
Chapter 1. Introduction

Community Overview

The City of Mechanicsville is a community of about 1,020 people as of the 2020 decennial census. It is located in the northwest corner of Cedar County. The city is located on US Highway 30 about ten miles east of the city of Mt. Vernon. Mechanicsville is about 25 miles east of Cedar Rapids, 30 miles northeast of Iowa City, 60 miles west of the Quad Cities, and 70 miles south west of Dubuque.

Purpose

The City of Mechanicsville Comprehensive Plan provides the City Council with a twenty-year guide for future decision making. The Comprehensive Plan establishes the community’s vision for the future and identifies a recommended set of actions that the community can take to realize that vision. The Comprehensive Plan focuses on all issues relevant to the development of the community, including land development, housing, economic growth, and infrastructure maintenance. The Comprehensive Plan is not a legal regulatory document. Instead, it is a roadmap for the future of the community that has been agreed upon by its citizens and leaders.

To achieve the vision set forth in the Comprehensive Plan, the community must actively work to incorporate the recommendations of the plan into its budgets, policies, and ordinances. Many of the recommendations listed in the plan will require additional research, analysis, public input, and consideration from the City Council before they can be implemented. When choosing how to implement the Comprehensive Plan, the City Council should consider all relevant factors and weigh the public good with the cost and impact on the community.

Once adopted, the Comprehensive Plan is not an infallible or unchangeable document. The plan should be updated every five to ten years, or when necessary, so that it continues to provide an accurate picture of how the community wishes to grow, develop, and prosper.



“Downtown Mechanicsville”

Iowa Smart Planning

The Iowa Smart Planning Act was signed into law by the Governor in 2010, as a way to guide and encourage the development of local comprehensive plans. The bill articulates ten smart planning principles and thirteen comprehensive plan elements for application in local comprehensive plan development and public decision making. These guidelines are intended to improve economic opportunities, preserve the natural environment, protect quality of life and ensure equitable decision-making processes. The Mechanicsville Comprehensive Plan addresses all Smart Planning principles and elements, but is organized in a way that best fits the City of Mechanicsville needs.

Iowa Smart Planning Principles



- Collaboration
- Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency
- Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy
- Occupational Diversity
- Revitalization
- Housing Diversity
- Community Character
- Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection
- Sustainable Design
- Transportation Diversity

Comprehensive Planning Elements



- 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

Chapter 2. Community Vision

Introduction

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to present a vision for the future of all activities that affect the growth and development of the community. Community engagement is critical to the development of that vision and to the comprehensive planning process. Citizens of Mechanicsville played a key role in the creation of the Mechanicsville Comprehensive Plan. This chapter outlines Mechanicsville’s vision for the future and summarizes the community engagement process used to develop it.

Community Engagement

Planning and Zoning Commission

The Mechanicsville Planning and Zoning Commission, consisting of community members appointed by the City Council, was the primary contributor to the planning process. The Commission met throughout the process and all meetings were open to the public. At its meetings, the Commission reviewed plan progress, worked on vision statements, identified issues, and provided feedback on draft documents.

The Commission members served as representatives of the broader community. Early in the process, the Commission participated in feedback sessions to identify ideas for the future of the community. As the planning process moved forward the Commission’s role shifted to reviewing and providing feedback on draft chapters.

Community Survey

A community survey was used as a method for collecting community input for the Comprehensive Plan. The survey was conducted between October - November 2021. The online survey form was published on the ECIA website and distributed locally via the monthly water bill. A total of 143 people responded to the twenty-nine-question survey. Following the completion of the survey, the Commission used the results as a guide for developing the Comprehensive Plan. Please visit the Mechanicsville comprehensive plan website at https://ecia.org/Mechanicsville_Plan/

Vision and Development Principles

After considering all the input collected from the community through the planning process, the City of Mechanicsville and the Planning and Zoning Commission developed a vision for the future of the community.

Community Vision

“The City of Mechanicsville will work to improve the quality of life by maintaining existing housing, public space, and community resources. The community will embrace new opportunities that help enhance the town’s unique character and economic prospects.”

To help Mechanicsville achieve its vision for the future, the plan includes six development principles. The principles represent the most important topics that emerged through public input sessions and work with the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Improve Parks and Recreation

The existing park system in Mechanicsville is well maintained and popular among residents. Expansion and maintenance of the existing park system to help accommodate more recreational activities is a goal for the community. Park and recreation programs help improve the quality of life for residents and can be a source of affordable entertainment and engagement.

Increase Housing Options and Quality

Mechanicsville's housing stock is largely made up of single-family residential homes. The community has suggested that a more options such as apartments, condos, and multi family would help give residents more affordable options in the local housing market. Maintenance of existing housing units is also a high priority for the community.

Maintain Mechanicsville's Small-Town Character

Many residents have noted that Mechanicsville has always had a charming, small-town character that has helped create tight knit connection among residents. The community aims to maintain the social character of Mechanicsville as well as help new residents become quickly integrated into the existing social fabric.

Revitalize Downtown Mechanicsville and its Historic Assets

One of Mechanicsville's greatest assets is its historic downtown; it is the community's goal to create a downtown that is attractive and lively. To this end, maintenance of facades and commercial units is a high priority as well as attracting businesses that appeal to a broader demographic of residents.

Increase Development of Current and Future Businesses

Currently, there are very few businesses in the City of Mechanicsville and many residents seek out goods and services in surrounding towns. The community has made it a high priority to attract new businesses and retain existing businesses in Mechanicsville. This will help keep disposable income within the city and help improve the quality of life for residents. When considering businesses Mechanicsville's highest priority is attracting local businesses that contribute the most to the economy.

Attract New Residents and Retain Existing Population

Keeping and adding residents is very high priority for Mechanicsville, which has seen a steadily decreasing population over the last few decades. Adding more residents increases the possibility that private development will take interest in Mechanicsville and more amenities can be added to improve the quality of life for all residents.