

CHAPTER IV - COUNTY VISION

Scott County's 2040 Vision is a long-range, big picture description of our desired future. It communicates core values, legacies, and aspirations for both current residents and future generations. The 2040 Vision is the core of this 2040 Plan Update, providing a framework for each element's goals, policies, and recommendations. Steps to achieve the 2040 Vision and address the 2040 Strategic Challenges are discussed in Chapter XII.

2040 VISIONING PROCESS

Over a decade ago, the County undertook its first-ever visioning process to garner input and help "paint a picture" of what Scott County should look like in the future. The visioning process included a series of workshops with residents and community leaders to elicit their opinions about the way Scott County should look, feel, and function in the year 2030. At each workshop, participants exchanged opinions on a series of questions (through an interactive electronic voting system) on topics such as rural densities, hamlets, transportation, natural resource protection, and parks and open space. A 40-member Vision Advisory Committee reviewed the public input and, in 2007, developed the 2030 Vision and Strategic Challenges. (A complete description of the original visioning process is documented in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update)

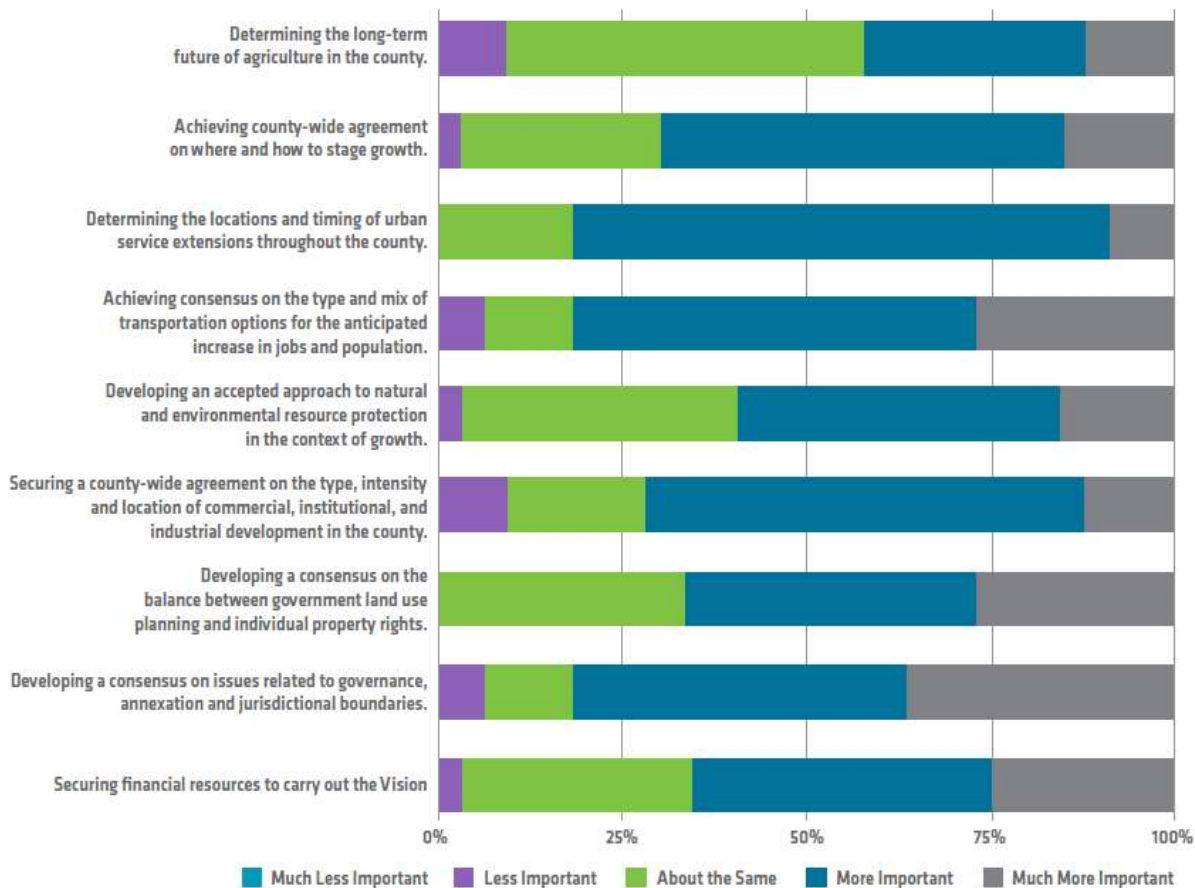
Ten years later, in April 2017, the County invited the same Vision Advisory Committee members back - along with county commissioners, planning commission members, mayors and town chairs - to a workshop to revisit and reboot the original vision. This dinner event provided an opportunity for 60+ stakeholders to explore the future of Scott County. The event gathered the group's collective intelligence on the formation of the 2030 Vision to evaluate, reflect and consider new perspectives for 2040, beginning with an examination of emergent trends in technology, transportation, energy, economic development, land use, and other influential agents. The workshop helped stakeholders understand and assimilate the complex and interrelated forces that come together to shape the future of Scott County. The workshop was facilitated and moderated by Future iQ, an international consulting firm specializing in future planning.

