



3. Moving Forward: Objectives and Action Strategies

The significance of the vision lies in the actions taken to realize it. This chapter details, for each strategic theme, the objectives, their rationales and the means for achieving them. This is where the “rubber meets the road.”

The key element is the Action Strategy for achieving each objective. The Action Strategy includes a “starting point” representing the most appropriate place to start work. The starting points are described in some detail. Additional follow-on or supporting actions that will help to achieve the objective are also included.

It is important to note that the actions identified through the **big.small.all.** process respond to the current issues and conditions in the county. It will be necessary to adapt them to include, supplement and support ongoing and future initiatives originating apart from **big.small.all.** As time passes and conditions change the implementation effort will evolve. New action strategies will emerge to best realize the objectives and goals of the vision.

A Collaborative County

These objectives speak to a desire to work better together, understand one another and be prepared to work cooperatively and effectively to pursue shared goals.

- County Identity
- Tolerant Community
- Strategic Thinking
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Efficient Public Services
- Participatory Government
- Representative Government
- Town & Gown Relationship
- County-wide Transportation Planning

County Identity

All our objectives require effective concerted action, which can only come about with unity of purpose. Unity of purpose can be developed and maintained with a stronger sense of mutual interests and shared values.



Credit: Darrell Hoemann

Objective

The residents of Champaign County will have a strong sense of being part of a single community with shared values and common interests.

Starting Point

Organize an annual event intended to bring all the people of the county together in a comfortable and fun setting that also helps broaden understanding and mutual appreciation of every element of the county community.

This could entail one or more activities such as a chautauqua, exhibition, tour, etc. It would have to be attractive to a wide array of persons and strongly promoted county-wide.

An appropriate entity with county-wide responsibility could organize participation by a broad cross-section of organizations, businesses, and governments to underwrite and produce the event.

Other Actions

- Organize an annual county-wide dance for high school students from all districts.
- Host forums, seminars, exhibitions, etc. focusing on issues that affect the entire county and that highlight common interests.
- Organize field trips, employee exchanges, and other means of broadening people's exposure to other communities within the county.
- Organize projects to involve people across the county in the same activity, like book reading, film screenings, etc.

A Tolerant Community

Relations between different racial, ethnic, and religious groups have been a challenge historically and remain so today. Moving the entire community forward on key initiatives with concerted and unified purpose requires that all persons feel included and valued in the community.



Objective

Champaign County will be a model of tolerance, harmony and respect for racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity.

Starting Point

Develop specific proactive strategies to promote tolerance and mutual understanding.

Many techniques have been developed around the country to do this. A systematic survey and evaluation could identify the approaches and specific programs with the greatest relevance to our community.

This initiative could be undertaken by a panel of key stakeholders with the support of community leadership and appropriate local agencies.

Strategic Thinking

We live in a challenging, fast-paced world. This dynamic requires a much greater understanding of the current conditions and trends and the interconnections between Champaign County, the region, and beyond.



Objective

Organizations, businesses and governments in Champaign County will have a clear sense of their place at the state, national and global scale, and of the ways that global trends and conditions affect their immediate and long term prospects.

Starting Point

Develop a set of agreed upon county-wide statistical indicators that track conditions relevant to the objectives contained here.

Statistical indicators can be developed that relate to most objectives in this vision. In most cases, data is already collected and published by other entities and would only need to be compiled for this purpose. In other cases new efforts to collect data would be required.

A central entity would need to work with key interests to develop one indicator (or possibly more) for each objective. This may be done by touching base with stakeholders in some cases and in others may require more extended discussion.

Other Actions

- Establish an agriculture blue ribbon panel to report on the current state and prospects of agriculture in the county, including the status and conversion of farmland. The panel would consist of recognized experts in agriculture and related disciplines, and appointees by townships from a geographically-representative set of rural townships.
- Develop an annual economic report for Champaign County addressing all key sectors, including agriculture, and supported by an advisory panel with appropriate experts in each field.
- Host forums and other discussions of global trends and conditions that do or may affect Champaign County.
- Develop an agreed upon list of other U.S. communities with whom we compete for new public and private investment and compare Champaign County's performance on key indicators with those competitors.
- Host exhibits, competitions, etc. that focus on the long-term future of the county and imaginative ways to meet potential challenges.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Champaign County has many independent governmental units with overlapping jurisdictions. Moving forward on any specific initiative usually requires consensus from numerous local taxing districts that coordinate and implement public policy, planning, and appropriation of resources. More efficient, effective and coordinated delivery of public services will also reduce public expenditures.

Objective

Champaign County will be a place where intergovernmental cooperation is actively undertaken by all units of government.

Starting Point

Strengthen county-wide governmental councils for various government bodies.

A central agency would work with existing organizations to assist them with developing and promoting agendas, meeting logistics, and recording and reporting on meeting results.

Other Actions

- Inventory existing governmental entities and their current cooperative efforts, and identify opportunities for improved communication or cooperation.
- Create joint alliances for service provision whenever possible.
- Promote communication and cooperation on a regional basis beyond the county's boundaries on important regional issues such as water supply, transportation, and the environment.

Efficient Public Services

More effective and efficient governmental services should translate into better government and lower costs. Fewer independent entities will make it easier for citizens to understand the authority and responsibilities of the governments that serve them. In other regions, fewer governmental units provide the same range of services, which may create a potentially significant competitive disadvantage for the county.

