



A VISION PLAN FOR OUR COMMUNITY

WASHINGTON, AN IOWA CLASSIC

IOWA GREAT PLACES DESIGNATION APPLICATION 2022

Acknowledgements

Steering Committee

This report was prepared by the Washington Great Places Steering Committee:

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Special thanks to the Washington Iowa Great Places Advisory Committee, who contributed to this Vision Plan by attending meetings, completing surveys, reviewing the Vision Plan, and/or providing letters of support.

The Washington Iowa Great Places Steering Committee, under the umbrella of the City of Washington's Hotel/Motel Tax Committee, coordinated the vision planning, gathered community input, reviewed the City's strategic priorities plan, assessed the 2019 Washington County Housing Study, evaluated the Washington County Regional Trails and Recreation Plan, and wrote the application to Iowa Great Places.

The Washington City Council unanimously endorsed the Vision Plan for this Iowa Great Places application at their March 1, 2022 meeting.

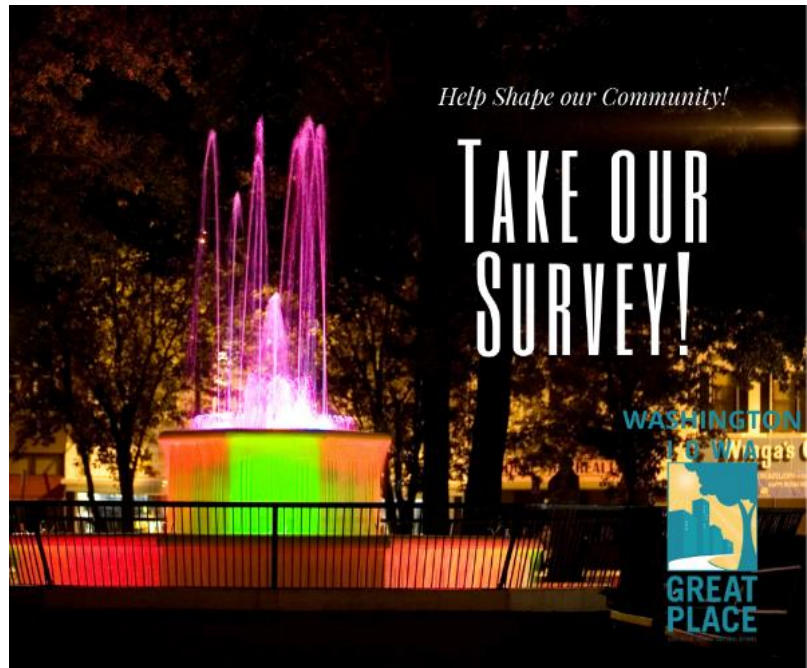
Plan Process

Washington's vision plan process began in 2020 with the Washington Hotel/Motel Tax Committee identifying top goals in an effort to best promote Washington to internal and external audiences. This goal-setting process led to identification of Great Places designation as a key goal, the inclusion of this goal in the City Council's 2021/2022 strategic priorities, and the creation of the Washington Great Places Committee (hereafter "the Steering Committee").

For the City of Washington this is not the first initiative to bring the community together to discuss and debate its direction. The City Council and Planning & Zoning Commission hosted a community-wide Comprehensive Development Plan update process over a nine-month period in 2011-2012. Main Street Washington hosted two rounds of Market Analysis & Economic Development reporting in 2013-2015, resulting in a snapshot of community needs. The Washington Chamber of Commerce hired marketing firm de Novo Alternative Marketing in 2013 to develop marketing priorities for Washington County as well as established a partnership in 2014 with the University of Iowa's Initiative for Sustainable Communities. The City Council convenes a strategic planning process each fall to solicit input and update goals. Many of the other key community partners in Washington regularly conduct planning efforts to this same end.

The Steering Committee includes a diverse group of officials and community volunteers. Initial work began with outreach to various communities that have been previously designated as Great Places and other research work. The Steering Committee met nine times in late 2020 and nine times in early 2021, often virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and two times in 2022.

Key early efforts of the Steering Committee included a public survey that was posted online in 2020 in both English and Spanish. It was promoted on social media, on the City and Chamber of Commerce newsletters, on the city's website, and through the local radio station and newspaper. In October, the Great Places Steering Committee reviewed survey results from 113 voices of the public that included current residents, local business owners, and former residents of Washington. In addition, committee members placed interactive chalk boards at Washington Farmers' Markets in September and October 2020 asking people to answer a specific survey question each week and recorded their answers. The Steering Committee utilized all this information and input to draft this Vision Plan, which was then referred to a larger group of community leaders that was designated as the "Advisory Committee". The Advisory Committee was provided the draft plan with an opportunity to review and provide constructive criticism as well as provide additional ideas. This input was incorporated into a final proposed plan by the Steering Committee. The Vision Plan was then presented to and approved by the City Council on March 1, 2022.



