



Keokuk Area

VISION WITH ACTION

Charting a course for our future

HOW WAS THE PLAN CREATED?

Over the past year, a group of dedicated volunteers dared to dream what our community and our area could become over the next 10 years. We began with a Strategic Planning Committee of more than 40 individuals who represented a wide range of community interests. We sought community input for our vision through surveys and community meetings. To develop the plan, we met monthly as a large group and more frequently as sub-committees.

After careful consideration and deliberation, the members of the Keokuk Area Vision project believe that an improved vision for our area lies in three major priorities:

- A) Improve Keokuk Area's Economy
- B) Improve Our Riverfront and Cultural, Recreational, and Tourism Assets
- C) Beautify the Community and Improve Our Ability to Care for Our Citizens

We have outlined a number of community goals that support these priorities and the strategic objectives that will make these goals a reality. We also present a Vision Story that illustrates what our community can become by the year 2016. And we list the Cornerstone Values that we considered as we developed our vision.

The plan presents a 10-year vision for Keokuk and the area. However, there are certain accomplishments that we have targeted as high priorities that should be tackled over the next 5 years. Those priorities are:

- Target expansion of Keokuk's manufacturing base
- Develop new riverfront and cultural, recreational, and tourism assets based on a to-be-developed Master Plan for the Riverfront
- Enhance the information technology opportunities for business, government and individuals
- Increase the attractiveness of our business and residential areas
- Improve the effectiveness of promoting Keokuk
- Spread our positive outlook, can-do spirit and community pride
- Establish a community service program, with employers, non-profit organizations, and volunteers of all ages, that will increase the number and effectiveness of volunteers

– Strategic Planning Committee,
Keokuk Area Vision with Action
May 2007

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Kathy Asbury	Jane Babcock	Mike Beaird	Kirk Brandenberger
Tom Crew	Janet Fife-Lafrenz	Joyce Glasscock	David Gudgel, co-chair*
Gary Johnson*	Cheri Kemp	Ed Kircher	Sharon Kokemueller
Kevin Kuckelman	Geraldine Lawson	Chris Lindner	Julia Logan*
Suzanne Messer	Chuck Mitchell	George Morgan	Leslie Niederschulte
Katie O'Brien*	Rev. Bill Mitchell	Mike O'Connor	Pat Poepping
Sue Prochazka	Tom Ross	Ron Schrieber	Beverly Simone
Mark Smidt, co-chair*	Joe Steil*	Meg Swan	Rick Tebbs
Ben Trane	Jerry Trimble	Justin Tuck	Rev. John Tyler
Al Zastrow	Jay Zetterlund	Britina Zirkel	

With assistance from William Wood and LaDene Bowen, staff at the University of Northern Iowa's Institute for Decision Making Staff

* Indicates members of the steering committee

OUR SHARED VISION

Connected to our past but motivated by our future, this is the Vision that we believe is possible for the Tri-States area by the year 2016:

Tall prairie grass bends under the delicate pressure of a misty river breeze, the wind carrying the muted sounds of traders and merchants bartering their goods while the subtle scent of smoke and rain collide in the thick morning air. In the distance, the solemn rhythmic beat of drums declares that this is the land of the Sac and the Fox. It is morning in Keokuk 1816, and the future for this small settlement seems eternally distant, the stuff of dreams and fantasy...but the future is already unfolding.

Today, two hundred years later, Keokuk 2016 is a vibrant and welcoming community built upon and well beyond the bluffs of its original trading post. The thriving downtown district, still significantly characterized by historic architecture, is a dynamic, living environment of retailers and offices by day, of restaurants and entertainment in the evening, and of residences to those who have created lofts and apartments in the upper levels of its restored buildings. The seamless integration of old and new, of history and technology has produced social energy through creative restoration and re-use of our structural heritage.

A vibrant cultural and business district has been one of the powerful benefits of the economic strength of Keokuk 2016. By diversifying the economic base from a solely industrial foundation and embracing the reality of doing business in a global environment, the community identified niches in green industries utilizing its natural river resources, as well as the development of agriculturally based products and services. Most importantly, the capacity of its people was championed as educators and entrepreneurs worked together to begin training students today to become leaders in the local economic future of tomorrow.

