

2018

# GOAL SETTING

City of North Liberty, Iowa

Facilitated by: Jeff Schott  
Institute of Public Affairs  
University of Iowa



NORTH LIBERTY CITY HALL  
3 QUAIL CREEK CIRCLE  
NORTH LIBERTY, IOWA 52317

319-626-5700



**DEPARTMENT HEADS**

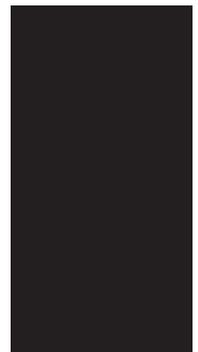
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- City Administrator Ryan Heiar**
- Assistant City Administrator Tracey Mulcahey**
- Building Official Tom Palmer**
- City Attorney Scott Peterson**
- Communications Director Nick Bergus**
- Fire Chief Brian Platz**
- Human Resources Director Debra Hilton**
- Library Director Jennie Garner**
- Parks, Buildings & Grounds Director Guy Goldsmith**
- Planning Director Dean Wheatley**
- Police Chief Diane Venenga**
- Streets Superintendent Michael Pentecost**
- Waste Water Superintendent Drew Lammers**
- Water Superintendent Greg Metternich**

**ELECTED OFFICIALS**

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- Mayor Terry Donahue**
- Councilor Jennifer Goings**
- Councilor Chris Hoffman**
- Councilor Sarah Madsen**
- Councilor Annie Pollock**
- Councilor Jim Sayre**



**Contents**

3 INTRODUCTION  
 6 ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
 25 ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES  
 33 ONGOING COMMITMENTS & NEW PRIORITIES  
 39 FINAL COMMENTS  
 41 APPENDIX A

**Goal Setting Work Sessions**

The City of North Liberty requested staff from the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) to assist the City with goal setting. IPA agreed to organize and facilitate a process that involved the following steps:

1. Prepare a questionnaire to identify recent accomplishments, issues/trends/concerns, potential new initiatives/programs/policies, and suggestions to improve organizational effectiveness;
2. Conduct a preliminary session with department heads;
3. Conduct a goal-setting session with elected officials; and
4. Prepare a final report.

City elected officials held a goal setting work session conducted by the IPA on Thursday, January 25, 2018. In attendance and participating at this meeting were Mayor Terry Donahue and City Council Members Jennifer Going, Chris Hoffman, Sarah Madsen, Annie Pollock, and Jim Sayre. Also in attendance and participating in this session were City Administrator Ryan Heiar and Special Projects Coordinator Angela McConville.

Prior to the council's goal setting session,

a preliminary session with department heads was held on January 10, 2018. In attendance and participating in this session were City Administrator Ryan Heiar, Assistant City Administrator Tracey Mulcahey, Human Resource Director Debra Hilton, Communications Director Nick Bergus, Building Official Tom Palmer, City Attorney Scott Peterson, Library Director Jennie Garner, Police Chief Diane Venenga, Planning Director Dean Wheatley, Water Superintendent Greg Metternich, Parks Director Guy Goldsmith, Recreation Director Shelly Simpson, Street Superintendent Mike Pentecost, Special Projects Coordinator Angela McConville, and Fire Chief Brian Platz.

This document was adopted by the North Liberty City Council via resolution on February 27, 2018.

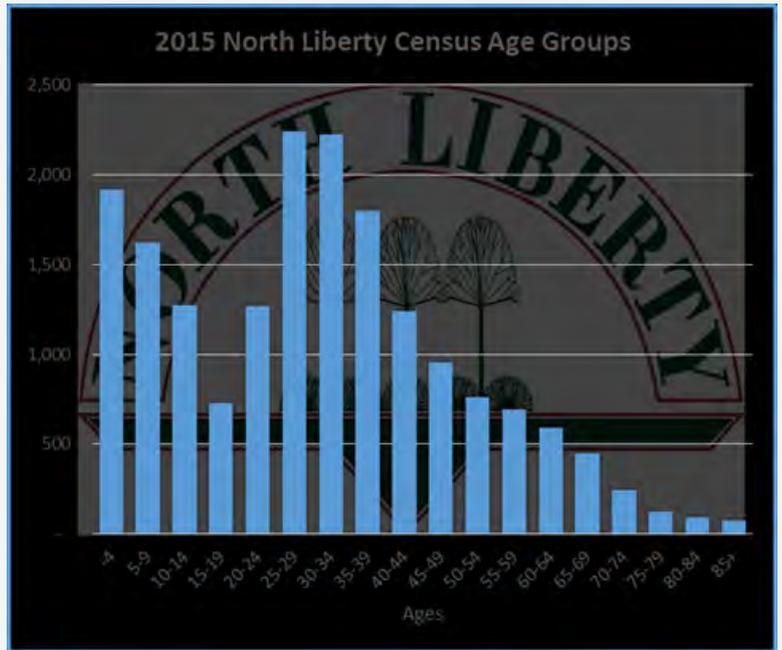


introduction

In the heart of the greater Iowa City Cedar Rapids region, North Liberty is a thriving, young community; a family-friendly small town but with easy access to big-city amenities.



NORTH LIBERTY IS A PLACE WHERE WE PLAY, AS HOME TO SWEEPING SUNSETS OVER BACKYARDS AND OPEN FIELDS, ICE CREAM ON THE WAY HOME FROM BASEBALL AFTER SCHOOL, MILES OF TRAILS AND ACRES OF PARKS.



