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VISION 2020

ATLANTIC'S PLAN FOR THE FUTURE



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Introduction

Vision 2020 is a special kind of plan. Vision 2020 is not the plan of *one* organization. It has a broad reaching scope because no one organization holds the future of Atlantic in its hands. It is not a typical *city* plan. It does not outline where to build streets or where to dig ditches, even though it will have a major impact on the infrastructure of the city for years to come. This plan is the product of a collaborative effort and its goals will only be implemented by a cooperative spirit. It is a vision statement on what Atlantic residents today want their community to be like in the future. It is also a statement of purpose and goals that will help guide decision makers and ordinary citizens as they make the choices that will shape what Atlantic will be tomorrow and twenty years from now.

Through the planning process the citizens of Atlantic identified great assets and opportunities within the community. This plan describes those characteristics. Atlantic residents also identified things that they want to see changed, improved, and created. The plan goals describe the ways that Atlantic residents want to see their high quality of life not only maintained, but improved for years to come.

Together, the citizens of Atlantic developed more than 25 statements for how they would like Atlantic to be in the future, using the year 2020 as a benchmark point in time. Similar statements were consolidated, and then each of these statements was voted on. The top 10 are listed below and provide insight into what Atlantic residents would like to see their community in the year 2020:

Figure 1 Atlantic is...statements.

Atlantic is...in 2020.
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Atlantic is receptive and encouraging of young ideas.2. Atlantic is the regional center for vocational and technical training.3. Atlantic is the go-to town for technology, recreation, and cultural diversity.4. Atlantic is filled with highly paid professional jobs.5. Atlantic is the best place in southwest Iowa to retire, and includes the whole spectrum of living from independent to long term care.6. Atlantic is a historical tourist destination focusing on downtown beautification through historic renovation.7. Atlantic is growing with 500 more people, and 150 new families.8. Atlantic is a welcoming community that attracts young and old people alike

to fulfill their dreams.

9. Atlantic is the health, safety, and fitness model for the state of Iowa.
10. Atlantic is the Coca-Cola capital of Iowa with daily opportunities to show how we became so.

From these statements of what Atlantic should be known for in the year 2020, and along with the specific goals developed by the planning process participants, a set of overall goals were established. These goals, listed below, are the guiding statements for a broad range of implementation steps, which are detailed later in this plan that will help Atlantic become the community that its residents envision.

Atlantic will...

- Lead the way in technology.
- Have many high quality jobs.
- Develop the housing necessary for a growing population.
- Expand recreational opportunities.
- Market itself locally and beyond.
- Welcome more people.
- Have a high standard of living.
- Educate its people for the future.

No one can accurately forecast events far into the future. It is difficult enough to foresee what will happen in a community in a few months, let alone in a few years. This plan is therefore not a prediction of or cookbook for success. It is, as its name implies, a vision for the future of Atlantic based on current conditions and the thoughts of current residents.

Community Profile

Atlantic is well situated for growth into the 21st century. Outstanding people, a great location, and a quality of life second to none all combine to make Atlantic one of the most attractive small communities in the Midwest. Atlantic is well connected to the rest of the country and the world through first class transportation and telecommunications infrastructure. Atlantic firms do business all over the world, while its residents enjoy the safety and friendliness of small town life.

Location:

Atlantic lies along the East Nishnabotna River among the rolling farm fields of southwest Iowa. This beautiful natural setting is roughly halfway between two of the Midwest's best metropolitan areas. Omaha, Nebraska is roughly an hour's drive to the west of Atlantic and Des Moines, Iowa is about the same distance to the east. Interstate 80 and numerous state and federal highways, along with the Iowa Interstate Railroad, provide convenient access to these metropolitan areas for passengers and freight as they pass through Atlantic.



Figure 2 Atlantic Regional Map

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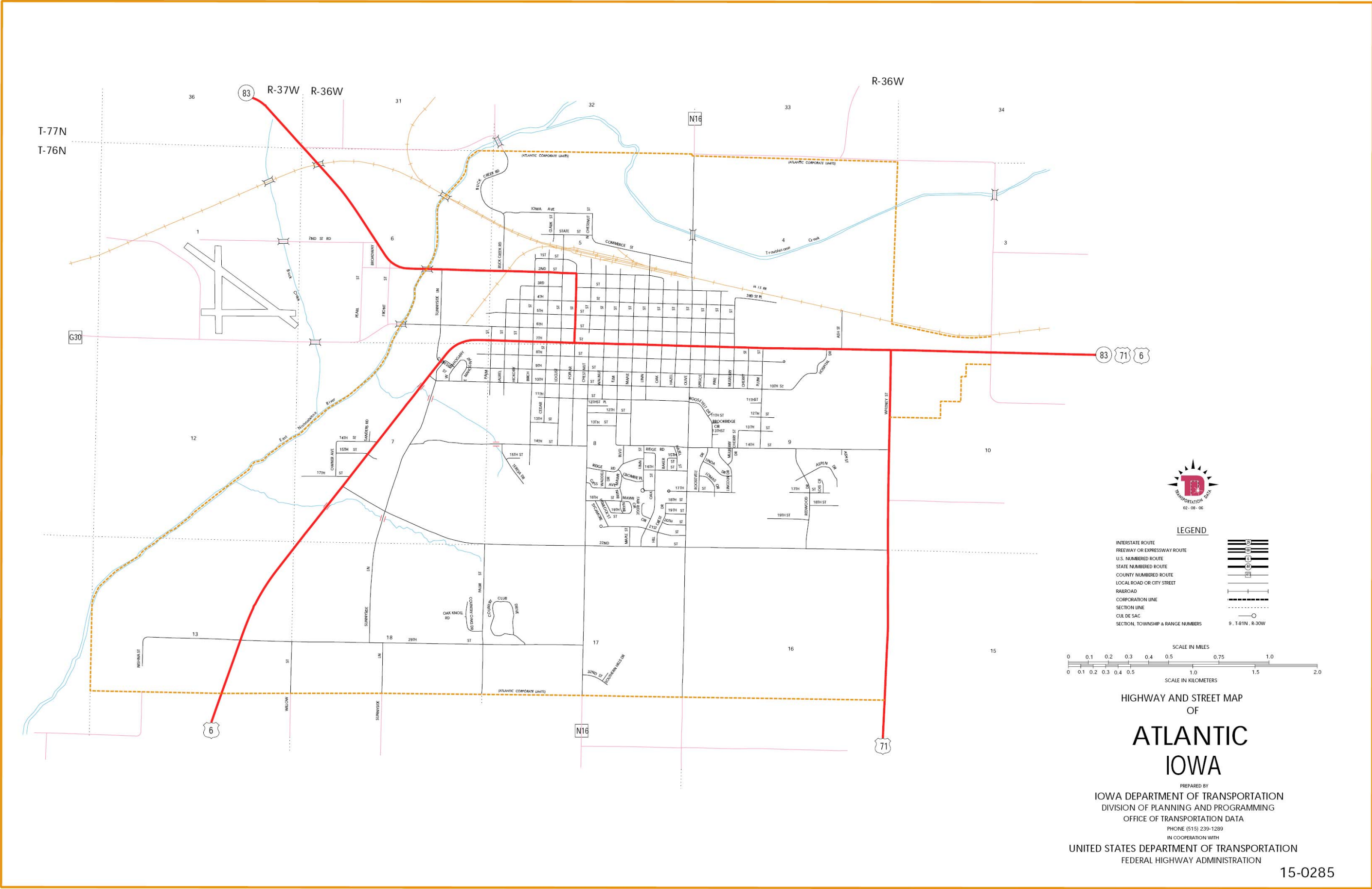
Figure 3 Atlantic distance from major cities