Leadership training created another powerful resource of instilling community pride in the citizens of Keokuk 2016. A culture of city wide volunteerism offered people of every age and background opportunities to enrich its community through public service, humanitarian assistance and collaboration of talents and gifts held within the lives of its citizens. The welcoming sense of being home, the overwhelming satisfaction of producing change, and the living realization of the interdependence of community, produced not just contented townfolk, but genuine guardians of a way of life. Keokuk 2016 celebrates the quality of small town living on the Mississippi River. It preserves its historical relevance as it is reinterpreted for future re-utilization.

The mist still rises from the surface of the Mississippi River each morning, but the fur trader and the Sac tribe are gone. Their spirit, however, still lives on in the hearts of those who call Keokuk 2016 their home. It is evident in their enjoyment of the river and through their investment into their families. Their pride in their homes and businesses, their satisfaction in living among familiar faces and their commitment to instill excellence in the community reflects the legacy from which they have come and secures the foundation for those who will call Keokuk their home a hundred years from now.

LEADING INTO THE FUTURE

The following organizations have endorsed or supported the Vision plan and agreed to provide leadership over the next 10 years:

- Business and Professional Women
- Center for Business and Industrial Services
- Central Lee Community School District
- City of Keokuk*
- Girl Scouts of Shining Trail Council
- Great River Region
- Hamilton (Illinois) School District
- Holy Trinity Catholic Schools
- Keokuk Airport Commission
- Keokuk Area Chamber of Commerce*
- Keokuk Area Community Foundation
- Keokuk Area Convention and Tourism Bureau*
- Keokuk Area Hospital
- Keokuk Area Hospital Foundation
- Keokuk Catholic Schools
- Keokuk Christian Academy
- Keokuk Community School District*
- Keokuk Cultural and Entertainment District
- Keokuk Economic Development Corporation*
- Keokuk Fine Arts Council
- Keokuk Fire Department
- Keokuk Health Systems
- Keokuk Historic Preservation Commission
- Keokuk Housing Authority
- Keokuk Human Rights Commission
- Keokuk Kiwanis Club
- Keokuk Lions Club
- Keokuk Ministerial Association
- Keokuk Park and Recreation Board
- Keokuk Police Department
- Keokuk Public Library
- Keokuk Rotary Club*
- Keokuk Yacht Club
- Keokuk YNet
- Konnections
- Lee County Conservation Board
- Lee County Economic Development Group
- Main Street Keokuk*
- Midwest Academy
- Odd Fellows
- Rollin' on the River
- Small Business Development Center
- Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission
- Southeast Iowa Regional Port Authority
- Southeastern Community College
- Southeastern Community College Business Department
- Tri-State Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Abuse
- Tri-State Development Summit – Transportation Task Force
- United Way
- Warsaw (Illinois) School District
- YMCA

* Indicates financial contributor to the Vision program

FOR MORE INFORMATION

A complete version of the Vision plan also is available. The complete version elaborates on the plan's goals, aims and objectives. These details include the success indicators, completion dates, lead and secondary organizations responsible for implementation, and suggested strategies for each objective. The complete plan also contains additional background information, including the Cornerstone Values.

To obtain the complete plan or get more information on Keokuk and the Tri-States area: visit the chamber's website at www.keokukchamber.com; write the chamber at Keokuk Area Chamber of Commerce office, 329 Main St., Keokuk, Iowa 52632; or call the chamber at 319-524-5055.

