



Long-Term Strategic Plan

City of Sikeston, Missouri

March 2009



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Message from the Co-Chairs

The road to success in many areas of life is built upon the adage “Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan”. The document which follows is the product of more than 100 concerned Sikestonians who collectively volunteered thousands of hours of talking, examining, challenging, and creating strategies for our city’s work plan over the next 15-20 years.

It is not inclusive of everything Sikeston must do to continue to grow; rather, it targets four key areas that those citizens feel are critical for community growth. And, their recommended strategies often overlap each other – economic development improvement is dependent upon education improvement; quality of life improvement is dependent upon housing improvement. As you review these recommendations you will see their interdependence.

Some strategies may seem far-reaching and they are meant to be, but they are not far-fetched. Further, those who would challenge them now should remember that this planning process was open and publicized to any and all citizens to take part throughout its nearly year-long existence. As Sikeston now moves from ‘plan your work’ to ‘work your plan’ through the actions of its new Strategic Plan Implementation Commission, further citizen input will be used to keep these strategies contemporary and do-able.

We were struck by two threads which ran throughout the process: First, Sikeston really does have a renewed and growing spirit of community rather than divisiveness. Neighbors do want to help neighbors and are willing to improve situations rather than relying solely on public services. All sectors of our city are ‘Sikeston Proud’. Second, the need to identify and develop young leaders to carry out and expand upon the strategies herein is critical. We challenge our civic organizations, churches, and families to foster that next generation of community leaders quickly.

We submit these recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on behalf of all who want to see Sikeston moving forward together, and thank you for our opportunity to take part.

Cordially,
Carolyn Harris and Jim Schwaninger, Co-Chairs
Sikeston’s Vision For Tomorrow Committee



Introduction

Carl Sandburg once said, "Nothing happens unless we first dream." The community of Sikeston claims a rich heritage as a regional leader in Southeast Missouri. With eyes to the future, the vision of the city of Sikeston is to grow and be as vital in the 21st century as it has been in the past. To paraphrase the great writer, Jonathan Swift, those with vision see the invisible.

Our community stands at a crossroad to its future. "Our community, as well as the nation, has changed greatly in the past 25 years," commented Mayor Mike Marshall. "It's time to take a look at what we've done, and where we want to be in the coming decade."

In August 2007, the Mayor and City Council of Sikeston recognized the need for a community-based task force of stakeholders to develop a comprehensive vision and plan for the Sikeston of the future. In January 2008, the City Council of Sikeston formally authorized the enlistment of the National Civic League (NCL) to help in identifying the community's needs with the goal of updating the City's long-term strategic plan, a plan projecting our vision 15-20 years down the road. This project became known as *Sikeston's Vision for Tomorrow /Moving Forward Together* and began in March 2008.



The Vision Process

In April 2008, the Sikeston City Council selected 18 area citizens, the Initiating Committee, to formulate the direction of the process. Working with Derek Okubo, National Civic League Senior Vice President, they met from April 10, 2008, to May 29, 2008. The Initiating Committee wanted a theme that reflected Sikeston's positive past as well as one that projected a forward-thinking vision for the future.

Jim Schwaninger and Carolyn Harris were selected to guide the process as co-chairpersons. Their task was to engage a group of stakeholders to continue the process. This group of people represented a broad cross-section of the Sikeston community including a diversity of ages, gender, ethnicity, relational status, income level, employment, length of time in the area, residential region, and vocation.

The invitation, extended to over 100 citizens, included an open call, published in the local newspaper, to anyone desiring to be part of this strategic planning project. Initially, over 150 citizens showed their interest in the road forward for Sikeston.

In a ten-month-long process involving this cross-section of Sikeston's citizens, the stakeholders met through January 2009. Four performance areas were identified as key to Sikeston's future—economic development, education, housing, and quality of life. Citizen "stakeholders" thoroughly examined each performance area, establishing priorities and identifying strategies with action steps for the implementation of a long-term strategic plan.

Vision Process

The kick-off event, at the Sikeston High School, was June 26, 2008. At this initial group meeting, the interested citizens met with the co-chairs and Project Director Derek Okubo to provide input and energy in the development of a long-range strategic plan that would result in an improved Sikeston that the citizens desired.

The *Sikeston Vision for Tomorrow* stakeholder meeting agendas addressed the following action planning steps.