Pre-Vision Update Workshop Survey

A survey was sent to invited participants of the vision update workshop, and this input, along with assistance from County staff helped to create framework for discussion at the 2040 Vision Update workshop. Workshop participants were asked about their views on having a shared community vision for Scott County. Twenty three (70%) of the thirty three respondents indicated having previously been involved in a future planning process with Scott County. In terms of demographics, 79% of the respondents were male and 21% were female. The majority of respondents were in the 51-70 age range, with 15% in the 31-10 age range. About 50% percent indicated they had lived in Scott for more than 40 years. Most respondents felt optimistic of highly optimistic about the future prospects of Scott County.

Survey respondents were asked two questions referencing the 2006 Scott County Visioning Process. The first identified the Strategic Challenges that must be addressed if Scott County is to be successful in achieving its 2030 Vision and asked if respondents thought these issues are now more or less important than they were in 2006/2007 when the original vision was drafted (see Figure IV-1).

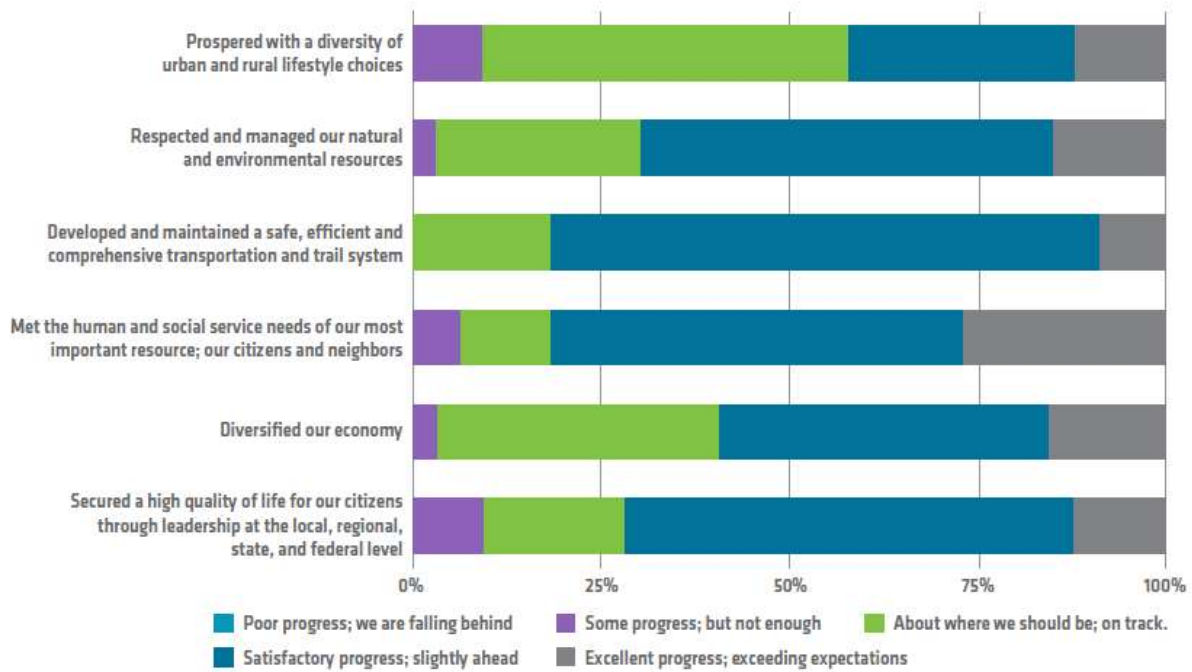
Figure IV-1: Most Important Strategic Challenges to Achieve 2030 Vision