Keokuk Area's Goals for Achieving Our Vision

GOAL 1: Improve the Keokuk Area Economy

Target expansion of Keokuk's commercial and manufacturing base

- Develop a new industrial park and related infrastructure
- Increase economic development funding levels toward business expansion and growth
- Further develop the Port Authority for manufacturing and product distribution warehousing by recruiting outside investors, more warehousing and establishing a foreign trade zone
- Recruit additional green industry to capitalize on Keokuk's natural resources
- Recruit support businesses for core existing industries

Revitalize the Main Street district and develop area retail and commercial businesses

- Strengthen historic downtown retail district
- Develop and implement a marketing plan communicating to potential prospects and creating greater awareness of types of businesses desired in the community
- Rehabilitate one block of Main Street as a demonstration project aimed at stimulating interest and commitment for additional rehabilitation projects
- Increase upper floor development
- Market, publicize and utilize the state and federal programs that are available for retail and service businesses

Develop Keokuk's skilled and professional workforce

- Pilot a workforce training center program that would target vocational education, creating a skilled workforce (including home improvement trades and potential new industry trades)
- Expand business mentoring programs at the high school level
- Create more opportunities in the fields of vocational and industrial technology by developing a stronger partnership between Southeastern Community College and area schools

Enlarge the Keokuk Area economic role and leadership position in Southeast Iowa and the Tri-State region

- Collaborate with other organizations in the Keokuk area for four-lane development of Highway 61 and other regional highways
- Implement the Great River Region's marketing initiative

Enhance the information technology opportunities of businesses, government, and individuals

- Coordinate with Lee County to develop a county-wide GIS system and make data sets free and Web accessible to everyone
- Develop a master plan for improvements of services to meet future needs (for example, cable, Internet, telephone, transportation, utilities)
- Promote and establish dependable access to Internet services, including a Wi-Fi cloud (wireless Internet connections) for the downtown and other community areas for businesses and residents

Expand entrepreneurship

- Create an entrepreneur program involving the community and the Southeastern Community College to provide start-up business assistance
- Continue to recognize, support and spotlight entrepreneurial businesses in Keokuk



Enhance availability of healthcare services to attract and retain patients from the community and region

- Educate the community as to the value and importance of a local hospital and affiliated medical services
- Lobby for equitable reimbursement from the Medicare and Medicaid programs for Keokuk Area Hospital and Iowa's six other "tweener" hospitals that have been left out of the reimbursement improvement programs that have been implemented for Critical Access Hospitals and larger urban organizations
- Increase Keokuk's regional draw for health care
- Increase the endowment for health care in Keokuk

Improve Keokuk's streets, parking, utilities, airport, and other similar infrastructure

- Develop 7th Street entrance to Main Street with welcome sign, park and green space
- Continue street improvement project plan on an annual basis
- Continue to upgrade airport facilities, developing Keokuk's airport into an inviting "doorway" to the community, utilizing and developing this asset for economic development.
- Create a master plan for additional parking in the downtown with front landscaping, art, gardens, etc.
- Develop and adopt a plan for various city codes and for expansion of future retail/commercial development

Increase the percentage of students completing high school and encourage more students to complete higher education programs

- Create a community based advisor/advisee program based on career aspirations
- Track the graduates of area schools, using exit interview results and other information, to find out ultimate career success
- Strategic Objective: Strengthen Keokuk's architectural character
- Attract and encourage local and out-of-town entrepreneurs to invest in downtown businesses and buildings through architectural, historical and financial assistance
- Identify and market the Main Street and downtown buildings that are structurally sound enough to be rehabilitated

GOAL 2: Improve our riverfront and cultural, recreational and tourism assets

Develop new riverfront and other tourism-destination assets

- Review, modify and/or develop a master plan for riverfront development south of U.S. Lock and Dam #19
- Acquire, restore and develop the depot into a community facility
- Develop a convention / meeting hall
- Build a facility for outdoor concerts or events on the riverfront

Offer a variety of options for entertainment, dining, the arts, and culture

- Develop a commercial entertainment district building on Keokuk theme
- Provide abundant recreational opportunities
- Improve and develop hiking and biking trails, including signage and amenities (picnic, rest areas) in the Keokuk area, along the riverfront and along river road
- Construct a new, modern city pool that the Keokuk area can be proud of and that meets the many and varied needs of the whole community, helping people to come together in one location