June 26, 2008	Kick-Off Meeting
July 17, 2008	Civic Index – Assessment of civic infrastructure
August 14, 2008	Community Scan – Accomplishments, trend data
August 28, 2008	Selection of Key Vision Areas
September 18, 2008	Evaluating Key Vision Areas – visioning
October 9, 2008	Evaluating Key Vision Areas – goals
October 30, 2008	Evaluating Key Vision Areas – strategies
November 20, 2008	Evaluating Key Vision Areas – action steps
December 11, 1008	Action Planning & Implementation Strategies
January/February 2009	Final Report Writing Begins
March 2009	Final Report Completed, Printed, Released to Community
	Implementation Begins



Vision Statement

Twenty-first century Sikeston looks forward to a strong economic base supported by education and training, providing enhanced quality of life and safety within a uniquely unified and diverse community. The spirit of Sikeston, nurtured by our friendly, progressive attitude, encourages all citizens to make the most of ever-increasing opportunities.

As Sikeston moves forward, new employers are drawn to the city by an educated and willing work force. Our strategic location and available resources prove advantageous to economic expansion. With the growth of job opportunities, Sikeston is able to provide a wealth of recreational and cultural activities for the benefit of its citizens of all ages. A new respect and understanding among all social classes assures a safe environment for the entire community. The city utilizes the talents and contributions of all its citizens and embraces ethnic and religious diversity. Change is cultivated as a sign of growth, and city pride is shown in the beauty and improvements to our city streets, buildings, and landscape.



Key Visions

Economic Development

Education

Housing

Quality of Life



Key Visions

Economic Development

- Plan and construct a 4-lane Interstate crossroads between I-55, I-57, and I-24.
- Establish a County Service Consolidation Committee to identify and then consolidate duplicate services to aid participating county budget costs.
- Create 3,000—5,000 new jobs by 2025.
- Re-establish a Sikeston Industrial Development Authority.
- Organize a Right-to-Work by County statewide initiative.

Education

- Provide educational opportunities for community members to become life-long learners.
- Provide opportunities for community members to compete in a global work force.
- Cultivate a collaborative environment with all education stakeholders.

Housing

- Promote safe and affordable housing for all levels of income.
- Increase home ownership rates and decrease foreclosures.
- Have each neighborhood visually appealing and reflecting pride.
- Rehabilitate or replace sub-standard housing.

Quality of Life

- Improve community-wide communication.
- Improve community-wide collaboration and cooperation across social, health, and community services.
- Improve public accommodations, services, and activities.