Challenges a decade ago that seem to be much more important today to the group included issues around governance, annexation and jurisdictional boundaries; balancing government land use planning and individual property rights, and getting consensus on the type of mix of transportation options to serve job and population growth. Challenges a decade ago that seem to be much less important today included issues around securing countywide agreement on the type, intensity and location of commercial and industrial development.

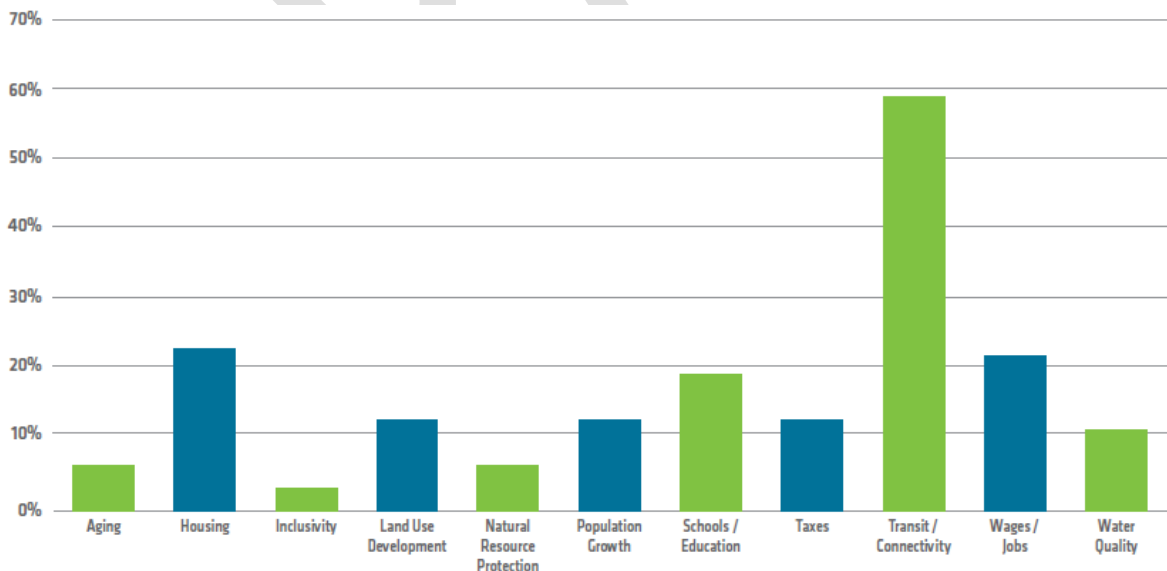
The second question asked respondents how satisfied they are with the progress that has been made on the six key pillars defined in the original Vision statement (see Figure IV-2). The group felt that the County has made excellent progress in “meeting the human and social needs of our most important resources; our citizens and neighbors.” Areas where the group felt there has been some progress, but not enough over the past decade, include “prospering with a diversity of urban and rural lifestyle choices” and “securing a high quality of life for our citizens” through leadership at local, regional, state and federal levels.