Plan, Purpose & Scope

The purpose of the Vision Plan process is to identify what makes Washington a “Great Place”, and to develop strategies and projects to further enhance our amazing community. We believe Washington is a natural fit for this program given its beautiful and vibrant downtown square, commitment to historic preservation, many recreational offerings and focus on their enhancement, strong public and private investment, and thriving arts community. We look forward to the opportunity to maximize these assets through the framework developed by the Department of Cultural Affairs.

We have enjoyed the opportunity to further our shared vision through this process to date and look forward to the contributions that we believe the program could make to the future of Washington. We believe that the development of additional arts, culture, and amenities through a variety of projects and initiatives will enhance community pride, spur private investment, and attract more people to our community both as visitors and prospective residents.

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

Input into the planning process included:

- A broad community survey in English and Spanish that received 113 responses
- Review of the 2005 Iowa Living Roadways Community Visioning Plan
- Review of the 2012 Comprehensive Development Plan
- Review of the Washington County Regional Trails and Recreation Plan
- Review 2014 Initiative for Sustainable Communities from University of Iowa
- Review 2015 Countywide Marketing Study from de Novo Alternative Marketing
- Review of the 2019 Washington County Housing Study
- Review of the Washington City Council Strategic Priorities Plan for 2021/2022
- Review of the City of Washington Capital Improvements Plan for FY2022-FY2026
- Review of the Washington Hotel/Motel Tax Committee’s Community Survey and Statement of 2020 Goals



- Review of 2021 Washington County Childcare Study completed by First Children's Finance
- Development of a draft Vision Plan by the Washington Great Places Steering Committee
- Review of & input on the draft Vision Plan by a broad-based group of community leaders designated as the Great Places Advisory Committee
- Finalization of the Vision Plan by the Steering Committee
- Vision Plan approved by the Washington City Council

What Makes Washington a Great Place

Who we are:

- **Historic and Thriving Downtown** –The development of Historic Downtown Washington as we see it now was built following the Civil War, replacing wooden structures with the still-standing brick commercial buildings. It features traditional architecture in multiple styles including Commercial Vernacular, Italianate, and Queen Anne. State Highway 92 routes around the downtown leaving the Central Park Square a thriving commercial district with peaceful streets and ample parking. Our beautiful Richardsonian Romanesque Washington County Courthouse is just one block off the square allowing for additional business and community traffic. Central Park hosts our 80-year-old Centennial Fountain as well as our Farmers' Markets, concert series, municipal band concerts, car shows, annual agriculture day, Latino Festival, fairs and many other community activities hosting programming approximately 150 days out of the year.

In 2005, following many years of disinvestment, the City of Washington identified several key downtown revitalization projects including the relocation of the Washington Public Library to a brand new LEED certified building on the southside of the square, bandstand restoration, and new streetscape design. In 2008, Washington was designated a Main Street Iowa community which has since spurred over \$15 million of additional development in the restoration and rehabilitation of downtown buildings and filling of vacancies. Main Street Washington has been able to leverage grant funding through our local Riverboat Foundation as well as the Iowa Economic Development Authority's Challenge Grants to encourage the restoration of the traditional brick facades and storefronts, the addition of multiple new upper story housing units, new infill construction, and an explosion of new retail and service businesses. In addition to these efforts, our Historic Preservation Commission was able to list the Downtown Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places in 2013. The City of Washington has seen great momentum through these partnerships and is in planning for further rehabilitation, expansion of our downtown streetscape, additional festivals, welcoming new businesses, and community growth.



- **Flourishing Arts Community** – The visual and performing arts have long been important to the fabric of Washington. Theatrical performances began soon after the city was founded in the 1840's. Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke in Washington and John Phillip Sousa played here.

