



Destination Indianola

A vision plan for our community

Prepared by Indianola Hometown Pride - in cooperation with the City of Indianola, Indianola City Council, residents, and community partners - to fulfill the requirements of the

Iowa Great Places Designation Application

Approved in June 2020



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Indianola Hometown Pride, at the direction of the Indianola City Council, coordinated the vision planning process and the application to Iowa Great Places.

Thank you to the Indianola City Council for providing their endorsement of the Vision Plan at their June 1, 2020 meeting.

Plan Purpose & Scope

The purpose of the Vision Plan process was to identify what makes Indianola a “great place,” and to create a set of goals for Indianola’s future that will allow us to further enhance our community and its offerings.

This plan articulates our shared vision and goals for the future of Indianola, with a special focus on arts, culture, and amenities. It was created for the purpose of applying to the “Iowa Great Places” program, under the direction of a diverse advisory group (see page 2).

The vision plan includes goals and objectives in the following areas: Arts and Culture, Architecture, Diversity, Business Development, Historic Fabric, Housing Options, Natural Environment, Amenities.

Plan Process

We created the vision plan by drawing on the recently completed Indianola comprehensive plan, and seeking input from a diverse set of residents and community leaders.

Input into the process included:

- The 2020 Indianola Comprehensive Plan
 - 1,700 residents participated in the comprehensive plan process.
- The 2018 Downtown Assessment Report (provided by the Iowa Economic Development Authority)
- Iowa Great Places Advisory Group meetings and survey
 - Indianola Hometown Pride, together with an advisory team representing 20+ organizations and businesses across the community, met in October 2019 and March 2020 to discuss the goals of the Vision Plan and our application to Iowa Great Places. Participants are listed on page 2.
 - The advisory group was also asked to complete a survey regarding the future of our arts, culture, amenities, and historical assets.
 - The advisory group reviewed the Vision Plan and provided revisions.

What Makes Indianola Great

The residents of Indianola take great pride in our community character and strong sense of cultural identity. While our community has many special things that make it a “destination,” a few assets rose to the top for the participants of our vision planning process:

- **Hot Air Balloons.** Each summer for 9 days, the Indianola skies are filled with hundreds of hot air balloons during the National Balloon Classic. We’re also home to the National Balloon Museum, which celebrates 200 years of ballooning history, and welcomes 10,000 visitors from 20 different countries each year.
- **Education:** Simpson College and our local schools provide top-notch educational opportunities, and offer arts and culture experiences for the entire community. Indianola High School boasts a 97% graduation rate and strong arts programming, while Simpson College is known for its excellence in music, debate and real-world learning experiences.
- **Des Moines Metro Opera:** Indianola attracts world class opera performers and opera fans from around the world, for the annual summer opera series.
- **Natural assets:** Indianola offers 14 City parks and 8 miles of community trails. Lake Ahquabi State Park and the Annett Nature Center, both just south of Indianola, are some of the most beloved outdoor attractions in the region.
- **County Fair:** In Indianola, we really love our County fair! It comes up again and again any time residents talk about their favorite part of living here. Whether it’s our youth proudly showing their animals, or a Renaissance-era jousting match, our Indianola-based fair offers experiences from the classic to the unique!
- **Our Residents and “Small Town” way of life:** Vision plan participants agreed that the greatest assets of Indianola are our residents and the “small town” connection we feel with each other. Indianola residents take great pride in our community, and it shows:
 - Indianola is home to more than 75 charitable organizations and clubs - that’s one organization for every 200 people!
 - More than 1,700 residents participated in the recent comprehensive plan process, a sign of high civic engagement.

“Destination Indianola” - Our Vision for Indianola

Vision Statement:

Indianola will be known for high-quality education, a thriving business economy, enriching amenities, and small town character.

Note: This same vision statement is also part of the Indianola comprehensive plan.

Supporting Statements:

We will be a community that:

- Serves as a regional destination for visitors and residents, by offering the very best in arts, culture, education, recreation, entrepreneurship and more.
- Celebrates and promotes the things that make us unique - Balloons, Education, Nature & Opera
- Elevates the Arts in all its forms
- Embraces cultural diversity
- Celebrates our historical assets, including historic architecture on the square, history-themed museums, and our registered historic sites
- Provides public amenities, such as parks and trails, that support a high quality of life
- Values and protects the natural environment
- Supports and grows our local business community
- Attracts visitors to our town, and provides a stellar experience that brings them back for more
- Offers diverse housing options so that anyone can afford to live in our great community!

