



## Guiding Principles and Advocacy Statements

### Introduction

Greater Iowa City, Inc. provides vision, leadership, and influence on a range of economic development and quality of life issues impacting Johnson County Iowa and the larger region. Our work elevates local businesses of all sizes and nonprofits, supports critical investment in the community, and fosters a resilient local economy. A major component of our work is advocacy – we seek to represent the needs of the business community, form strategic alliances to move the region forward, and effectively navigate complex issues involving multiple stakeholders.

Our advocacy efforts will:

- 1) **Inform** businesses and community partners about important issues
- 2) **Encourage participation**, offering a spectrum of ways to engage in the work and promoting existing programs in addition to new initiatives
- 3) **Influence** community decision making
- 4) **Model productive, civil discourse** and provide educational opportunities for the next generation of civic leaders

This work will be conducted by the following guiding principles:

- 1) **Collaborative.** We will position the organization as a partner, not an adversary, assume positive intent, and communicate with civility. We will support local Self-Supported Municipal Improvement Districts (SSMIDs) in their local advocacy.
- 2) **Strategic.** Our work will align with larger initiatives and seize upon well-timed opportunities to create meaningful change. We will also be judicious about when and how we engage in advocacy, prioritizing core business issues.
- 3) **Process/System Focused.** We must study the processes of government agencies and other partners to discern how to best coordinate and embed Greater IC's work. This may involve advocating for structural changes and ways to optimize existing systems. This advocacy work will be less public than other functions but still crucial.
- 4) **Creates/Engages with Diverse Coalitions.** Our work will pull together diverse and even unlikely coalitions focused on specific issues.

### Advocacy Statement Structure

Greater IC is focused on building productive public-private partnerships, and a key stakeholder in all our work are our local municipalities – Iowa City, Coralville, and North Liberty. As such, we are creating advocacy statements for each city to focus on specific, actionable ideas that align with our urban planning principles and address challenges faced by the business community. These advocacy statements are:

- 1) **Hyperlocal.** Each municipality has specific opportunities as well as challenges, and we want our advocacy to be specific to each. However, our recommendations will all be informed by the same planning principles.
- 2) **Evolving.** We will update these statements to reflect current issues. They are not a comprehensive list of our values, but rather specific goals we'd like to achieve in partnership with our cities.
- 3) **Informed by the local business community.** Each statement was created in partnership with business leaders from that specific community and reflects issues they deemed most important.

In alignment with our guiding principles, the intent of these statements is to be clear about our priorities and create opportunities for productive discussions. We will make progress toward our goals by convening groups and facilitating conversation.

## Planning Principles

Greater Iowa City, Inc. seeks to create a thriving, equitable, and resilient community that balances development and growth with environmental stewardship, transportation efficiency and accessibility, and quality of life for all residents.

Johnson County is experiencing steady population growth and development, which brings both opportunities and challenges. With careful and coordinated planning, we can ensure our infrastructure is right sized, maintain and enhance our environmental quality, and prevent traffic congestion. We must *proactively* address these issues to ensure a vibrant and livable community for current and future generations.

Greater IC aligns with the following planning principles that we believe address the complexities around planning and retrofitting existing development patterns for walkability and greater public transit accessibility, core focuses of our mission and vision.

1. **Equity and Social Justice:** We prioritize equity and social justice in growth management policies to ensure that all residents, regardless of income or background, have access to employment, affordable housing, transportation options, and essential services.

2. **Economic Development:** We recognize the interplay between growth management and economic development and promote policies that foster sustainable economic growth, job creation, and entrepreneurship while maintaining the unique character and identity of our communities.

3. **Community Engagement:** We advocate for ongoing inclusive and transparent decision-making processes that engage stakeholders, residents, businesses, and local governments in shaping the future development and transportation priorities of Johnson County.