Improve the effectiveness of promoting the Keokuk area

- Develop and implement an image campaign and marketing plan to promote the assets of the area, including a community-wide theme, brochures, posters, banners, and media advertising to reach area residents and potential visitors
- Establish a Keokuk web site that promotes the area and its opportunities with links to and from business, government and visitor sites



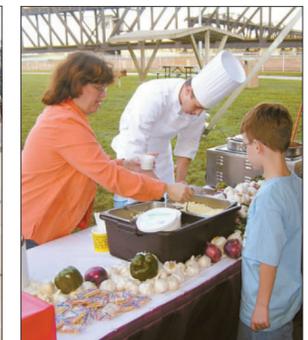
Increase Keokuk area's tourism-related business opportunities

- Utilize Pool 19 of the Mississippi River by developing master plans for the river north of the lock and dam
- Coordinate efforts to actively bid for tournaments and/or various sporting activities and events
- Coordinated with the marketing plan, produce an enhanced community/visitor's guide that incorporates a community-wide theme
- Create a Think Keokuk Area First campaign
- Improve connections between the river and downtown
- Create an information/welcome center
- Develop an activities/events plan that draws visitors to the riverfront



Enhance visitor friendly qualities, such as hospitality, signage, and a welcoming spirit

- Establish and present a hospitality training program for retailers, police officers, taxi drivers and city workers that provides front-line personnel general information on business and historic and tourist attractions
- Expand a "Tour Keokuk Area" program that attracts group tours to the community
- Evaluate, consolidate and coordinate community signage and entrances with community theme



GOAL 3: Beautify the community and improve our ability to care for our citizens

Spread our positive outlook, can-do spirit and community pride

- Tied to the community image campaign, educate the community by creating a weekly, monthly, or annual spotlights for the Keokuk Vision - Keokuk's Positive Points - utilizing PSAs on radio, TV, and newspaper - highlighting initiatives and people
- Update the tour of historic homes and tourist sites and publicize the availability of the program that attracts motor coach tours to the area
- Continue to host annual meeting of area churches and service institutions with school at-risk personnel to build collaborative relationships
- Develop a student television program created to air on local access channel featuring student perspectives on community issues
- Engage north, south, east, and west residents to provide input as to their everyday issues and needs by holding "listening posts" by community wards

Increase the beauty and attractiveness of our business and residential areas

- Re-establish Christmas in May project
- Expand the city cleanup and park adoptions to a Make a Difference Day campaign
- Continue to address key efforts to improve the environment - air, water, and sound quality
- Establish a tax incentive program for restoration and property improvements (for example, a sidewalk program)
- Ensure the development of sidewalks in new housing areas through the city codes

Increase access to a variety of resources that will enhance the Keokuk area quality of life

- Establish a community grant writing service coordinator
- Expand access to technology resources at the library, schools, and other facilities
- Create workforce development opportunities for area workers to utilize the high schools' industrial technology labs, media centers, and computer technologies
- Integrate all local/area educational institutions, as well as, local com-

mercial businesses to create accessibility to up-to-date equipment and technology training for the labor base

Ensure the safety of our residents and visitors

- Continue adequate staffing and equipment for police and fire protection
- Rejuvenate neighborhood watch groups

Provide a wide range of housing options

- Utilize the results of the community housing study to develop an incentive program for new housing development and market to potential contractors and developers
- Identify decrepit homes in the community, acquire and remove



Improve the effectiveness of recruiting, training, and using volunteers and volunteer leaders

- Encourage and recognize student community service hours
- Affirm and support the development of leadership in the Keokuk area, utilizing projects such as the Keokuk Area Community Foundation's leadership summit
- Promote, recognize and support effective volunteerism by serving as the resource and coordination center for volunteers and a builder of coalitions and community partnerships
- Recruit additional civic volunteers to city boards and commissions by hosting and inviting all citizens to attend a gathering to highlight the boards and commissions, recognize and thank current board members and commissioners, discuss the roles and responsibilities of the different boards and commissions, and recruit volunteers for vacancies

