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# CITY OF SMITHVILLE

SMITHVILLE – A MODERN COMMUNITY  
OASIS DESIGNED FOR 2030

A Vision and Strategic Action Plan for  
the City of Smithville, Missouri

November 2019



# CITY OF SMITHVILLE

## VISION AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

This report presents the vision and strategic action plan that has been developed following an extensive community engagement undertaken during the City of Smithville Vision and Strategic Action Planning process. Throughout 2019 approximately 1,100 people contributed to a series of surveys, workshops and focus group sessions, to explore the long-term future of the community of Smithville. This engagement process was designed to provide an open, inclusive and transparent platform for community members to help create a shared vision and broad action plan.

This report represents Future iQ's analysis of the engagement outcomes, and how this data has informed the identification of a preferred future and strategic actions. As the project consultant, Future iQ was given the responsibility to develop a data-driven process, which has informed this report. The analysis in this report builds on the preceding project reports and engagement analysis. The recommended Key Strategic Action Areas and Goals have been drawn from the community input gathered during the visioning process. The concepts and actions presented were discussed at some point during the engagement process. These actions have been structured into a proposed roadmap, drawing heavily from the prioritization conducted at the reconvening of the Think Tank and Focus Group sessions in September 2019.

November 2019

These reports and the data visualization are available on the project portal:

<https://lab.future-iq.com/city-of-smithville/>

Prepared By:

future→iQ



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Smithville Vision and Strategic Action Plan represents the final element in the vision and strategic planning process. The analysis within this report builds on preceding project reports and represents Future IQ's analysis of the engagement outcomes and how this data has informed the identification of a preferred future and strategic actions.

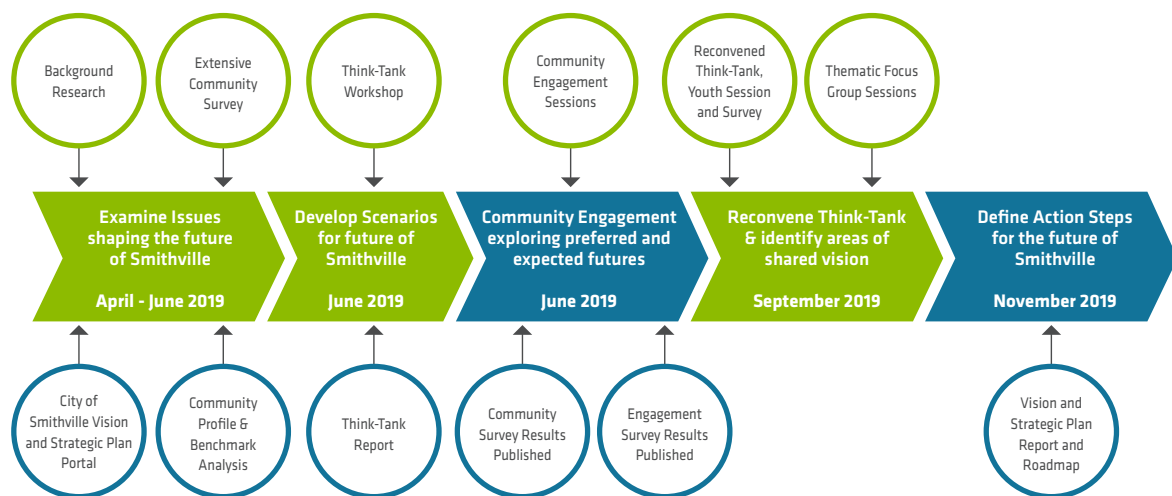
The City of Smithville vision and strategic planning process was undertaken by Future IQ to reflect the City of Smithville's desire to develop a long-range community vision through a transparent and inclusive community engagement process.

This vision and strategic planning process built extensive community input and transparent, inclusive engagement was central to the process. The comprehensive engagement and data-driven process progressively focused the discussion on emerging key themes and aspirations for the future. The purpose of the process was to arrive at a "point of consensus" that represented the shared vision for the future.

This report examines the identification of the preferred future for the City of Smithville while discussing the stages of the overall visioning process. The key themes and aspirations which arose from the engagement analysis are included within the strategic action pillars. The key strategic action areas are outlined in this report with a roadmap looking out to 2030.

The City of Smithville Vision and Strategic Action Planning process has brought the citizens of Smithville together within a large-scale community visioning process, in order to meet the future challenges facing Smithville, looking out to 2030.

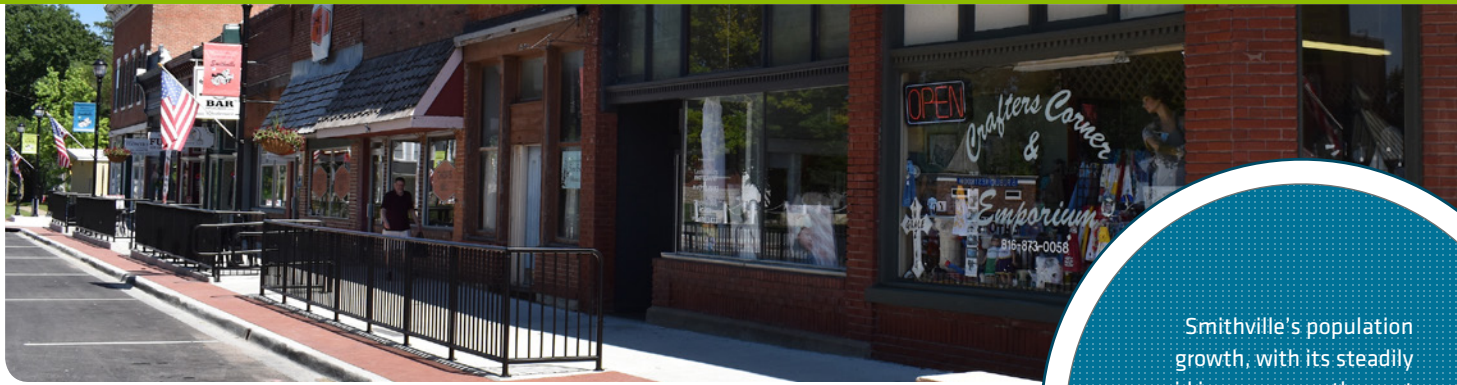
### City of Smithville Community Visioning and Action Planning Timeline



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#### DATA INSIGHTS:

- The planning process ran from April to November 2019 and included a number of key points for community engagement.
- The project produced a series of reports and all data collected has been summarized and presented on the project portal (<https://lab.future-iq.com/city-of-smithville/>).



Smithville's population growth, with its steadily rapid increase over the past 27 years has had a significant effect on its residents and businesses as it evolves into a larger sized city.

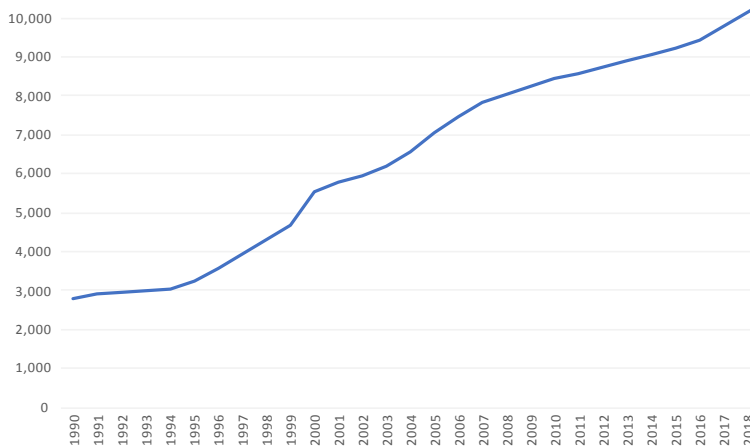
## 2.0 SNAPSHOT OF KEY ISSUES SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SMITHVILLE

The following section explores a number of the most important issues that are shaping the future of Smithville. These issues were identified in the background research and are also documented in the *Community Profile and Benchmark Analysis, June 2019*, produced as part of the project (see <https://lab.future-iq.com/city-of-smithville/>).

### 2.1 POPULATION INCREASE (1990-2017)

Smithville's population has gone through a significant increase between 1990 and 2017. The population went through a 99.3% increase between 1990 and 2000, and since 2000 has increased by an annual growth rate of 4%. Smithville is now at a population level that makes it a significant community, rather than a "small rural town". This population growth has been fuelled by the community becoming a highly desirable and sought-after "bedroom community" offering good recreation amenities and a high performing school district. It is also expected that Smithville's population will continue to grow, and may even grow faster, given its proximity to the Kansas City International Airport, and its improving amenities.

**Population change for City of Smithville, Missouri (1990-2017)**



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#### DATA INSIGHTS:

- In 2016, Smithville was rated as the sixth fastest growing city in Missouri by the Kansas City Business Journal.
- Future population increase will likely result in changed land use, or increased density to allow for options such as commercial / industrial development, recreation amenities and higher density housing. The population size now requires that Smithville enhance its public operations to manage increasingly complex issues and deliver amenities and services being sought by the community.

