

IMAGINE  
ST. JOSEPH  
2040





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# IMAGINE ST. JOSEPH 2040

## A BRIGHT FUTURE

Since April 2018, Imagine St. Joseph 2040 – launched by the St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce and the United Way of Greater St. Joseph – has engaged more than 1,000 residents who've donated almost 2,000 hours to help our community identify its most critical trends and plausible futures.

The outcome of this effort has led us to a plan with the focus of **Invest in People, Create a Better Place** and **Grow Prosperity**.

The plan itself is action oriented, builds on our community's strong history of working together and aligns us around ambitious, yet achievable goals that will make St. Joseph a place that people want to be a part of.

## Invest in People

Our greatest return-on-investment comes from investing in our people. Ensuring that all children are ready to learn, as well as investing in state-of-the-art K-16 education, will cultivate a dynamic next-generation workforce. Providing two-year degrees and certificate programs, as well as four-year and graduate degrees, will enable current and future workers to retool and be prepared for new economy jobs. We will face poverty head-on by addressing the root causes, not just the symptoms. Whether it's the issue of poverty, mental health or addiction, we will make sure resources and systems are in place that encourage all residents to reach their full potential. Investing in people now, will reap benefits in our future.

## Create a Better Place

In great cities, visitors and residents feel “there’s something exciting going on.” Filling our downtown storefronts, connecting downtown to the riverfront, creating green space and meeting space for festivals and conferences, attracting visitors and residents to a place that defines the heart of St. Joseph. It also means taking pride in what we have, restoring the grandeur of our older neighborhoods, keeping people safe and being willing to invest in new infrastructure and amenities that create a place that attracts and retains people. We will create a place where people choose to be and want to stay.

## Grow Prosperity

Successful cities are prosperous. Residents enjoy a quality of life that comes with good paying jobs and meaningful careers. Prosperity does not just happen, it takes collaboration and leadership. It takes the belief that we can make a difference and that each of us is part of something bigger than ourselves. Vision, leadership and focus will lead us to a prosperous future, but only if we are willing to be better and constantly innovate.

# OUR PREFERRED FUTURE

It's 2040 and St. Joseph has emerged as one of the Midwest's most exciting communities. We attract young families with award-winning schools, affordable cost of living and quality amenities. Young professionals and entrepreneurs appreciate St. Joseph's dynamic blend of unique history, interesting people and inspiring places. We retain residents too; our children and our grandchildren find value and opportunity in St. Joseph and want to stay and be part of the future. And to underscore our affordable cost of living, nationally-recognized health care and quality of life, St. Joseph is considered one of the best communities in the Midwest for retirees.

St. Joseph attracts visitors, from Kansas City, Omaha, Des Moines, and beyond. Our guests come to stroll our downtown shops and galleries, play along our riverfront, enjoy entertainment at our unique venues, enjoy our Parkway System and participate in our diverse festivals. They relish in the historic architecture and enjoy our uncommon amenities that truly sets St. Joseph apart.

Despite our growth – St. Joseph eclipsed the 100,000 population mark a few years back – the community still has that thing that everyone was talking about back in 2018, Uncommon Character. We still have rabble rousers who keep us honest and test our mettle, but we also have that “special something” that everyone wants in a community, a sense of belonging. Whether you're a townie who has lived in St. Joseph most of your life, or a transplant looking to make your mark in one of our high-tech manufacturing companies or simply looking for the best place to raise a family, St. Joseph's spirit of inclusion, entrepreneurship and collaboration is everywhere. Wherever you are in St. Joseph, or whoever you are, you are a part of something special. In St. Joseph, everyone belongs, and everyone makes a difference.

It's 2040. St. Joseph has become that place that people are attracted to, want to be a part of and choose to stay.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

To reach our future vision, we must be forward-looking and ambitious. This future is possible. To effectively execute the strategy, we must begin by investing in our people, making meaningful efforts to make our community better, and be a place that attracts people and business, leading to greater prosperity. But it is also a place that holds each other – new leaders, established leaders, and those with great ideas – accountable for attacking big issues with vision, determination and ambition. The following path to our future will set the course for success and enable us to meet whatever headwinds come our way.

# INVEST IN PEOPLE

It's 2040 and St. Joseph has the top-rated school system in Missouri and the highest concentration of skilled workers with post-high school training in the state. When you visit our early childhood centers you see children not only getting an academic head start but working together and solving problems. Missouri Western State University is an internationally-recognized institution focusing on future-shaping programs related to population health and biotechnology, attracting students from around the world. The percentage of families living in poverty has been sliced in half because St. Joseph has addressed access to basic needs like transportation, food and safe housing and placed health care specialists in the field to help those who need help, and hope. In St. Joseph, we don't just say "everyone belongs," we live it by ensuring that those on the margins who need the most help get it in the most innovative ways possible.