Moving Forward Together

Economic Development

Education

Housing

Quality of Life

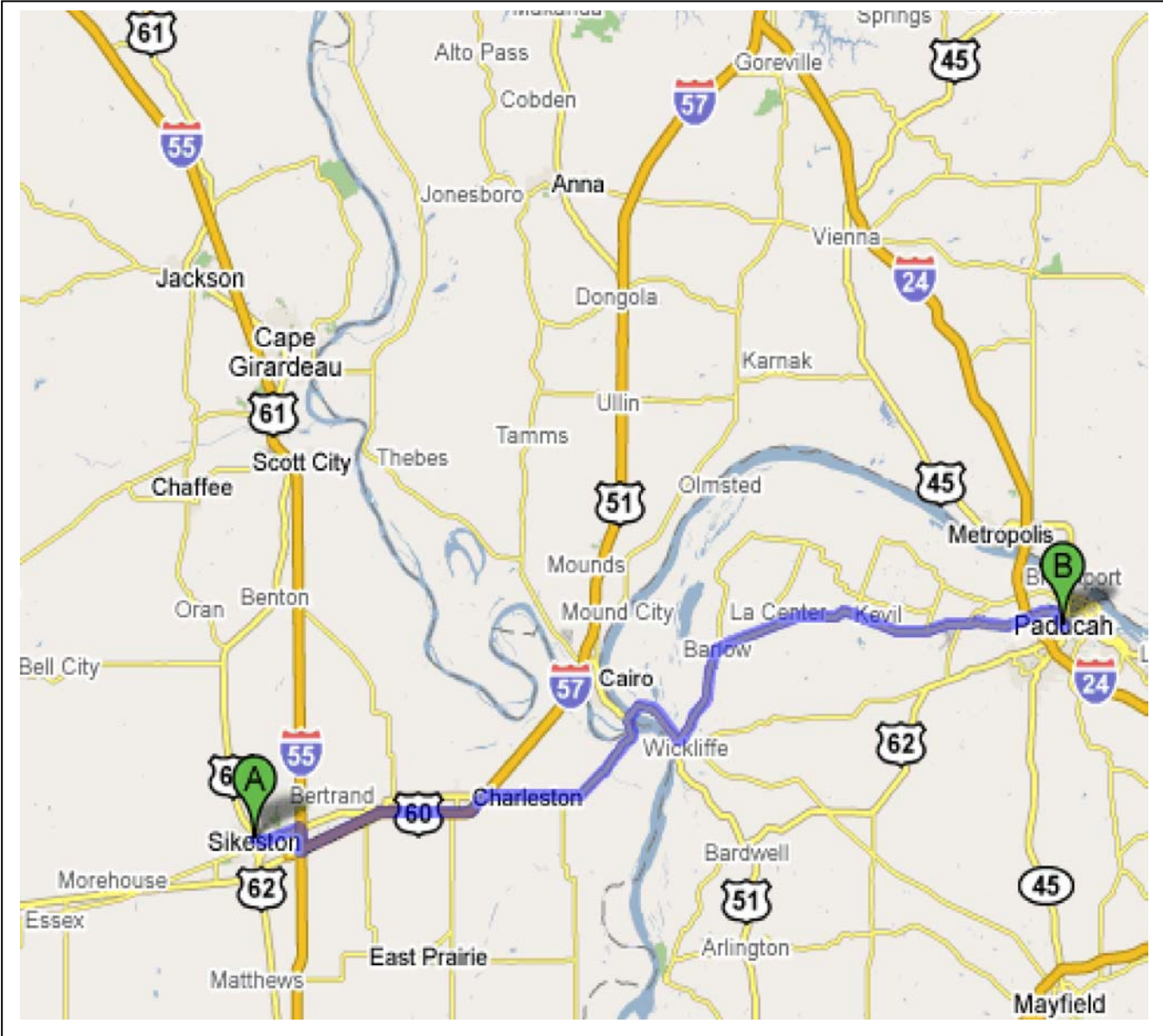


Economic Development

Moving Forward Together

<i>Plan and construct a 4-lane Interstate crossroads between I-55, I-57, and I-24.</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a steering committee. 2. Establish one logical route. 3. Write a petition for support. 4. Collect support petition signatures. 5. Petition Congress.
<i>Rationale</i>
<p>Present routing follows US Highway 60 between Charleston, MO and Paducah, KY. The US Highway 60 bridges over the Mississippi and the Ohio Rivers are both pre-World War II structures and are a safety hazard. There are three states affected: Missouri, Illinois, and Kentucky. Politically, there are low-lying river areas to cross and possibly National Forest areas, as well. No previous routing has been endorsed by these political areas.</p>
<i>Requirements</i>
<p>Involvement by cities of Sikeston, Paducah, Cairo, New Madrid, the Port Authority, government offices of Missouri, Kentucky, and Illinois, and the U.S.</p> <p>Legal assistance to create the corporation to advance the project.</p> <p>Help from respective highway departments for previous studies and impact statements.</p>

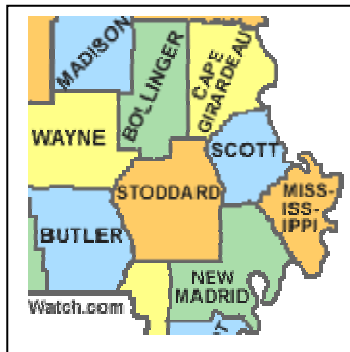
**Proposed Route of 4-lane Interstate Crossroads
Between I-55, I-57, and I-24**



Establish a County Service Consolidation Committee.

1. Establish a steering committee.
2. Establish a list of services that could benefit from consolidation (For example, 911 dispatch service).
3. Draft a petition that lawfully creates a consolidated entity to perform these functions.
4. Committee members will garner support by speaking with civic clubs and area government bodies, obtaining petition signatures.
5. Affect the petition into law.

Rationale



Population flight from rural areas into urban areas has left surrounding counties, in particular Mississippi, New Madrid, and to some extent Stoddard, with a smaller tax base to support increasing service levels. County services continue to expand faster than county budgets. What happens in surrounding counties affects the city of Sikeston. The purpose of the committee will be to identify and then consolidate activities that are duplicated among participating counties and free resources of the individual counties.