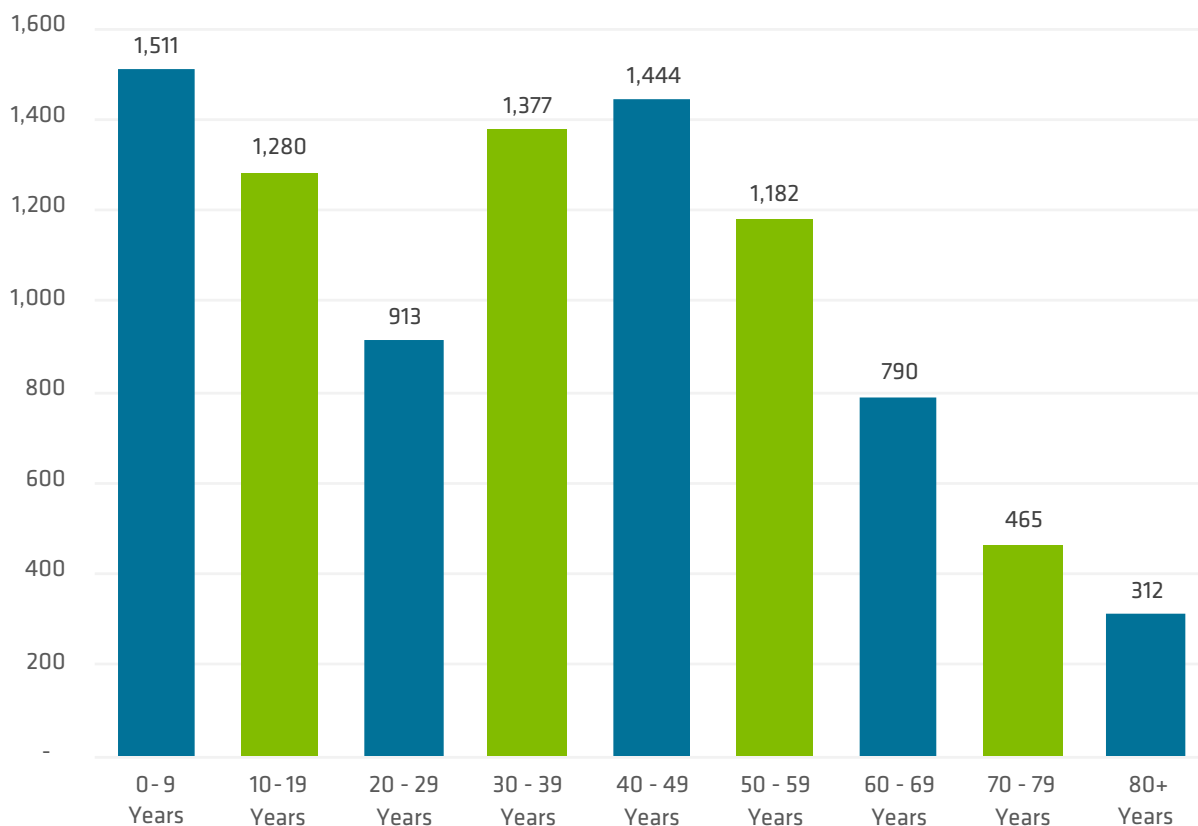


## 2.2 CHANGING AGE DEMOGRAPHICS

According to 2017 statistics, the City of Smithville is made up predominantly by children, students and the 30–50 age cohort. Almost 40% of the population are students which reflects the reputation and quality of the school district within Smithville. Young families are moving to the city to enroll their children into the schools, hence these prime age cohorts. This school aged family phenomena drives the family friendly nature of the community, and the desire for a safe community. As was documented in the Community Profile and Benchmark Analysis, June 2019, the median age in Smithville is approximately 37 years old. This demographic profile has defined a lot of the community focus and priorities for the last decade and has defined the nature of the community.

Smithville is beginning a demographic transition from heavily focused on a school aged family profile, to now include an emerging retiree and senior cohort. This will add extra demands on the community, but also build a larger long-term resident segment.

**Residents age profile for Smithville, 2017**



Source: American Community Survey (2017 - ACS 5-year estimates)



### DATA INSIGHTS:

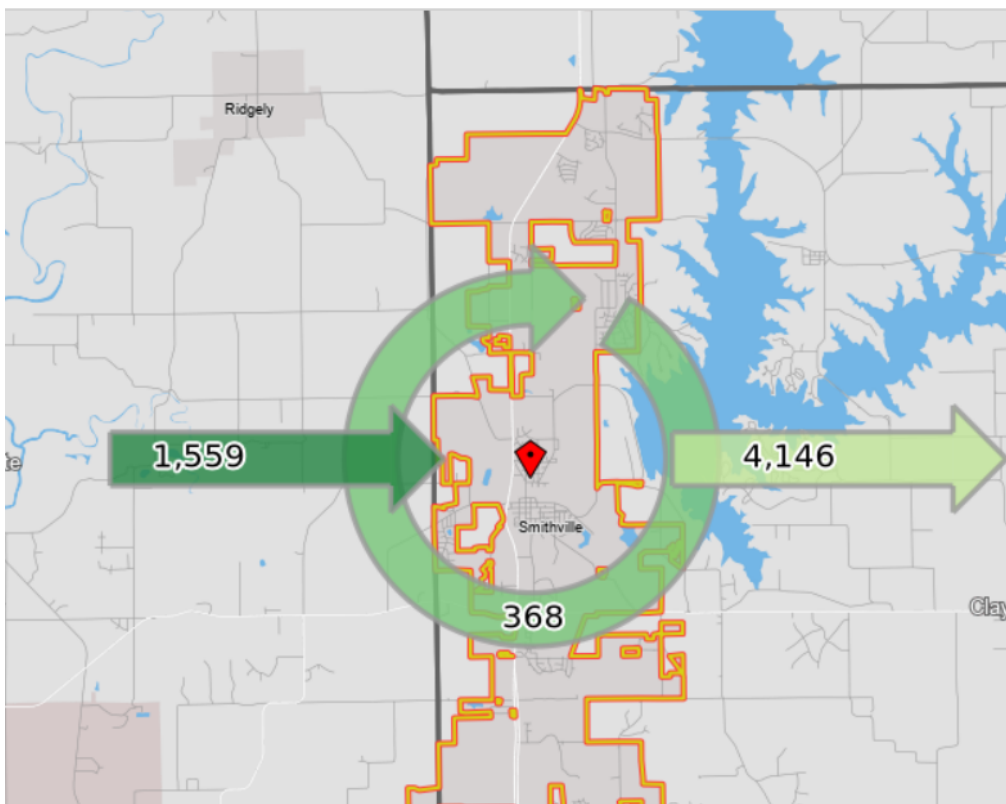
- There is a strong student population base that make up nearly 40% of the community. This school-centric nature of the community is reflected in the community discussions and focus. Maintaining the school performance is of utmost importance to many people.
- However, there are emerging demographic issues the community now needs to tackle. The cohort of people between 50 and 70 is now a growing portion of the community, and the future needs of this cohort will need to be considered. This will include housing stock, recreation and healthcare amenities. This topic was highlighted during the engagement sessions.

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## 2.3 INFLOW AND OUTFLOW OF COMMUTERS

As was identified in the *Community Profile and Benchmark Analysis, June 2019*, Smithville has a modest inbound workforce every day, and a sizable outbound workforce. This suggests there might be opportunity, over time, to create more local business, and live and work opportunities. This chart provides an insight on two populations; those who are employed in Smithville and those who are living in Smithville. Understanding the inflow and outflow of commuters, helps us understand how the local economy interfaces with the local population. The inflow and outflow data are from 2015, and Smithville has seen considerable population and workforce growth in that time. This commuter data shows the underlying pattern, which is likely to be similar in 2019.

During the community engagement sessions, there was considerable discussion about the potential local impacts of the redevelopment of the Kansas City International airport. This may make Smithville increasingly attractive for people who travel regularly as part of their work.



Source: 2015 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics: <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>



### DATA INSIGHTS:

- In 2015 (most recent data), a total of 1,927 people worked within the city. Of this population, 1,559 (80.9%) lived outside the city. Also, in 2015, 4,146 (91.8%) commuted outside of the City to their workplace while 368 (8.2%) commuted within the City to their workplace.
- Smithville has a relatively small employment base, but this is growing with the addition of new businesses accelerating in 2019. There is the potential to see the employment base within the city grow, especially in businesses that are attracted to the unique location.

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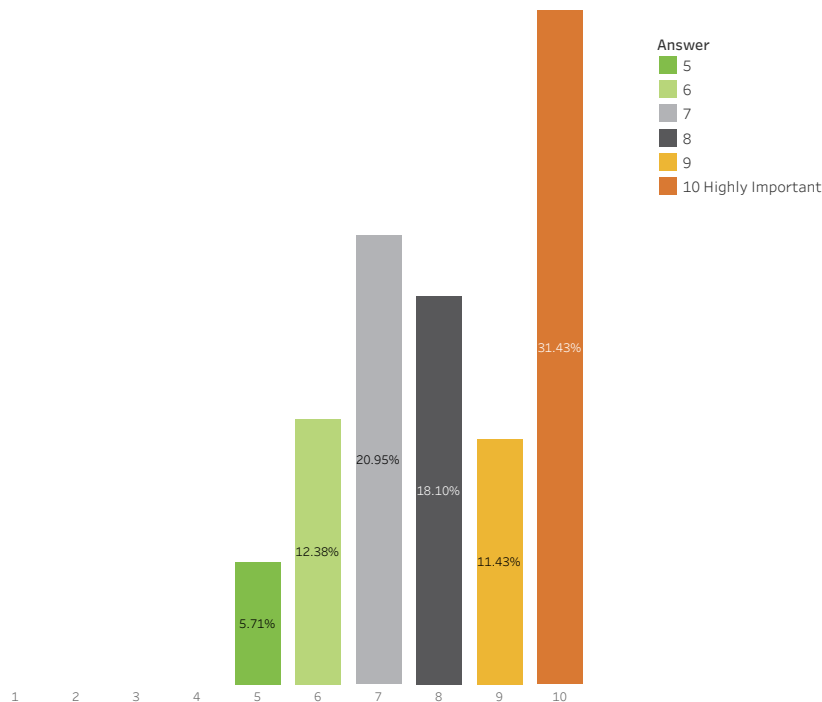
## 3.0 IMPORTANCE OF VISIONING

Smithville has a history of planning and community engagement. A background paper was produced as part of this initiative, to review previous planning efforts by the City of Smithville. The City of Smithville Vision and Strategic Action Planning process aims to build on the previous visioning work. Previous work includes:

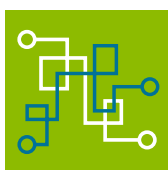
- Smithville Strategic Plan (2007)
- Strategic Plan Update (2015-2017)
- Smithville Branding Initiative (2016)
- Smithville Citizen Survey (2019)

The community engagement surveys highlighted that residents and stakeholders see important value in community visioning, and expect decision making to be informed by the community. Within the next 10-year timeframe (to 2030), there will be significant change within a number of areas that will impact Smithville, including the exit from leadership roles of the “baby-boomer cohort”; the emergence of autonomous vehicles and artificial intelligence; and the redevelopment of the airport. The community is generally aware that significant change has already occurred, and more is coming. The visioning process was largely viewed as an opportunity to come together and shape the future trajectory. The following chart reflects the sentiments from the 474 survey responses who completed the community survey, which launched the process..

**How important do you think it is to have a SHARED VISION for the future of Smithville?**



The City of Smithville Vision and Strategic Planning process builds on previous visioning work and expands the level of community engagement. This process was perceived to be very valuable, across all the engagement phases, and across the various demographic groups.



### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- The data supports the observation in the workshops that people in Smithville have a significant appetite for change and progress. The timing was seen as important with a relatively new group of elected community leaders, and an energized professional staff at the City and schools.

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- Smithville has undertaken a visioning process to 2030. The accelerating speed of change suggests that check-in points should be established more frequently (at least every 3-5 years) to stay on top of emerging trends and adjust as needed.

