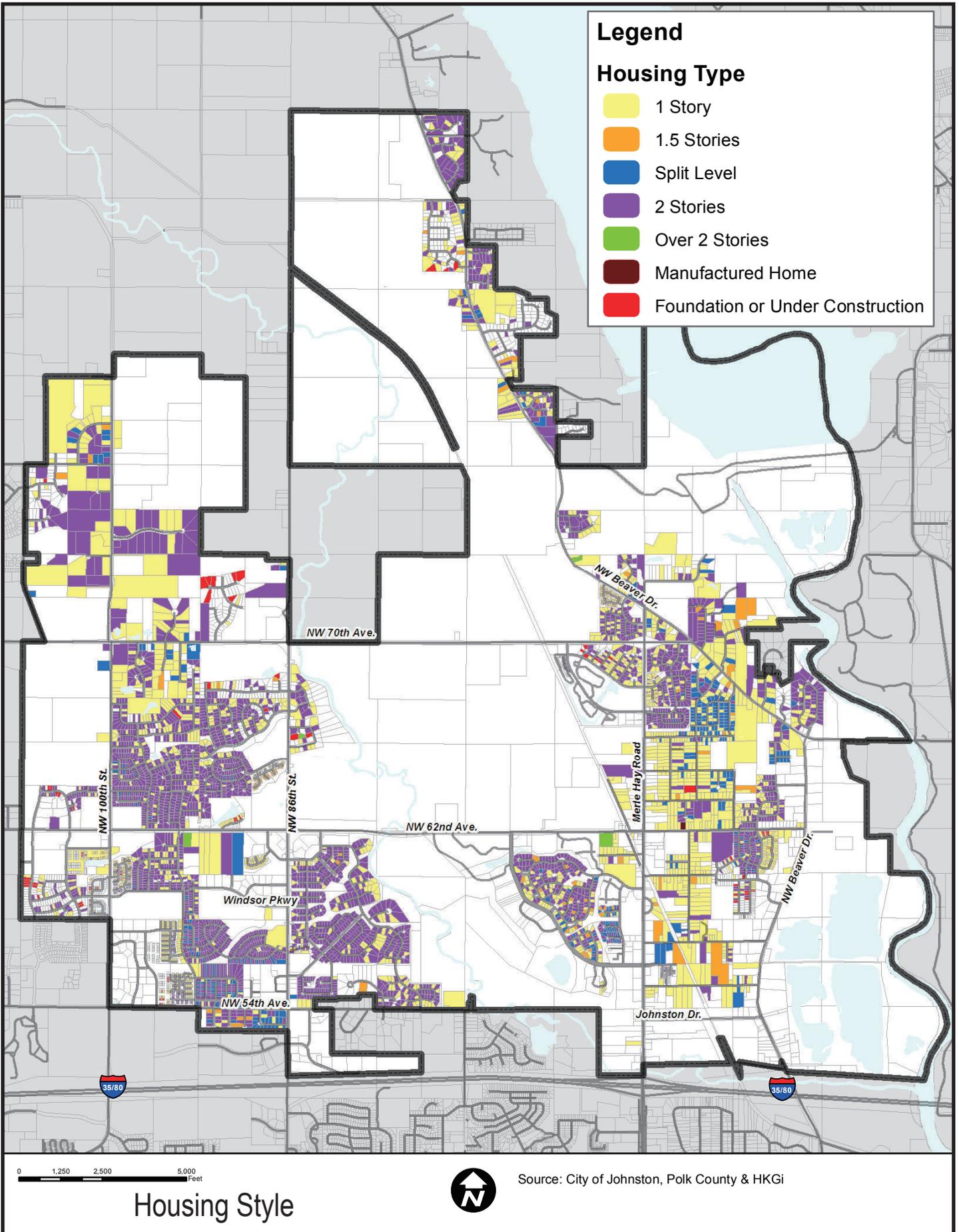
0 1,250 2,500 5,000 Feet



Source: City of Johnston, Polk County & HKGI

Housing - Year Built

Figure 7.1 - Housing - Year Built



Housing Style

Figure 7.2 - Housing Style

Characteristics of the Existing Housing Supply

| Assessed Value | Units | Percent |
|-------------------------|-------|---------|
| < \$75,000 | 131 | 3% |
| \$75,000 - \$150,000 | 707 | 14% |
| \$150,000 - \$250,000 | 2,270 | 45% |
| \$250,000 - \$350,000 | 1,241 | 25% |
| \$350,000 - \$500,000 | 495 | 10% |
| \$500,000 - \$1,000,000 | 175 | 3% |
| > \$1,000,000 | 15 | 0% |