Requirements

- Cooperation among cities and county seats of neighboring counties.
- An accounting service may be helpful to assemble participant costs and unified savings.
- Legal advice to correctly target the petition.
- Media releases and interviews explaining reasoning to the public.

Create 3, 000—5,000 new jobs by 2025.

1. Research, identify, and recruit agriculture-related businesses.
2. Identify and recruit industries/companies that utilize geographic and transportation systems.
3. Identify retail and service businesses to support incoming industry.

Rationale

The promotion of Sikeston to new employers is a directive of the Sikeston Department of Economic Development (DED), leading many other similarly minded organizations. We believe that the core jobs in our community need to be in the industrial and commercial segment. The corollary to these core jobs is an increase in the retail and service sector workforce.

Requirements

Involvement by the Sikeston Department of Economic Development and Sikeston Area Chamber of Commerce.

Training for the workforce.

Bonds, grants, and other state or federal incentives.

Re-establish a Sikeston Industrial Development Cooperation (SIDC).

1. Establish a steering committee.
2. Investigate potential stakeholders in the corporation.
3. Create the corporation and core funding.
4. Target properties to own (For example: old Triangle building).

Rationale

The SIDC would create a community-friendly company that can be used to facilitate the job creation by supplying property needs to prospective employers. Many prospects would prefer to lease, rather than own, property, freeing capital for their other specific business needs. The Sikeston Department of Economic Development would direct a committee to create this corporation.

Requirements

Involvement by the Sikeston Department of Economic Development, City Council, Board of Municipal Utilities, Sikeston Industrial Development Corporation.

Legal assistance to create the corporation.

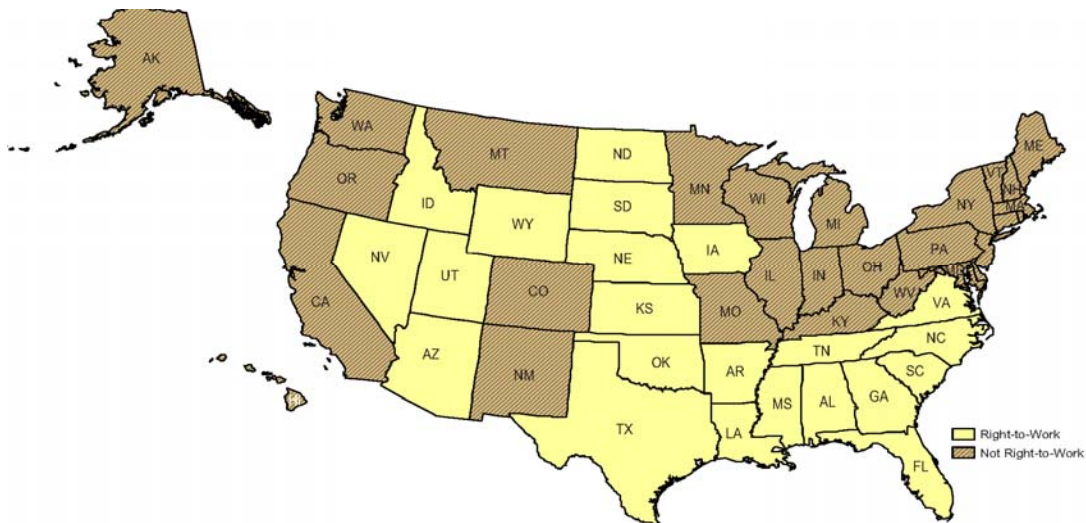
Possible state funds, if available.

Cooperation by banking and finance stakeholders.

Organize a Right-to-Work by County statewide initiative.

1. Establish a steering committee.
2. Committee personnel will speak to local civic clubs and business organizations to gather support.
3. Contact state elected officials.
4. Organize with other cities and counties for same purpose.
5. Collect support petition signatures.

Rationale



The Missouri Bootheel is surrounded on three sides with right-to-work states. The ability for Scott County to become a right-to-work county would put us on equal footing competing with surrounding states on this big labor issue. This issue needs to be a rural county grassroots initiative in order to combat the bias in the legislative bodies that has been reacting to organized labor in metropolitan areas.

Requirements

- Involvement by interested employers and industrial development parties from rural counties.
- Rural state representatives willing to assist and sponsor legislation.
- A network of development offices from each government level.
- Sympathetic funding to be used to assist in travel and promotional expenses.



