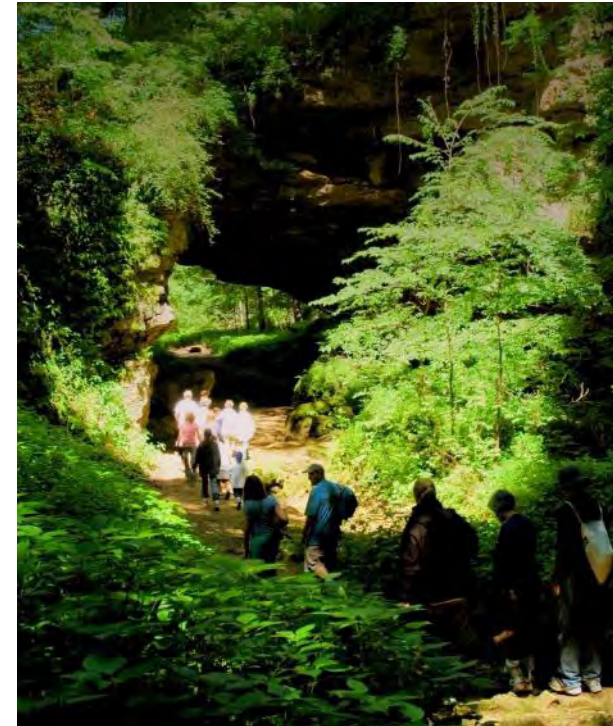


# Chapter 1. Introduction



Rural Jackson County landscape

*Photo Credit: Jackson County website*



**Maquoketa Caves State Park**

*Photo Credit: Jackson County Area Tourism website*

#### COUNTY OVERVIEW

Located along the Mississippi River in eastern Iowa's Driftless Region, Jackson County features limestone bluffs, rolling hills, woodlands, farm fields, natural caves, and winding waterways. Home to over 19,000 people, Jackson County prides itself on providing a diverse blend of agriculture, industry, and tourism.

Like most rural areas in Iowa, Jackson County's economy suffered during the farm crisis of the 1980s. The resulting high unemployment rates led to an 11% population decline between 1980 and 1990. Since then, Jackson County has maintained its population and focused on growing and diversifying its economy.

To take advantage of its unique location, resources, and heritage, Jackson County decided to adopt its first comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan identifies issues and opportunities, and provides a guide for implementation of goals and objectives to achieve a shared community vision.

#### WHY A PLAN?

People make plans to reach their goals for home, business, farm, vacation, and retirement. Plans help guide you to where you want to be.

If you're headed into the future without a plan, you could end up somewhere you don't want to be.

Counties make plans, too. These plans help communities set goals, so their county is a place where people want to live, work, do business, and have fun.



#### WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan presents a shared vision for the future, with long-range community goals. It is a guide for future policies, services, public improvements, growth, and development.

It's **comprehensive** because it covers a wide range of issues and activities.

With a **shared vision** everyone has a common destination and common goals. People then can work together as a team, supporting and encouraging each other to reach community goals.

It's **long-range** because it looks forward 20 years.

It's a **policy guide**, a road map, shaped by public participation. It's *not* rules or regulations.

**PLAN PURPOSE**

State law enables a county to create and amend a comprehensive plan. A comprehensive plan has two fundamental purposes:

- First, present a unified and compelling vision for the community and establish the specific actions necessary to fulfill that vision.
- Second, provide a legal basis for land use regulations by analyzing existing conditions and developing growth goals for the community.

The comprehensive planning process is designed to be a transparent public input process in which people create a shared vision to promote the health, safety, and prosperity of Jackson County.

State law requires that zoning, subdivision, and other land use regulations be in conformance with a comprehensive plan. The Jackson County Comprehensive Plan provides the legal basis for the county to regulate land use and development.

**PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

The Comprehensive Plan provides the Board of Supervisors with a 20-year guide for future decision making. The plan establishes a shared community vision for the future and identifies a recommended set of actions that the county can take to realize that vision.

To achieve this shared vision, the county must actively work to incorporate the plan’s recommendations into its budgets, policies, and ordinances. Many plan recommendations will require additional research, analysis, public input, and consideration from the Board of Supervisors before they can be implemented. When choosing how to implement the Comprehensive Plan, the Board of Supervisors should consider all relevant factors and weigh the public good with the cost and impact on the county.

Once adopted, the Comprehensive Plan should be updated every 5 to 10 years, so that it continues to provide an accurate picture of how the county wants to grow, develop, and prosper.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN IOWA**

Iowa Code Chapter 18B Land Use – Smart Planning was signed into law in 2010, as a way to guide and encourage the development of local comprehensive plans. The law describes 10 smart planning principles and 13 comprehensive plan elements for application in local plan development and public decision making.