Omaha, Nebraska	60 miles
Des Moines, Iowa	80 miles
Sioux City, Iowa	120 miles
Kansas City, Missouri	170 miles
Minneapolis, Minnesota	320 miles
Chicago, Illinois	400 miles
St. Louis, Missouri	430 miles
Denver, Colorado	600 miles

Figure 4 Atlantic Aerial Photograph, 2006



Figure 5 City Street Map



Climate:

Atlantic enjoys four distinct seasons and a wide range of temperatures through the course of the year. The weather is perfect for a variety of outdoor activities and crops. Summers are warm with occasional thunderstorms. Winters are cold and snow is relatively common. Both spring and fall are pleasant, but can experience wide ranges in conditions from week to week. The warmest month is July with an average high of 86°F. The record high temperature for Atlantic, 117°F, was set in July, 1936. January is the coolest month, with an average high of 29°F. The record low for Atlantic of -37°F was set in January, 1974. On average Atlantic receives 34.77 inches of precipitation in a year. Atlantic's climate is well suited to a broad range of agricultural crops. Corn and soybeans are the most common, but many other grains, as well as flowers, fruits, and vegetables thrive in the Atlantic area. Atlantic is close to the border of USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 4 and 5.

Figure 6 Temperatures and Precipitation

	Average High	Average Low	Average Precip.	Record High/Low
January	29°F	9°F	0.85 in.	67°F / -37°F
February	35°F	15°F	0.94 in.	76°F / -36°F
March	48°F	27°F	2.34 in.	91°F / -32°F
April	62°F	38°F	3.49 in.	94°F / 4°F
May	73°F	49°F	4.32 in.	105°F / 17°F
June	82°F	59°F	4.99 in.	106°F / 32°F
July	86°F	63°F	4.62 in.	117°F / 37°F
August	83°F	61°F	3.76 in.	111°F / 33°F
September	76°F	51°F	3.81 in.	104°F / 17°F
October	64°F	39°F	2.74 in.	96°F / 1°F
November	46°F	27°F	1.80 in.	83°F / -16°F
December	32°F	15°F	1.11 in.	69°F / -33°F



Figure 7 Sunnyside Pool

People:

Atlantic is the county seat and largest city in Cass County, Iowa. The 2000 Census put Atlantic's population at 7,257. This population base is fairly steady, although like many Iowa communities, Atlantic's population has seen its ups and downs. These cycles have been generally tied to the local farm economy and overall national



Figure 8 Local Volunteers

and global trends. The population of Cass County peaked in 1900, when there were 21,274 people in the county—the majority of whom lived on small farms. Today there are about 14,684 people in the County. The City of Atlantic's population peaked in 1980 after decades of changes in farming led to a decline in the number of people needed in agriculture and a gradual migration from the countryside into cities and towns. The Farm Crisis of the 1980s caused Atlantic's population to slump before rebounding and stabilizing in the 1990s.

The 2000 Census revealed that Atlantic is slightly grayer than the state and the



Figure 9 Children at Harvestfest

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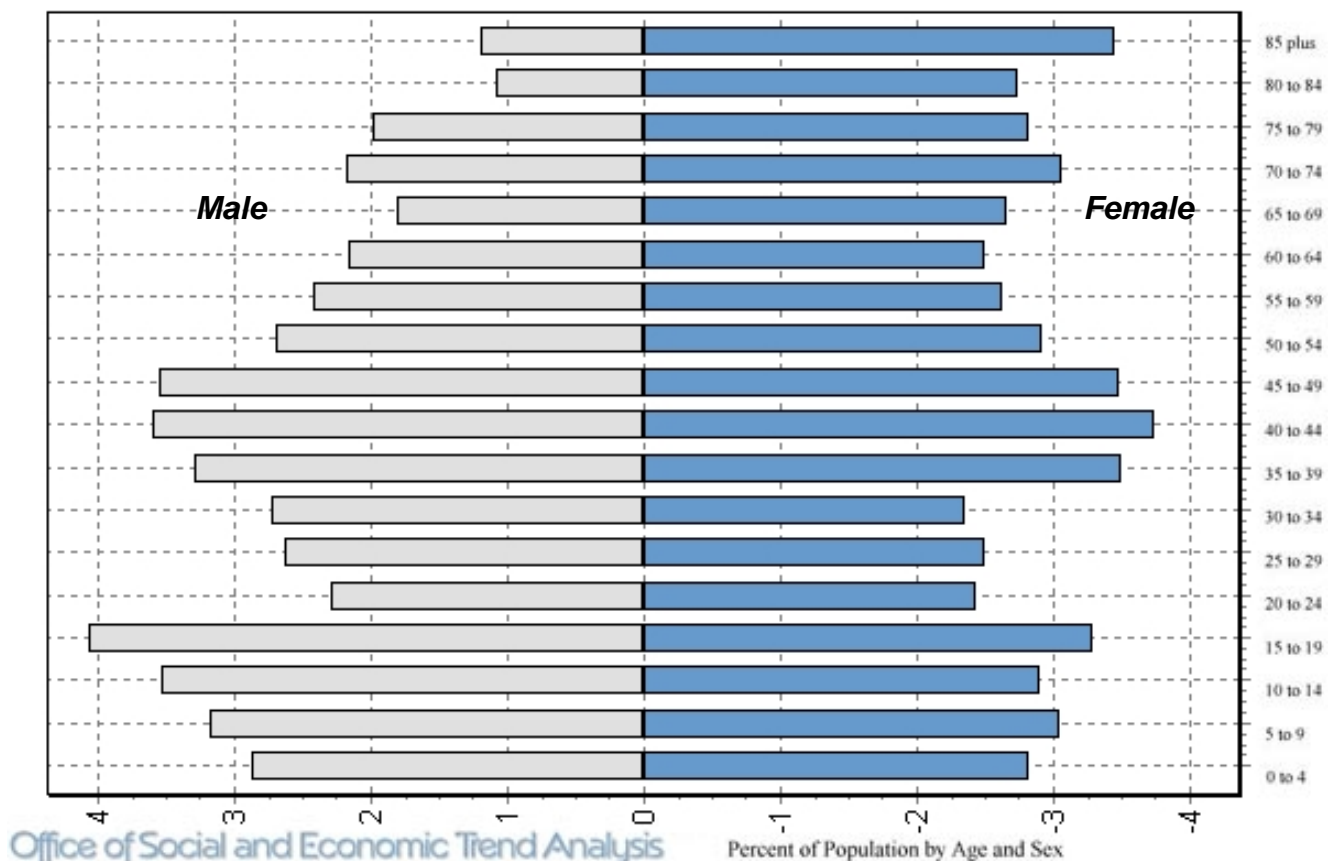
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nation as a whole. Atlantic's median age is about 5 years older than the state median and about 6 years older than the national median. Atlantic has almost double the percentage of people age 65 and over than the national average. If you break Atlantic's population down by age groups, you see that the largest slump in population occurs between the ages of 20 and 34, before rebounding again around age 35. The lack of significant higher education opportunities in Atlantic, simple recreational options, and an often tight labor market were cited by many of the high school students interviewed for this plan as why they may leave Atlantic. Fortunately, many return once they begin to raise a family and bring important experience and skills back with them. More can be done to not only entice those young families back to the community but to give those young people who do not intend to leave the skills and opportunities, both economically and socially, that will help them transition into the local workforce more smoothly.

Likewise, there is a dip in the population around the traditional retirement age of 65. This can partially be accounted for by natural attrition, but also reflects the fact that some people choose to leave the community once their children are grown and retire elsewhere. Atlantic has for many years led the region in the

Figure 10 Atlantic Age Distribution



development of assisted living and nursing home facilities to meet the growing demands of the senior population. This needs to continue. However, many people in their late 50s and older are retiring and looking for a much more active lifestyle. Housing options, recreational amenities, volunteer opportunities, and second careers are all vital to helping to retain these active, experienced members of the community. Similarly, these amenities geared toward the more experienced citizen will also help draw new residents over 50 to the community and bring their much needed resources and talent.