4. **Smart Growth:** We advocate for directing growth towards existing urban areas and designated growth centers to maximize land use efficiency, protect agricultural lands and natural habitats, and preserve our rural character. Other planning movements that we believe

characterize our values include 15-minute cities and building upon the unique attributes and cultures of local activity centers.

**5. Placemaking:** We call for reliable and sufficient investment in community placemaking amenities, understanding that a strong community identity and enriching experiences are crucial to attract and retain employees and residents.

**6. Transportation Planning:** We support integrated transportation planning that prioritizes multi-modal transportation options, including public transit, walking, and cycling infrastructure, to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and alleviate traffic congestion.

**7. Infrastructure Investment:** We call for strategic infrastructure investments to support growth, such as expanding and maintaining roads, bridges, utilities, and public facilities, to accommodate population growth while minimizing environmental impacts.

**8. Environmental Stewardship:** We emphasize the importance of preserving and enhancing our natural resources, including water quality, air quality, and green spaces, through responsible land use policies and conservation initiatives. We support sustainable development practices and incentives to support these efforts.

## **Advocacy Priorities for Iowa City**

We see significant alignment between our planning principles and the [City of Iowa City's strategic plan](#) to support neighborhoods & housing, mobility, the economy, and safety & well-being. We advocate for the following specific opportunities to advance our shared priorities:

### **Modify regulations that impact housing affordability and increase mix of housing supply.**

- Provide additional developer education and resources to support local form-based code implementation.
- Work with builders to address concerns about approval delays with large construction projects and implement solutions.
- Pursue policies and programs to encourage Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) construction.

### **Partner with Greater IC on Strategic Investment Districts Initiatives.**

- Co-sponsor Strategic Investment District initiatives that have clear phasing, public and private sector recommendations, and implementation opportunities.
- Utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and/or other financial economic development tools to incentivize urban revitalization in Strategic Investment Districts to encourage amenity-based redevelopment.
- Support infrastructure within Strategic Investment Districts to increase walkability and policies to increase housing supply to create a stronger neighborhood identity.

### **Continue to support a reliable, accessible public transit system.**

- Plan for alternate funding sources to support the fare free bus service so it can continue past the pilot period.
- Collaborate with other municipalities and the county to optimize the existing CRANDIC rail line to facilitate mobility across the region.
- Explore transit options to serve individuals who work later shifts and need to travel outside the existing transit schedule.
- Work to strategically align affordable housing locations with transportation infrastructure.

**Partner with stakeholders to demonstrate a proactive, collaborative approach to economic development.**

- Council should keep the work of the City moving forward by reading packet materials, getting input from staff and community stakeholders prior to Council meetings, and coming prepared to vote to reduce the number of deferrals at Council meetings.
- Invigorate the current Council Economic Development Committee (CEDC) by hosting meetings on a structured cadence with an economic development agenda, including updates from Greater IC.
- Encourage City Department Directors to work collaboratively with the business community by personally attending forums and partnering with stakeholders to address their challenges and seek opportunities to improve city processes.
- Request staff to send monthly examples of how they help the business community “get to yes” that Greater IC can promote to help foster a culture of productive public-private partnerships.
- Invite Greater IC staff to attend any City touch point with local large industries to enhance business support and retention opportunities outside the City’s purview.
- Allow Greater IC to provide meaningful input and support for major economic development opportunities ahead, including the Pro Housing grant implementation and major land use decisions (21 South Linn, ACT campus, Dubuque St. and Interstate 80 etc.).

**Continue to support inclusive economic development work.**

- Provide consistent funding and support for inclusive economic development efforts.

**Limit engagement with individuals engaged in predatory leasing.**

- In alignment with our partners at the [Iowa City Downtown District](#), we support landlord and tenant lease terms that provide a clear and positive business opportunity for both entities. We oppose “predatory” leases and ask the city to limit engagement with those engaged in these practices.

**Advocacy Priorities for Coralville**

TBD

## **Advocacy Priorities for North Liberty**

TBD