Education

Moving Forward Together

Provide educational opportunities for community members to become life-long learners.

1. Inventory the needs and available resources of the Sikeston area.
2. Create an on-going campaign to promote education opportunities in the community.
3. Institute an on-going campaign to demonstrate the significant impact of an education that engages life-long learning and the need to have a quality education for personal and financial success.
4. Prepare an on-going campaign to enlighten the community about the varied educational opportunities in Sikeston and persuade the community that a quality education is one of its highest priorities.
5. Ask for a commitment to provide the necessary funding to improve educational infrastructures.

Rationale

Educated citizens make a better community and generate a knowledgeable work force, one that is motivated and embraces a continuous learning experience.

Requirements

Involvement of local school districts, Sikeston Area Chamber of Commerce, Sikeston Department of Economic Development, Sikeston Career & Technology Center (SCTC), Southeast Missouri State University, Three Rivers Community College, Bootheel Regional Planning & Economic Development Commission, Bootheel Regional Training Group, and citizens.

Funding from public and private sources.

Provide opportunities for community members to compete in a global work force.

1. Inventory the needs and available resources of the Sikeston area.
2. Share the results of the inventory with the community.
3. Survey and define the employment trends for the next 20 years.
4. Develop a plan to make adjustments that reflect an evolving global work force.

Rationale

Citizens will have a greater potential for success because of the excellent educational opportunities for both training and re-training. Educational opportunities translate into job opportunities.

Requirements

Involvement by educational personnel, business leaders, government officials, agriculture agencies, manufacturing, energy, medical, geriatric, and transportation representatives as well as the working population.
Funding from public, private, and commercial sources.

Cultivate a collaborative environment with all education stakeholders.

1. Inventory needs and available resources of the Sikeston area.
2. Share the results of the inventory with the community.
3. Create an advisory council to identify the on-going training needs and coordinate the resources.
4. Provide regional/national training conferences that capitalize on Sikeston's location for high impact, short-term training.
5. Establish training centers that reflect current and future cutting-edge job opportunities.

Rationale

When all stakeholders have a vested interest, they will become involved in the on-going design and implementation of meaningful educational opportunities.

Requirements

Involvement by Sikeston Area Chamber of Commerce, Sikeston Department of Economic Development, Sikeston Career & Technology Center (SCTC), Southeast Missouri State University, Three Rivers Community College, Bootheel Regional Planning & Economic Development Commission, local church and civic groups, and other education or training groups.

Funding from public, private, state, and commercial sources.

Current information and training that is provided by governmental entities, industry experts, national speakers, professional trainers.



Housing

Moving Forward Together

Promote safe and affordable housing for all levels of income.

Increase home ownership rates and decrease foreclosures.

1. Improve street lighting.
2. Start neighborhood watch programs.
3. Encourage local financial institutions to implement cooperative plans for financing houses on LCRA properties.
4. Educate the population on the benefits of home ownership and mentor new home owners.
5. Add infrastructure such as sidewalks, lighting. Remove trees, shrubs, bushes to encourage developers to build or rehab houses. Create an environment where people will want to develop affordable housing. Consider modular homes.
6. Have a neighborhood open house upon completion of several houses being rehabbed.

Rationale

Safe and affordable housing is a basic need for the citizens of Sikeston. Persons who own their own homes have the incentive to take care and be proud of their possessions.

Requirements

Involvement of neighborhood residents, Sikeston Street Department, Public Safety, politicians, government leaders, builders, educators, DAEOC, Habitat for Humanity, U.S.D.A. Rural Development, churches, and social service organizations.

Resources for revenue cooperation, risk-sharing, lending in target areas, grants, and donations.

Volunteers to mentor new home owners and to provide leadership in neighborhoods.

Each neighborhood will be visually appealing and reflecting pride.

1. Conduct a block-by-block assessment, front and back, of properties.
2. Organize regular clean-up projects.
3. Develop an assistance program to help those homeowners unable to perform clean-up/fix-up tasks on their own.
4. Appoint a coordinating group.
5. Pass an ordinance to stop parking cars on lawns
6. Pass stricter ordinances to force landlords to make rentals more attractive and keep them in good repair.
7. Have a neighborhood open house after clean ups.

Rationale

Residents who keep their homes and property clean and in good repair show pride in themselves and their community. A visually appealing neighborhood will attract builders and other residents.