In 1893, the Graham Opera House was built and provided live entertainment for Washington residents. Moving pictures have been shown here since 1896. The Graham was eventually converted into a movie theater and continues to show films as the State Theater. In 2016, the theater was designated by Guinness World Records as the Oldest Continuously Operating Movie Theater in the World. In the last 10 years, the exterior has been restored to its 1940's era appearance, including its blue and gold marquee. Today you can enjoy blockbusters from new seats with digital projection and surround sound, while eating a bucket of popcorn from the theater's balcony and watch as the curtain is drawn up before each show. It is seen frequently in the world-renowned documentary *Saving Brinton* that features a local historian on his quest to share the world's oldest films in existence which were found in the basement of a Washington home.

In 1974, the community fundraised for a new 500-seat theater. It is the home of our active Washington Community Theater group and hosts many events and performances. In 2016, a \$7.2 million Performing Arts Center was added to the Washington High School, funded largely with community donations and grants from the Washington County Riverboat Foundation and Vision Iowa.

Washington is also home to the Washington Performing Arts Series, the LET's Center for the Healing and Creative Arts, the Washington Municipal Band, and the Art Domestique Gallery. The Washington Free Public Library is also home of the Helen Wilson Gallery which rotates artwork regularly. A vibrant mural with literary references can be found on the alley-side of the library and was the product of a partnership with Art Share through the University of Iowa.



- **Recreation, Parks, and Trails –**

The City of Washington’s extensive parks system allows for endless recreational opportunities including Sunset Park with the Washington Steele Family Aquatic Center, New Dawn playground, a skate park area, basketball courts, and the longest 18-hole disc golf course in the state. Sunset Park also has a dog park and easy access to the 13-mile Kewash Nature Trail that offers excellent hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing for year-round opportunities. Annually, the trail is the site of the Kewash Half Marathon, 10K, and 5K that attracts hundreds of runners from across the country and is USA Track and Field certified.



In 2019, construction began on the 82-acre Wellness Park on the northwest corner of Washington, located adjacent to the new YMCA that opened in 2020. The park features a four-field baseball/softball complex, two full-sized competition soccer fields, nine youth soccer fields, sand volleyball courts, a concession stand and restroom facility, and walking trails with direct access to the Kewash Nature Trail. Future development of the park includes building a pond, installing lights on the soccer fields, trails through native flowers and prairie grasses, another restroom facility, and an accessible playground structure.



Additional recreational opportunities in town include the Washington Golf and Country Club and the Washington County Fairgrounds which offers a campground for visitors, rental facilities for events, and holds the annual county fair each July. Washington County has the seventh-largest enrollment of 4-H members in the state. Nearby, visitors can also enjoy fishing, camping, hunting, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and hiking at Marr Park County Park near Ainsworth and Lake Darling State Park near Brighton.

- **Community Festivals and Events –**

Washington is well-known for its busy event calendar. We are fortunate that many organizations take leadership roles in organizing these public events. The Washington Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Washington, the Washington County Hospital and Clinics, Latinos for Washington, and Washington County Fair Board are just a few of the groups that produce events throughout the year. Local businesses and citizens provide sponsorships and volunteer labor that ensure the success of these festivals and fairs which include several annual craft fairs, an art walk around the square, and Washington's weekend Summer Classic each June that promotes and celebrates agriculture, the arts, a sense of community, and local businesses. The event includes multiple days of sales and is the state's longest running Ridiculous Day event.



- **Historic Character** – The City of Washington was founded in 1839. In addition to being home to the World's Oldest Continuously Operating Movie Theatre there is so much more to see and learn about local history. Additional museums can be found in the community which include the Conger House Museum, the F Troop Military Museum, the Alexander Young Log House, and the Blair House. Frank Brinton designed and constructed airships which gathered national attention in 1890, prior to the Wright brothers. The Washington Downtown Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2018, the neighborhood adjacent to downtown was added to the National Register of Historic Places and is known as the West Side Residential Historic District with over 135 contributing structures.

Washington County is the Barn Quilt Capital of Iowa and our self-driving tour through the countryside affords visitors an opportunity to see the rural landscape around our city while enjoying the lovely colorful painted quilts on barns on well-kept farms.

Those interested in tracing family history can do so in the extensive collection of materials curated by the Washington County Genealogical Society. The Washington Public Library houses local family histories, cemetery records, and other items of interest. In addition, the Washington Welcome Center offers an opportunity to connect to our past by offering Cemetery Tours, Historic Home Tours, Historic Sites and Points of Interest.





• Community Pride and Caring Citizens –

Washington offers the ability to enjoy the charm of a small town but with many of the facilities and organizations of a larger city. Children can sign up to play many different sports and activities through the local YMCA, Public Library, and 4-H clubs. A variety of clubs and organizations are available for high school students.