Figure 11 Atlantic Demographic Data

Census 2000 Statistics			
	Atlantic	State of Iowa	United States
Population	7,257	2,926,324	281,421,906
Males	3,434 (47.2%)	49.1%	49.1%
Females	3,833 (52.8%)	50.9%	50.9%
Median Age	41.6	36.6	35.3
Under Age 5	413 (5.7%)	6.4%	6.8%
Over Age 65	1,666 (23%)	14.9%	12.4%
Average Household Size	2.22	2.46	2.59
Owner Occupied Housing Units	2,189 (70%)	72.3%	66.2%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	987 (30%)	27.7%	33.8%
High School Graduate or Higher	4,394 (84.4%)	86.1%	80.4%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	1,076 (20.7%)	21.2%	24.4%
Median Household Income	\$33,370	\$39,469	\$41,994
Individuals Below Poverty Level	858 (12.1%)	9.1%	12.4%
Median Monthly Mortgage	\$658	\$829	\$1,088
Median Monthly Rent	\$263	\$268	\$295
Median House Value	\$68,200	\$82,500	\$119,600
Vacant Housing Units	228 (6.8%)	6.8%	9.0%
Speak other Language than English at Home	3.2%	5.8%	17.9%
Single Race: White	7,159 (98.6%)	93.9%	75.1%
Single Race: Black or African American	18 (0.2%)	2.1%	12.3%
Single Race: American Indian/Alaska Native	9 (0.1%)	0.3%	0.9%
Single Race: Asian	16 (0.2%)	1.3%	3.6%
Single Race: Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4 (0.1%)	<0.1%	0.1%
Single Race: Some other race	30 (0.4%)	1.3%	5.5%
Two or more races	21 (0.3%)	1.1%	2.4%
Hispanic (any race)	57 (0.8%)	2.8%	12.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Economy:

Due to rapid changes in the farm economy, Atlantic's employment and services base has diversified to the point where it is a full service community, much less vulnerable to changes in any one employment sector than in the past. Atlantic is now a regional hub for retail, manufacturing, housing, medical services, and many other services.



Figure 12 +5 Logo

Iowa Workforce Development has recently completed an inventory of the workforce characteristics within the Atlantic laborshed. This laborshed includes Atlantic and nearby communities that supply labor to the Atlantic area or employ individuals from Atlantic. This inventory found that health care and social services employ the most people within the Atlantic laborshed. Close behind are agriculture and education. Professional services, manufacturing, and wholesale and retail trade round out the top of the list of employment sectors.

Figure 13 Laborshed Statistics Industry	% of Laborshed	# of Employed
Health Care and Social Services	16.9%	3,177
Agriculture	12.4%	2,331
Education	11.5%	2,162
Professional Services	10.9%	2,049
Manufacturing	10.0%	1,880
Wholesale & Retail Trade	10.0%	1,880
Transportation, Communication, and Utilities	7.3%	1,372
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	6.6%	1,241
Public Administration and Government	5.7%	1,072
Construction	5.1%	959
Personal Services	2.4%	451
Entertainment and Recreation	1.2%	226

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, 2007

Healthcare employs the largest percentage of workers in the Atlantic area and the community benefits greatly from the services provided by the Cass County Memorial Hospital, its associated clinics, and the many other medical services provided in the city. This sector of the economy will undoubtedly grow as the local population grows and as individuals age and require more services.

Atlantic's retail sector is fairly strong and the community has become an important regional hub for retail. Both large chain retailers and many small businesses combine to provide a comprehensive range of products and services. The +5 *Grow Atlantic* program has demonstrated that shifting just 5% of purchases from out of town retailers to local ones has had a strong positive impact on the local economy. Atlantic has done better than other neighboring communities of similar size in keeping sales within the community and drawing in customers from surrounding areas. A 2004 study prepared by Iowa State University Extension showed Atlantic had stronger than expected sales in 7 of 9 categories. There was considerable room for growth in the building materials and home furnishing categories. The opening of a new home furnishing store in 2006 and the ongoing expansion of a local building center are positive trends toward filling these holes in the local economy.

Figure 14 Percent Above or Below Expected Sales by Economic Category, 2004

Category	% Above or Below Expected Sales, 2004
Building Materials	-70.5%
General Merchandise	+34.4%
Food	+80.9%
Apparel	+83.2%
Home Furnishings	-38.8%
Eating and Drinking	+15.3%
Specialty Stores	+63.1%
Services	+27.5%
Wholesale	+17.1%
Total Sales	+14.6%

Source: Iowa State University Extension

Manufacturing:

Manufacturing has long been an important part of the Atlantic economy. Plastic products, precision components, textiles, and many other products are manufactured in Atlantic plants. These plants range in size from less than a dozen employees to several hundred. In the Iowa Workforce Development laborshed study of 2007, manufacturing jobs in Atlantic had a median hourly wage of \$14.00/hour and salaried positions had a median yearly wage of \$40,000.00 per year. Manufacturing had one of the highest hourly rates of pay among the industries surveyed, but had the lowest percentage of employees with undergraduate degrees or higher.



Figure 15 Park Street Business Park

This demonstrates that there is both a strong demand for workers with trade skills in Atlantic and that manufacturing offers an opportunity for good employment for people who are unable to or do not wish to pursue a four year degree.

In recent years community leaders in Atlantic have taken several proactive steps toward encouraging the growth of manufacturing in the area. Both the Valley Business Park and the Park Street Business Park have been developed to meet a wide variety of needs of manufacturing and other firms. The Park Street Business Park, which is on the east edge of Atlantic, is serviced by US Highway 71 and 6 as well as State Highway 83. The Park Street Business Park provides spaces that are close to retail and hospitality options. The Valley Business Park is north of Atlantic and takes advantage of the crossroads of Interstate 80 and US Highway 71. The Valley Business Park is a cooperative effort between Cass and Audubon Counties and offers both existing buildings as well as large areas of developable land.



Figure 16 Valley Business Park

Agriculture:

Agriculture is still at the heart and soul of the community, but even that part of the economy is constantly changing, with a trend toward the consolidation of farms and a focus on producing crops for bio-fuels with the potential of utilizing the by-products from ethanol production to feed livestock. The 1969 USDA Census of Agriculture counted 1,398 farms in Cass County. The 2002 edition counted 764, demonstrating that fewer people in the county are actively engaged in farming, though acreage farmed has grown slightly.

The Amazing Energy ethanol plan will begin operation in 2008 and will have a major positive impact on the local economy. The production of crops for bio-fuels is already bringing a new premium to the traditional local crops of corn and soybeans. The future of the agricultural economy will be closely linked to the development of renewable fuels. At the same time, there is a growing local and national movement toward smaller farms that can grow healthy, nutritious food close to home. By encouraging small farm production of fruits, vegetables and livestock, citizens of Atlantic can reduce their carbon footprint by reducing the number of miles their food has to travel to their plate.



Figure 17 Combining Near Atlantic

Encouraging the development of small farm production needs an infrastructure to help it flourish. By encouraging microenterprise development, new jobs will be created. An entrepreneurial environment helps foster long term commitment to community.



Figure 18 Atlantic Farmers Market

Amenities:



Figure 19 Nishna Valley Family YMCA

Good people live in Atlantic, not because of houses or jobs alone, but because of the many amenities and services that are available in the city. Even if your needs are as diverse as wanting a friendly place to run a few laps, like the Nishna Valley Family YMCA, or you are in need of specialized medical care, such as at the Cass County Memorial Hospital, Atlantic has all of the bases covered.