Table 7.1 - Assessed Value of Housing

| Year Built | Units | Percent |
|-------------|-------|---------|
| < 1900 | 4 | 0% |
| 1900 - 1920 | 21 | 0% |
| 1920 - 1940 | 68 | 1% |
| 1940 - 1960 | 160 | 3% |
| 1960 - 1980 | 458 | 9% |
| 1980 - 2000 | 1,783 | 35% |
| 2000 - 2008 | 2,534 | 50% |

Table 7.2 - Housing Year Built

| Style of Housing | Units | Percent |
|--------------------------------|-------|---------|
| 1 Story | 1,636 | 32% |
| 1.5 Story | 207 | 4% |
| 2 Story | 2,778 | 55% |
| 2+ Story | 5 | 0% |
| Split Level | 325 | 6% |
| Manufactured Home | 1 | 0% |
| Under Construction/ Foundation | 83 | 2% |

Table 7.3 - Housing Style

Assessed Value

Table 7.1 shows the assessed value of residential properties in Johnston according to 2010 Polk County Assessors data. Approximately 70% of Johnston's housing has an assessed value between \$150,000 and \$350,000. In most cases, the assessed value of a given home closely correlates to its age of construction. Residential units lying west of Merle Hay Road have generally higher assessed values than properties lying east of Merle Hay Road. Residential units with the highest assessed value are concentrated north of NW 70th Avenue, west of NW 86th Street and along NW Beaver Drive in the northern portion of the city.

Year Built

Johnston's housing stock is relatively new with 85% of the total units being constructed since 1980 (see Table 7.2). Only 4% of the total housing stock was built prior to 1960. From 2000 to 2010, much, but not all, of Johnston's new housing growth has occurred on the west side of town. Figure 7.1 shows the distribution of housing units in the community by year of construction. Of note is the amount of new home construction that has taken place in Johnston's older neighborhood areas east of Merle Hay Road. Although the total number of homes constructed prior to 1960 is relatively small, units of this vintage will require increasing amounts of ongoing maintenance. The city will need to continually monitor overall housing quality to ensure the long-term integrity of neighborhood areas.

Style of Housing

Housing styles change with the times. For the past couple of decades, two story homes have been a strong form of new housing. Two story structures account for over half of Johnston's housing stock and can be found throughout the community (Table 7.3 and Figure 7.2). As the population continues to age, some residents will seek other housing choices that offer one level living. Anticipated decreases in family size as well as the preferences of younger buyers may also impact the future marketability of this common form of housing.

Housing Issues

Given the fact that most of Johnston's housing has been built since 1980, the community has not experienced many of the general housing issues that older communities have seen. Two issues are evident at this time. The issue of foreclosures is one which should abate gradually as the economy improves; however, maintenance concerns will continue to be present and will grow over time as Johnston's housing supply ages.

Foreclosures

Residential foreclosures in Johnston have and are occurring throughout the community but not in any concentrated areas. The numbers of foreclosures in Johnston are difficult to specifically track but are generally felt to be consistent with foreclosure rates in other Des Moines area communities. Fortunately, few properties have become maintenance concerns. Establishment of a system to track and monitor foreclosures could help prevent maintenance problems with vacant properties while helping to ensure the integrity of the surrounding neighborhood.

Maintenance

Johnston has reached a population threshold at which the city will be preparing and adopting a housing maintenance code. The maintenance code will require inspection of rental properties and will also set standards for maintenance of all residential structures. The City will continue to use Metro Help and other programs that provide grant and loan funding to assist qualifying owners of properties with maintenance and repair concerns.