Adults of all ages participate in school and service organizations and social clubs. Washington is home to 17 churches and more than 68 charitable organizations and clubs. In addition, Washington hosts many groups that sponsor and support our Veterans. These include House of Heroes, English River Outfitters as well as six other Veteran focused organizations.



Residents, businesses, schools, and students in Washington have access to broadband internet service through Washington County-based company Kalona Cooperative Technology Company. The company received an Empower Rural Broadband Grant to continue to expand services across the area.

Washington is fortunate to be the site of two major retirement communities: Halcyon House, a WesleyLife Community, and the United Presbyterian Home which is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church USA. Both facilities offer options for independent living, assisted living, and full nursing care. Seniors in Washington participate in community activities and many take advantage of the public transportation provided by the Washington County Mini Bus. The county-wide Mini Bus provides demand and response transportation that is wheelchair accessible. In recent years, the service has logged over 300,000 miles annually with over 67,000 rides, more than double the ride totals for counties similar in size.

Washington has been blessed with progressive leaders and individuals that are open to new ideas and people. Much progress has been made in the past 15 years regarding city facilities and infrastructure, beautification, and community pride.

- **Strong Emphasis on Education** – Washington, Iowa has had a long record on the importance of a good education for all. In 1869, citizens of Washington asserted the rights of a young Black student to be educated alongside other children at the Young America School in rural Washington.

Since that time, Washington has placed a high priority on its excellent educational system. Washington offers five preschools for young families. Washington Community School District includes two elementary buildings, one middle school, and one high school. The School District also offers support for families who choose to home school their children as well as opportunities for social, athletic, and arts extracurricular activities.

Washington also boasts a variety of daycare centers both in-home as well as centers. Several facilities have been in operation for more than 30 years with high quality of care. Like most communities in Iowa we could always use more daycare spots for our growing population as confirmed in the most recent Census Data. Washington County also hosts an incredibly strong 4-H program led by the staff of Iowa State Extension at the Washington County Fairgrounds. The Washington County Fair is considered one of the top three most impactful fairs in the State of Iowa. We are also home to a strong collection of local youth enrichment programs like dance studios, travelling sports clubs, music lessons, as well as national organizations like scouts, Girls on the Run, 4-H, and more. Our community is dedicated to the enrichment of our youth and it shows.

Washington High School boasts a graduation rate of 90.9% and students may continue their post-high school studies at Kirkwood Community College's Washington County Regional Center in Washington. Many area students take concurrent credit courses while in high school so that when they receive their diplomas from WHS they already have college credit on their transcripts. In the 2020-21 school year, Washington County students saved \$792,540 in tuition with concurrent credit courses and accumulated 3,918.5 college credits. The center also offers adult education classes, high school equivalency diploma, English language skills, one-on-one tutoring, and continuing education credit opportunities for area professionals.



“Washington, An Iowa Classic” - Our Vision for Washington

Vision Statement:

We will continue the cycle of investments that enhance our ongoing renaissance, and will showcase Washington to all its citizens as well as to visitors, whom we welcome.

Supporting Statements:

We will be a community that:

- Attracts visitors to town to celebrate Washington’s place in film history while bringing new faces into our businesses and restaurants.
- Celebrates our cultural diversity.
- Provides high-level education, recreation, arts, culture, business development, and more for residents and visitors alike.
- Promotes Washington’s unique aspects including the Brinton Film Collection, the historic downtown district, the Guinness World Record recognized State Theater, and Centennial Fountain.
- Strives for a high quality of life for all citizens with access to public amenities such as parks and trails.
- Honors our history including historic sites throughout town, the historic architecture found in the downtown district, and our sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Applauds and supports the arts in all forms and at all skill levels.
- Embraces and protects the natural environment.
- Helps support local businesses to promote growth.
- Develops housing opportunities for a variety of income levels.
- Welcomes visitors to our town and provides an enjoyable experience so they go home and spread the word of wonderful Washington to others or take up residence in town.

In reflection of the statements above, we have drafted a set of goals and objectives for Washington that are listed on following pages.



Goals and Objectives

Mission Statement:

The City of Washington is committed to improving the livability of our community through personal dedication, integrity, accountability, innovation, and sensitivity to the needs of our citizens whom we serve. We will continue expanding the public and private partnerships that connect our citizens to their passions, empowering our community to honor its past, celebrate its present, and embrace its future.