Figure IV-2: Progress Made on Strategic Challenges



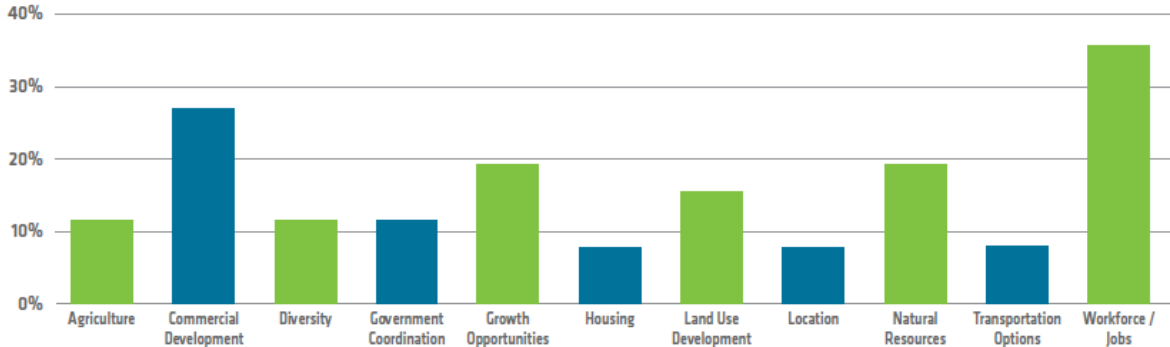
Finally, survey respondents were asked to describe what they thought were the biggest problems and challenges facing Scott County in the medium and long term (15-20 years), as well as the biggest opportunities facing Scott County in the next 15-20 years (see Figures IV-3 and 4).

Figure IV-3: Biggest Challenges Facing Scott County



In the next 15 to 20 years, a large majority of respondents (nearly 60%) felt transit and connectivity was the biggest problem or challenge facing the County. Housing and jobs were the next biggest problems or challenges facing the county according to respondents. As for opportunities, many respondents felt “workforce development and jobs” and “commercial development” were areas to capitalize on over the next two decades.

Figure IV-4: Biggest Opportunities Facing Scott County



2040 Vision Update Workshop

The half-day vision update workshop was conducted on April 24, 2017, and attended by approximately 40 participants. The workshop was intended to assist in the understanding of future drivers that affect Scott County and look ahead at what is wanted for the County. Outcomes were intended to include recommendations for vision updates that will be used to inform the upcoming comprehensive planning process. In order to begin considering recommendations for the 2040 Vision initiative, Scott County visioning stakeholders and staff reviewed the priorities of the 2030 Vision and were presented with future local and global trends that will affect Scott County in the next 5-20 years. Stakeholders were asked to explore the future by answering the series of questions in table groups. After each question was answered, groups were asked to select one priority issue and present it to the workshop group. A compilation of all responses and priorities are described below.

Workshop participants discussed the ramifications and implications of failing to address Scott County's future challenges and opportunities head on. It was recognized that some of the existing work in the county is already significantly shaping the future directions and actions. As an effort to prioritize potential recommendations for the County's 2040 Vision, participants at the workshop were asked by group to identify what they saw as the most important emerging areas of focus that needed to be added 2040 Vision. Each group reported out and arrived at the following recommendations to guide the County in its vision update

- **Create a sustainable local economy** that supports livable wage jobs; focus on diversifying job opportunities. Locate new business in smaller cities (Belle Plaine, Jordan, New Prague, Elko New Market). Help existing businesses grow or adapt rather than only focusing on new business development. Attract CEOs/executives to live here and subsequently move their business here. Accommodate corporate campus development. Plan for and maintain amenities in the community to attract businesses. Better integrate SMSC into County's economic development plan. Invest in and capitalize on the Minnesota River ports. Expand commercial and residential development in the hamlets. Capture the value of the County's fiber infrastructure.
- **Embrace technology but be brave in slowing the pace of utilization** to ensure new technology is helping build community and not dividing or isolating it. Plan and prepare for automation of vehicles, drones, and the workplace. Consider advances in wastewater management to allow development of hamlets. Explore how technology can enhance secondary education and vocational training. Plan for and respond to security

threats (terrorism, cyber, ID theft). Plan for and accommodate growth in renewable and alternate energy development.

- **Provide a vision for long-term farmland preservation** (commodity agriculture vs. providing local foods to feed the Twin Cities region). Preserve agricultural land and micro farming. Support farming best practices and policies (particularly as it relates to chemicals and runoff). Preserve water quality and pollinators. Plan for and maintain infrastructure that supports farming.
- **Maintain the County’s unique identity in the region.** Recognize the sense of individuality that is prevalent in the county. Remain competitive in the region in “quality of life” metrics. Create and elevate a sense of community. Pay special attention to providing services (transit, trails, social) to the older population in the rural areas. Avoid becoming just like another urbanized county in the Twin Cities region. Connect children to a “slower” environment (parks, trails). Create and maintain diverse ways to connect people. Be nimble in policy and policy making. Set a vision of becoming a “premier community.”