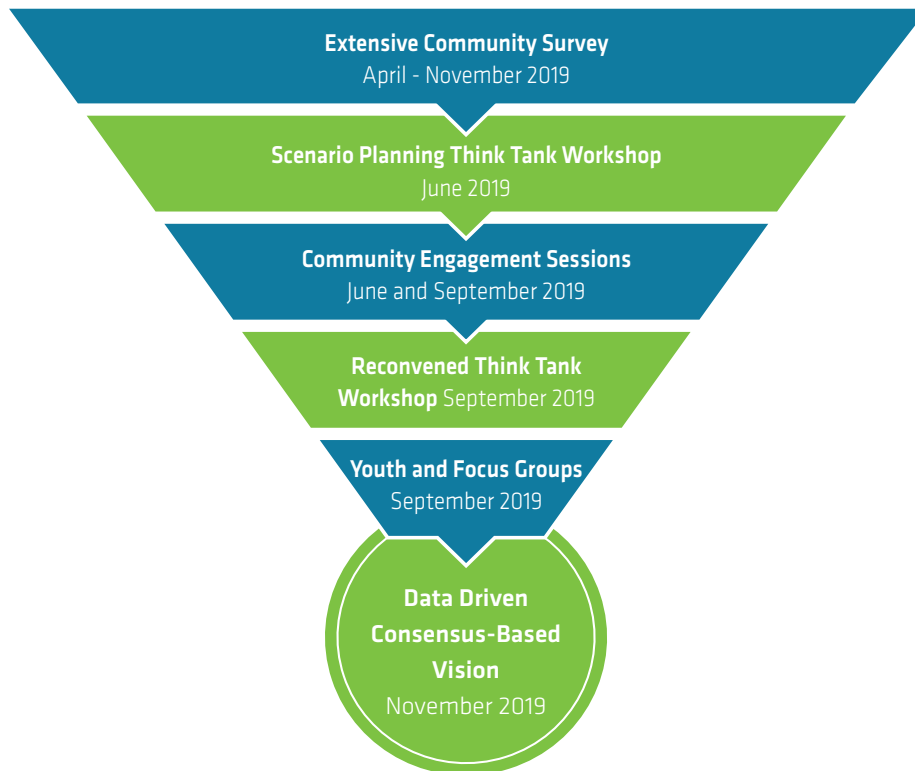




The engagement process aimed to have each step methodically build on the previous work, creating consensus about future direction and priorities. This helps the community “hone-in” on the data-driven consensus-based vision.

## 4.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

A key feature of the City of Smithville Vision and Strategic Action Planning process was the focus on transparent and inclusive community engagement. The engagement was conducted through much of 2019, and attracted approximately 1,100 significant inputs (survey responses, workshops, focus groups). The data-driven visioning process helped the Smithville community discover clear “points-of-consensus” regarding their future vision. The focus groups and reconvene of the Think-Tank, helped drill down to more direct actions and ideas for implementation.



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### DATA INSIGHTS:

- The project’s engagement process helped identify a series of critical strategic pillars and key goals. The information presented in the goals all derive from these engagement steps.
- There was a core group of people who participated in most steps of the process. This helped create some connectivity of ideas.



## 4.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The community engagement was a feature of this project. Efforts were made to ensure it was as easy as possible for community residents to participate and provide meaningful input. The engagement was offered via online surveys, workshops and focus groups. These were held on different days of the week, times of the day, and over several months.

The City staff put substantial effort into engaging the community in the visioning process. Social Media was used to highlight each stage of the process and the project portal provided regular update information. Posters were distributed for key events, and people were individually invited to many sessions by staff and elected officials.

The level of engagement in this community was significant, with over 10% of the community having some direct input in the process.



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### DATA INSIGHTS:

- A stand-out feature of the Smithville engagement work was the over 350 high school students who participated in future exploration discussions, with 321 surveys collected.
- In total, there was a very solid number of high-quality input. There was good representation from various interest groups and community sections of the community. The depth and quality of the stakeholder input helped ensure the robust and reflective outcome.

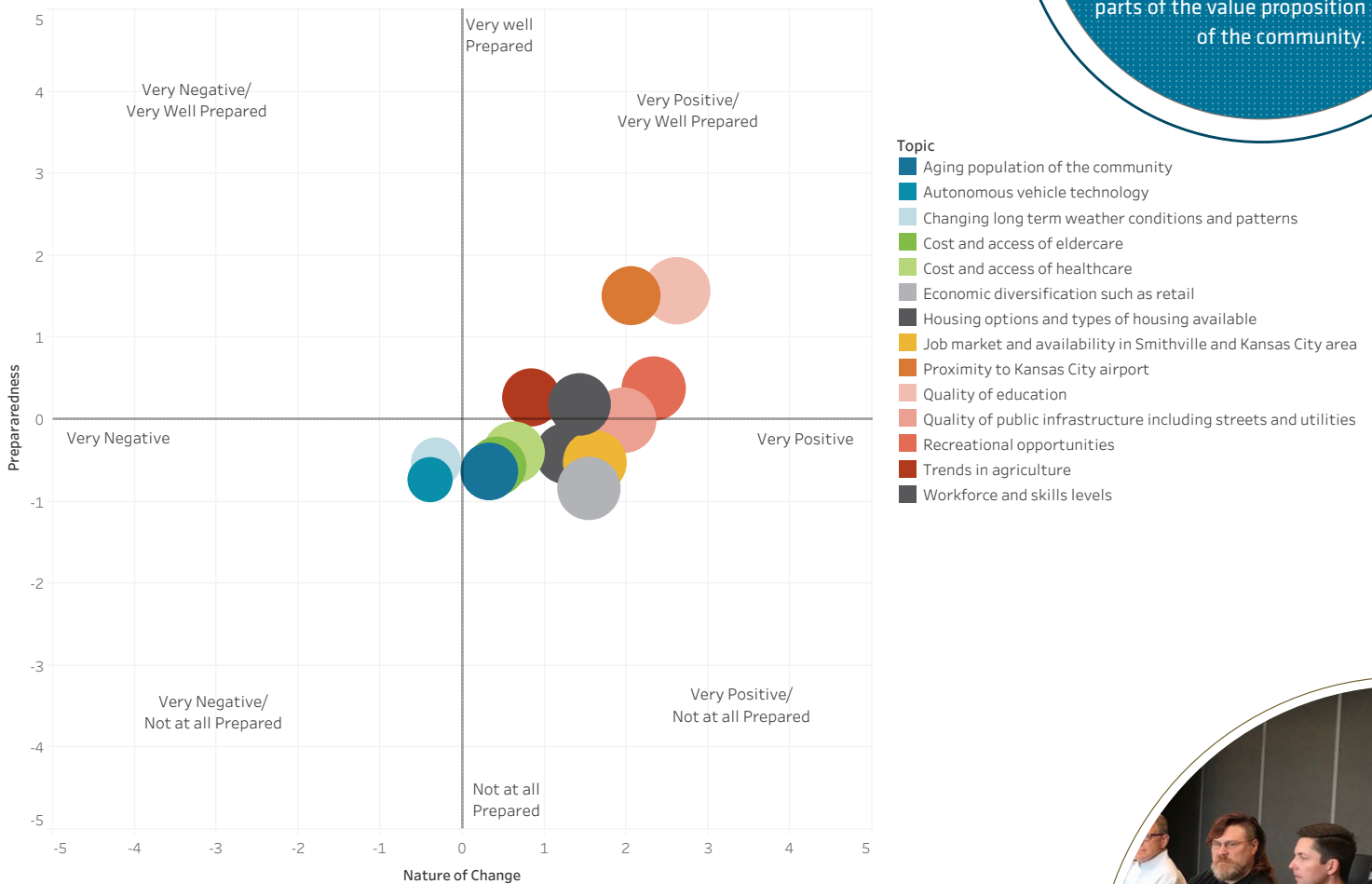


## 4.2 COMMUNITY SURVEY - DRIVERS OF CHANGE ANALYSIS

To understand perceived drivers of change and their potential influences on Smithville's future, community survey participants were asked about the importance of changes in key topic areas over time, as well as Smithville's preparedness regarding these drivers of change. Results from a combination of the responses to these two key questions are also provided below. Overall, the survey respondents indicated that most of the key topics would ultimately be positive for Smithville, but the community needed to be better prepared.

The quality of education and proximity to Kansas City airport were seen as the topics that Smithville was best "prepared for" and "would have a positive impact on the future". These two topics represent key parts of the value proposition of the community.

### Key Factors - Average Data



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### DATA INSIGHTS:

- Survey respondents considered "Quality of Education" and "Quality of Public Infrastructure including streets and utilities" as the most important drivers of change in shaping the future of Smithville. This was closely followed by "Recreational Opportunities" and "Job Market and Availability" in Smithville and Kansas City area.
- Economic Diversification into retail and the job market/workforce and skills levels were seen as areas that Smithville is not well prepared for, looking out to 2030.