Objective

Duplicative services will be substantially eliminated and all appropriate opportunities for sharing or consolidating government responsibilities will be implemented.

Starting Point

Establish a process with strong public input to study consolidation opportunities.

An independent and credible group of citizens could create the process and undertake such a study. The study would identify opportunities for reducing public expenditures and improving public services based on operational efficiencies, availability of practical legal mechanisms, and supportive public opinion with respect to various alternatives for sharing or consolidating responsibilities.

This could be initiated by an independent civic organization with the participation of local governments.

Other Actions

- Conduct an inventory of existing municipal services and taxing bodies to identify those that could be combined or merged for economy and efficiency.

Participatory Government

A more involved citizenry ensures more responsive government and more effective policy. This is especially true today, since it is difficult to understand and navigate local governments, many of which have overlapping jurisdictions and responsibilities.



Objective

A significant proportion of the citizenry, of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds, will be actively engaged in local elections and in government decision-making and action.

Starting Point

Create a county-wide local government “ombudsman” office that can be contacted by any citizen to help them get to the right person in the right government to answer their question.

The “ombudsman” would serve all county units of government. The office would answer inquiries directly, maintain a web-based guide to local government, make presentations, and otherwise provide information. The “ombudsman” could be an added function of a county-wide entity and would need to be responsible to the local governments it supports.

Other Actions

- Develop, disseminate, and utilize simple, brief, pre-written lessons for the classroom to increase civics and voter awareness.
- Provide leadership training in school by giving students opportunities for substantive decision-making.
- Create opportunities for community leaders to visit and teach in schools through establishment of a speaker’s bureau.
- Increase opportunities for community participation by regularly scheduling town meetings, conducting thorough public information and outreach, and exploring multiple methods to reach stakeholders.
- Promote the creation of official, web-based mechanisms to post information and provide a forum for citizen input and dialogue.
- Encourage local radio and television stations to air shows and segments devoted to local government issues and community focus.

Representative Government

Good government requires appreciation of all perspectives in the community and sound decision-making processes. This requires that concerns be expressed effectively by persons who can speak credibly for constituent groups and who are also knowledgeable about government procedures, processes, and issues. It also requires independent critical review of government processes.



Objective

Citizen leaders will effectively represent all segments of the community.

Starting Point

Establish a non-partisan, government watchdog organization that can objectively explain ideas and policies, and help improve their effectiveness.

Bring together non-partisan leaders engaged in increasing representation and watchdog activities to examine the feasibility of supporting a staffed organization similar to the better government groups typically found in larger communities.

This could be initiated by an existing independent non-partisan organization engaged in these efforts.

Other Actions

- Publicize the advantages of and means to create nonpartisan decision making.
- Develop a resource guide to educate citizens about local government and encourage/facilitate participation.
- Establish an academy of local leaders and volunteers who go out and speak to clubs, groups, and schools to explain the function of all local governments in the county.
- Initiate an awards program to recognize community members who participate in local government activities.

Town & Gown Relationship

Our institutions of higher learning are among the best in the nation and a unique source of specialized knowledge and expertise. At the same time they are very important employers in highly competitive industries and have a special stake in the well-being and competitiveness of the community. It is crucial to leverage their substantial resources and address their concerns as we make decisions and undertake initiatives.



Credit: Darrell Hoemann

Objective

Leadership of the University of Illinois and Parkland College will bring the knowledge, skill and energy of their institutions to all significant civic initiatives.

Starting Point

Identify opportunities for the leadership of the University of Illinois and Parkland College to collaborate with the larger Champaign County community.

Identify past examples of successful collaboration as well as noteworthy misunderstandings or missed opportunities. Identify potential future collaborations and means to ensure timely communication and involvement and document them so that all key business, civic, and government entities can make best use of them.

This could be undertaken within the framework of an existing forum where the University and the College are represented.

Other Actions

- Foster comprehensive work force development and integration with technology transfer initiatives, focusing on high-tech workers and on under-skilled/underemployed employees.
- Support the University of Illinois master teacher program, as described in the University of Illinois Strategic Plan.
- Develop a plan for Parkland College and University of Illinois to support the K-12 educational system.

County-wide Transportation Planning

Present transportation planning efforts are tied to institutional structures with artificial boundaries. Travel and transportation questions extend throughout the county and need, therefore, to be coordinated on a county-wide basis.



Objective

Appropriate agencies will implement a coordinated county-wide transportation plan produced by a representative transportation planning program comparable to the Champaign Urbana Urbanized Area Transportation Study (CUUATS).

Starting Point

Identify the potential legal framework and means of funding a county-wide transportation plan.

Current law provides no clear mechanism to undertake transportation planning on a county-wide basis. Various means and legal authority exist but the optimal approach requires consideration and consultation with many parties.

An agency with county-wide responsibility, access to legal assistance, and appropriate expertise could be tasked to prepare this report.

Other Actions

- Create the legal, financial, and institutional framework needed to develop a county-wide transportation plan.
- Conduct a county-wide transportation study to research transportation needs and required infrastructure improvements including public transit, freight movement, and alternative transportation modes.
- Identify county roads to become “complete streets” which provide infrastructure for all transportation modes, as defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).
- Designate and protect selected streets or roadways that exhibit historical, cultural, or scenic value as “legacy lanes.”
- Provide county residents with education on the costs and benefits of all modes of transportation.