COUNTY BOARD GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Scott County Board of Commissioners has established guiding principles to direct County personnel and its actions. These guiding principles are intended to facilitate the transaction of business by the County Board, County staff and established citizen advisory committees. The following Scott County Board of Commissioners guiding principles (goal, vision, mission and values) are important considerations when updating the 2040 Vision.

Scott County Goal, Vision, Mission, and Values

Goal

Safe, Healthy and Livable Communities

Vision

Scott County: Where individuals, families, and businesses thrive.

Mission

To advance safe, healthy, and livable communities through citizen-focused services

Values

- Stewardship: Ensuring the responsible and stable investment of taxpayer dollars and communicating its value to the public.
- Partnership: Aligning existing resources, volunteers and programs to achieve shared goals
- Leadership: Anticipating changes and managing challenges based on reliable information and citizen input.
- Commitment: Developing a high quality workforce that is dedicated to advancing a safe, healthy and livable community
- Customer Service: Creating a customer experience that is respectful, responsive and solution-oriented.
- Innovation: Exploring and adopting new technologies and processes with the goal of improving service and reducing the long term cost of service delivery.

2040 VISION

The following is the 2040 Vision for Scott County based on a culmination of input received during the 2040 community engagement and visioning processes. Taken together, some common “word clouds” (a graphical representation of word frequency) emerged that informs the 2040 Vision update: *identity, sustainability, mobility, technology, connectivity, and time.*

2040 Vision

In 2040, Scott County is a well-planned, safe, prosperous and fiscally responsible community built by citizens and businesses who value neighborhoods, education, families, health, and public safety, and who enjoy its natural beauty, rural character, and location in the region. In 2040, Scott County is recognized metro-wide as one of the best places to live, work, shop, and play in the Twin Cities because we have:

- prospered with a diversity of urban and rural lifestyle choices while maintaining a unique identity in the region;
- respected and managed our natural, aggregate, agricultural and environmental resources;
- developed and maintained a safe, efficient, and comprehensive transportation, mobility and trail system;
- met the human and social service needs of our most important resource...our citizens and neighbors, who are stable, connected, educated and contributing;
- expanded our sustainable, local economy that supports livable wage and diversified job opportunities; and
- secured a high quality of life for our citizens through leadership and partnership at the local, regional, state, and federal level; and
- created a place where our citizens have time; time to socially interact, time to adapt, time to learn and innovate, and time to enjoy active, healthy lifestyles.

The following is the 2040 Vision for Scott County expanded with more description:

2040 Vision (with supplemental description)

In 2040, Scott County is a well-planned, safe, prosperous and fiscally responsible community built by citizens and businesses who value neighborhoods, education, families, health, and public safety, and who enjoy its natural beauty, rural character, and location in the region. In 2040, Scott County is recognized metro-wide as one of the best places to live, work, shop, and play in the Twin Cities because we have:

Prospered with a diversity of urban and rural lifestyle choices while maintaining a unique identity in the region – We have accomplished this balance through fair, proactive, broad-based, regional collaboration and cooperation in both meeting the day-to-day needs of the citizens of Scott County and preparing for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

- Our cities have ample room for growth and expansion, diverse job opportunities, abundant goods and services, vibrant downtowns, a range of housing choices within close proximity to local and regional infrastructure investments, quality community services and amenities, and convenient access to transportation corridors.
- Our hamlets continue to serve as compact, convenient places for gathering and commerce in the rural areas.

- Our rural areas offer a living environment with a range of lot sizes for single-family homes, hobby farms, productive farmland, natural areas, scenic landscapes, and recreational opportunities. As a result of proactive planning, many of our rural neighborhoods have developed as clusters utilizing evolving technologies for community sewer and water service, and providing open space and conservation corridors while preserving for essential infrastructure.
- Our expansive agricultural areas, with large tracts of farmland and dispersed housing options, provide open space and rural lifestyles while preserving our heritage and history.

Respected and managed our natural, aggregate, agricultural and environmental resources – Our rivers and streams, lakes and wetlands, bluffs and river bottoms, wildlife habitats and significant natural and agricultural areas are preserved for current and future generations to enjoy.