The law’s local comprehensive planning and development guidelines are intended to improve economic opportunities, preserve the natural environment, protect quality of life, and ensures an equitable decision-making process.

A comprehensive plan developed using these guidelines must address prevention and mitigation of, response to, and recovery from a catastrophic flood.

The Jackson County Comprehensive Plan addresses all Iowa Smart Planning Principles and elements, and is organized in a way that best fits the county’s needs. The Iowa Smart Planning Act is summarized below and online at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/18B.pdf>

**IOWA CODE CHAPTER 18B  
LAND USE - SMART PLANNING**

**18B.1 Iowa Smart Planning Principles**

State agencies, local governments, and other public entities shall consider and may apply the following principles during deliberation of all appropriate planning, zoning, development, and resource management decisions, except that nothing in this section shall be construed to expand the eminent domain authority of a state agency, local government, or other public entity beyond that which is authorized under chapter 6A or 6B:

1. Collaboration
2. Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency
3. Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy
4. Occupational Diversity
5. Revitalization
6. Housing Diversity
7. Community Character
8. Natural Resources and Agricultural Protection
9. Sustainable Design
10. Transportation Diversity

**18B.2 Local comprehensive planning and development guidelines.**

1. For the purposes of this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

*a. (1) "Development"* means any of the following:

- (a) Construction, reconstruction, renovation, mining, extraction, dredging, filling, excavation, or drilling activity or operation.
- (b) Man-made changes in the use or appearance of any structure or in the land itself.
- (c) The division or subdivision of land.
- (d) Any change in the intensity of use or the use of land.

*(2) "Development"* does not include any of the following:

- (a) Activities on or uses of agricultural land, farm houses, or agricultural buildings or structures, unless such buildings or structures are located in the floodplain of a river or stream.
- (b) Installation, operation, and maintenance of soil and water conservation practices.
- (c) The choice of crops or a change in the choice of crops on agricultural land.

*b. "Land development regulations"* means zoning, subdivision, site plan, corridor map, floodplain, or storm water ordinances, rules, or regulations, or other

governmental controls that affect the use of property.

*c. "Municipality"* means a city or a county.

2. A municipality shall consider the smart planning principles under section 18B.1 and may include the following information, if applicable, when developing or amending a comprehensive plan under chapter 335 or chapter 414 or when developing or amending other local land development regulations:

**Comprehensive Planning Elements**

- A. Public Participation
- B. Issues and Opportunities
- C. Land Use
- D. Housing
- E. Public Infrastructure and Utilities
- F. Transportation
- G. Economic Development
- H. Agricultural and Natural Resources
- I. Community Facilities
- J. Community Character
- K. Hazards
- L. Intergovernmental Collaboration
- M. Implementation

**COUNTY PLANNING HISTORY**

Since 1994, Jackson County has been part of the Regional Planning Affiliation (RPA) along with Clinton, Delaware, and Dubuque counties. With guidance from the State of Iowa, the RPA identifies projects and improvements and prepares plans for all parts of the regional transportation system (roads, trails, transit, rail, air, and river) in the rural areas. The RPA’s latest *Long Range Transportation Plan* for 2045 was adopted in 2022.

From 2013 to 2024, Jackson County has engaged in many planning efforts at the county level and in various regional partnerships as shown in Table 1.1.

Planning efforts scheduled for completion in 2024 include an update of the 2019 Jackson County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan and adoption of the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan.

Year	List of Jackson County and Regional Plans
2013	Jackson County <b>Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan</b> adopted
2015	Jackson County <b>Housing Needs Assessment</b> completed
2016	<b>Grant Wood Loop Master Plan</b> adopted for Dubuque, Jackson, and Jones Counties
2018	Jackson County <b>Tomorrow Strategic Plan</b> completed
2019	Jackson County <b>Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan</b> updated
2020	Jackson County <b>Community Health Needs Assessment</b> completed
2021	<b>Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027</b> adopted for Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties
	<b>Maquoketa River Watershed Management Plan: Phase 1</b> adopted for Buchanan, Clayton, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Jackson, Jones, and Linn Counties.
	Jackson County <b>Water Trails Plan</b> adopted
	Jackson County <b>Soil and Water Conservation District Five-Year Plan 2021-2025</b> completed
2022	<b>RPA 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan</b> adopted
	<b>Grant Wood Loop Master Plan Update</b> adopted
	Jackson County <b>Innovate 120 Final Report</b> completed
	Jackson County <b>Clean Energy Plan</b> completed
2023	<b>Maquoketa River Watershed Management Plan: Phase 2</b> adopted for Buchanan, Clayton, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Jackson, Jones, and Linn Counties.
	<b>RPA Federal Fiscal Year 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program</b> approved
	Jackson County <b>Conservation 5 Year Outdoor Recreation Plan</b> completed
	Jackson County <b>Conservation 5 Year Environmental Education Plan</b> completed
2024	Jackson County <b>Engineering 5 Year Road Plan Fiscal Year 2024-2028</b> approved
	<i>Jackson County <b>Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan</b> update</i>
	<i>Jackson County <b>Comprehensive Plan</b> adoption</i>