## 2040 GOALS

By 2040, our reputation as a community that values and invests in education helps all people connect to resources for a better future. It creates a quality of life that residents and visitors alike embrace, making St. Joseph a place where people want to live:

- St. Joseph realizes that ensuring all children have access to early learning activities is the key to a successful educational system. Working with business, educators and social service agencies, the community adopts a program that offers all children an opportunity for early learning and discovery.
- Our award-winning public and private schools focus on career-based skills, post-secondary preparation and alignment with current and future jobs. The program builds on the future approach of incorporating stackable credentials beginning in high school and through post-secondary education.
- St. Joseph creates a culture that values education at all levels and accepts responsibility of ensuring all students are prepared for success. This begins with the importance of regular school attendance and continues with the understanding that all high school freshmen complete their senior year and graduate with at least 10 career experiences. Students are prepared and ready to continue post-secondary training and education. The result is that St. Joseph has the highest rate of educational attainment in Missouri.
- The community understands the importance of investing in local education and builds a case to fund the local School District at levels that create innovative learning environments and provide instructional resources that lead to awarding-winning schools.

- Our public, private and nonprofit sectors are recognized nationally for their success in collaboratively addressing poverty. Focus includes both generational poverty and situational poverty. Agencies work together on shared goals, shared metrics, and shared accountability, resulting in our poverty rate being cut in half.
- MWSU focuses on community involvement and engagement, leading St. Joseph to be considered a "university town" and providing an environment that inspires innovation and attracts sought-after talent.
- St. Joseph has one of the top hospitals and medical practices in the country in Mosaic Life Care. Ensuring that Mosaic can attract and retain a quality workforce is a community priority. The community working with Mosaic identifies issues related to educational programs, talent attraction and quality of life amenities that serve to attract and retain the best and brightest in the medical profession to St. Joseph. Mosaic Life Care is considered a top hospital in the country.
- Working with our local health care providers, the community creates an early intervention program for those individuals challenged with mental health issues and addiction. The program is designed to offer individuals and families support that leads to self-sufficiency and stability.
- Learning from other communities, St. Joseph develops worker training and housing programs aimed at those experiencing homelessness, addressing both the short- and long-term causes.
- Career readiness requires a robust education continuum that includes primary/secondary education and two and four year degrees. St. Joseph creates this continuum through public and private investment and collaboration with our local educational partners.
- Local health care providers, the faith-based community and the private sector engage the elderly population to understand challenges and needs and establish programs that allow this growing population to access services and assistance. This allows the elderly to maintain an independent lifestyle in a supportive community environment.

### What “positive disruptions” would increase our performance in this area?

- An anonymous donor or group of donors creates a scholarship program that provides funding of training and education beyond high school. Modeled after the Kalamazoo Promise, the program provides full tuition for post-secondary education for any graduate of St. Joseph high schools.
- A coalition of investors, local developers, and planners work together with the City to address access issues associated with grocery stores, safe and affordable housing and to offer better access to jobs for residents who have transportation challenges.
- The community approves a multi-million dollar bond issue to provide the resources to update educational infrastructure in St. Joseph.
- The School District, in partnership with MCC and MWSU creates a post-secondary campus at Hillyard Technical Center to include a new building that provides further instruction and training.
- The community receives a federal grant that provides the resources to implement a new model of addressing mental health and addiction needs in St. Joseph.

# CREATE A BETTER PLACE

It's 2040 and St. Joseph's downtown is teeming with shops, activities, and the arts. Known as "one of the best downtowns in America," St. Joseph's downtown boutique hotels and conference space fill with visitors who come to enjoy its historic charm, ease, and hospitality. Visitors and residents alike walk or bike along the Parkway System that connects the community to downtown and the Missouri River Commons, a development that emerged along the riverfront and showcases locally-owned food trucks, intimate outdoor performance venues, and a park where children – and the young at heart – can play. St. Joseph's neighborhoods and its housing are well maintained, attracting new families and new urban homesteaders willing to invest and improve our historic homes and older neighborhoods. Crime has been reduced as the community has come together to address the issues that lead to crime and provide resources to combat criminal activity. The community honors its history by investing in new infrastructure that is both beautiful and inspiring, whether that's architecturally-inspired boulevards and bridges or public art and greenspaces that encourage public gatherings. St. Joseph has become a place that residents want to stay, and others choose to move to.