- Our undeveloped landscape is made up of rolling farmland, woodlots and open fields.
- Our 2040 developed landscape includes parks, greenways, and conservation corridors based on natural resource inventories.
- We have managed a plentiful supply of quality drinking water for all residents.
- We have managed our surface and groundwater systems in face of rapid growth and intensive farming activity.
- When opportunities were presented, we worked with landowners to restore wetlands and re-establish historic drainage patterns.
- Through careful planning, orderly development, and land stewardship, we have protected our natural resources through both public and private means to ensure a high quality of life.
- Natural open spaces and conservation corridors have been provided through the use of cluster development, density options, innovative site design, and through public-private partnerships.
- We recognize the importance of preserving our natural resource base as a way to foster and retain economic and tourism development and to support healthy, active lifestyles.
- We have encouraged development that promotes active, healthy lifestyles. We have turned our attention back to one of our most treasured natural assets, the Minnesota River, as a place to recreate, learn, live and enjoy.
- We have promoted development patterns aimed at reducing air and water pollution and encouraged development practices that maintains the health of our environment.
- Our public is educated on the importance of resource and energy conservation to reduce the amount of waste and preserve the environment for future generations.
- We continuously build on our vision by actively engaging residents in further planning for our natural resources.

Developed and maintained a safe, efficient and comprehensive transportation, mobility, and trail system – Our countywide transportation network is a safe, efficient, and multi-modal (highways, transit, and trails) system that supports and promotes expansion of the county’s economic base. We have focused on maintaining and optimizing safety of our existing roadways and trails. We have participated in regional transportation projects aimed at reducing traffic congestion and travel times for our residents. This has led to a more efficient and integrated transportation system within the wider metropolitan region.

- Future road and trail corridors have been established and reserved in planned growth areas before development occurs.
- A countywide trail system has been developed along road corridors and cross country to link our cities, parks, hamlets, and other points of interest as well as provide a safe alternative for pedestrians and cyclists to move about the county supporting an active lifestyle.
- This system has provided active outdoor recreational opportunities. Transit has met the needs of our diverse population.
- By 2040, our transportation and trail system enhances the quality of life for our citizens, and minimizes the system's overall capital and annual operating costs.
- We continue to explore new ways to move people, goods and services to, from, and within our community and build upon this vision by actively engaging our residents and businesses in further transportation and trail planning.

Met the human and social service needs of our most important resource . . . our citizens and neighbors, who are stable, connected, educated and contributing –

We have worked collaboratively with our partners to provide the critical human infrastructure needed to serve the well-being of our long-term residents and businesses, and our welcomed newcomers.

- Health care, transportation, security and social services for our aging population are being met locally.
- Volunteers share with professionals the responsibility for providing public safety skills and services.
- All levels of high-quality education are available; we have life-long learning opportunities.
- Cultural diversity is celebrated.
- For the safety of our residents, we have anticipated major challenges caused by humans or nature.
- Our parks, trails, community and cultural centers, libraries, schools, and places of worship serve all generations as places to gather, connect with the community, and support an active lifestyle.
- Services have been extended, in a planned and orderly manner, to meet population demands and changing demographics.

Expanded our sustainable, local economy that supports livable wage and diversified job opportunities – We have a majority of our workforce working inside the county. We have planned and marketed land along our major transportation corridors for commercial and industrial development.

- The appearance of these corridors have been enhanced to promote quality development and site design, and to promote long-term investments.
- Our cities' historic downtowns are vibrant; and the commercial nodes in our communities provide goods and services to our residents.
- We have developed the necessary "information infrastructure" in both our urban and rural areas to foster economic development and enhance communication.
- We continue to attract visitors to our full range of tourism destinations – both public and private. We recognize the importance the tourism industry has on our local economy.

- Our success in economic development has been driven by our high quality of life (safe communities, quality schools and parks, abundant natural resources, and convenient access to the region) and dedication to serving the needs of our residents.

Secured a high quality of life for our citizens through leadership and partnership at the local, regional, state, and federal level – We have taken the lead in the region in finding new and innovative ways to look beyond our political boundaries for solutions to challenges of the twenty-first century. Our residents recognize that community prosperity will continue well beyond 2040. We also recognize the balance between economic growth and prosperity and the preservation of the ways of life that is cherished by many.