Requirements

Involvement by city code enforcement, civic organizations, work force, DAEOC, Sikeston Area Chamber of Commerce, churches, homeowners, neighborhood leaders, tree service companies, city government, landlords.

Rehabilitate or replace sub-standard housing.

1. Identify problem properties.
2. Form neighborhood associations.
3. Formulate a work force from within the direct area involved.

Rationale

Sikeston has over 300 properties that have been identified as sub-standard, needing demolition or rehabilitation. Visitors and potential employers take note of run-down areas of town. Rehabilitation of unsightly areas will improve the image and livability of the community.

Requirements

Involvement by homeowners and tenants: west of Main St., east of Main St., northeast of Malone, southeast of Malone.
Committees to identify problem properties.
Involvement by city officials to verify home ownership.
Involvement of civic organizations, property owners, churches, tenants, neighborhood residents in affected areas.
Available grant funding.



Quality of Life

Moving Forward Together

<i>Improve community-wide communication.</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare a comprehensive communication plan that includes using a variety of media, including radio, TV, print, website, electronic sign, etc. 2. Implement an all-inclusive community calendar to be widely disseminated by various media methods. 3. Publicize all community events and issues more fully, using many media methods.
<i>Rationale</i>
<p>With improved communication, many of the quality of life issues can be addressed: Increase community awareness of available opportunities and issues; promote community pride; promote positive social norms; improve community image.</p>
<i>Requirements</i>
<p>Involvement of all government agencies, service organizations, church groups, and other planning and organizing groups to share information.</p> <p>Funds to develop/purchase advertisement for community events. May include funds for clerical staff. Funds may come from the operating budgets of involved groups.</p>

Improve community-wide collaboration and cooperation.

1. Develop a staff position or commission to act as a clearing house that identifies opportunities for collaboration and helps coordinate the collaborative efforts among groups.
2. Investigate what type of organization/position would be most effective (city, chamber, independent corporation, city board)
3. Develop specific responsibilities for the organization/position.
4. Put the organization/position in place.
5. Have the organization investigate ways of collecting information needed for community collaboration.
6. Have the organization investigate ways to organize the collected information to make it useful. Consider volunteer bank, comprehensive list of community organizations, and community directory that includes more information than the basic phone book.
7. Have the organization make use of the Community Communication Plan to get information to those who need it.
8. Have the organization investigate the use of an interactive website that could be used by community organizations for collaboration. Consider having message boards, links to other community websites.
9. Develop ways for all segments of the community to be involved in community-wide celebrations. Examples include enlarging already scheduled celebrations to make them more inclusive and considering how to make the upcoming Sesquicentennial more inclusive.

Rationale

Collaboration among various community and government organizations will prevent both duplication and omission of services and opportunities.

Requirements

Involvement and volunteers of service clubs, churches, social services, government agencies, health agencies, and all other community groups.

Funds, perhaps supplied by affected groups above.

Improve public accommodations, services, and activities.

1. Improve/increase marked crosswalks and/or pedestrian signals. Improve street lighting. Identify problem areas.
Develop plans to address problem areas.
2. Develop design and zoning standards for commercial areas of Sikeston.
Investigate and/or enhance current standards.
Educate community on standards.
Implement and enforce standards.
3. Improve sidewalks. Enforce existing codes; develop a maintenance plan; retrofit existing subdivisions.
4. Increase funding for parks and recreation.
Develop facilities needs assessment.
Develop a plan to expand scope of parks and recreation department beyond maintenance.
5. Develop trails to accommodate pedestrian and bike travel.
Develop and enhance existing plan for trails.
Promote, market, educate community on benefits of trails.
6. Encourage people to take personal responsibility for their property.
Identify unattractive neighborhoods.
Identify leaders within each neighborhood.
Schedule meeting/training for neighborhood leaders.
Provide ongoing training/support/recognition in the development of individual neighborhood groups.
7. Increase availability of public transportation.
Investigate current availability and research how other small communities handle public transportation. Identify potential sources within community. Develop plan to address public transportation.
8. Improve traffic flow. Identify problem areas and develop plans to address them.

<i>Rationale</i>
Improving public services and infrastructure will increase the attractiveness and image of Sikeston, provide citizens a safer means of travel when choosing not to drive, and encourage private and commercial recreation initiatives.
<i>Requirements</i>
Involvement of Department of Public Safety, Historic Midtown Development Group, Board of Municipal Utilities, Parks and Recreation Department, neighborhood groups, Sikeston Area Chamber of Commerce, and local business owners. Sources of funding need to be explored for physical improvements. Funding needed for increased role of Parks and Recreation Department.



