

A Supportive County

The objectives gathered here reflect a commitment to ensuring that everyone in Champaign County has access to the basic necessities of a secure, happy and dignified life in which they can contribute to larger life of the community.

- Health and Well-Being
- Healthcare Access
- Access to Services
- A Safe Community
- Affordable Housing
- Accessible Housing

Health and Well-Being

Apart from a simple concern for the well-being of county residents, these factors are a measure of prosperity and quality of life. Site selectors use statistical measures of well-being to identify good locations for business establishment and new investment. The county's ranking with respect to key measures affects the way it is viewed from outside by businesses and investors.



Objective

Key measures of health and safety will significantly improve for all residents in Champaign County.

Starting Point

Identify key health and safety factors that can be measured and establish a county baseline.

This would consider the statistics usually considered in competitive place rankings along with other measures identified by health professionals.

This could be a joint project between the business community, health sector and the University of Illinois. See also the Strategic Thinking action strategy on page 3.6.

Other Actions

- Provide assistance to local businesses to provide a healthy work environment and family-friendly policies.
- Promote healthy lifestyles and physical activity in schools and workplaces.

Healthcare Access

Physical and mental healthcare are key measures of well-being and happiness. A healthier community imposes fewer costs on business and government and is a more competitive location for new investment. Access to healthcare is uneven and subject to disruption by the vicissitudes of life. Wider access helps keep everyone on a footing where they can live more satisfying lives and participate more constructively in society.



Credit: Darrell Hoemann

Objective

Champaign County will be a national model for providing access to an affordable, integrated, comprehensive, and seamless model of healthcare.

Starting Point

Bring together relevant stakeholders to identify the most critical gaps in access to healthcare in the county and ways that those gaps can be addressed locally.

Overarching healthcare reform requires action at the state or federal level in an extremely difficult and politically charged context. Locally, we can address specific key service delivery issues and implement focused programs that contribute to better health and healthcare.

A body of healthcare professionals, social service agencies, civic groups, and business groups, could periodically formulate a set of broadly supported proposals to address key access or service delivery gaps.

Other Actions

- Promote constructive dialogue between healthcare providers, citizens, and healthcare advocacy groups.
- Increase awareness of preventative care and of healthcare programs and services.
- Expand information and referral services to create a county-wide assistance program modeled after an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to provide resource information to people in need throughout the county.
- Expand and ensure support for the Frances Nelson Health Center.

Access to Services

All residents, those in poverty and youth especially, need convenient nearby access to an array of services. Minimizing the costs of service delivery should include the costs borne by private individuals as well the costs to service providers.

Objective

Residents of every community will have convenient access to information, education, recreation, supportive services, and crisis intervention.

Starting Point

Assess the availability of services throughout the county. Identify critical deficiencies and gaps and develop a plan to address them.

Starting with the Community Needs Assessment and utilizing GIS technology assess the geographic distribution of families and individuals with particular needs along with the locations of service providers. Assess the need and potential means of better aligning service delivery with locations of greatest need.

A central agency could undertake this as an extension of the Community Needs Assessment process with technical assistance provided by local agencies and potentially by one or more academic units at the University of Illinois and/or Parkland College.

Other Actions

- Consider alternative means of service delivery including development of multi-function community centers or clusters throughout the county including, but not limited to: teen and family recreation and activities; clearing houses for information, employment, and services; education; healthcare; libraries; computer access; child care; and crisis intervention.
- Implement the Developmental Assets Model™, or an equivalent program, through Champaign County schools, churches, neighborhood organizations, community organizations, and social service providers.
- Expand temporary, emergency shelter and short-term housing options for families and individuals in conjunction with job training, counseling, and placement to promote self-sufficiency.



Credit: Darrell Hoemann

A Safe Community

The incidence of crime is a key element of the actual and perceived quality of life. It imposes costs on individuals and on the larger community and creates a special burden on low-income persons and at-risk youth who are most likely to be crime victims.



Credit: Darrell Hoemann

Objective

Champaign County's communities will be safe environments that effectively deter drug use, criminal activity, and inmate recidivism through an integrated county-wide system of evidence-based practices.

Starting Point

Create a county-wide interagency system to deter incarceration and/or recidivism; standardize screening between agencies; identify risk factors; make referrals to appropriate agencies; provide case management oversight; train first responders; train caregivers in cultural competency; identify community barriers to implementation; and develop an action plan for overcoming barriers to action.

Prioritize the various components of an integrated system and focus efforts on incrementally building the component parts.

A panel of key stakeholders can review the relevant criminal justice and social service delivery programs, prioritize them, and identify means to implement improvements with technical assistance from police, court, social service, and other agencies.

Other Actions

- Determine which community services are in need of improvement and what services are most valued.
- Identify social concerns throughout Champaign County, with special focus on unique needs in each locality, and formulate an appropriate response.
- Provide each community with an advocate to link individuals with agencies or organizations.
- Improve coordination between social service agencies to increase access and improve community well being.

Affordable Housing

Safe sound housing is a basic requirement for pursuing a livelihood, raising children, and participating productively in society. It is, therefore, in everyone's interest to try to ensure that all residents can find housing that meets their needs without putting undue strain on their household income.

Objective

All persons at every income level will be able to afford safe, quality housing.

Starting Point

Convene a panel of stakeholders to develop an agreed upon definition of affordable housing county-wide.

The concept of affordable housing has different meanings to different people depending on their circumstances. Development and implementation of policies to ensure affordability requires a common understanding of what is meant by the term “affordable”. The panel could be convened by a public or private entity with representation from the private sector, tenant groups, social service providers and government entities.

Other Actions

- Create a panel of stakeholders to review local regulations and identify barriers to the construction of affordable housing.
- Provide financial relief, such as reduced fees and tax incentives, to developers who build affordable housing on contiguous undeveloped sites and built-up areas in the county.
- Extend and expand programs to promote owner-occupied housing, e.g., first time home buyer funding, non-profit mortgage company, etc.
- Create a panel of stakeholders to identify and evaluate creative methods for promoting the creation of affordable housing, such as housing trusts, limited dividend corporations, development exactions and incentives.
- Create a panel of stakeholders to develop rental property upkeep standards to be used throughout the county that balance the cost and benefits of higher standards.

Accessible Housing

Broad housing options for persons with disabilities ensures that the benefits of good, sound, supportive housing are available to everyone, thereby enabling effective participation in civic life. This goal will become even more important as the population ages.

Objective

All persons with disabilities will be able to purchase or rent quality housing that is accessible, supportive, and meets their needs, at an affordable cost.

Starting Point

Revise local government regulations to require that a minimum share of new multi-family housing be accessible or adaptable.

Work with stakeholders to identify the most flexible and cost effective means to ensure availability of accessible units. This would result in specific proposals to amend local building regulations. Stakeholders would include persons with disabilities, home builders, design professionals, developers, and local government officials.

Other Actions

- Promote the construction of small senior communities with affordable assisted living support throughout the county.