The quality of life in Atlantic is hard to beat. It is no exaggeration to say that there is no traffic in Atlantic, parking is free, and it is a very safe community. Iowa as a whole is a safe place, in 2005

Iowa ranked 50th out of 50 states in terms of murders per 100,000 people, 44th in robbery, and 46th in vehicle theft.

Neighbors know their neighbors, but unlike some smaller communities, Atlantic has had enough migration into the city from elsewhere that people are genuinely happy to see new people move in and welcome them to the community.

This small town, safe environment is enhanced by the fact that Atlantic has many of the conveniences of a much larger community, without the hassles.

The health of the community is a primary concern and an important indicator of the quality of life. The Cass County Health System (CCHS) is an integrated health system that allows for coordinated, comprehensive care to patients in southwest Iowa. A part of the CCHS is the Cass County Memorial Hospital (CCMH). CCMH is a 90-bed facility with 13 physicians on the active medical staff. CCMH offers:

Rehabilitation	Laboratory	Radiology	Emergency
Education	Home Care	Hospice	Wellness
Surgery	Obstetric Service		Cardiology
Allergy	Business Health		Ear/Nose/Throat
Hemodialysis	Oncology		Ophthalmology
Orthopedics	Physical Specialist		Pulmonology
Radiology	Retinal Specialist		Urology
Vascular Medicine			



Figure 20 Atlantic Community High School

Education is also a primary concern of the people of Atlantic, and also one of its best attributes. The mission of the Atlantic Community School District, in collaboration with home and community, is to

prepare all learners to be creative, innovative and productive citizens and

workers in a changing society, by providing diversified opportunities to learn and apply relevant skills and knowledge in a positive, disciplined and challenging environment. The Atlantic Community School District has established several goals for itself and the community. Vision 2020 will support those goals, which include:

Students in the Atlantic Community School District will:

- Apply math skills and concepts to real life situations.
- Demonstrate respect and responsibility for self, others, property, and the environment (social skills/life skills).
- Write clearly to express ideas and disseminate information.
- Read for information and enjoyment.
- Persuade, inform, entertain, and solve problems through speech.
- Apply reasoning skills when making decisions, solving problems, and organizing information.
- Possess skills which enable them to contribute to their community (citizenship).
- Gather, process, and evaluate information (study skills).
- Experience the fine arts personally and as an extension of local and world culture through listening, viewing, or participating.
- Access and apply technology to manage information, to learn, and to enhance the quality of life.
- Apply listening skills to gather information.



Figure 21 Atlanticfest Street Vendors

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Atlantic is also well known for its festivals and events, which are not only important tourist draws but also help to build community and are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. These festivals and events include, but are not limited to:

May:	A Great Place to Put Down Roots community flower planting
June:	Customer Appreciation Days Citnalta Sizzle Street Dance
July:	Crazy Days Sales Cass County Fair
August:	Atlanticfest
September:	Coca-Cola Days
October:	Harvestfest
November:	Grand Lighting of Chestnut Street
December:	Christmas in Atlantic

Figure 22 Aerial View of the Atlantic Municipal Airport



Along with the many special events, every day there are many things to see and do in Atlantic. These include taking a flight from the expanded Atlantic Municipal Airport, visiting the recently renovated and expanded Carnegie Library, swimming at Sunnyside Pool, or golfing at one of the two 18 hole golf courses. Atlantic also boasts many parks, playgrounds, and ball fields that provide many different entertainment options. The T-Bone Trail, located just north of Atlantic, as well as several other nearby parks and recreational areas provide many opportunities for outdoor enjoyment.



Figure 23 Atlantic Carnegie Library



Figure 24 Cass County Community Center

Planning Process

The Vision 2020 planning process has taken several months and has involved a diverse group of people. The first work on the plan began in December, 2006 when members of the Atlantic Area Chamber of Commerce, who have long recognized the need to better coordinate the goals of the many Atlantic groups that influence change, decided it was time for a more unified, strategic plan. The primary reasons for seeking a strategic plan were to:

- Coordinate actions of the many groups involved in economic and social development.
- Prioritize the use of scarce resources.
- Serve as an internal and external marketing tool.

Planning Timeline:

December, 2006	Identified stakeholders, developed planning schedule and public participation plan.
January, 2007	Contacted stakeholders, began gathering data.
February, 2007	Public “kick-off” meeting. Developed vision statements for Atlantic in the year 2020.
March & April, 2007	Public small group planning sessions on a variety of topics. Identified strengths and weaknesses and developed goals. Held planning sessions at the high school.
May & June, 2007	Consolidated goals and developed an implementation strategy. Developed draft plan and sought feedback from stakeholders.
July, 2007	Presented the draft plan for public comment and review. Developed support from various implementing groups.
August, 2007	Plan adopted by the Chamber of Commerce and CADCO. Implementation began.
Ongoing	Measure success and review and update as necessary.



Figure 25 Planning session at Atlantic High School

From very early in the planning process, the Cass Atlantic Development Corporation (CADCO) supported this initiative by co-sponsoring the plan and participating at every level. After a series of initial meetings, Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) was hired to facilitate the planning meetings and write the plan.

SWIPCO worked with the Chamber and CADCO to develop a list of key

stakeholders and members of the public to personally invite to the planning process. SWIPCO also worked with the Chamber and CADCO to develop a public participation plan for the planning process, which involved a series of press releases and other media features to reach out to a broad range of the general public.

At every point along the way, the public was encouraged to participate in the plan, and many, many did. There were many ways for individuals to get involved, and at a basic level individuals and groups were asked to:

- Complete surveys.
- Join focus groups
- Attend meetings.
- Volunteer to make contacts with implementers.
- Offer expertise.
- Attend the planning conference.
- Work toward the goals.
- Help evaluate the progress.
- Support making modifications, as changes become necessary.

A public “kick-off” meeting was held on February 1, 2007 and more than 80 members of the public attended. At this “kick-off” meeting the planning process was outlined and the first vision statements for Atlantic in the year 2020 were developed. Attendees were also given the opportunity to sign up for future meetings on a variety of more specific topics.

Throughout February, March, and into April, small groups, ranging in size from 10 individuals to more than 30, met to discuss the topics of quality of life, small

business, industry, infrastructure, government and non-profits, and finance and development. Within these groups a number of stakeholders and topics were identified, including:

Quality of Life

- Healthcare
- Education
- Recreation/Fitness
- Social Interaction

Small Business

- Downtown Merchants
- Home Occupations
- Retailers
- Small Manufacturers
- Small Service Providers

Industry

- Manufacturers
- Agriculture
- Large Employers

Infrastructure

- Utilities
- Transportation

Government/Non-Profit

- Public Safety
- Public Services
- Service Coordinators

Finance/Development

- Lenders
- Developers
- Realtors
- Housing

At each of these meetings the public went through a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) exercise, which helped define what things are going well for Atlantic and which need improvement. From these strengths and weaknesses each group also developed a set of goals that are summarized in the goals section of this plan. SWIPCO staff also held a series of seven planning meetings at the Atlantic High School, which were attended by over 100 students. The students' insight and input greatly influenced the plan.

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Following the small group meetings, there was a period of data gathering and plan review that focused the information collected from the public meetings and developed it into a more accessible and ready to implement form. During May, June, and July various groups throughout the community were consulted on their input and drafts of the plan were circulated for comment and review.

In July a public unveiling of the draft plan was held and the general public was again given an opportunity to voice their opinion on the plan and offer feedback. With this information in hand, the plan was put in its final form and given to the Chamber and CADCO boards for review and adoption. Once officially adopted the plan was presented to various groups in the community for their concurrence and support. Implementation of the plan began with adoption. From that point on the Chamber, CADCO, and their partners will periodically assess progress on the Vision 2020 goals and make reports to their own boards and to other organizations on that progress. Every year the plan will be assessed and modified as necessary, and a progress report will be published annually so that the public can see how the goals are being achieved.