## 2040 GOALS

By 2040, St. Joseph's quality of life will be known throughout the Midwest because the community focused on the following goals realizing to grow and prosper we must be better:

- St. Joseph's residents are connected to their community through strong neighborhood associations that meet regularly, define neighborhood improvement projects and needs, and ensure that residents feel engaged in their local government. Neighborhood groups are credited with working with local police to lower the city's crime rate and St. Joseph achieves the rank of "top 10 safest cities" in America.
- Our public transit system is agile, efficient and responsive. Residents and visitors easily move among downtown, local attractions, residential areas, and retail.
- St. Joseph's hotel/motel tax, fueled by increasing tourism, generates additional revenue, which is reinvested into further infrastructure and development of the Parkway System and riverfront.
- The community's entertainment venues like the Krug Park Amphitheater are refreshed and reinvented to support St. Joseph's existing arts and entertainment, and a new generation of entertainment venues are created, expanding arts and cultural amenities enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

- The Chamber, Convention and Visitors Bureau and Downtown interests work together on a dynamic and ambitious plan to attract visitors and private sector investment, such as restaurants and retail to downtown St. Joseph, providing a destination for visitors and residents.
- As part of a newly-created downtown Arts District, an artist incubator is created in collaboration with MWSU, offering teaching venues and gallery space for local artists and attracting artists from across the country to teach and take advantage of St. Joseph's Artist-in-Residence Program.
- The City, with its abundance of outdoor and recreational amenities, pursues initiatives that enhance and expand these amenities, becoming a nationally-recognized destination for outdoor enthusiasts and various sports tournaments.
- The City pursues residential housing regulations along with capital investment and development incentives as part of an overall strategy to bring back St. Joseph's older neighborhoods. The effort stimulates private investment leading to redevelopment and overall improvement of the community's housing stock. The result is that the older neighborhoods are the most sought after by young couples and families moving to St. Joseph.
- To address trash and litter, the City adopts a comprehensive solid waste collection program that includes curbside residential recycling.

### What “positive disruptions” would increase our performance in this strategy?

- The decommissioning of Interstate 229 and the vision of City leaders to use the riverfront for one of the most historic and exciting greenspace developments in Missouri – the new Missouri River Commons.
- A light-rail system connecting Kansas City and St. Joseph is built as a first phase that will ultimately also connect Omaha. This creates the first mega-region in the Midwest.
- Voters approve a general obligation bond to fund enhanced community amenities and residential infrastructure improvements.
- The City agrees to invest 1 percent of all new infrastructure spending for public art, and beautification, to ensure that all new infrastructure is both functional and inspiring.
- The City connects the Parkway System to downtown and extends it to the new riverfront development.
- The City, as part of its Capital Improvement Program, builds a multi-million dollar Youth Sports Complex attracting tournaments and teams throughout the Midwest.
- A new boutique hotel is developed downtown.
- A new conference and meeting facility is constructed that allows the community to pursue small conventions and association meetings.
- A Land Bank and Redevelopment Authority is created to address blight and stimulate new investment in the older neighborhoods of St. Joseph.

# GROW PROSPERITY

It's 2040 and St. Joseph's economy is thriving. We've become well-known for our pre-K-16 focus, public/private education collaboration and entrepreneurship. Starting in middle school, students start dozens of digital businesses, selling everything from tutoring services to robotics. Several new businesses have grown up in St. Joseph, a result of dynamic partnerships between established businesses and high-tech agriculture. The community has become known as the center of new agriculture-based technology that is creating new inventions in crop science and food production, attracting new industry to St. Joseph. But growing prosperity is more than just economic growth and personal incomes, it is also about the quality of local civic leadership that provides the foundation for collaboration, engagement and inclusiveness. Without strong leadership there can be no prosperous and successful community. If we are to be prosperous in our future, it must start with strong leadership at all levels.

## 2040 GOALS

By 2040, St. Joseph's economy reflects its agricultural and manufacturing roots, but has transformed itself by taking advantage of a growing need for skilled and high-tech workers. This has allowed existing companies to be successful, while also attracting new companies that seek a skilled workforce and a community that allows them to successfully compete in the global marketplace.

- St. Joseph's economic development efforts are not only defined by our existing businesses but what new business opportunities can be created by attracting and growing talent.
- The local business community establishes a mentoring program that benefits young entrepreneurs. This leads to a collaboration between businesses and education and the growth of new business opportunities.
- Innovations in agribusiness are pursued through a strategy that engages local business, area educational resources and an investment by the community to provide the talent and facilities to grow high-tech agriculture in St. Joseph.
- Local private investments, such as angel funds, seed capital and venture capital funds, act as a catalyst to grow and attract start-up companies. This becomes a primary generator of thousands of new, high-wage jobs.
- St. Joseph strategically invests in its infrastructure that complements city planning to create opportunities for business attraction.
- To leverage its location and access to talent, as well as other amenities, the City and County develop a regional (Kansas City & Northwest Missouri) growth strategy that includes cooperation with economic development projects, infrastructure and talent attraction.