Housing Policies

1. *Maintain a balanced housing supply with housing available for people at all income levels and unit types that meet the varying life-cycle needs of Johnston residents.*
2. *Promote ongoing maintenance of owner occupied and rental housing units.*
3. *Establish a housing pattern that respects the natural environment while striving to meet local housing needs and the community's share of metropolitan area housing growth.*
4. *Establish a community of well-maintained housing and neighborhoods including ownership and rental housing.*
5. *Improve access and linkage between housing, employment and retail centers in Johnston.*
6. *Work to integrate affordable workforce housing into the community.*

Housing Action Steps

In order to promote the identified housing policies, the City of Johnston will:

1. *Maintain zoning and subdivision regulations allowing for the construction of a variety of housing types and price ranges.*
2. *Continue to utilize city ordinances that allow planned unit developments that provide a mixture of housing types.*
3. *Promote the development of multi-family housing in areas that are physically suited to higher densities.*
4. *Require the integration of open spaces within residential developments in order to maintain a living environment that is consistent with the city's vision and guiding principles.*
5. *Promote higher density housing in the mixed use area of the city.*
6. *Explore new approaches to provide affordable housing.*
7. *Continue to use the 2030 Comprehensive Plan and other tools to promote quality housing developments that respect encourage resident health and conserve energy.*
8. *Continue to work collaboratively with property owners, builders, lenders and other stakeholders to meet local housing needs.*
9. *Use GIS and other data sources to monitor conditions and trends in the housing stock, including ownership status, values, sales and improvements.*
10. *Explore ways to protect neighborhoods from the negative impacts of foreclosure, including the creation and maintenance of a foreclosure list, maintaining contact with owners, mortgage companies, builders or other responsible parties about security and maintenance issues and monitoring of the properties.*
11. *Encourage the formation of neighborhood associations to address long-term maintenance of landscaping and other neighborhood improvements.*





Housing Plan

In community meetings held during the beginning of the comprehensive planning process, housing was an issue of concern to residents, but not a major concern. Specific issues raised focused on a number of housing topics such as maintaining a balanced housing supply, retaining a variety of housing types, maintaining the community's housing stock over an extended period of time, developing new housing that is integrated into the natural environment and improving the linkage between housing and employment. These issues form the basis for the housing plan.

A Balanced Supply of Housing

The City of Johnston strives for a balanced mix of housing to sufficiently provide for the needs of current and future residents and existing residents' housing needs as they move through different stages of the life cycle. At the present time (2010), the city's housing mix - single-family versus multi-family - consists of 68 percent single-family and 32 percent multi-family. There has been a significant amount of multi-family housing constructed in the city since the completion of the last comprehensive plan in 1998. The addition of the multi-family housing was in response to market trends. Because of the city's availability of land for housing development and the tradition of strong single-family detached neighborhoods, there will be pressure to develop additional single-family housing.



As the population of Johnston continues to age and young buyers seek different forms of housing, the demand for multi-family housing is likely to continue to be strong. As a result, over the next ten to twenty years, the amount of multi-family housing in the community as a percentage of total housing may increase.

In response to maintaining a balance of housing in the community, the future land use plan designates land to accommodate a variety of housing types and densities.



A Variety of Housing Types

The city has a variety of types and styles of housing including traditional single-family, large lot single-family, duplex (twinhome), townhomes, condominiums and apartments. In addition, recent development has added several different styles of townhome units to the housing stock.

In the future, Johnston is likely to see interest in developing small-lot single-family homes. This product type is being designed to appeal to mid-age and older adults with no children as well as young seniors seeking to downsize from a larger single-family home.

The majority of the city's housing stock remains newer, having been built after 1980. As such, Johnston has fewer issues with housing stock renewal and replacement than older communities, but more issues with maintaining the balance of the housing stock as it pertains to intensity of land use and product design for lifestyle needs.



Development in Johnston over the past ten years has resulted in a mixture of housing types that were built in response to market conditions. Traditional single-family detached housing has always been a strong component of the community's housing stock. Because of market interest and tax and finance issues, multi-family housing complexes have been built at different times. During the 1980s and into the 1990s, Green Meadows established itself as a large scale planned unit development with a variety of housing types and densities. As the community looks forward to the next two decades, this comprehensive plan assumes that efforts will be made to maintain housing diversity.

Future housing constructed in Johnston will either occur as infill housing in the developed portion of the community or new housing in the developing, west and northwest area of the city. In infill situations, housing types will be dependent on compatibility with surrounding housing types and lot sizes. In the developing area, more flexibility exists.