Atlantic Vision 2020 Goals

The Atlantic Vision 2020 planning process identified a number of goals for Atlantic. These goals are as varied as the needs of Atlantic's diverse and dynamic population. Some are seemingly small—such as increasing the amount of outdoor seating at restaurants. Many are monumental—such as solving Atlantic's wastewater treatment issues—and will require millions of dollars



Figure 26 Planning Session

and many years to implement. All of the goals, however, share the ultimate vision of making Atlantic a better place to live and therefore a more attractive community for new businesses, industries, and people. Several common themes emerged in the different planning sessions that were held. In the end, most of the goals—large and small—can be grouped into eight categories. These include, in no specific order:

Atlantic will...

- Lead the way in technology.
- Have many high quality jobs.
- Develop the housing necessary for a growing population.
- Expand recreational opportunities.
- Market itself locally and beyond.
- Welcome more people.
- Have a high standard of living.
- Educate its people for the future.

Within these goals fall the many items that were identified by the planning process participants as important goals for the future. The following pages break down each of the seven overarching goals into the more specific steps that when accomplished will together make Atlantic a better place. Some of the eight goals have more action items associated with them than others. In the end, however, all of the goals are inter-related and without one set it is highly unlikely that the others will be accomplished.

GOAL: Lead the way in technology.

At the turn of the 20th Century revolutions in agricultural engineering, agronomy, and transportation systems led to a farm economy boom in the United States. Atlantic prospered greatly from that boom because of its location in a fertile area and its connectivity to the rest of the world via the railroad. Atlantic's reliance on agriculture to fuel its economy has been a mixed blessing. Bad times have come along with the good. One hundred years after the first agricultural boom Atlantic is looking at the prospect of another positive time in agriculture with the focus on bio-renewable energy.

Atlantic needs to lead the field in the production and development of bio-fuels and other products derived from local agriculture. In order to do this, Atlantic must build upon its current success in corn based ethanol and look to the future of this technology. Atlantic should be involved in the development of other sources of fuels as well as multiply its benefits from the emerging bio-economy by manufacturing the equipment necessary to build the industry.



Figure 27 Corn Based Ethanol



Figure 28 Wireless Laptop

Not only should Atlantic lead the way in the new bio-economy, but in order to stay competitive, Atlantic must be a leader in information technology and digital connectivity. High speed internet is not only an opportunity for Atlantic residents to become connected with the outside world; it is an opportunity for the rest of the world to be connected to Atlantic. Advances in technology have made it possible for many professional tasks to be done from offices anywhere in the world—as long as they are equipped with the right digital

infrastructure. Atlantic must invest in its broadband internet capabilities. Just as the railroad connected Atlantic area farmers with commodity buyers in far away cities, increased broadband capacity will make it easier for local businesses to access distant markets. Likewise, companies looking to relocate personnel from expensive metropolitan areas to the high quality of life available in Atlantic will be able to do so, if the digital infrastructure is in place to accommodate them.

GOAL: Lead the way in technology.

Sub-Goal	Objective	Implementers	Target Date
Identify specific areas of strength and weakness in the communications and technology infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an inventory and plan for IT infrastructure growth. 	City of Atlantic, Chamber, CADCO, AMU, Telecommunications firms.	2008
Make Atlantic as internet friendly as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the broadband capacity available to Atlantic. Install wireless internet where practical. 	Telecommunications firms.	2010
Be on the cutting edge of energy conservation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a community based energy conservation audit and conservation incentive program. 	AMU, Other utilities providers.	2012
Make Atlantic a center for research and development in bio-fuels, fuel production technology, and other bio-renewable resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a research campus in conjunction with a major university. 	City of Atlantic, Chamber, CADCO, SWIPCO, IWCC, Iowa State University, USDA, private firms.	2020

Abbreviations used in goal matrixes:

Chamber: Atlantic Area Chamber of Commerce
 CADCO: Cass/Atlantic Development Corporation
 AMU: Atlantic Municipal Utilities
 IWCC: Iowa Western Community College
 USDA: United States Department of Agriculture
 RPA 13: Regional Planning Affiliation 13
 SBA: Small Business Administration
 S.I.R.H.A.: Southern Iowa Regional Housing Authority

SWIPCO: Southwest Iowa Planning Council
 SWITA: Southwest Iowa Transit Agency
 S.B.D.C.: Small Business Development Center
 C.P.C.: Community Promotion Commission
 C.C.M.H.: Cass County Memorial Hospital
 C.C.R.R.: Child Care Resource and Referral

GOAL: Have many high quality jobs.

If there was one comment that came up in each of the many planning sessions, it was that there needs to be more good jobs in Atlantic. Almost all economic development focuses on how many new jobs are created or how many jobs are retained in a community. However, once the easy assumption is made—that more jobs is a good thing—a number of questions are raised.

Perhaps most importantly, what is a “high quality” job? A definition that was offered at one planning session was that a high quality job is a stable position that pays enough to support a family. How much is that in Atlantic, Iowa? One measure of this is the median household income, which is a statistic that identifies for the average size household what income level would fall exactly in the middle of the income range.



Figure 29 Welder

At the 2000 Census, Atlantic had a median household income of \$33,370, which was only 90.8% of the state median household income. Detailed updated Census data for Atlantic will not be available until after 2010, but the Census Bureau has made an estimate of what the state's median income was in 2005. If Atlantic, at a minimum, maintained the same percentage of the state's median income, then Atlantic's median income in 2005 would have been \$39,597. If the rate of increase in the state median income remains the same, about 3% per year, then Atlantic's median income will need to rise proportionally, as shown in the table below, to simply keep at the current level of about 90 cents on every \$1.00 earned statewide.

Figure 30 Median Household Income Projections, Parity Scenario		
Year	Atlantic	State of Iowa
2000	\$33,370	\$36,742
2005	\$39,597	\$43,609
2010	\$45,814	\$50,456
2015	\$53,007	\$58,378
2020	\$61,329	\$67,543

In terms of wages, that means that in the year 2000 a household needed to earn at least \$16.04/hour between all wage earners to be at the median household

income for Atlantic. By the year 2020 that same household will need to earn \$29.49/hour between all wage earners to have a similar purchasing power.

Figure 31 Wage Per Hour Necessary to Meet Median Income Projections*		
Year	Atlantic	State of Iowa
2000	\$16.04	\$17.66
2005	\$19.04	\$20.97
2010	\$22.03	\$24.26
2015	\$25.48	\$28.07
2020	\$29.49	\$32.47

*40 hours per week, 52 weeks a year.

Atlantic should not settle for earning 90% of what families on average in Iowa earn. The goal for “good jobs” in Atlantic should be to meet or exceed the state median household income, at the latest by 2020. Efforts to attract new employment or to help local businesses expand should target jobs that will on average pay at least enough to maintain the current median income, and should gradually work up from their position of 90% of the state median income to a position equal or above it.