- Our cities, rural communities, and tribal community work together, share resources, exchange information, and tackle tough issues in a collaborative effort to save taxpayer dollars and build leadership in public service.
- We have maintained an open line of communication with the public and our partners on important issues facing our community.
- We have planned for urban expansion to meet the needs of projected future growth and development for the second half of this century.
- We recognize that, in some places, our abundant farmland is an interim use that will eventually, in the long term, become more profitable as developed land in an urban setting.
- We have adapted to and taken advantage of evolving technologies to meet the challenges of the future.
- We have worked with local, regional and state agencies to plan for this future growth so that development can continue to be managed in a way that enhances our overall quality of life.
- We continuously build on our vision by actively engaging landowners, residents, businesses, local governments, and regional and state agencies in proactive growth management planning in Scott County.
- We have taken the position that initial growth and development should pay for itself as much as possible and not fall on the backs of our current residents.
- We have taken steps to manage growth in a positive way, to act fiscally responsible and with deliberation when making decisions that affect our high quality of life and that of our children's children.

Created a place where our citizens have time; time to socially interact, time to adapt, time to learn and innovate, and time to enjoy active, healthy lifestyles – Time is a critical resource for many of our citizens, and the lack of it was expressed in many surveys and focus groups as the key barrier to civic involvement, social interaction, active living, healthy eating, and park and trail usage. Home to a large number of families where both parents are working and ever-increasing average commute times (26 minutes in 2014 – longer than the average in the entire region), it is no wonder many Scott County residents just don't have time. By 2040, we have taken steps to reverse this trend - to the greatest extent possible - and given back a little of this precious resource.

- We have promoted land development patterns aimed at reducing long car trips for daily errands. We have created more walkable, bikable neighborhoods in close proximity to employment areas, shopping, schools, hospitals, and offices.
- We have grown or attracted more job opportunities that match the skills of our labor force,

resulting in more people living and working within the County and fewer people making long commutes every day outside the county for employment.

- We have grown or attracted more shopping, eating, marketplace, recreation and entertainment uses within our own communities - resulting in more people staying or buying “local”.
- Our residents have access to high-speed Internet services (as well as next-generation gigabit speeds). Our cities, townships, schools and large employment centers are all connected to the County’s fiber ring; creating more and more opportunities for our residents to work, collaborate, study or (re-)train for a career right from their home or business.
- We have developed a wider array of housing choices for our residents. Not only are single-family homes in all price ranges available, but townhomes, apartment buildings, and senior living complexes are all located within the same community. Our residents have ample opportunities to remain in their community while moving throughout different stages of life. Our young adults and seniors have housing choices to remain close to their families.
- We have employed technology to allow more people to access local government services on-line or 24-hour access to provide more convenience to the customers.
- We have expanded transit and mobility services to allow more residents to travel within the county without driving a car. We have started laying the infrastructure and policy groundwork to accommodate autonomous vehicles and deliveries, and ride shares. This has allowed our residents to use transport time for more productive use or social interaction.

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

Strategic Challenges are those issues or conditions that must be addressed if Scott County is to be successful in achieving its 2040 Vision. Because the Vision covers a twenty-five year period, the challenges may not become problematic for a few years, but nonetheless, will impede progress. The following are Strategic Challenges identified by the Vision Advisory Committee back in 2006, and updated to reflect the outcomes of the 2040 visioning process:

1. Determining the long-term future of agriculture in the county.
2. Achieving county-wide agreement on the location and pace of growth, while preserving the County’s unique identity in the region.
3. Adapt to new technologies and innovation in the fields of transportation, energy, workforce development, education, communication, and delivery of public services in a way that will strengthen the community, and not separate or isolate it.
4. Achieving consensus on the type and mix of transportation and mobility options for the anticipated increase in jobs and population, and in response to emerging technologies.
5. Developing an accepted approach to natural and environmental resource protection (especially water quality and prime farmland) in the context of growth.
6. Securing a county-wide agreement on the type, location, density and affordability of workforce and lifecycle housing to meet the needs of a growing, aging and more diverse population.
7. Developing a consensus on the balance between government land use planning and individual property rights.

8. Developing a consensus on issues related to governance, annexation and jurisdictional boundaries.
9. Securing financial resources to carry out the Vision.

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