In service of the vision described above, we created a set of goals and objectives that are detailed on the following pages.

Goals and Objectives

The goals are organized according to the categories provided by the Iowa Great Places application guidelines, in order to make it easy for the review team to evaluate. The only exceptions are that the Diversity category has been expanded to include “Diversity and Collaboration” and the Historic Fabric and Architecture categories have been combined to bring together aligning goals.

The tables that follow include goals from the comprehensive plan that are most relevant to our Vision. We also support the comprehensive plan in its entirety, which can be found at indianolaiowa.gov.

1. Arts, Culture, and Community

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
1a Increase the presence of the arts throughout our community.	1a-i: Open an art gallery or art center.	5-10 years	Private Business, Simpson College, Local Artists
	1a-ii: Install art on streets and in public spaces, such as murals, sculptures, and installation pieces. Make frequent use of the balloon theme to reinforce our brand.	0-2 years and beyond	City of Indianola, Local Artists, Hometown Pride, Simpson College, Local businesses, Civic groups, Building owners, Keep Indianola Beautiful
	1a-iii: Host more outdoor performances.	Ongoing	Indianola Concert Association, Carousel Theatre, Simpson College, Parks & Recreation, Chamber of Commerce
1b Expand the impact of our existing arts and culture institutions, through financial investments, promotion, and volunteer support.	1b-i: Increase promotion and investment in our performing arts “gems”: Carousel Theatre, the Des Moines Metro Opera, and K-12 drama & music programs.	Ongoing	Carousel Theatre, Des Moines Metro Opera, Residents, Indianola Public Schools, Chamber of Commerce
	1b-ii: Improve and expand local library facilities and operations. Develop a plan for future expansion of library facilities. (Comp Plan CS-2-A)	Ongoing; 5-20 years	Library, City, Residents
1c Increase resident engagement with local arts and community organizations	1c-i: Provide more ways to “get the word out” about what’s happening, such as promoting the community calendar and local media outlets.	0-2 years	Local Media, Chamber of Commerce
	1c-ii: Host an annual volunteer fair to share volunteer opportunities with residents.	Ongoing	Simpson College, Hometown Pride

1d Embrace Balloons as the central part of our unique community identity, and use it to grow our notoriety in Iowa and the Midwest.	1d-i: Include balloon themes as part of the comprehensive marketing and branding strategy described in goal 4A.	2-5 years	City of Indianola, Chamber of Commerce
	1d-ii: Increase promotion and investment in the National Balloon Classic and the National Balloon Museum.	Ongoing	National Balloon Classic, National Balloon Museum, Residents
	1d-iii: Include balloon themes in public art (see objective 1a-ii).	0-2 years, Ongoing	City of Indianola, Local Artists, Hometown Pride, Simpson College

2. Amenities

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
2a Expand our walking and biking trails, and connect trails to our parks	2a-i: Require dedication of recreational trail easements concurrent with plat approvals by 2021. <i>(Comp Plan, CS-3-B-ii)</i>	0-2 years	Parks and Recreation, City Planning Dept
	2a-ii: Apply for trail grants on an annual basis. <i>(Comp plan, CS-3-B-i)</i>	Ongoing	Parks and Recreation, Hometown Pride
	2a-iii: Support the City of Carlisle in their efforts to build the Des Moines-to-Carlisle connection, since this will ultimately connect Des Moines to Indianola.	5-10 years	City of Indianola, City of Carlisle, Warren County Conservation Board, Hometown Pride
2b Maintain and improve existing park amenities and add amenities to new parks <i>(Comp Plan CS-3-A)</i>	2b-i: Expand the Memorial Park outdoor amphitheater, to grow our ability to host outdoor cultural events.	5-10 years	City of Indianola, Local performance groups
	2b-ii: Adopt a citywide Park System Master Plan to direct active and passive recreation facilities and programs. <i>(Comp Plan, CS-3-A-i)</i>	0-5 years	Parks and Recreation Dept
	2b-iii: Add at least 1 splash pad/wading pool by 2025. <i>(Comp Plan, CS-3-A-iv)</i>	2-5 years	Parks and Recreation Dept; Hometown Pride
2c Make the downtown square a vibrant and active retail node <i>(Comp Plan, ED-3)</i>	2c-i: Use special events to draw people to the square. <i>(Comp Plan, ED-3-C)</i> (Build on success of existing events like Wine, Witches & Brews and Girls Night Out.)	Ongoing	Downtown businesses, Local nonprofits, Chamber, City, DSA
	2c-ii: Create a customized brand and logo specifically for the downtown square. <i>(Comp Plan, ED-3-A-i)</i>	2-5 years	City of Indianola, Chamber, Hometown Pride
	2c-iii: Develop the downtown streetscape described in the City Square Master Plan (wayfinding system, gateway elements, outdoor dining). <i>(Comp Plan, ED-3-B)</i>	2-5 years	City of Indianola
	2c-iv: Install public art (e.g. murals, sculptures, interactive exhibits, selfie stations, etc.) to support the brand and establish a unique sense of place.	2-5 years	City of Indianola, Chamber of Commerce, Hometown Pride, Civic groups, Keep Indianola Beautiful