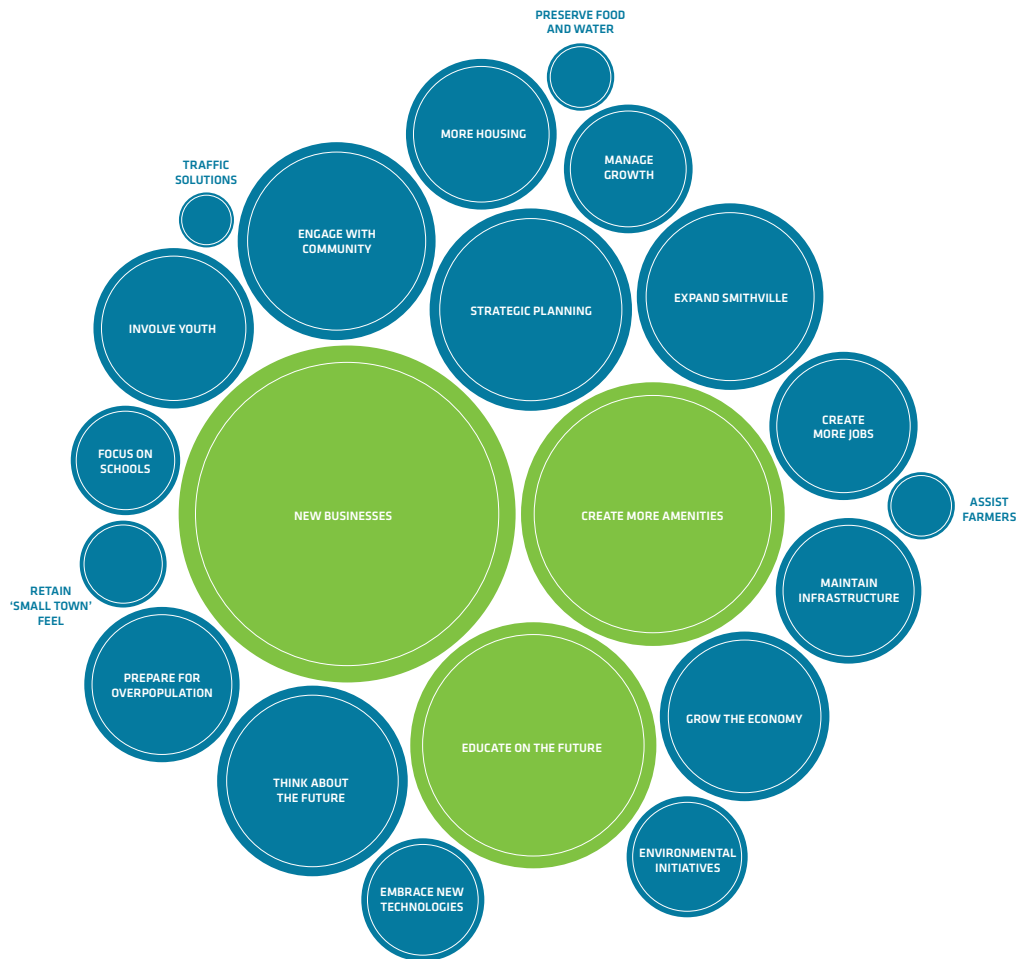


### 4.3 YOUTH SURVEYS

As part of the engagement process, sessions were run in the high school to seek the input and perspectives of the youth. Three sessions of approximately 120 students per session were held. These involved a presentation of macro trends, and then students were asked to complete a detailed survey. This data is available on the project portal <https://lab.future-iq.com/city-of-smithville/data-visualization/youth-survey/about-the-survey/>. As an example, respondents were asked “What does Smithville need to be doing to be prepared for the future?”. Responses from this open-ended question were categorized and ranked, in relation to frequency of use. The responses are represented in the word cloud below. The green circles represent the most popular topics relating to how Smithville should change over the next 10 years.

The youth surveys show that young people are positive about Smithville's future. Also, in terms of future trends, they perceived technology to be a huge positive. As a community, Smithville should ensure it remains technologically progressive.

**What does Smithville need to be doing to be prepared for the future?**



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#### DATA INSIGHTS:

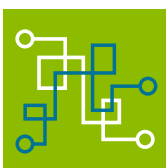
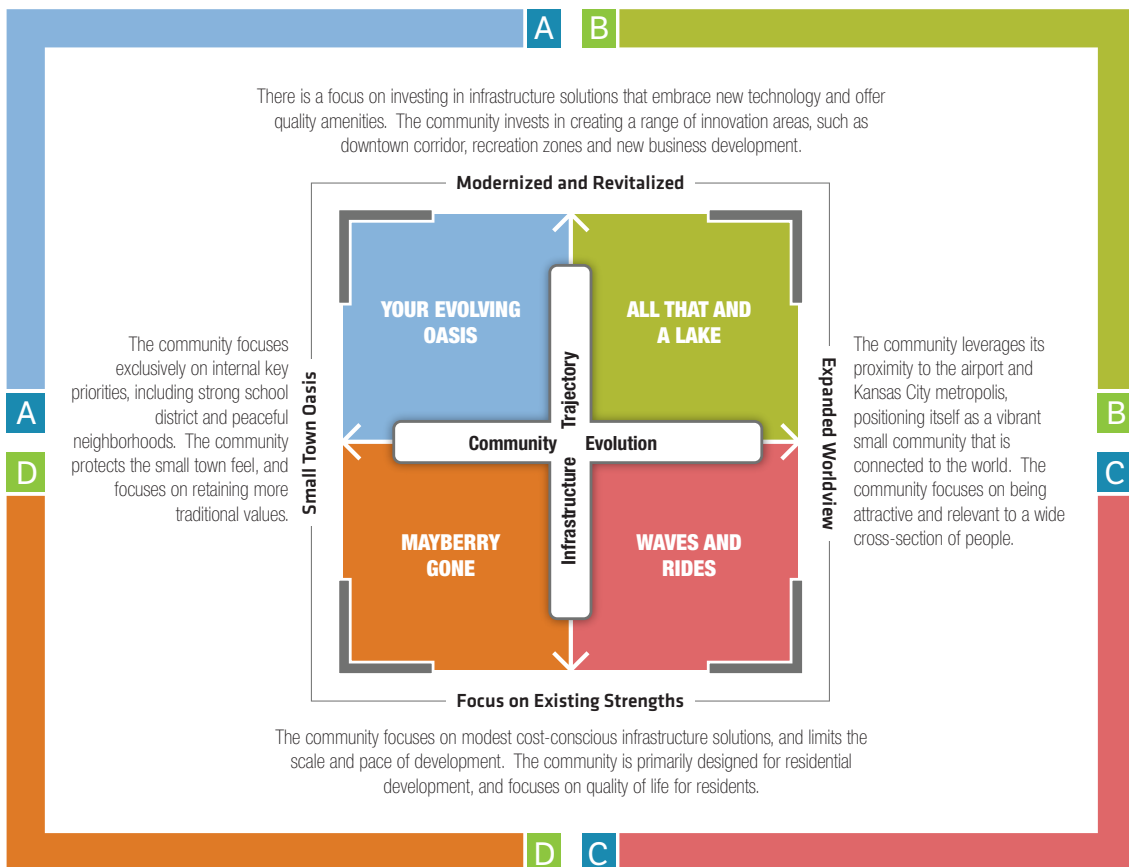
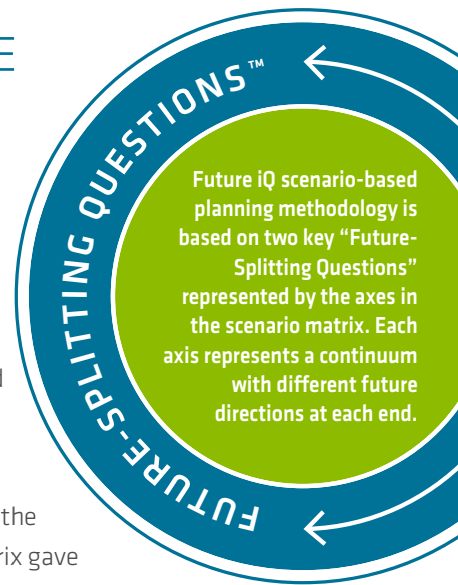
- “New Businesses” was seen as the most important topic regarding what Smithville needs to be doing now, in order to be better prepared for the future. This was followed by “Create more Amenities” and “Educate on the Future”.
- Responses to other questions point to the youth's desire to see the community evolve, such as “Enhanced technology”, “Environmental initiatives” and “Increase diversity”.

## 5.0 IDENTIFYING THE PREFERRED FUTURE

### 5.1 SCENARIOS OF THE FUTURE – FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLORATION

The City of Smithville Vision and Strategic Action Planning process was built on a scenario-planning methodology. This allowed the development and exploration of a range of plausible futures, which created a framework for community input and discussion. More detail on the process is available in the City of Smithville Vision and Strategic Action Planning Think-Tank Report, June 2019. (for more information visit <https://lab.future-iq.com/city-of-smithville/>).

This planning process produced a scenario matrix built around two key axes shaping the future, which were “Community Evolution” and “Infrastructure Trajectory”. This matrix gave people a chance to consider implications and consequences of various futures.



#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- Undertaking the scenario-based planning gave the Smithville community a chance to have a very thoughtful future-oriented conversation. This process allowed people to think about the community’s future in a multi-dimensional manner.

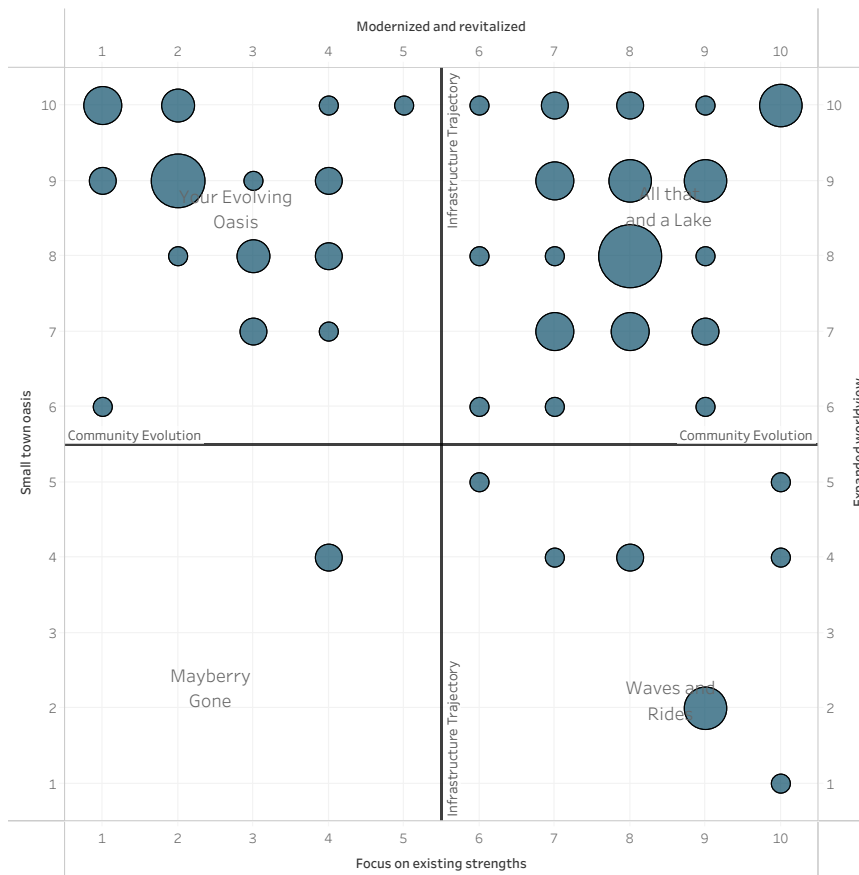
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- The process allowed participants to think deeply about how to best design their city and community to suit current and future needs. It allows some anticipation and projection of future trends and explores how the city needs to evolve to meet future needs.

## 5.2 ALIGNMENT AROUND THE PREFERRED FUTURE

Think-Tank and Community Engagement Session participants were asked to engage in plausibility mapping around expected and preferred futures. The expected future is one deemed most likely to happen if there is no change in the current trajectory in Smithville. The preferred future is the type of future participants ideally want to see happen recognizing that most often steps will be needed to get there. There was generally strong alignment around the expected and preferred futures. The expected future was largely considered to be the “Mayberry Gone” and the preferred future was “All that and a lake”, with a secondary cohort of interest in “Your Evolving Oasis”.

### Preferred Future - City of Smithville 2030



The preferred future showed a significant appetite for change to pivot away from the expected future and highlights the strong appetite for change in the community. This change is in both “Community Evolution” and “Infrastructure Trajectory” aspects.