Figure 32 Lab Technician

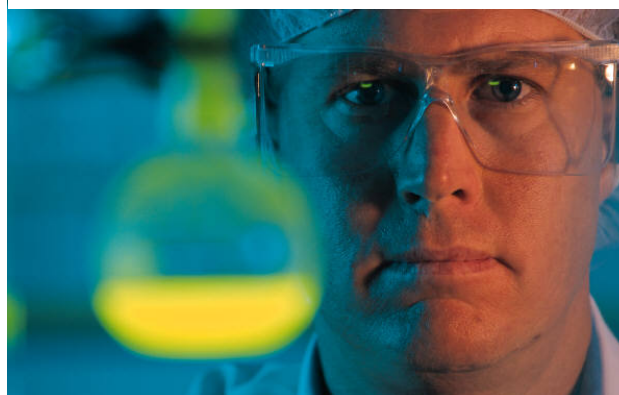


Figure 33 Target Average New Job Wage Rates Per Hour Per Household		
Year	Atlantic Goal	Projected State Median Household Wage
2010	\$22.03	\$24.26
2015	\$26.66	\$28.07
2020	\$32.47	\$32.47

2010: 90% of State Median, 2015: 95% of State Median, 2020: 100% of State Median

In order to meet this goal, it is not necessary or practical to recruit and develop only jobs that will pay \$25.00 or \$30.00 an hour. On the contrary, considering that the majority of working households include two wage earners, it is more practical to set a goal that on average new employment will pay at least half of the wage rate goal. For example, in 2010 in a hypothetical family with two wage earners, if one of them is employed full time and makes 75% of the state median wage for a household, or \$18.19 an hour, then the second wage earner would need to work about 33 hours a week at the current minimum wage rate of \$7.25 an hour in order to be equal to the projected state median income for a household in 2010.

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GOAL: Have many high quality jobs.

Sub-Goal	Objectives	Implementers	Target Date
Ensure infrastructure is in place for new business and industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with capital improvements planning. Lobby for more road funds. Repair or replace the wastewater treatment plant. Assess infiltration into the sanitary sewer system and fix the problems. Support the City's infrastructure improvement plan. 	City of Atlantic, RPA-13, SWIPCO, Cass County Board of Supervisors, AMU.	Ongoing
Support existing small business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect small businesses with local resources. Match training programs with the needs of small employers. 	CADCO, Chamber, Atlantic Schools, IWCC, SBDC.	Ongoing
Encourage business friendly government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep taxes down. Introduce a one stop shop concept for new business permitting, inspections, etc. 	City of Atlantic, Cass County Board of Supervisors.	2008
Develop business parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract businesses to the Valley Business Park and the East Business Park, as well as other developable areas. 	City of Atlantic, Cass County Board of Supervisors, CADCO.	2008
Increase self employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect home based businesses with resources. 	Chamber, CADCO	2008
Facilitate the transfer of existing businesses when owners retire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a small business transfer program. Utilize and expand mentorship programs. 	SBA, Chamber, CADCO	2009
Encourage entrepreneurial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a small business incubator 	CADCO, Chamber, Atlantic Schools,	2010

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business spin-offs.	facility and support program.	IWCC, SBDC.	
Maximize the use of the airport for economic growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a business park adjacent to the airport.	CADCO, Atlantic Airport	2015
Add 300 new primary income jobs and 100 managerial/professional positions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Average 30 new jobs a year between 2007 and 2020	All parties	2020

GOAL: Have the housing necessary for a growing population.

Most rural communities in Iowa have been losing population over the last 20 years. Up until now, Atlantic has been no exception. As a result, the demand for new housing has been relatively low. However, if Atlantic is to grow, new housing stock is imperative. Without available housing units, or at least the ability to construct them in a timely manner, it will be extremely difficult for Atlantic to develop new employment or to support its schools and businesses.

Various types of housing will be necessary to support the kind of comprehensive growth envisioned by the people who worked to develop this plan. Affordability is an important consideration along with quality. A good deal of the housing demand will be driven by new residents coming to the community. However, an



Figure 34 New Housing Construction

equal if not greater portion of the demand will come from the need to eliminate sub-standard housing and from the changing needs of Atlantic residents—such as when residents start families or when they no longer have children living at home, both events lead to a demand for new housing.

A primary concern when discussing new housing in Atlantic is the availability of

infrastructure for those new homes. There are several areas within existing neighborhoods that have infrastructure, but these may need other buildings removed in order to make space for housing development. Without this in-fill development, new land on the edge of the city must be developed at greater cost to the developer and potentially the city.

New Housing Demand:

In 2005 Southwest Iowa Planning Council conducted an evaluation of the housing stock in Atlantic. This evaluation involved reviewing each housing unit from the street and assigning it to four broad categories. The majority of the homes in Atlantic were rated as being in good condition. A large number—313—however, were evaluated as being in fair or poor condition, meaning that it was

obvious that serious work needed to be done to rehabilitate these housing units or they were in need of demolition.

Excellent: New home, no rehabilitation needed

Good: Minor exterior work may be needed

Fair: Exterior rehabilitation work is necessary

Poor: Units should be demolished or abated

Figure 35 2005 Atlantic Housing Condition Inventory		
	Number of Units	Percentage
Excellent	167	5.8%
Good	2400	83.3%
Fair	226	7.8%
Poor	87	3.0%

Housing demand multiplier:

Because each household is different, it is difficult to predict how many new residents will be generated in a community because of a certain amount of new employment. Therefore, it is difficult to predict how many new housing units will be needed to meet the demand generated by new jobs. In order to make an approximate estimation of the number of new housing units necessary to meet the goal of 400 new jobs over the next 13 years, an average for similar southwest Iowa communities of 0.87 employed people per housing unit was used. This ratio was arrived at by looking at the number of housing units per employed person in Atlantic, Harlan, Red Oak, Shenandoah, Clarinda, and Creston in the 2000 Census.

When that ratio is applied to Atlantic, it amounts to about 350 new housing units over the next 13 years to meet the needs generated by new employment. Also, the 87 housing units listed as being in poor condition will need to be replaced.

Housing needs:

Replace Poor Condition Housing	100
New Worker Housing	$.87 \times 400 = 348$
Retirement Units	50
Total	498

Housing Types:

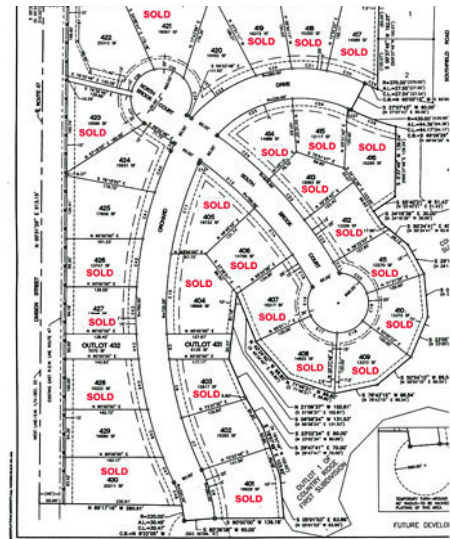
70% Owner Occupied: 348 units (27 a year)

30% Renter Occupied: 150 units (12 a year)

If Atlantic is to meet its goals for job, population, and housing growth, more land area is going to have to be prepared for housing. In-fill development—redevelopment of existing lots within platted areas—will be an important piece of this new development. The use of in-fill lots greatly reduces the infrastructure expense associated with development since in most cases utilities and streets are already in place. However, even though in-fill development should be encouraged to the fullest possible extent, new subdivisions will be necessary to meet the housing demand.

Figure 36 A Subdivision Layout

The land area necessary to support new housing growth will vary considerably with the density of the new development. Low density housing patterns are very expensive to maintain because more linear feet of pipe, street, cable, etc. is necessary to connect each house. Higher density housing patterns are less expensive to maintain, but are not always the most desirable properties to market. A balance between the two will need to be found in order to keep development costs down while still meeting the housing goals necessary to accommodate growth.



New employment will not be the only driving force behind housing demand. As the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age, there will be an increased demand for a wide range of retirement housing options. Studies suggest that the current generation of retirees wish to live at home as long as possible, and then if they become unable to do so, they are seeking out a wider range of assisted living facilities and nursing homes.