	<i>(Downtown Assessment Visit Report, Comp Plan: ED-3-A-v)</i>		
	2c-v: Offer programs for building maintenance, restoration, preservation and revitalization. <i>(Comp Plan, ED-4-A)</i>	0-10 years	Community & Economic Dev. Dept, Chamber of Commerce, Iowa EDA
2d Improve the aesthetics of our community gateways	2d-i: Install new entrance signage at entrances to the City.	5-10 years	City of Indianola
2e Build on our strong summer event presence to become a year-round draw.	2e-i: Add a signature winter event that draws visitors to Indianola and brings activity to local businesses.	2-5 years	Local Nonprofits, National Balloon Classic, Hometown Pride, Chamber of Commerce, Wineries
	2e-ii: Market our year-round attractions, such as wineries, restaurants, all-season recreation options (see goal 4a).	see goal 4a	see goal 4a
	2e-iii: Integrate themes from our signature summer events into public art and other attractions that can be seen year-round (See goal 1a).	0-2 years, 2-5 years	City of Indianola, Local Artists, Hometown Pride, Simpson College

3. Diversity & Collaboration

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
3a Connect Simpson College and the Community, both physically and symbolically (Improve “town/gown” relations)	3a-i: Create an art corridor between campus and downtown by installing a series of public art pieces and lighting.	Phased project over 5-10 years	City of Indianola, Hometown Pride, Simpson College, Local Artists
	3a-ii: Increase volunteerism in the community among Simpson students by growing the annual community organization fair and improving year-round communication between campus and local non-profits.	Ongoing	Simpson College - Student Development; Hometown Pride
3b Cross-market our local attractions	3b-i: Expand City’s wayfinding system to help unify all our destinations, and direct people from one attraction to another. If designated, include Iowa Great Places designation on the signage!	5-10 years	City of Indianola, Chamber of Commerce, Hometown Pride

4. Business Development

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
4a	4a-i: Develop a brand and update the logo for the city. (Comp Plan, ED-2-A-i)	2-5 years	City of Indianola

Use citywide marketing to promote tourism and local businesses (Comp Plan, ED-2-A)	4a-ii: Use the brand and logo in marketing (e.g. signage, maps, social media, etc.). (Comp Plan, ED-2-A-ii)	Ongoing	City of Indianola, Chamber of Commerce
	4a-iii: Use public relations to generate interest in downtown. (Downtown Assessment Visit Report) (Comp Plan, ED-2-A-iii)	Ongoing	City of Indianola, Chamber of Commerce
	4a-iv: Establish a Warren County Convention & Visitors Bureau and hire a County-wide Tourism Director, who will promote Indianola and other communities.	2-5 years	Warren County Economic Development, Warren County Hometown Pride, Cities of Indianola, Norwalk & Carlisle, Chamber of Commerce
	4a-v: Take advantage of the services offered by Catch Des Moines, Travel Iowa, Google Maps and other platforms, to help promote our area.	0-2 years	National Balloon Classic, Des Moines Metro Opera, Warren County Hometown Pride, Private Business Owners
4b Proactively seek new businesses that will diversify and strengthen the economy (Comp Plan, ED-1-B)	4b-i: Identify sites suitable for new restaurants and market those sites to restaurateurs. (Comp Plan, ED-1-B-i)	0-5 years	Chamber of Commerce, City of Indianola
	4b-ii: Establish a business incubator. (Comp Plan, ED-1-B-iv)	5-10 years	Chamber of Commerce, City of Indianola
4c Encourage entrepreneurship and support of local businesses development (Comp Plan, ED-2-B)	4c-i: Establish grant programs that can assist with local business startups and expansion. (Comp Plan, ED-2-B-i)	5-10 years	Chamber of Commerce, City of Indianola
	4c-ii: Establish educational, mentorship, and networking programs. (Comp Plan, ED-2-B-ii)	2-5 years	Chamber of Commerce, City of Indianola