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### DATA INSIGHTS:

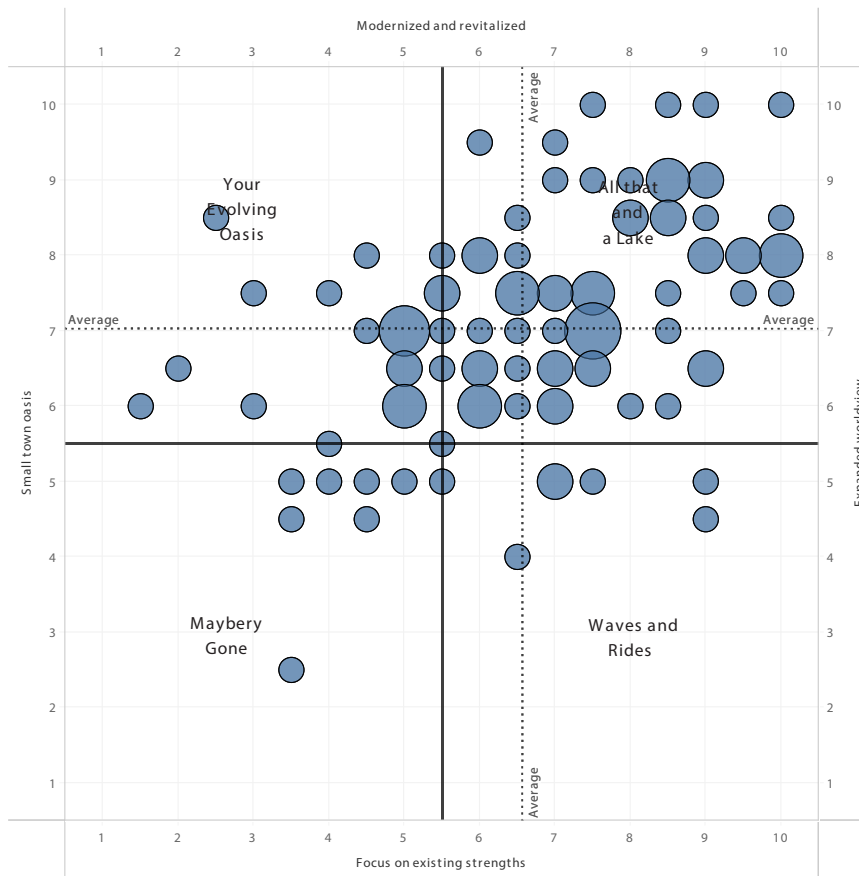
- The preferred future was predominately to the top of the vertical axis, towards the “Modernized and Revitalized” end of the infrastructure trajectory axis. This suggests a strong desire to see more aggressive investment in community-based amenities and incorporating technology.
- The community evolution axis suggested the community would like to see a more open worldview, while also retaining the small-town feel. This creates the intriguing possibility of creating a unique community oasis feel that is connected to the world.



## 5.3 SCENARIO VALIDATION MATRIX

This chart provides a method to validate the preferred future created via the heat maps. This Scenario Matrix Validation Chart is created by building a preferred future from the answers to the “Important Themes” questions. These “Important Themes” questions are subsets of the scenario axes, and by recombining each person’s answers we create a unique X, Y average. This approach generates a notional Preferred Future, but one based on likely response to issues and expected behavior in real-life.

### Scenario Validation Matrix - Smithville Community Visioning 2030



The scenario validation matrix highlights the concentration of responses in the community and validates the survey respondents’ selection of the scenario “All that and a lake” as the preferred future.



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#### DATA INSIGHTS:

- The size of the circle in the chart represents the number of responses.
- The dotted line on the matrix represented the average X,Y point of all responses. The average response point is well within the upper right scenario quadrant, called “All that and a lake”.



The City of Smithville 2030 Vision and Strategic Action plan process positions Smithville for its next evolutionary leap. It is already a successful community and city, and this vision aims to ensure its ongoing relevance and success, while retaining core values and attributes.

## 6.0 COMMUNITY VISION - 2030

The 2030 community vision for Smithville has been developed following a thorough consultation and “future exploration” process with the community throughout 2019. This process allowed the participants to explore the future evolution of the community around the two main themes of “Community Evolution” and “Infrastructure Trajectory”. These themes allowed the community to wrestle with the implications and responses to changing community makeup and appetite for improvement in infrastructure amenities.

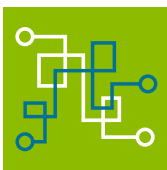
The phrase “Smithville – a modern community oasis designed for 2030” reflects a combined language reflecting the two preferred scenarios “Your evolving oasis” and “All that and a lake”, together with the end point descriptions on the axes. This creates an inclusive statement that is reflective of the vast majority of responses. The majority of responses want to see the community infrastructure “modernized and revitalized”. At the community evolution level, most people wanted to see an “expanded worldview” but an important cohort also suggested a desire for retention of the small-town or oasis feel.

The Strategic Pillars were developed prior to the Reconvening of the Think-Tank workshop in September 2019. The pillars were discussed and tested at the workshops with participants.

### THE VISION IS TO CREATE “SMITHVILLE - A MODERN COMMUNITY OASIS DESIGNED FOR 2030”

#### The key strategic pillars that support this vision include:

- Continued Commitment to Education
- Enhanced Recreation and Connectivity
- Diverse Housing and Neighborhood Options
- Strengthened Business and Economic Development
- Retention of Small-Town Feel and Sense of Community



#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- The strategic pillars give intentional structure to the key areas of development in the community. Some of these areas represent new approaches for the community and will require some new policy settings and investments.

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- The strategic pillars provide areas for significant innovation in Smithville over the coming years, especially in developing a coherent economic development strategy and creating new housing options.

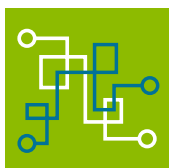
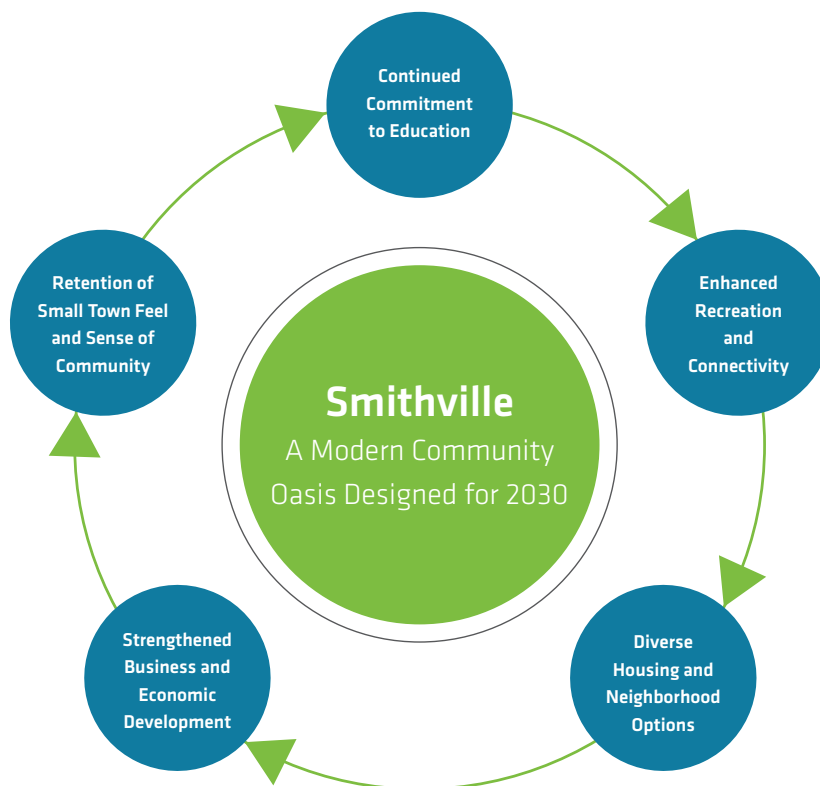




The strategic pillars help organize future actions in key focus areas. These are intended to be the major building blocks that help the community achieve the vision of being a modern community oasis designed for 2030.

## 7.0 STRATEGIC PILLARS FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Pillars were developed at the Reconvening of the Think-Tank in November 2019. The pillars represent the major theme or topic areas that underpin the aggregated preferred future. They have been drawn directly from the scenario planning and community engagement process. The Goals are structured around these five key strategic pillars. These are the fundamental building blocks for the future actions that support the vision.



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### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

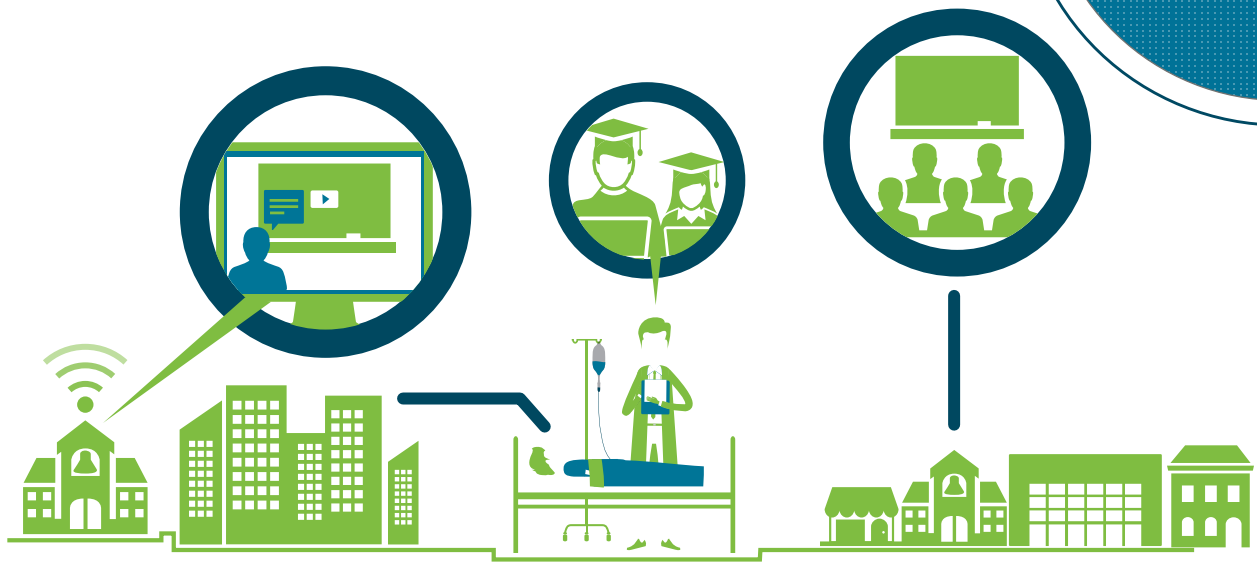
- The Strategic Pillars draw together the elements identified by the community as being the highest importance in terms of the future.
- The Strategic Pillars are not intended to represent the entire operational responsibilities of the City, but rather focus areas for goals and strategic action areas over the medium term, that will produce long-term results.

