



Town of Johnstown

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION STAFF ANALYSIS REPORT

ITEM:	Public Hearing and Consideration of Final Draft of the <i>2021 Johnstown Area Comprehensive Plan</i>
DESCRIPTION:	<i>2021 Johnstown Area Comprehensive Plan</i> is a complete update to all sections of the current plan document (2006).
LOCATION:	Town-wide and applies to the Growth Management Area (GMA)
APPLICANT:	Town of Johnstown – Planning & Development Department
STAFF:	Kim Meyer, Director
HEARING DATE:	October 13, 2021

ATTACHMENTS

1. [Final Public Draft 2021 Johnstown Area Comprehensive Plan](#)
2. Logan Simpson 9-27-21 Presentation of Overview of the Plan

PROJECT SUMMARY

With the significant growth the Town has experienced in both commercial and residential land uses, extensive floods that occurred in 2013 and shifted the regulatory floodplains for major rivers, and some significant transportation planning actions in recent years, the Town chose to embark on a full update to the Johnstown Area Comprehensive Plan in Spring of 2020, with Logan Simpson used as the Town's consultant to assist the Town with this update. The onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic modified the project's timelines and community engagement plans. Through a variety of social media and digital outreach campaigns, 1238 community responses were received on-line, as well as information and perspectives gathered from more focused stakeholder interviews conducted via remote online meetings.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN HISTORY

The Town of Johnstown appears to have started its foray into master / comprehensive planning in 1981 with the initial adoption of the Master Land Use Plan; at the time Johnstown encompassed approximately 2,184 acres, about 3.41 square miles. The planning area for growth included residential extending east from just east of Telep Ave, another quarter section – to where Rolling Hills Ranch sits today; north along WCR 50 (Veterans Parkway); south to about the RR tracks south of Hwy 60, and following the Little Thompson River; and heavy industrial uses filling in east to the Central Waste Water Treatment Plant.

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A 1998 update followed, noting about 2500 residents at that time, and where the Town's planning area expanded greatly to "60 sections" of land, equal to 60 square miles – from north to US 34, west to WCR 7, south to WCR 38, with the east boundary generally along WCR 19, but extending to Hwy 257 in the north – an area that extends farther than the current ~48 Square mile "Growth Management Area" (GMA).

For the 2001 update, the estimated current population was approximately 3,800 residents (2000); with projections up to 10,000 by 2020. The Land Use Map starts to look more like the map being considered with the 2021 update, with a higher level of intensity and density at major corners and transportation corridors – using more traditional "commercial," and "residential" designations, but with a seemingly similar intent. With the 2006 Comprehensive Plan update, the Town starts to address recent growth pressures and considers such factors as process predictability, flexibility, land use balance and self-sufficiency. Reporting 8,900 residents, the 2006 plan projects the population to expand to 14,000 by 2015. The Land Use Framework Plan starts to acknowledge competing planning and development interests for land between neighboring municipalities, and pulls the GMA back to its near-current boundary.

PUBLICATION & AWARENESS

This project has experienced significant visibility on the Town's website and social media platforms, and has been able to engage a relatively large number of resident and businesses in the community. A Discussion Draft was available online from mid-November of 2020 through May of 2021, when significant revisions and updates were made. The Final Draft has been republished online – with the ability to comment directly on that link – since mid-September 2021; as well as included on the Town website, social media, and the newsletter. Notification of the public hearings for Planning & Zoning Commission and Town Council were published in the Johnstown Breeze on October 7th.

THE PROCESS

The Planning & Development Staff were actively involved in all aspects of this update and process, and feel that the proposed plan accurately reflects the sentiments shared through the extensive outreach efforts.

The Steering Committee was comprised of the Planning & Zoning Commission members, Councilwomen Amy Tallent, to provide a Council perspective, and Alex Sauer, as an Ag/Rural representative with deep roots in the community. Stakeholders interviewed included HOA representatives, staff from neighboring municipalities and counties, Downtown business representatives, and a youth perspective offered by several students of Roosevelt High School. Key town staff from the Town Manager's office, Public Works, and Communications also played key roles in helping craft the implementation strategies and ensuring a broad perspective overall.

OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN

The proposed Plan took into account the recent Mission, Vision, and Values discussion from Town Council and built on that foundation. From the public input received, some very consistent points emerged, leading the Plan to establish the primary themes of Johnstown being: Resilient, Vibrant, and Connected.

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From this place, primary goals – 12 of them – and nearly 60 actionable “implementation strategies” were developed to specifically identify and target tasks that would start to move Johnstown towards realization of these ideals. Those strategies were broken down into sections that then influence:

- Where we Live
- Where we Work & Shop
- Where we Play
- How we Move
- How we Serve



The most impactful change may be moving away from directing specific land uses to specific areas, to acknowledging that much of the development Johnstown has to date, and is working to implement in the near future, involves a wider mix and meshing of land uses. Higher density residential areas adjacent to commercial areas and/or as a buffer between commercial and a lower density residential neighborhood; a desire for neighborhood goods and services closer to developing and existing residential neighborhoods for convenience and to lessen the need to drive, out of the way or at all, to grab essentials. Areas begin to be described as High to Very Low “Density / Intensity Areas” and discussion of high level characteristics related to the type of uses or densities one might expect to find there. There is also a hatch identifying where some prime agricultural lands may exist for future preservation action. The intent is to avoid the “line” between one use and another, and the need to amend the Lane Use Map as users/uses become known within a development – creating a more fluid and flexible approach to land use planning.

The Plan identifies and highlights the importance of agriculture to the area and to the cultural heritage of Johnstown, and identifies some initial strategies that might begin to actively address how this interaction may function, and that value be protected, over time.

The Implementation Strategies section is a restatement of strategies identified earlier in the Plan, in one place, with “Champions” and Partners identified to start creating an action plan for implementation of the Plan’s policies and overall guidance. The intent is to create a workbook like section that can be written in, updated with regular accountability reviews, modified on an annual or bi-annual basis based on priorities and resources, and otherwise used as a quick “go-to” guide for “what do we do next?”

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Zoning Commission is tasked, by JMC §2-186, with preparing a master plan, holding a public hearing, and – once approved by the Commission – refer the plan to the Town Council for Adoption by Council Resolution.

Given the Commission’s involved role in the Steering Committee that prepared this plan, the data and guidance provided by the consultants, and the public comments received to date, Staff believes this plan is an honest reflection of the comments and concerns of all parties involved in the process and should be Approved by the Commission, with a recommendation for Adoption to the Town Council.

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RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the Planning & Zoning Commission approve this 2021 Johnstown Area Comprehensive Plan, and refer this plan to the Town Council for Adoption.

Planner:



Kim Meyer, Planning & Development Director