According to the U.S. Agency on Aging, in 2005 in America over half (54.8%) of the older noninstitutionalized population lived with their spouse in 2005. Approximately 10.9 million, or 71.7%, of older men, and 8.4 million or 42.0% of older women, lived with their spouse. The proportion living with their spouse decreased with age, especially for women. Only 30.2% of women 75+ years old lived with a spouse.

About 30.1% (10.6 million) of all noninstitutionalized older persons in 2005 lived alone (7.7 million women, 2.9 million men). They represented 38.4 of older women and 19.2% of older men. The proportion living alone increases with advanced age. Among women aged 75 and over, for example, half (47.7%) lived alone.

While a relatively small number (1.56 million) and percentage (4.5%) of the 65+

population lived in nursing homes in 2000, the percentage increases dramatically with age, ranging from 1.1% for persons 65-74 years to 4.7% for persons 75-84 years and 18.2% for persons 85+. In addition, approximately 5% of the elderly lived in self-described senior housing of various types, many of which have supportive services available to their residents.

Clearly, if Atlantic is to be a center for retirement, more housing options across the whole range from single family homes, duplexes, condos, apartments, assisted living homes, and nursing homes and hospice are necessary to serve the aging population.

GOAL: Have housing necessary for a growing population.

Sub-Goal	Objective	Implementers	Target Date
Increase options for first-time homebuyers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build homes in the \$120,000 to \$200,000 range. 	Private developers, Lenders, City of Atlantic.	Ongoing
Increase options for retirees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build more condominiums and independent living apartments. Increase the amount of assisted living housing, nursing and rehab housing. Develop housing options closer to services and social opportunities. 	Existing facilities, City of Atlantic, Private developers.	Ongoing
Increase options for those seeking higher-end homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop larger lot residential and homes in the \$200,000 + range. 	City of Atlantic, Private developers, lenders.	Ongoing
Increase options for those not wishing or able to purchase a house.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number and quality of rental housing units. 	S.I.R.H.A., Private developers	Ongoing
Develop and maintain the infrastructure needed for housing growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage in-fill development. Extend services where needed. 	City of Atlantic, Private developers.	Ongoing
Overall increase in housing capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 348 single family housing units and 150 renter occupied units. 	City of Atlantic, Private developers.	2020

GOAL: Expand recreational opportunities.

Atlantic is similar to many communities across Iowa and around the Midwest. There are good people, good schools, and an overall good quality of life. However, what differentiates many communities in their ability to retain and attract residents is recreation. Atlantic has some outstanding recreational facilities, including, but not limited to the Nishna Valley YMCA, Sunnyside Pool, two golf courses, and numerous parks. Even with these, planning participants made it clear that there is significant room for growth, particularly in terms of outdoor recreation.



Figure 37 Nishna Valley Family YMCA



Figure 38 T-Bone Trail

Outdoor recreation serves a number of purposes. One of these is economic development—outdoor recreational opportunities are attractive components that make a community stand out among a crowded field of competitors. Another purpose is to improve the physical and mental health of the community. Any physical activity tends to be good activity, and a healthier community tends to require less medical care and is more efficient. A third purpose of outdoor recreation is as an important gathering place for young people and recruitment tool for young families.

Trails were identified as an area that needs to be more developed in the future. The City of Atlantic has developed a trails plan, and that should be supported.

These trails should serve a variety of users and help connect various parts of the city. Likewise, separate all terrain vehicle (ATV) trails were identified by young people as a highly attractive amenity to them. Statistics on personal ATV ownership show that there has been a rapid expansion in ATV ownership and a ATV park could be an attractive asset if carefully sited and developed.

Likewise, there was a great emphasis on water recreation. The Schildberg Recreation Area, or quarry park, was identified as an area that needs to be continually developed, both as a gateway to the city and as a recreational opportunity. Limitations at the quarry site also prompted many planning participants to suggest alternative water attractions, such as a large, purpose built recreational lake or a series of smaller lakes surrounded by prairie. These options should be explored and further developed.

Atlantic is fortunate to be host of the Cass County Fairgrounds and several improvements to that site were mentioned during the planning process. These included building an outdoor amphitheater for events as well as renovating existing fairground buildings as well.

Although outdoor recreational opportunities were listed as a priority, indoor recreation was also identified as an area of need. High school students in particular wanted more recreational opportunities with more extended hours. Wireless internet, listed as an important economic development tool, was also identified as an important recreational plus. More venues that combine safe late night social options for young people with internet access should be encouraged. Likewise, seasonal outdoor seating and more smoke free eating and drinking options were identified as attractive community features that Atlantic should encourage more of.

The arts were also identified as an area that could be improved upon in Atlantic. Planning participants noted that there is a lack of venues for art performances and displays. The Old Armory building and the Depot Baggage Building were identified as locations that could be renovated to house arts programs. In general, more can be done to promote the arts and the arts should be given a higher profile in Atlantic.

GOAL: Expand recreational opportunities.

Sub-Goal	Objective	Implementers	Target Date
Increase recreational options for all ages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a coffee shop or similar business with extended hours and wireless internet access. • Increase outdoor seating at restaurants. • Encourage restaurants and bars to become smoke free. • Improve, update, and expand city parks. 	Chamber, Private businesses, City of Atlantic.	2010
Increase trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an intra-city trails system as well an inter-city trails system linked to regional trails. • Develop an ATV trail system. 	City of Atlantic, Cass County Board of Supervisors	2012
Increase water recreational options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the quarry park. • Develop a larger recreational lake or lakes near Atlantic. 	City of Atlantic, Cass County Board of Supervisors.	2010: Quarry 2020: Lake
Make improvements to the Cass County Fairgrounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an amphitheater for events. • Update Fair Ground buildings. 	Cass County Fair Board	2012
Develop more venues for the arts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start an arts council. • Utilize the space in the Armory for the arts. • Open an art gallery. 	Arts Supporters	2012

GOAL: Market Atlantic locally and beyond.

Atlantic residents have a lot to be proud of. Everything from a beautiful downtown to a first class hospital is packaged together in a way that most Americans would be envious of. Atlantic has so much to offer to residents and visitors alike that it is hard to know where to begin when telling the story of Atlantic. However, no amount of community improvement or economic development will ever reach its full potential if people don't know about it.

Therefore, it is vitally important that marketing be seen as an integral part of all projects that stem from Vision 2020. Time, energy, and funding must be directed toward sending the message that Atlantic is a great place to live. Funding is a big concern of any project. However, in the case of marketing Atlantic a ready option is available to help pay for that need—a hotel/motel tax. A hotel/motel tax is a very common mechanism for raising funds for community promotion and would raise funds from visitors to the community, rather than raising local taxes. Under state law communities that do not have a hotel/motel tax do not receive

local option sales tax from revenue generated at their lodging facilities, so a hotel/motel tax would recoup this tax money that is currently being lost at area hotels.

With additional resources more energy can be focused on spreading the good word about Atlantic, but this message must also be better coordinated to be effective. Numerous groups in Atlantic currently serve marketing roles for the community. In the future, a conventions and visitors bureau would be able to coordinate all those functions under one roof, ensuring a consistent, dedicated marketing strategy that will be more cost effective and productive in the long run.



Figure 39 Atlantic Marquee

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GOAL: Market locally and beyond.

Sub-Goal	Objective	Implementers	Target Date
Draw former residents back to the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directly market to alumni and former residents and educate them to the benefits of returning to Atlantic. 	Chamber, CADCO	2008
Market Atlantic externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a visitors and conventions bureau with an events coordinator. Improve local websites. Adopt a hotel/motel tax. 	Chamber, CADCO, City of Atlantic, CPC.	2009.
Market Atlantic internally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve local websites. Increase local promotions such as +5 Atlantic. 	Chamber, CADCO, City of Atlantic, CPC.	2009
Strengthen the Atlantic brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase tourism options in the city and market those accordingly. 	Chamber, CADCO,	2009

GOAL: Welcome more people.