## 7.1 CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

### 7.1.1 IMPORTANCE OF A CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

The Smithville community places a high value on the local education system. The performance of the schools, and the quality of education, is a key value proposition of the community, and therefore a key economic driver for the city. This has resulted in community expansion, as school-aged families migrate into Smithville. The schools' expertise in innovative programs such as robotics also position it well for the future.

Smithville school system is creating a high-tech learning and innovation environment. This offers considerable potential in terms of generating a skilled local workforce.



The community visioning process identified several new potential dimensions for education in the community. The population profile of the community is changing, with a larger retiree cohort now residing in the community. This cohort is generally active learners and seek life-long learning opportunities. In addition, much of the US is now in a highly constrained skilled labor market condition, and employers are interested in building connections to potential recruits, as far back into the school system as possible. This could build the attractiveness of Smithville as a business location, with the larger pool of skilled young students.



#### VALUE TO RESIDENTS:

- The high quality of the schools attracts families, and this is made even more appealing by the relatively low expenditure per student. This educational value for money scenario is a fantastic proposition for many people.
- High performing schools are often a source of great pride for communities, and Smithville is no exception. Leveraging this into a high performing learning community is an interesting and enticing concept.



## 7.1.2 KEY ACTION AREAS - GOALS FOR 2030

### 1. Create educational cluster

As Smithville grows, its student population becomes more significant. There is the potential to create a significant high performing educational cluster, and possibly seek to attract a community college campus.

### 2. Forge strong partnership between School and City

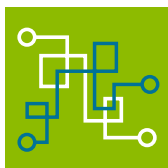
The School District and City of Smithville represent two of the strongest institutions in the community. Both are instrumental in shaping the community and building critical infrastructure. There should be a very close collaborative partnership, to help shape important community discussions and direction. The School Board and City Board of Aldermen have already commenced regular meetings, and this should continue.

### 3. Create industry responsive educational pathways

Connecting students closely with vocational and professional careers pathways will make Smithville more attractive to companies seeking to locate close to talent. Building connection to emerging local technology firms will have multiple benefits.

### 4. Build a lifelong learning culture

As has been discussed, Smithville is entering a phase where there will be more active retirees living in the community. As people live longer, research is showing that mentally active people enjoy a better quality of life. Programs that support this lifelong learning culture will deliver benefits at many levels. This topic was of interest to a number of participants in the community engagement work.



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#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- Smithville has the opportunity to position itself as a smart, learning and educated city with unique geographic positioning.
- The partnership between the School and City could lay the foundation for deeper collaboration in the community. This will help accelerate community progress and help coordinate funding initiatives.



#### BOLD IDEAS:

- Seek to attract a community college campus to Smithville that would anchor a higher education cluster.



## 7.2 ENHANCED RECREATION AND CONNECTIVITY

### 7.2.1 IMPORTANCE OF ENHANCED RECREATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Smithville prides itself on being a family friendly recreation-oriented community. The lake is a significant draw for recreation for locals and regional visitors. The visioning process highlighted the need to better connect the lake recreation zone to the downtown and other areas. The new Main Street Trail connecting the downtown to the lake is poised to create an important new corridor, which will trigger economic integration between these two critical areas.

There is a particularly strong community desire to create a safe network of sidewalks and trails for students to get to schools and other community amenities.



During the visioning process, there was an expressed desire for overall dramatic expansion of connectivity within the community, with a network of trails and pathways that connect all the key community nodes together. In addition, the community discussions reflected the desire to continue to explore the best options for a community center, or other similar multi-use community and recreation facility. The visioning discussions have also highlighted a desire for amenities that encourage wellness, walkability, recreation options, and a healthy community across all ages.



#### VALUE TO RESIDENTS

- Expanding and connecting trails to create a city-wide trail network offer a unique multi-modal experience in the community. This would make the city very attractive to recreation oriented young professional, families and seniors.
- Such recreation trails could further connect people to nature and open spaces and help leverage the lake recreation area and make it more accessible for locals.



## 7.2.2 KEY ACTION AREAS - GOALS FOR 2030

### 1. Create a recreation and connectivity masterplan

The desire for connected trails and recreation systems in the community, naturally leads to the need for a recreation and connectivity Parks Master Plan. The development of the infrastructure will take time and money and need to be methodically planned and executed. Considerable effort has already been invested to think through how and where to create some trails, sidewalks and bike lanes. There is the potential for trails between neighborhoods and from neighborhoods to school, downtown and lake.

### 2. Study community desires for recreation facilities

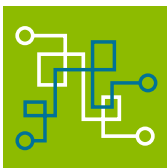
During the stakeholder engagement workshops, various ideas were raised about community recreation facilities and where they could be located. There seems to be a desire to determine appropriate scale and cost. Other ideas that have been proposed include a basketball court complex, expansion of the Senior Center and a possible teen center. Funding options and priorities will need to be explored.

### 3. Build recreation as an economic driver

The recreation economy can be a powerful economic driver. Festivals and special events attract visitors and local expenditure. There is the potential to market Smithville as a recreation hub, especially as more trails are constructed.

### 4. Build regional trail connectivity

One of the macro emerging trends across the US is the development of regional and national trail systems. Smithville should aim to collaborate with Clay County and Kansas City for trail and recreational integration. This will bring additional resources to the table, as well as providing the potential for Smithville to be a significant destination on regional trails.



#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- A network of trails provides the basis of a multimodal transportation system and allows people options to travel across the community without travelling on roads. This would make the community very attractive to recreation-oriented people.
- New forms of transport such as electric scooters and bikes will accelerate the need for a comprehensive trail system.

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#### BOLD IDEAS:

- Create a river walk along the river system behind the downtown area. This helps create more recreation amenities and trails in this community hub, and could trigger habitat restoration projects, further enhancing the community oasis feel.



## 7.3 DIVERSE HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD OPTIONS

### 7.3.1 IMPORTANCE OF CREATING DIVERSE HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD OPTIONS

Most residents of Smithville have moved into the community because of the school amenities and the quality of life offered to school-aged families. However, looking forward, the community vision anticipates a more diverse population, attracting more young professionals and young families. There is also an emerging cohort of people, who have raised their families and now wish to stay in Smithville as active retirees and are seeking better suited housing options.

**In Smithville, scale is important. Good design and planning can create nodes and neighborhoods, that will create the local intimate small-town feel, embedded within the fabric of a growing city.**



There is broad desire to activate public spaces as community gathering areas, like the downtown and a community center. These amenities can create localized neighborhood centers that host multi-cultural events and community activities such as farmers markets, arts and cultural shows. These more dynamic types of neighborhoods are well suited as locations for some mixed housing options for younger adults and active retirees. This is balanced with an expressed desire to create a clear separation between most family based residential areas, and commercial, industrial, and innovation zones. This helps protect the safety and integrity of the family residential areas.



#### VALUE TO RESIDENTS:

- People in Smithville desire a unique and special place to raise their families and enjoy their lives. Investment in defining different neighborhood types will help offer choice and create areas with different charm and well-suited amenities. In addition, good housing creates stability and wealth in a community.
- There is a clear desire for alternative housing options, that includes senior living, active retirement, live / work young professional accommodation, and affordable housing. This will allow a wider range of people to make Smithville their home and for people to transition through their changing needs.



### 7.3.2 KEY ACTION AREAS - GOALS FOR 2030

#### 1. Initiate the Comprehensive Planning process

Smithville faces a number of complex planning issues going forward. It is a growing community that is attracting the attention of developers, businesses and potential residents. The community desires to have a greater variety of housing options, and greater definition of neighborhoods connected to community amenities. The primary tool for charting out this roadmap is the Comprehensive Planning process. This plan can also explore the supporting issues of annexation, zoning requirements and density issues. This has been included in the City's 2020 budget.

#### 2. Facilitate the availability of more diverse housing options

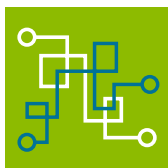
There was strong mandate from the visioning work to proactively facilitate the creation of more diverse housing options. Smithville housing stock is currently anchored by single-family homes, but the vision and broader society trends suggest the need for a much broader range of options. The immediate needs are housing for seniors and retirees, young professions and affordable or workforce housing. These options will need to be met through condos, mixed use, multifamily complexes and higher density development.

#### 3. Define and develop neighborhood nodes

An emerging trend in growing cities is the development of strong neighborhood development, often incorporating nodes. A "node" is a community location where people connect, typically for services, recreation or events. The trend is to more walkable neighborhoods, where people have obvious connection points. A number of the neighborhoods with HOA's have some elements of this with pools and recreation facilities. There is the potential to further develop this approach by exploring how amenities within or adjacent to neighborhoods can strengthen the local feel.

#### 4. Preserve green space and rural feel

One of the unique features of Smithville is that it sits between rural tracts and a major urban metropolis. The rural feel, outdoor amenities and greenspaces are a valuable part of the overall Smithville experience. Enhancing the green space plan is a key tool to ensure the preservation of the experience.



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#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- Smithville community has identified the need for new types of developments such as condos, senior living and live / work / play options. These options make sense in several locations in the city, with the most obvious being around the downtown, school, retail areas and perhaps senior facilities near the lake.
- It will be important to seek out and work with developers who understand the community vision and respect the desire for the small town feel. This may require some new public / private partnerships and collaboration.



#### BOLD IDEAS:

- Leverage the highly successful Main Street redevelopment to spark a broader downtown revitalization that could include live / work options (such as condo developments), community amenities, river-walk and renewed retail and commercial activity.



## 7.4 STRENGTHENED BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### 7.4.1 IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTHENED BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Smithville is currently defined by a growing residential sector. Some new commercial and industrial developments are now following. However, the City is still heavily dependent on the residential sector for its revenue. The visioning highlighted that there is a strong desire among the community to support a thriving economy, in large part because of the local services and goods it offers, as well as economic resilience.

Smithville has the potential to dramatically expand its economic and business development focus. This was the highest rated priority area for action at the reconvening of the Think-Tank participants.



There are several identified economic opportunities worthy of exploration. Smithville lies between the Kansas City metropolis and a vast agricultural landscape to the north. There seems significant opportunity to attract innovative businesses, especially related to the agribusiness and bio-based sectors that tie into this regional economy. In addition, the proximity to Kansas City International Airport offers the potential for associated business activity, especially as it goes through redevelopment into a major hub. Local business activity appears to have the potential for growth, especially associated with the tourism industry and in servicing the growing local population. Business attraction will also include additional retail and restaurant options.