Moving the Vision Forward



The Road Forward

The work of Sikeston's Vision for Tomorrow team began in April 2008, and was completed in January 2009. But the greatest work is yet to come. The Vision report contains strategies, rationales, and recommended action steps to direct those who can make the vision become a reality. It is up to us, the citizens of Sikeston, to complete the vision, to take the next steps on our road forward.

The City Council will begin distributing the Strategic Vision Plan to the community as a whole. They will select interested citizens for the Strategic Plan Implementation Commission whose job it will be to move the plan forward. The Implementation Commission will carry out important monitoring and follow-up actions that are defined within the Vision Plan. This committee, too, will be made up of citizens from all areas of the community, citizens who have a real interest in Sikeston's success, including citizens not previously involved in the Vision process.

Each year, the Strategic Plan Implementation Commission will convene for an annual review of the goals, strategies and actions identified in the Strategic Vision Plan. The review process will assure that the plan remains consistent with Sikeston's changing landscape. Recommendations and adjustments will be made due to pressing issues, completion of some goals, budgets, and/or necessary timeline updates.

The implementation and review process is intended to ensure that the strategies, action steps, and recommendations are not lost in time, that the plan created today is truly a living document, a road map to guide us into tomorrow. Together we can move forward.



Acknowledgements

Vision for Tomorrow Co-Chairs

Carolyn Harris and Jim Schwaninger

Sikeston Vision for Tomorrow Initiating Committee Members:

Mike Bohannon	Elizabeth Lorenz
Andy Comstock	Linda Lowes
Rhonda Council	Mike Marsh
Jim Gleason	Matt Marshall
Maude Harris	Missy Marshall
Tom Hedrick	Mike Moll
Michael Jensen	Blair Moran
Christina King	Kathy Teachout
Lisa Lane	Connie Thompson

Vision Stakeholder Committees

Economic Development

Judy Buck, Tom Hedrick, co-chairs

Philip Black	Doug Friend	Jeff Miles
David Craig	Genesis Grant	Steve Millington
Chuck Devers	Harry Howard	David Strom
Ed Dust	Brandon Kuehn	Mary Turner
Joel Evans	Dana Kuehn	Nancy Walker
David Friedman	Missy Marshall	

Education

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Dione Blissett	Vanessa Freeman	Martha Neel
Marissa Bowen	Stephanie Gleason	Edna Pride
Sheila Branch	Rick Justice	Leah Pruden
Libby Caskey	Megan Looney	Gary Silverthorn
Andy Comstock	Richard Looney	Regina Turner
Jim Davis	Kayla Marsh	Tom Williams
Jasmine Frazier		

Housing

Geoff Posegate, Donna Taylor, and Randy York, co-chairs

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Mike Bohannon	Michael Harris	Onethia Williams
Dwayne Bratcher	Michael Jensen	Charlotte York
Trista Douglas	Agnes Mason	Randy York
Julie Grant	Kathy Teachout	Dennis Ziegenhorn
Trey Hardy		

Quality of Life

Jeff Partridge, Wende Pruden, co-chairs

Dan Armour	Patty Ginder	Blair Moran
Zac Black	Linda Lowes	Cristy Neel
Larry Braden	Mike Marsh	Deanna Nelson
Rhonda Council	Mike Marshall	Jane Pfefferkorn
Ed Cowan	Ryan Merideth	Harry Sharp
Jackie Cowan	James Miller	Roger Sherman
Ken Dicus	Jiggs Moore	David Teachout

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Jim Schwaninger and Carolyn Harris for volunteering their time to help co-chair the Vision process

Libby Caskey and Jackie Cowan, co-authors of final *“Vision For Tomorrow Long-Term Strategic Plan”*

Mayor and Sikeston City Council for their support through the process

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Wal-Mart and Manager James Miller for donating cookies to our meetings

Jiggs Moore and Ed Dust, City of Sikeston, for helping to transport items needed for our meetings and with clean-up

Linda Lowes and Rhonda Council, City of Sikeston, setting up and coordinating the meetings

Additional copies are available at the Sikeston Public Library and Sikeston Area Chamber of Commerce

You can also view the “Vision For Tomorrow Long-Term Strategic Plan” on the City’s website, www.sikeston.org