**VISION, BROAD GOALS, & PRIORITIES**

The comprehensive plan presents a unified and compelling vision for the future. The vision defines aspirations of what the community hopes to achieve in the future.

*Shared Vision Statement*

The shared vision statement for Jackson County declares where the community wants to be in the future:

**Jackson County is an engaging community, enthusiastically creating opportunity, supporting growth, and enhancing quality of life for all who live, work, and visit.**

The vision statement helps local governments, organizations, businesses, and individuals to make strategic decisions, aligning effort with broad goals and priorities that will enable Jackson County to reach the destination described in the shared vision statement.

*Broad Goals and Priorities*

- ✓ Rural quality of life and safe communities that compete well with larger cities
- ✓ Recreational opportunities, historic sites, natural resources, unique amenities, and river access points
- ✓ Business retention, expansion, and recruitment
- ✓ Available, trained workforce of professionals, skilled trades, and labor in general
- ✓ Locally owned and operated shops and restaurants engaged in their communities
- ✓ Quality, affordable, and accessible housing options and pathways, especially for underserved populations
- ✓ Affordable childcare available countywide
- ✓ Strong volunteerism

**PLAN ORGANIZATION**

The Comprehensive Plan begins with Chapter 1. Introduction. Chapter 2. Jackson County Snapshot highlights current community characteristics. Chapter 3. Public Participation reviews community outreach and outcomes. Chapters 4 through 13 review existing conditions and trends; local, state, and federal programs; issues and opportunities; and goals and objectives for these key planning elements:

- 4. Community Facilities and Services
- 5. Infrastructure and Utilities
- 6. Transportation
- 7. Economic Development
- 8. Housing
- 9. Agriculture and Natural Resources
- 10. Parks, Recreation, Cultural Resources
- 11. Hazard Mitigation
- 12. Land Use
- 13. Intergovernmental Collaboration

Chapter 14. Implementation aligns the chapter goals in a strategy for the future.

**CHAPTER 4. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Goals focus on maintaining current public-private and intergovernmental partnerships and establishing new relationships to provide high quality community facilities and services that improve quality of life for residents.

**Community Health**

4.1 Address the top three health priorities for Jackson County through community partnerships.

**Child Care**

4.2 Ensure that high-quality child care opportunities are available and affordable to all residents.

4.3 Support efforts to attract, maintain, and expand child care services in the region.

**Education**

4.4 Continue to support the Jackson County Campaign for Grade-Level Reading in the four areas supporting academic achievement: School attendance, School readiness, Summer learning, Access to books.

**CHAPTER 5. INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES**

Goals focus on maintenance and improvement of public and private infrastructure and utilities, and outline strategies for a transition from non-renewable to renewable energy sources, to enhance quality of life for residents.

**Public Infrastructure**

5.1 Maintain and modernize critical infrastructure for transportation, broadband, water, sewer, downtowns, and community facilities for a more competitive region.



**Residential Solar System in Springbrook**  
Source: 2022 Jackson County Clean Energy Plan

**Renewable Energy**

5.2 Install photovoltaic (PV) solar panels on County-owned buildings.

5.3 Create solar-ready zoning and building codes.

5.4 Expand data collection for the Jackson County Energy District’s solar installation map.

5.5 Advocate for clean energy policy by the Iowa Legislature and Iowa Utilities Board.

5.6 Encourage involvement in the *Grow Solar Jackson County Program* through the Jackson County Energy District.

**CHAPTER 6. TRANSPORTATION**

Goals seek to maintain and improve the county and regional transportation network, with priority on improvements and projects that improve quality of life.

***Maintain and Improve the Existing Transportation Network***

6.1 Strategically preserve existing infrastructure and focus future investment in areas that are already served by significant public infrastructure investments.

6.2 Increase the safety, security, and resiliency of the transportation system.

***Prioritize Transportation Improvements and Projects***

6.3 Support transportation improvements and projects that promote existing and future economic development.

6.4 Provide a high degree of multimodal accessibility and mobility for individuals, and better integration and connectivity between modes of travel.