#### VALUE TO RESIDENTS

- The visioning process has highlighted the interest in economic activity in Smithville, and especially the concept of attracting technology driven industries and business. This creates the opportunity for more local jobs and careers.
- More business activity in Smithville will help boost City revenues and allow more resources for investment in needed infrastructure and amenities.



## 7.4.2 KEY ACTION AREAS - GOALS FOR 2030

### 1. Focus on technology and bioscience companies

Smithville will become an increasingly ideal location for technology and bioscience companies. The high school is producing a skilled workforce, and the city has a unique geographic location straddling the agricultural areas and urban metropolis. This positioning of Smithville within the peri-urban ring makes it an attractive location for new industries such as controlled environment agriculture, and businesses servicing the agricultural landscape.

### 2. Leverage off airport redevelopment

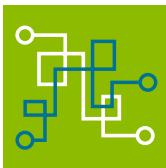
The redevelopment of the Kansas City International Airport is a once in a generation game-changer. This massive redevelopment is likely to trigger new investments in aviation and transport related industries, and coupled with ongoing local residential development, creates the potential for a cluster of construction businesses. Building a strategic relationship with the economic development entities and developers associated with the airport is an important first step.

### 3. Pursue tourism related business potential

The Main Street redevelopment is an important step in linking the recreation economy at the lake with the downtown. This will be further amplified by the connecting trail and the downtown amenities and events. These initiatives could spur a boutique tourism sector, that ties into the recreation economy and provides interesting visitor amenities and experiences.

### 4. Create dedicated industrial zones

Smithville has a shortage of available industrial land. There is likely to be pressure on remaining areas for development in City limits, and some dedicated zoning will be important. This should be addressed during the comprehensive planning process. The future of development, particularly on the southern end of the city will have an important role in shaping the future of the community character.



#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- Smithville sits within the peri-urban “Arc of innovation” that surrounds Kansas City. This makes it attractive for many technology and bioscience industries. Smithville should pursue such businesses, and actively participate in the regional Biosciences Corridor initiative.
- The future impact of the airport redevelopment should not be underestimated. This might make Smithville very attractive to people working in the “gig” economy and who travel frequently.

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#### BOLD IDEAS:

- Smithville is at the point where a hotel and conference complex would be a significant economic addition. Such a facility would offer an important community and visitor amenity and provide new revenue streams.



## 7.5 RETENTION OF SMALL-TOWN FEEL AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY

### 7.5.1 IMPORTANCE OF SMALL-TOWN FEEL AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Throughout the visioning process, the community has highlighted the importance of the “small-town feel” for its residents, as well as a desire to create an expanded worldview. While people clearly recognize that Smithville has grown and is no longer actually a small town, there is a deep desire for a more familiar intimate community feel and connection. The visioning process probed what did people mean by “small-town feel”. Common responses included creating a neighborhood feel, being more than a bedroom community to Kansas City, and creating connection points throughout the community.

Residents in Smithville place a high value on the sense of community and seek the sense of familiarity and safety that comes with a connected community. Fostering this intimate community feel should be a focus of community development.



Smithville retains enough geographic separation from the Kansas City sprawl to be able to create a unique small-town feel, while still being a significant sized city. During the visioning, the concept of a community oasis also emerged, and was named as one of the scenarios of the future. This oasis concept was where there would be that nostalgic feel, but with a modern sustainability and environmentally progressive overlay. In today's world, communities can create a more intimate feeling by programs that connect people and encourage inclusivity, designing small scale streetscapes, and build in community events like markets and festivals.



#### VALUE TO RESIDENTS

- A strong sense of community contributes to the quality of life, safety and levels of contentment within Smithville.
- The small-town feel also adds to the charm of the community, and its appeal for families.



## 7.5.2 KEY ACTION AREAS - GOALS FOR 2030

### 1. Create “Smithville Community Oasis” area

The visioning process identified the appeal of a community oasis concept. The scenario called “Your Evolving Oasis” held some appeal for a cohort of people. In the focus group sessions, a concept emerged of how to create a “community oasis”. The area between the downtown and the lake represents a possible epicenter of the community attention. In this area, people envisaged a combination of river-walks, environmental restoration, community gardens and recreation areas. Well designed, such an area could represent an environmental, educational and recreational oasis, and links the downtown and lake.

### 2. Utilize unique signage and promotion

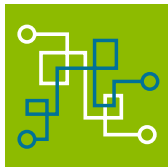
Smithville has recently completed rebranding work. Creating distinctive and empathetic signage used across the community would help create an identifiable Smithville identity. During the visioning process, there was strong support for the idea of entrance welcome signs on the approach to Smithville, particularly from the southern side.

### 3. Apply design that fosters a small-town feel

The right combination of design, technology and scale can help create the sense of charm and community that people seek. Smithville has the potential to embrace a number of urban design trends, such as walkable neighborhoods, that will help foster the sense of a community oasis. This sense of connectedness also promotes community safety, which is a key priority and strength in Smithville.

### 4. Embrace environmental practices

An element of the preferred future was embracing environmental sustainability and practices. In particular, there was discussion of the application of sustainable building materials, renewable energy and recycling programs. There was also some interest in local food systems, coupled with farmers market. The embrace of environmental practices helps promote a sense of a community that cares about its landscape and resources. This could also be a great value proposition for attracting young families and professionals, who might find appeal in these values.



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#### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- The broad concept of creating an environmental and recreational community oasis could make Smithville an attractive alternative to the busy Kansas City metropolis.
- Urban design and lifestyles are evolving, as people seek more intimate neighborhood residential feel, and greater walkability and multi-modal connectivity. Smithville has the potential to be at the forefront of some of these important trends.



#### BOLD IDEAS:

- Developing an identifiable community oasis area between the downtown and the lake. This could include trails, river-walk, gardens and environmental habitat, and would be a fantastic initiative for Smithville. This would create a unique experience that ties together a lot of community priorities.

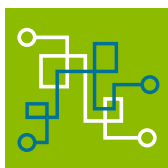
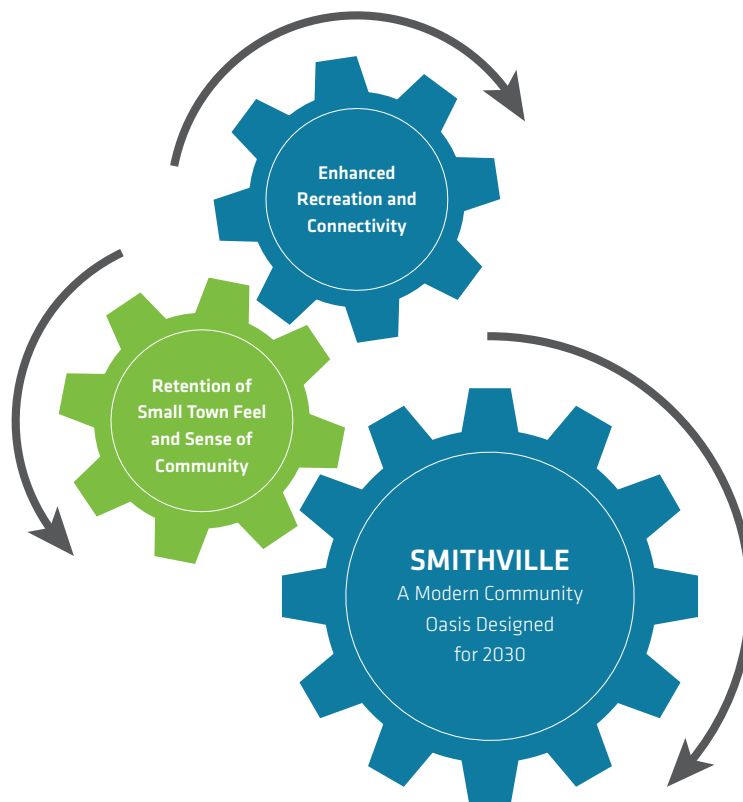


## 8.0 DYNAMIC SYSTEMS-THINKING APPROACH

The Strategic Pillars framework lays out the key themes and specific recommended actions. However, it is very important to think of this in a dynamic systems-thinking approach. Each strategic pillar needs to enable and empower the other elements. For example, a focus on the “Enhanced recreation and connectivity” has important implications for retaining the small town feel and neighborhood options. At a practical level, there are a number of projects that will demonstrate this systems-thinking approach. For example:

- The idea of the river-walk near the downtown will have multiple benefits, such as enhance the downtown experience, create strong sense of an ecological and recreational oasis, and provide connectivity.
- Selective annexation of adjacent lands can help create zones for economic development, connect neighborhoods and create new options for housing.
- Downtown live and work developments, and connected trails systems that link the community and offer recreational opportunities.

The systems thinking approach is well suited to a community of Smithville's size, where the obvious connection between key areas of investment and activity can easily be made.



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### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- A systems-thinking approach allows synergy to be created, both accelerating and optimizing progress, and making the most of every community investment. For example, consider the systemic impact from the recent downtown renewal on issues like recreation, community attitude and economic development.
- The development of the Smithville Comprehensive Plan should take a system-thinking approach and look to build cross-linkages between the key pillars. This integrated planning will help amplify outcomes and benefits at the community level.





The vision and strategic action plan outlines high level steps for the community and a pathway to the implementation of the vision.

## 9.0 NEXT STEPS

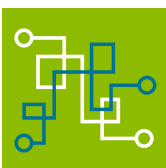
The City of Smithville Vision and Strategic Planning process has produced the following outcomes:

- Documented a detailed understanding of the community's views across a range of important topics and future shaping factors.
- Allowed detailed examination of plausible future scenarios, explored expected and preferred futures, and built an understanding of the implications of these future options.
- Identified and coalesced support around a shared vision for the future.
- Identified key strategic pillars and goals.

This work has been built on solid public participation and thoughtful and constructive dialogue. The vision looks out to 2030. Now the next phase of work needs to begin. The following immediate next steps are recommended:

- **Forge strong partnerships.** These initial partnerships need to be between City and other key institutional groups, such as the School District, Clay County, and City of Kansas City.
- **Comprehensive Planning process.** The process to start this is already underway, and it provided the ideal mechanism to continue the community engagement and planning for the future. The Comprehensive Planning allows a way to create the dynamic systems-thinking approach that maximizes the impact of future investments.
- **Recreation and connectivity masterplan.** The recreational and connectivity masterplan is a critical building block for Smithville. This will occur as part of the Comprehensive Planning work and will help define future development.

It is also recommended that the City continue to develop forward looking plans, and review development and community goals as part of the annual planning process. Over time, other key partnerships will be required with regional economic development groups, groups related to the Kansas City International airport, and property developers.



### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- The City should pursue ongoing innovation, staying abreast of best practice, new technology and future trends. New trends will emerge in urban living, technology and funding models – and these will need to be incorporated as appropriate.
- The vision also anticipates new investments in community infrastructure and amenities. This will require support from the public, and ongoing commitment to pursue various grants and programs from State and Federal entities.