Our goals, listed below, are organized according to the categories listed by the Iowa Great Places application guidelines. These goals were identified through public survey results, reviewing City Council goal setting, and with input from the members of the Washington Great Places Steering Committee and Advisory Committee.

1. Arts and Culture

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
1a Create a film festival to celebrate arts and local history	1a-i: Establish an annual Brinton Film Festival to celebrate our local film pioneers, Frank and Indiana Brinton, and one of the world's oldest collection of films and magic lantern slides in existence. Also, showcase newly created films.	2 years and beyond	Main Street Washington, City of Washington, Historical Society, Chamber of Commerce, local media, private businesses, local historian Mike Zahs
1b Work with local partners to install more public art throughout town while promoting local artists and celebrating our history	1b-i: Install additional murals throughout the community as well as selfie spots to create a more interactive experience of our community	1-5 years	Washington Chamber of Commerce, LETs Center for the Healing & Creative Arts, Hotel/Motel Tax Committee, Washington County Riverboat Foundation
	1b-ii: Celebrate our agricultural heritage through the development of a series of walking tours to reinvigorate interest in the loops of barn quilts that exist throughout our county.	6 months - 1 year	Washington Chamber of Commerce, Washington Middle School ELP and Arts Programs
1c Continue to make Washington a holiday destination with decorations for all to enjoy	1c-i: Expand on the modernization of downtown's wintertime lights to further enhance the beauty of our Community. An LED conversion & expansion project has been underway since 2018. Out of 6000 linear feet of building in the downtown, we're about 50% to completion.	2-5 years	Park Board, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Washington, Washington Maintenance and Construction Department, landscape architects, Washington Free Public Library, Community Visioning

1c - <i>continued</i>	1c-ii: Continue the expansion of the wintertime lights to main arterial highways through town.	5-10 years	Park Board, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Washington, Washington Maintenance and Construction Department
1d Celebrate the performing arts in public spaces	1d-i: Support local musicians, artists and actors with more performances in public spaces, like musicians in Central Park at weekly Farmers' Markets, the Community Theater's annual live radio play in the windows of the library, and the En Plein Aire contest for people to attend in person or listen in.	Ongoing	Washington Community Theater, Washington Chamber of Commerce, Washington Farmers Market/Main Street Washington, Washington Public Library, Latinos for Washington, Washington Free Public Library



2. Amenities

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
2a Make Washington easy to navigate for residents and visitors	2a-i: Develop wayfinding and Informational kiosks signage for local attractions: parks, theaters, historical sites.	1-3 years	City of Washington, Park Board, Chamber of Commerce, Hotel/Motel Committee
	2a-ii: Improve entrances to town with coordinated signage and landscaping.	3-5 years	Master Gardeners, Washington Chamber of Commerce, City of Washington
2b Expand the streetscape from the square around Central Park to the larger Main Street Washington District	2b-i: Expand the current streetscape to the super-square area to improve sidewalks and curb heights, making it easier to access businesses and more aesthetically pleasing with continuity of brick design, streetlamps, and benches. This work is estimated to cost \$6 million with \$4.8 million currently earmarked.	2-5 years	City of Washington, Main Street Washington, City Engineer, Chamber of Commerce, Washington Economic Development Group
2c Increase free family-friendly amenities	2c-i: Consider the addition of a splashpad for a safe option for young children to play in the summer. Continue to support the library's activities, the development of a playground at the Wellness Park, as well as the park trail systems.	3-10 years	City of Washington, Parks Department, Park Board
2d Implement a marketing strategy to promote Washington and its amenities	2d-i: Hire marketing staff to develop a plan and campaign with measurable benchmarks to promote Washington to surrounding areas through social media, local news media, and promotional videos.	1-2 years	City of Washington, Chamber of Commerce, Hotel/Motel Tax Committee, Main Street Washington, local media
	2d-ii: Inform local citizens of the happenings in town through social media, news media, and regular City and Chamber newsletters available by print and electronically.	Ongoing	City of Washington, Washington Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Washington, Local Media