6.5 Support efficient freight system in the region.

**CHAPTER 7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Goals seek to improve economic quality and sustainability as a foundation for a resilient community and an enhanced quality of life for residents.

***Workforce Development***

7.1 Attract and maintain a diverse population and workforce that can meet the needs of regional employers.

***Business Attraction and Retention***

7.2 Continue to support business retention and expansion through capital investments and entrepreneurial centers.

***Tourism***

7.3 Improve the region’s desirability by enhancing and expanding access to the arts and recreational opportunities.

**CHAPTER 8. HOUSING**

Goals focus on actions that the county and its partners can take to have a supply of good-quality, affordable housing available in a variety of shapes, sizes, and price points that will ensure an improved quality of life for residents.

***Workforce Housing***

8.1 Provide affordable housing to make Jackson County attractive for young workers.

***Housing Options***

8.2 Increase and diversify housing options throughout Jackson County.

***Age-Friendly Housing***

8.3 Provide more housing options for seniors.



**CHAPTER 9. AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

In coordination with Chapter 10, goals seek to maintain and improve the quality of agriculture and natural resources to enhance quality of life for residents.

***Soil Health and Water Quality***

9.1 Implement Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Five-Year Soil and Water Resources Conservation Plan’s priority goals for 2021-2025.

***Watershed Management***

9.2 Implement Maquoketa River Watershed Management Plan – Phase 1.

9.3 Implement Maquoketa River Watershed Management Plan – Phase 2 as a subwatershed action plan to guide local authorities and residents in putting Phase 1 into practice.

***Natural Resources Conservation***

9.4 Implement Jackson County Conservation’s 2023 Outdoor Recreation Plan.

**CHAPTER 10. PARKS, RECREATION, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

In coordination with Chapter 9, goals focus on improvements for county parks and recreation areas, as well as conservation and interpretation of cultural and natural resources, to enhance quality of life.

***Environmental Education***

10.1 Implement the 2023 Environmental Education Plan’s 5-Year Plan for programming.

***Outdoor Recreation and Conservation***

10.2 Implement the 2023 Outdoor Recreation Plan.

***Honor Cultural and Natural Resources***

10.3 Enhance quality of life through honoring arts and cultural events and natural resources in the region.

10.4 Promote celebration of the arts and cultural events.

10.5 Ensure cultural sustainability for the wellbeing of all.

10.6 Enhance access to natural excursion areas and recreational activities.

***Regional Collaboration***

10.7 Implement the updated Grant Wood Loop Master Plan’s Future Priorities.



**Education at Hurstville Lime Kilns**  
*Source: Jackson County Conservation*

**CHAPTER 11. HAZARD MITIGATION**

Goals focus on mitigation, prevention, and preparedness to reduce potential losses and enhance quality of life.

**Mitigation**

11.1 Protect the health, safety and quality of life for Jackson County citizens while reducing or eliminating property losses, economic costs, and damage to the natural environment caused by a disaster.

**Prevention**

11.2 Ensure government operations, response and recovery in Jackson County are not significantly disrupted by disasters.

**Preparedness**

11.3 Expand public awareness and encourage intergovernmental cooperation, coordination and communication in Jackson County to build a more resilient community against all hazards.

**CHAPTER 12. LAND USE**

Goals seek to minimize conflicts between incompatible land uses, preserve key resources, and ensure that Jackson County can grow while keeping its rural character and quality of life for residents.

**Best Practice**

12.1 Keep Land Use Policy current with changing growth conditions in the region.

12.2 Ensure that cities are coordinating with each other for their best development.

**Preservation**

12.3 Preserve and protect viable land for agriculture.

12.4 Preserve and protect parks, open spaces, and natural resources.

**CHAPTER 13. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION**

Goals seek to improve and expand intergovernmental collaboration to build on Jackson County’s active community spirit and strong volunteerism to improve quality of life for residents.

**Build Local Capacity**

13.1 Build capacity of local governments, non-profits, and community organizations in Jackson County.

**Informal Collaboration**

13.2 Jackson County Economic Alliance (JCEA) collaborates with Jackson County, cities, schools, hospital, and service organizations.

**Youth Development**

13.3 Promote engagement and entrepreneurship among the county’s youth, including professional development opportunities for young workers.

**See CHAPTER 14. IMPLEMENTATION of this Comprehensive Plan for the implementation strategies for Chapters 4 through 13, including goals and objectives, potential sponsors and partners, timeframes, and related plans.**