The land use pattern in the community promotes housing diversity. The mixed use center at Merle Hay Road and NW 62nd Avenue will contain higher density housing within a

development pattern that also accommodates small scale retail commercial and offices. Throughout most of Johnston, the medium density land use pattern will accommodate developments that have a gross density of up to eight units per acre. This density range allows the integration of townhouse developments with traditional single family detached housing neighborhoods.

A Community of Well Maintained Housing

An analysis of the age of Johnston’s housing stock revealed that the majority of the housing in the community was built after 1980, nearly 85%. The comparative newness of the city’s housing indicates that there should be relatively few concerns with deterioration of the existing housing stock.

Although the number of deteriorating housing units is very low in Johnston, it is possible that some deteriorating housing units may be located in prominent locations. Johnston, like many communities, has areas that are zoned commercial but currently contain residential uses. In such areas, the residential structures are non-conforming and can typically only be maintained rather than expanded or significantly improved. In such cases, owners of property sometimes defer required maintenance because the use is intended to change in the future. The future in such cases, however, may be ten, twenty or thirty years away. As a result, such properties sometimes deteriorate and negatively impact the image of the community.

Communities have a limited number of alternatives in order to minimize deterioration as a result of zoning practices. They can enforce the non-conforming use provisions of the applicable code which typically allows normal maintenance such as painting, roofing, etc. or they can take an active role in facilitating development and redevelopment that will result in desired long term uses thereby minimizing the amount of non-conforming situations.

Johnston should continue to provide for ongoing monitoring of the housing stock to identify issues with physical deterioration of specific units or in specific areas of the city. In the near future, these issues are likely to be minimal. Efforts should also concentrate on property maintenance. Neighborhood deterioration due to abandoned vehicles, peeling paint, junk storage, etc. can be addressed in property maintenance standards.

Housing Development that Respects the Natural Environment

The City of Johnston has topography that provides unique physical features including slopes, woodlands and wetlands. Environmental regulations in addition to public consensus strives to protect these features as distinct benefits for “quality of life.” In addition, a significant amount of land lying northwest of the city is slated to be developed with large-lot single-family housing, designed in a manner to preserve and protect natural features. This “estate” residential area is expected to remain substantially less dense than the rest of the city, in part, because of the excessive costs associated with extending utilities to this area in the future. Also, the city is committed to preserving the existing character of the estate area through less intensive land development.

Natural features need to be considered in the design of all densities of housing in Johnston. The fingers of open space that are part of the Beaver Creek corridor will extend and become linking elements in many of the future housing areas in the community. These open space corridors and trails within them can be strong physical and visual connections that can tie together different neighborhoods and even different land uses.

Improvement of Linkages Between Housing and Employment and the Provision of Services to Residents

Johnston is a community with strong north-south transportation corridors. Merle Hay Road, NW Beaver Drive, NW 86th Street and NW 100th Street are all significant north-south roadways. Most of the commercial uses in the city have located along Merle Hay Road. Industrial employment is scattered along NW Beaver Drive. Concentrations of office



employment occur along NW 62nd Street, west of NW 86th Street and along Merle Hay Road.

East-west connections across the city are more limited and relatively undeveloped. Most traffic is oriented north-south which tends to divide Johnston and cause a portion of residents to funnel out of the city for retail goods and services.

This comprehensive plan emphasizes efforts to improve east-west connections throughout the city in order to enhance through traffic and create better linkages between employment, services and transportation. As additional housing development continues, NW 70th Avenue, NW 62nd Avenue and NW 54th Avenue will enhance linkages and access between housing, employment and services.

Because of the existing land use pattern as well as the natural characteristics of the community, it is difficult to integrate employment and housing in Johnston on a large-scale basis. Because the highest residential densities are scattered throughout the community and the employment growth will be predominately in the western section of the city, the roadway system and local and regional trails will be the primary means of linking the residential population to the employment base. The transportation section of the comprehensive plan seeks to establish an adequate roadway system to ensure appropriate access to local businesses. Additionally, transit may provide access to some employment destinations in the future. Over the course of the next 10 to 20 years, increasing numbers of people will be working out of their homes because of technological advances and changes in employment practices.