3. Business Development

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
3a Create an atmosphere to welcome new businesses and support current businesses throughout Washington	3a-i: Attract more businesses and restaurants through developing recruitment packets that can be targeted by industry.	Ongoing	Washington Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Washington, Washington Economic Development Group
	3a-ii: Fill vacant locations on the square by developing measures to prevent and reduce vacant by choice commercial buildings.	Ongoing	Main Street Washington, Washington Chamber of Commerce, City of Washington
	3a-iii: Promote continued investment in rehabilitating buildings in the downtown district with programs like Main Street Washington's Downtown Investment Grants (DIG).	Ongoing	Main Street Washington, City of Washington
	3a-iv: Continue to develop the Business Park along Highway 1 and West Buchanan so businesses have lots available to build to suit with utilities and infrastructure already on site.	Ongoing	City of Washington, Washington Economic Development Group
	3a-v: Use the childcare survey within the next two years to seek grant funding to promote expansion as well as additional daycare centers to fit the needs of the community.	2 years	Washington Economic Development Group, Washington Chamber of Commerce, City of Washington, local daycare providers, YMCA, local employers, Washington County Public Health



4. Historic Fabric and Architecture

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
4a Establish a museum about the Brinton Film Collection and oldest movie theater in the world	4a-i: Establish a museum to exhibit items from the Brinton Film Collection and the World's Oldest Continuously Operating Movie Theater educate the public on some of the world's oldest films in existence that were shown within the same theater more than a century ago.	2-6 years	State Theater, City of Washington, Historical Society, Brinton Collection, Washington Historical Preservation Commission, Washington Chamber of Commerce
4b Develop a self-driven historical tour of Washington	4b-i: Update self-driven tour of historical sites in Washington and add plaques at historical sites. A brief narration about the significance of each site will be hosted on the community's website. Residents and visitors can drive, bike, or walk to each site and learn of the diverse history of the area from one of the first integrated schools in the country to the home of the mother of the Iowa State Patrol.	1-2 years	City of Washington, Washington Chamber of Commerce, local historian Mike Zahs, Washington Historical Preservation Commission
4c Update and digitize a historical walking tour of cemeteries	4c-i: Promote, update, and digitize historical walking tours of Elm Grove Cemetery and Woodlawn Cemetery to highlight the stories of the people who have made Washington a great place over the last two centuries, featuring their stories. Place the complete updated version on the website.	2-3 years	City of Washington, Washington Chamber of Commerce, local historian Mike Zahs, Washington Historical Preservation Commission, Washington County Genealogical Society



5. Housing Options

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
5a Improve existing housing stock in Washington	5a-i: Clean up residential properties with programs through ECICOG and property maintenance code enforcement.	Ongoing	Residents, City of Washington
	5a-ii: Expand and improve downtown upper-story residential units.	Ongoing	Main Street Washington, City of Washington
	5a-iii: Continue using the Neighborhood Stabilization Program and Housing Infill Partner Program to improve houses and replace dilapidated houses on existing residential lots with new construction.	Ongoing	City of Washington
	5a-iv: Clean up and improve maintenance of rental homes through the Rental Home Inspection Program already adopted and established by the city.	Ongoing	City of Washington, Washington Fire Department
5b Increase efforts to address the local housing shortage	5b-i: Continue to develop areas for new housing including the NLW Subdivision and the 19+ acres of Bell property in the southwest quadrant of town.	Ongoing	City of Washington, Washington Economic Development Group
5c Incentivize buying local homes	5c-i: Promote the Homebuyer Assistance Program that uses CDBG funds countywide to assist with down payments.	Ongoing	Washington Economic Development Group, Washington County, City of Washington
5d Add low-to-moderate income housing	5d-i: Expand and improve Washington's current low-to-moderate income housing stock to provide more options.	5 years and beyond	City of Washington, Washington Economic Development Group, HACAP, Eastern Iowa Housing Trust Fund

6. Diversity and Community Relationships

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
6a Foster a diverse community by promoting local organizations through their selected events and by opening spaces for conversations and collaboration	6a-i: Implement strategies suggested from analysis by market studies done in the past 10 years by using multiple platforms to reach residents including print media, radio, newsletters, email, and social media.	Ongoing	City of Washington, local media, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Washington, Latinos for Washington, DUO Compassion, Washington for Justice
	6a-ii: Work to promote a positive environment for all citizens including celebrations like the annual Latino Festival and Washington for Justice's annual Juneteenth celebration.	Ongoing	City of Washington, local media, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Washington, Latinos for Washington, DUO Compassion, Washington for Justice
6b Increase usage of the Washington Welcome Center	6b-i: Promote and enhance the Washington Welcome Center to further serve area businesses and non-profits, and increase foot-traffic downtown.	2 years and beyond	Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Washington
6c Celebrate Washington's diversity through public art	6c-i: Install murals throughout town depicting Washington's diverse culture and history.	5-7 years	City of Washington, Chamber of Commerce, local artists, Latinos for Washington, Washington for Justice, Washington County Veterans Association
6d Increase accessibility for Spanish-speaking residents	7d-i: Update City of Washington documents, applications, and informational flyers to have English and Spanish versions available.	Ongoing	City of Washington