As Atlantic continues to improve its marketing to new residents and visitors and other efforts encourage more new people to try Atlantic, the city must be prepared to welcome these new residents and guests in ways that ensure that they will either encourage others to live here or will return with their friends, as the case may be. It is very important, therefore, that Atlantic be both a welcoming place and tourist friendly.

One of the keys to being able to welcome more people is that more lodging space must be available so that they will extend their stay in Atlantic. Currently, Atlantic is limited in the size of conventions and groups that it can accommodate because lodging space is at a premium. More lodging rooms need to be added—either through the addition of conventional hotels and motels or through innovative ways such as new bed and breakfast inns, or as one planning participant suggested, more second floor lodging space in the downtown area.

Figure 40 Atlantic Entryway Sign



Once more lodging space is added more conventions and tourists can be accommodated. These individuals will of course need things to do and reasons to come to Atlantic. More work should be done to increase and coordinate options for tourists within the city and in the adjacent area. Packages should be developed and marketed that combine activities, such as touring farms, hunting, fishing, or golfing with restaurants, shopping, and overnight stays. In that way more of the visitors' dollars stay in Atlantic when they come to the area.

In addition to accommodating the needs of visitors, more should be invested in welcoming new residents as well as welcoming new people into leadership positions. This leadership education should begin in the schools. Young people should be given the opportunity to experience leadership positions both in the schools and in the community at large. Employers should be encouraged to become active in school programs and develop mentorship programs that will build bridges for students from their academic studies to future employment.

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It is often difficult for young people, particularly those with young families, to volunteer outside the home or fill leadership positions, simply because of the amount of time involved. Employers should be encouraged to identify leaders from within their organizations and give them time to participate in community functions.

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GOAL: Welcome more people.

Sub-Goal	Objective	Implementers	Target Date
Expand welcome programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the participation in the welcome basket program, both in the terms of the number of newcomers welcomed and in the number of services and businesses promoted. • Develop a new business welcome kit. • Encourage new member programs at area churches. 	Chamber, CADCO, Local Churches	2008
Develop New Leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite young people to participate in leadership positions. • Mentor young people to become better, more active citizens and members of the business community. • Start an employee leadership program. 	Private Businesses, CADCO, Chamber, Service Groups	2009
Encourage conventions and group travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start a conventions and visitors bureau • Continue to improve the community center. 	CADCO, Chamber, Cass County Community Center	2009
Increase tourism options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couple hunting/fishing/golfing packages with overnight stays. • Develop a year round Coca-Cola museum. • Expand farm tours and agro- 	Private Businesses, Chamber, CADCO	2010

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	tourism.		
Increase the number and quality of recurring festivals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to improve and expand the winter holiday events and attractions.• Increase the number of events throughout the year.	Chamber, Service Groups.	2010
Increase lodging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Double the number of hotel/motel/bed and breakfast rooms available.	Private business, Lenders, Chamber, CADCO, City of Atlantic	2015

GOAL: Have a high standard of living.



A major asset for Atlantic that was identified in every planning session was the high quality of life. This high standard of living is reflected in the low crime rate, non-existent traffic, great health care, excellent schools, and a host of other benefits. The quality of life in the community is the cumulative effect of all the other goals as well as many unique things that may not

be covered by other areas of emphasis.

Atlantic's population, like much of the Midwest, is growing older. Atlantic needs to be prepared to offer a wide range of services catering to its retired population, or risk losing that population to other areas. Likewise, as economic development programs increase the younger working population, the community must be prepared to provide services to young families. Both groups require a broad range of healthcare, educational, and social services.

Retirees require not only the housing mentioned in the housing goals, but also recreational social opportunities and opportunities to volunteer. Today's retirees tend to be much more active in their retirement than in years past and many will choose to play an active role in the community. Special consideration needs to be made, in terms of accessibility, scheduling, and other factors, so as to better accommodate the needs of these active seniors, which will help to keep them in the community.



Young families will also play a pivotal role in the future of Atlantic. According to the US Census, in the majority of young families all of the parents in the household work outside of the home. This provides unique challenges to today's young families, especially in terms of early childhood development. If Atlantic is to thrive, attract new people, and have a high standard of living, there must be early childhood development options available to meet the needs of young families.

Also, one key indicator of the quality of life in an area and the standard of living is how well the community is maintained. Atlantic is fortunate to have a number of beautiful neighborhoods and an attractive downtown. More can be done, however, to beautify the community and increase the amount of pride felt by residents in their city.

Neighborhoods should be encouraged to have events that will bring residents together to help beautify and improve their streets, homes, and businesses.



Another important component of the standard of living are the many community events and festivals that fill the community calendar. Atlantic has done a good job of holding a wide range of events, however, there are particular times of the year, such as in the spring, that have fewer events than others and events should be encouraged during those times.

GOAL: Have a high standard of living.

Sub-Goal	Objectives	Implementers	Target Date
Beautify the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a neighborhood improvement program throughout the city. 	City of Atlantic, Chamber.	2009
Increase services for young families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build an early childhood development center and link families and service providers with it. 	Atlantic schools, Head Start, child-care and pre-school providers.	2012
Increase social events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase special events/promotions, particularly during slow times of the year, such as January through May. 	Social Clubs, Chamber, Private Businesses.	Ongoing
Expand Atlantic's role as a retirement center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase public transportation resources. Increase health care options. Incorporate senior friendly designs into new projects. Consolidate services into easy to access facilities. Develop social opportunities for seniors, expand life long learning options. 	City of Atlantic, Private Businesses, Social Clubs, SWITA, CCMH, IWCC	Ongoing
Improve the health of the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Cass County Memorial Hospitals long range plan. Support the YMCA's long range plan. 	YMCA, CCMH, CADCO, City of Atlantic	Ongoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage the use of healthy, locally produced foods.		
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GOAL: Educate citizens for the future.



Any efforts at improving the community will be wasted if Atlantic is not preparing its citizens with the skills necessary for the future. As technologies and trends change, the population of Atlantic must be ahead of the curve in their adoption and implementation in order to remain competitive.

Higher quality jobs demand increased levels of knowledge and skill. A four year degree is the avenue by which many individuals will acquire that knowledge and skill. However, a traditional four year degree may not be what is best suited to all students, or meet the needs of employers. There is a high demand for individuals with skilled trades—such as carpenters, welders, plumbers, etc.—as well as for individuals with design and technology skills. Atlantic should lead the way in linking students with local employers through skilled trades training programs. In that way, the demands of local employers are met locally, and young people are shown that their skills are in high demand within the community, reducing the likelihood that they will leave for other opportunities.

Increased educational opportunities also require increased coordination between providers and students in order to be effective. It should not be difficult for students, teachers, and employers to build connections. Educational services should be coordinated in such as way that there is a one stop shop—either physical or virtual—for individuals to get connected with the educational services that they need.



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GOAL: Educate citizens for the future.

Sub-Goal	Objective	Implementers	Target Date
Increase coordination of educational services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link individuals with the appropriate educational services to meet their life long learning needs. 	Atlantic Schools, IWCC, other colleges and universities.	Ongoing
Expand degree programs in Atlantic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of programs that allow students to complete degrees while staying in the area. Link those degrees to local employment opportunities. 	Atlantic Schools, IWCC, other colleges and universities.	Ongoing
Meet the demand of current and future employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the manufacturing, building, and design trades training. Expand the information technology curriculum. Expand the healthcare curriculum. 	Employers, CADCO, Atlantic Schools, IWCC, other colleges and universities.	Ongoing