5. Natural Environment

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
5a Protect wetlands, prairies, stream corridors, and other wildlife habitat (Comp Plan, ES-3-A)	5a-i: Acquire environmentally sensitive land for protection. (Comp Plan, ES-3-A-ii)	5-10 years	Parks & Recreation, INHF, WCCB, IDNR
	5a-ii: Foster community connection, access and awareness of natural resources through wildlife parks, trails, and programs. (Comp Plan, ES-3-A-iv)	Ongoing	Parks & Recreation, WCCB, IDNR
5b	5b-i: Establish an annual tree-planting program for public and private properties. (Comp Plan, ES-3-B-i)	0-5 years	Parks & Recreation, City Planning Dept

Expand urban tree canopy (Comp Plan, ES-3-B)	5b-ii: Adopt a tree preservation ordinance. (Comp Plan, ES-3-B-ii)	0-5 years	Parks & Recreation, City Planning Dept
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6. Historic Fabric & Architecture

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
6a Celebrate the Rich History of our Town Square and its architecture	6a-i: Finish installation of plaques around the Square explaining the history of individual buildings and how they were used.	0-2 years	Warren County Historical Society & Museum, Business owners on Square
	6a-ii: Maintain and promote the existing (and new) historical plaques.	Ongoing	Warren County Historical Society & Museum, Businesses on Square
	6a-iii: Offer an annual architectural walking tour of the square.	0-2 years	Warren County Historical Society & Museum, Business Owners, Chamber of Commerce
6b Support and enhance the Warren County Historical Museum	6b-i: Promote the museum to visitors and residents, as part of objectives 4a-iv & 4a-v.	0-2 years	Residents, Warren County Historical Museum, Tourism office (not yet est.)
6c Support and expand knowledge of local history among residents	6c-i: In addition to Pioneer Days for all third-grade classrooms, identify opportunities where local history is integrated into school curriculum through field trips (ie walking tours) and/or classroom materials.	2-5 years	Warren County Historical Society & Museum, Indianola Community School District

7. Housing Options

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
7a Provide a variety of attractive housing options for residents, accommodating all income levels and in all stages of life (Comp Plan, HN-1)	7a-i: Increase the availability of housing targeted toward households earning more than the city's median income. (Comp Plan, HN-1-A)	Ongoing	Developers, Neighborhoods
	7a-ii: Ensure the housing stock is safe and attractive. (Comp Plan, HN-1-B)	0-10 years	City, Neighborhoods, Developers
	7a-iii: Expand the variety of housing types. (Comp Plan, CHN-1-C)	5-10 years	City, Neighborhoods, Developers

Plan Implementation and Evaluation Metrics

The Hometown Pride committee will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Vision Plan, in partnership with the City of Indianola and the Iowa Great Places Advisory group (page 2).

Each year, the Hometown Pride committee will review the plan to determine which actions have been completed, and identify which goals are scheduled to be pursued in the coming year. The review will include the opportunity to modify the plan as conditions change and new opportunities arise. Indianola Hometown Pride will coordinate with our partners to ensure that action is taken on the goals.

Many of the above goals and objectives have already been committed to by the City through their comprehensive plan, which has its own implementation process (including an annual review). For these goals, the City and the Planning & Zoning Commission will take the lead on implementation, and Hometown Pride will coordinate with them to monitor progress.

What does success look like? (11 additional success metrics)

Though some of our goals will be easily measurable through the annual review process, such as establishing an art gallery or expanding a trail, many of them are harder to quantify, since their impact is relatively subjective and/or ongoing. We will have to regularly look at several additional factors to determine if we have been successful. We'll know we are successful if:

1. Our downtown square is thriving, as evidenced by full parking spaces, ample foot traffic, and zero vacancy in our storefronts.
2. Our non-profit organizations always have plenty of volunteers and resources to do their work.
3. We are known throughout the region as the home of Ballooning.
4. Our tourism industry is growing, as shown through the establishment of new hotels, new restaurants, and other tourist-oriented services.
5. Visual and performance art is ever-present on our streets and in our public spaces.
6. Our population grows, as residents from all different demographics flock to Indianola.
7. Simpson College students are more integrated into community life - volunteering, working, playing.
8. Our K12 schools are known and recognized for their excellence, and new residents cite the schools as a primary factor in coming to Indianola.
9. Our residents know our history and share it with others.
10. New businesses open up every year.
11. All our residents live within walking distance of a park or natural space.