- The community creates a neighborhood leadership program providing assistance with training and education that encourages neighborhood associations and citizen engagement.
- A nationally-recognized student leadership program is offered to high school students. The one-year class offers theory and practical lessons on leadership and civic engagement and culminates in a capstone project that engages the public in one of the goals of Imagine St. Joseph 2040.
- A leadership and training program is developed by the not-for-profit community to provide individuals who are prepared and ready to take positions on various boards and committees. The City and most other agencies require this training before someone is qualified to serve.
- An “entrepreneur-in-residence” program is created, which offers a stipend, housing in one of St. Joseph’s historic mansions, and seed funding. Entrepreneurs are selected through a competitive startup pitch contest available to entrepreneurs from Missouri and neighboring states.
- The Chamber and United Way create an annual speakers series, attracting national thought leaders to address issues associated with Imagine St. Joseph 2040 and civic leadership.

### What “positive disruptions” would increase our performance in this strategy?

- High school curriculum includes a requirement that all students receive business start-up training and coaching.
- An ag-based venture capital fund starts up and is headquartered in St. Joseph.
- The USDA builds a high-tech agricultural research facility in St. Joseph.
- Missouri revises its economic development incentives to focus support for early stage companies and increase job training funding for high-tech, skilled jobs and reward investment in new technology.
- A Civic Council is established representing all the neighborhood associations in St. Joseph. The Civic Council becomes the focus of volunteerism, civic engagement, and leadership development. It becomes a new model for civic governance in the U.S.
- The City constructs a new eastside wastewater treatment facility allowing further residential and commercial development to the east beyond the Platte River.
- The city charter is revised providing term limits for the Mayor and City Council, providing opportunities for new leaders to seek and hold public office.
- The Department of Defense identifies the 139th Airlift Wing as a Center of Excellence for air mobility research and innovation, adding investment and personnel, but also attracting new private sector contractors to St. Joseph to conduct research and collaborate with the Air Guard.

# PARTNERSHIPS & LEVERAGE

St. Joseph's history has always been about making the most of the conditions that surrounded us – about being opportunistic and hard working.

This plan was fueled by that same spirit of being persistent, determined and willing to face our challenges together. We know that prosperity tends to flow to places that stand out, are unique and that people want to be a part of. That means we must commit ourselves to pursuing a better community.

Today, we have new opportunities – Kansas City, Omaha and Des Moines are all expected to grow to a million or more people by 2030 and we continue to occupy an important and critical role in the Midwest's – and the world's – agribusiness, manufacturing and animal health sectors.

But the rules are also different this time around. It's harder to go it alone. We need each other. That's why when we talk about prosperity and success we talk about leadership, collaboration and inclusion. It begins with all of us coming together, to share our vision, to clear new ground and create our own opportunities. Whether it's venture capital agribusiness startups, residents who are willing to invest in the future of St. Joseph's students or a new urban homesteader investing in an older neighborhood and restoring a historic home, each in their own way are investing in our people and re-creating a vibrant community.

Our history is clear: when the people of St. Joseph have an opportunity, we seize it. What will St. Joseph be in 2040? It depends on us. It depends on you. What will you do to make St. Joseph better place?

# PRINCIPLES

The principles noted below serve as a guide to Imagine St. Joseph 2040. They will serve to inspire our work and provide focus to our goals. Agreeing to these principles gives us the flexibility in our tactics, while ensuring we're faithful to the vision.

## Principle 1: Future Facing

Rationale: When choosing which opportunities to pursue, we will ask, "How does this align with our vision for Invest in People, Create a Better Place and Grow Prosperity"? We can do many things, but we must choose to do things that will have the most impact toward our vision.

## Principle 2: Grow the pie, don't cut the pie

Rationale: Successful cities prioritize the best interests of the community over any individual or entity. The principle is to grow the pie (unite) rather than cut the pie (divide).

## Principle 3: Powerful partnerships

Rationale: Our future is dependent on working beyond silos. Imagine St. Joseph 2040, was born out of a unique partnership between the St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce and United Way of Greater St. Joseph. New and unconventional partnerships – working in new ways – will be required to bring this vision to life.

## Principle 4: Every life is of equal value

Rationale: St. Joseph's future requires each person reaching his or her full potential. This is why we want to end generational poverty, improve our educational outcomes, raise the standard of living for all and promote inclusion in St. Joseph.

## Principle 5: Experimentation and readiness

Rationale: If we want different results, we must take risks, prototype quickly, and work in new ways with different partners. We must be the change we want to see throughout our community and be prepared to take decisive action when opportunity presents itself.