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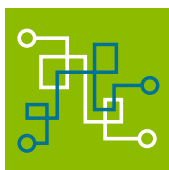
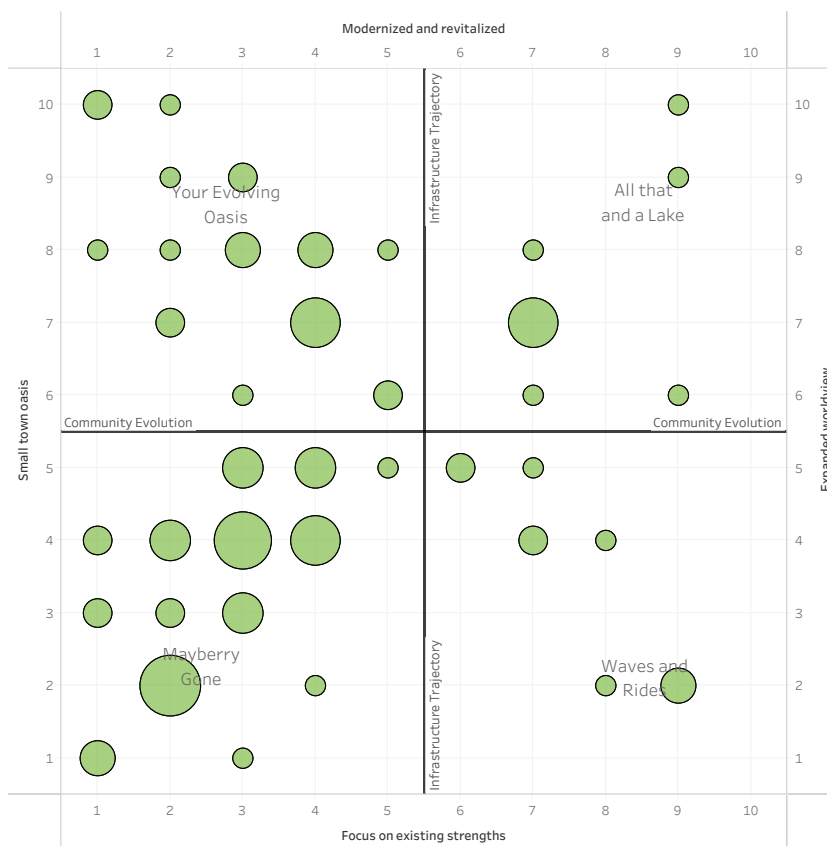
## 10.0 CONSULTANTS PERSPECTIVE: HOW TO AVOID MAYBERRY GONE

### CONSULTANT'S PERSPECTIVE

Development delivers economic benefit to the community of Smithville. However, there is a clear need to balance the benefits of growth, while maintaining the community oasis feel, and charm of the community. One of the potential future pitfalls for Smithville is over-development where infill creates a contiguous suburban strip. This would erode the small town feel and the sense of space. This is the future scenario called Mayberry Gone. While it was considered an unattractive future, over half the survey respondents considered it could be the expected future – which is what will happen if Smithville does not change direction.

The issue of urban sprawl impacts many of the growing metropolises in Midwest USA. With no clear growth boundaries, the trend is for creeping sprawl on the urban fringe.

### Expected Future results from vision survey - Mayberry Gone



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### FUTURE INSIGHT

- Over the next 30 years, the USA will add another 100 million people to major urban centers. Kansas City is likely to grow significantly, and developmental pressures on Smithville could increase.
- Smithville will need to ensure that development, especially along Highway 169, does not devolve to urban sprawl, with uninterrupted development. Anticipating growth, and directing it correctly, needs to be a key aspect of the Comprehensive Planning work. Preservation of landscape and greenspace will help preserve the unique experience and feel of the community.

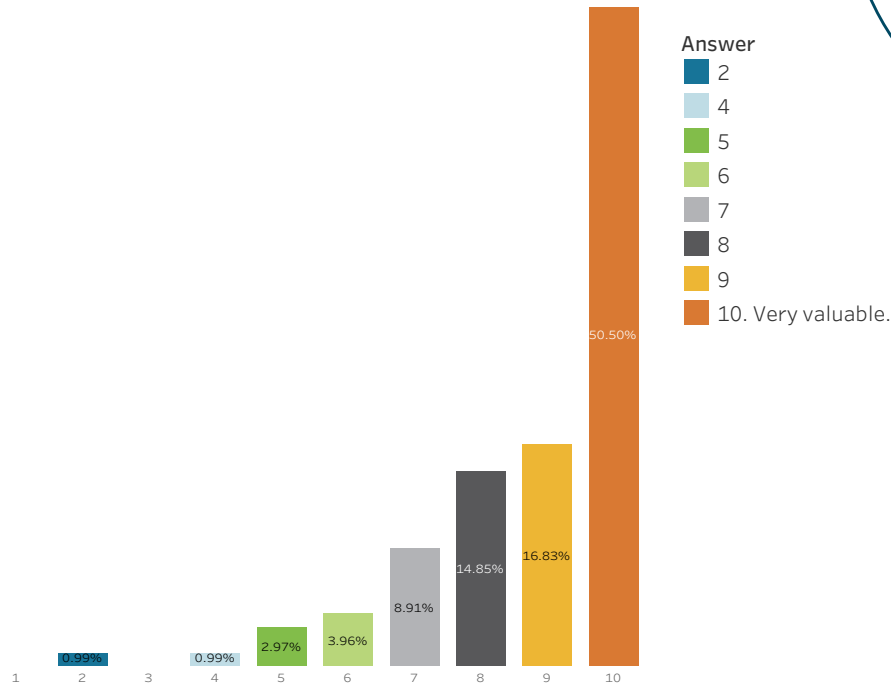


## 11.0 VALUE OF THE VISIONING PROCESS

The survey and workshop participants were asked for their perspectives about the value of the visioning process. Respondents were asked the question: 'Do you think this visioning process is interesting and valuable to Smithville?'

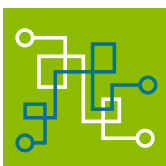
(Scale :1 = Waste of time; 10 = Very interesting and valuable)

**Do you think this visioning process is interesting and valuable to Smithville?**



The community of Smithville saw great value in the visioning process, with the majority of respondents noting that it was "Very valuable and interesting". This further validates the observed appetite for change.

There was a strong level of appreciation and perceived value in the visioning process. This matches the interest and enthusiasm shown by people in the various engagement workshops. It is important to understand the perceived value and interest as a reflection of public value in the process. Visioning processes can be time consuming, but a process that produces new insights about the future can be extremely beneficial to long-term planning efforts.



### FUTURE INSIGHTS:

- The Youth Surveys highlighted the need to continue to look ahead and plan for the future. This should be an underlying principle in Smithville, which is continuing to monitor emerging trends and consider the implications.

### FutureInsight

- The impacts of the redevelopment of the Kansas City International Airport are not yet fully understood. This should be tracked carefully, as it could impact the speed of development in ancillary industries.



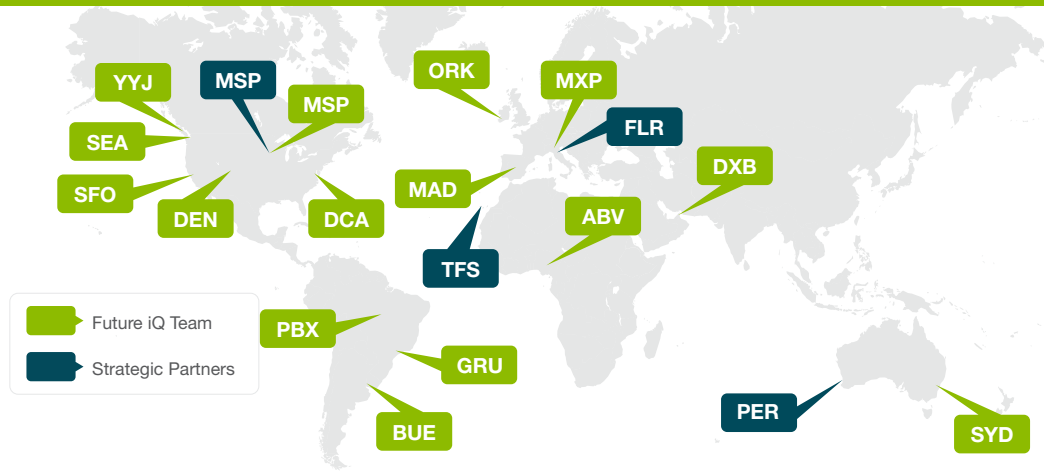
The people of Smithville demonstrated exceptional commitment, energy and participation in this very valuable process.

## 12.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Future iQ would also like to acknowledge the substantial support from the staff at the City of Smithville for the significant time and effort put into the planning and execution of the City of Smithville Vision and Strategic Planning process.

In particular, Cynthia Wagner and Nickie Lee from the City of Smithville and Mayor Damien Boley provided invaluable guidance and support for this process. Support was also provided by the six Board of Aldermen: Josh Hurlbert, Melissa Wilson, John Chevalier, Jr., Steve Sarver, Marvin Atkins, and Jeff Bloemker. Finally, and most importantly, we would like to recognize and thank the people of Smithville for their commitment, energy and participation in this valuable process.





## 13.0 ABOUT FUTURE IQ

Future iQ specializes in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist cities, organizations, regions and industries shape their economic and community futures. With nearly two decades of experience, the company has a global clientele spanning three continents. To learn more about Future iQ, and our recent projects [visit www.future-iq.com](http://www.future-iq.com) or by email at [info@future-iq.com](mailto:info@future-iq.com)

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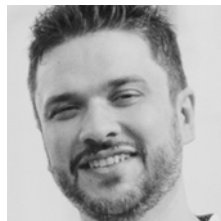
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## 14.0 FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Also, please visit these websites to access information on Smithville, and reports produced as part of the project:

**City of Smithville Website:** <https://www.smithvillemo.org>

**City of Smithville Vision and Action Plan Project Portal :** <https://lab.future-iq.com/city-of-smithville>



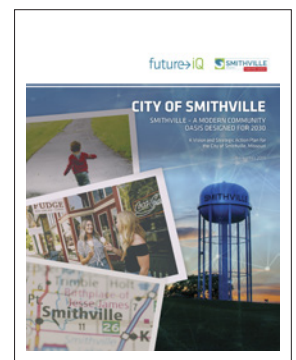
Smithville Community  
Engagement Portal



Smithville Community Profile  
and Benchmark Analysis  
Report  
June 2019



Smithville Scenario-Based  
Think Tank Report  
June 2019



Smithville Vision and Strategic  
Action Plan  
November 2019