7. Natural Environment

Goal	Objective	Timeline	Implementation Partners
7a Create more recreational opportunities for families to enjoy	8a-i: Continue developing the Wellness Park and its future phases that include a pond for fishing and ice skating, and playground equipment. The current phase opened in June 2021 with two full-sized competition soccer fields, four baseball/softball fields, and sand volleyball courts; as well as a concession stand and restroom facility.	1-5 years	City of Washington, Park Board, YMCA of Washington County, Washington Community School District, Washington Area Soccer Program, Washington Area Softball Association, Washington Area Baseball Council
	8a-ii: Build and connect a trail around the new Wellness Park to the Kewash Nature Trail to offer an ADA compliant trail with opportunities for safe walking, cycling, and snowshoeing.	Ongoing	City of Washington, Park Board, Washington County Conservation
	8a-iii: Improve and install playground spaces	Ongoing	City of Washington, Park Board, area service organizations
	8a-iv: Develop comprehensive maps and post them at area parks to show all parks, trails, and places to birdwatch	2-3 years	City of Washington, Park Board, Washington County Conservation
	8a-v: Install a disc golf course at the new Wellness Park to expand Washington's available holes from 18 to 27 or 36.	3-7 years	City of Washington, Park Board
7b Create a trailhead	8b-i: Develop the Kewash Nature Trail's trailhead area along West 5 th Street to include a shelter with picnic benches and map of the trails.	5-10 years	Park Board, Washington County Conservation
7c Improve sidewalks to increase accessibility	8c-i: Continue to improve the city's walkability and accessibility by repairing, replacing, widening, and expanding sidewalks throughout town.	Ongoing	City of Washington, Washington County Public Health, Healthy Hometowns Committee
7d Paint bicycle boulevards through town	8d-i: Designate and paint bicycle boulevards throughout town on existing streets to connect downtown Washington to the entrance of the Kewash Nature Trail.	3-5 years	Washington Maintenance and Construction Department

7e Offer outdoor equipment rentals	8e-i: Purchase equipment and develop a check-out system for people to enjoy the outdoor activities while eliminating cost barriers. Equipment may include pickleball paddles, yoga mats, and large yard games.	Ongoing	Washington YMCA, Washington Parks Department, Washington Free Public Library
7f Add bocci ball courts	8f-i: Add bocci ball courts to Sunset Park.	3-5 years	Washington Parks Department, City of Washington
7g Increase winter outdoor recreation	8g-i: Build a seasonal ice-skating rink.	3-7 years	Washington Parks Department, City of Washington



Narratives – What We Envision

1. **ENHANCE DOWNTOWN** – The heart of Washington is its historic, vibrant downtown.

Central Park, the State Theater, surrounding businesses, shops, restaurants, and non-profit offices serve as a hub for residents and visitors. The Washington Great Places Steering Committee looks to further improve our downtown district by:

- Expanding the current streetscape to the super square area to improve sidewalks and curb heights, making it easier to access businesses and more aesthetically pleasing with continuity of brick design, streetlamps, and benches. This work is estimated to cost \$6 million with \$4.8 million in funding currently earmarked. (2b-i)
- Attracting more businesses and restaurants. (3a-i)
- Filling vacant locations on the square by developing measures to prevent and reduce “vacant by choice” commercial buildings. (3a-ii)
- Promoting continued investment in rehabilitating businesses in the downtown district with programs like Main Street Washington’s Downtown Investment Grants (DIG). (3a-iii)
- Developing wayfinding signage for local attractions: parks, theaters, historical sites, business district. (2a-i)
- Expanding and improving downtown upper-story residential units. (5a-ii)

2. **EXPLORE ARTS AND CULTURE** – Arts have long been woven into the fabric of

Washington and plans are in place to continue that pattern. More than a century ago films were shown at Washington’s Graham Opera House, now known as the State Theater, by Washington’s own film pioneers Frank and Indiana Brinton. Many of their artifacts, films, and magic lantern slides have travelled the world with the documentary Saving Brinton. Below are ways to expand arts and culture in this regional destination:

- Establish a film festival and museum to exhibit items from the Brinton Film Collection and educate the public on some of the world’s oldest films in existence that were shown at Washington’s Graham Opera House, now known as the State Theater, more than a century ago. (1a & 4a)
- Install murals throughout the community to educate residents and visitors about our robust film history and celebrate our diverse culture. (1b-i and 7c-i)
- Partner with area students to develop walking tours of miniature barn quilts that mimic those found in greater Washington County. (1b-ii)

3. EMBRACE THE OUTDOORS – With opportunities to run, bike, swim, and play, Washington embraces the outdoors and healthy living, these include facilities for traveling club sports and spaces for creative play for youth. Washington is building upon this with the new state-of-the-art Wellness Park with plans to construct an ADA compliant trail for all to enjoy. This trail will then connect to the existing 13-mile Kewash Nature Trail that runs along an old railroad line. In an effort to have more people enjoy the outdoors, below are our goals for Washington:

- Build and connect a trail around the new Wellness Park to the Kewash Nature Trail to offer an ADA compliant trail with opportunities for safe walking, cycling, rollerblading, and snowshoeing. (8a-ii)
- Continue developing the Wellness Park and its future phases that include a pond for fishing and ice skating, and playground equipment. The current phase opened in June 2021 with two full-sized competition soccer fields, four baseball/softball fields, and sand volleyball courts, as well as a concession stand and restroom facility. (8a-i)
- Improve and install playground spaces. (8a-iii)
- Develop a Kewash Nature Trail's trailhead area along West 5th Street to include a shelter with picnic benches and map of the trails. (8b-i)

4. FIND YOUR WAY IN WASHINGTON – Washington is home to a diverse community with room to grow. To make Washington easy to navigate, the Great Places Steering Committee aims to increase our sense of place with cohesive landscaped gateways to the city and coordinated wayfinding signage throughout town. Below are goals identified to improve Washington's sense of place:

- Develop wayfinding signage for local attractions: parks, theaters, historical sites, business district. (1a-i)
- Improve the entrances and gateways to town with coordinated signage and landscaping. (1a-ii)
- Make Washington easy to navigate for residents and visitors by vehicle, bicycle, or on foot which makes the town more accessible to people of all ages despite their mode of transportation. (1a-i)
- Enhance a driving tour of historical sites in Washington by posting plaques, modernizing print brochures, and developing apps to highlight historical sites. A brief narration about the significance of each site will be hosted on the community's website. Residents and visitors can drive, bike, or walk to each site and learn of the diverse history of the area from one of the first integrated schools in the country to the home of the mother of the Iowa State Patrol. (4b)
- Promote and enhance the Washington Welcome Center to further serve area businesses and non-profits and increase foot-traffic downtown. (7a-ii)

Implementation and Evaluation

The Washington Great Places Committee will monitor the implementation of the vision plan, in partnership with the Hotel/Motel Tax Committee, Washington Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Washington, and the City of Washington.

The plan will be reviewed annually by the Washington Great Places Steering Committee to evaluate which actions have been taken, which goals have been completed, and what should be slated for work next. The review process will offer opportunity to modify the plans as opportunities arise or situations change. Partner organizations listed in the goals above will be included in planning action for each item. In addition, the Steering Committee will conduct future community surveys to gather input and local perception of progress correlating with the goals and objectives outlined in this plan.

The City of Washington has already committed to many of the projects listed in the goals through the comprehensive plan which stands alone and has an annual review and implementation process. Progress on the goals will be followed by the Washington Great Places Committee and reported to the City of Washington.



How will success be measured in Washington?

While some goals are easily measured with construction timelines and definite metrics, others are more ambiguous with subjective progress and ongoing work. A variety of factors will be used to measure Washington's success in becoming a Great Place in Iowa.

Success will include:

- A thriving downtown district with low vacancy in storefronts, bustling shops, restaurants with full tables, few parking spots open, and abundant foot traffic throughout the district.
- Being known in the region as a historic destination with a variety of events to attract visitors from throughout the corridor and beyond.
- Non-profit organizations having ample volunteers and resources to continue their work of improving Washington for all.
- New businesses opening annually.
- A growing population with diverse demographics calling Washington home.
- Tourism increasing with more visitors at events, more diners at restaurants, and more guests staying overnight with increased options to lay their heads at the end of a busy day.
- Our education system continuing to be recognized for excellence for staff and students from pre-school to the collegiate level with our public school system, private elementary school, and regional community college.
- Residents of Washington celebrate our history and share it with others.
- Art on display and performances in public spaces for residents and visitors to observe and appreciate.