WE GROW, WITH NEW SCHOOLS AND NEW RESIDENTS, WITH RAIN GARDENS AND HEART, AND FROM TODDLERS TO TEENAGERS.

**1913**

YEAR TOWN INCORPORATED

**88**

FULL TIME CITY EMPLOYEES

**18,299**

POPULATION, 2015 SPECIAL CENSUS

WE WORK, AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF LOCAL MEDIA, REGIONAL FINANCIAL AND NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMPANIES OR WITH SOLAR ENERGY AND TECH STARTUPS AND ENTREPRENEURS GETTING THEIR BIG IDEAS OFF THE GROUND.



AND WE KID, WITH GREAT SCHOOLS, RECREATION AND LIBRARY PROGRAMS AND WITH EACH OTHER AT WORK, SCHOOL AND ON THE LOCAL RESTAURANT PATIO.





# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This section lists city accomplishments from the last two years, as identified by Elected Officials and Department Heads.

## AWARDS & RECOGNITION

2017 Money Magazine #75 **Best Place to Live** in the United States

2017 **Tree City USA** award (22 consecutive years)

2017 **Playful City USA** (seven consecutive years)

2016 National Crime Reporting **#1 Safest City in Iowa** (in our population group)

2016 Safe Wise Report #11 **Safest Community in Iowa**

**Funds Grants Donations**  
 > \$6,000,000

**BOND RATING Aa2**

**SPECIAL CENSUS 18,299**

**TAX RATE \$8.10**

**SAFELYWISE -2017- #11 IOWA SAFEST CITIES**

**playful city USA**

**Money #75 Best Place to Live 2017**

**TREE CITY USA Arbor Day Foundation**

<b>DUBUQUE STREET</b>	<b>ROUNDABOUT</b>
<b>NORTH LIBERTY ROAD</b>	<b>WIDENING</b>
<b>PENN STREET</b>	<b>BEAUTIFICATION</b>
<b>SCALES BEND ROAD</b>	<b>TURN LANES</b>
<b>RANSHAW WAY</b>	<b>UTILITIES PAVING</b>

# MENTS



## PARKS AND TRAILS

PENN MEADOWS – SPLASH PAD, PAVILION, TOT LOT, RESTROOM & CONCESSIONS, TURF GRASS, PAINTING, STORAGE SHED

CENTENNIAL – LOTS, ROADS, TRAIL

BEAVER CREEK – PLAYGROUND, TRAIL

QUAIL RIDGE – DUGOUTS, FENCING, BATTING CAGE

MONUMENT SIGNS

FOX VALLEY – TRAIL

LANDSCAPING PARKS & ROUNDABOUT

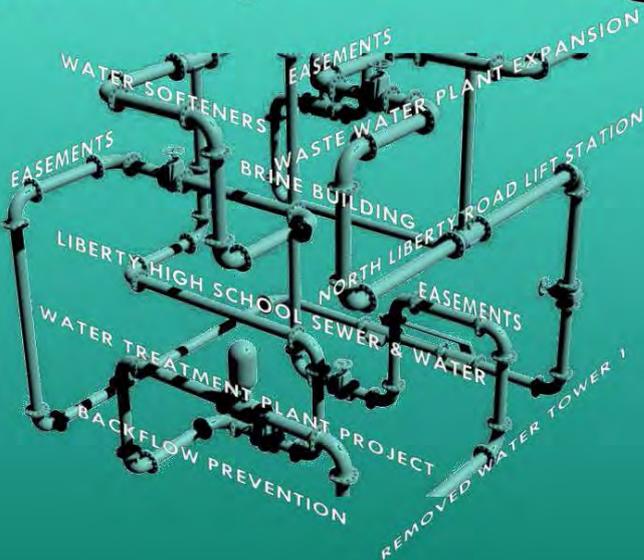
LIBERTY CENTRE - UNDERGROUND ELECTRICAL



✓ Full-time Fire Chief hired



high quality services • relationships • employee engagement meetings • compliments • bargaining unit contract • travel policy • child safety policy • library strategic plan • aquatics plan • community center user policy • park plan • residential occupancy ordinance • targetsolutions • lexipol • meeting room software • library website redesign • podcasts • newsletter • met training goals • passed audits • laboratory procedures update • sanitary sewer cleaning program • street crack sealing program • pop-up library • after-school snacks • neighborhood watch • emergency notification • public transit program • lactation room • community garden • seed library • fat-oil-grease program • community center security camera system & keycard door access • durable epoxy paint • warning siren • ALICE training • severson challenge win • volunteering • police headquarters design contract



# ACCOMPLISHME



## PUBLIC EVENTS & VOLUNTEERISM

Annual **Blues & BBQ** celebration (11 and counting), booked national headliners and set attendance records in 2016 and 2017. Event was expanded to a second day.

Annual **Beat the Bitter** winter festival schedule has launched for its third year.

Annual Iowa Department of Natural Resources **Free Fish Weekend** at Liberty Centre Park, most recent had over 400 people in attendance.

Annual **Muddy Creek and Bike Trail Clean-Up** with Tree & Storm Water Advisory Board members, City staff, Boy/Cub Scouts and the public in attendance.

Highway 965 was dedicated as **Ranshaw Way**; Streets Department staff installed new signage.

**Glock Armor School** for 40 area law enforcement officers. "Officer Involved" documentary movie screening and associated training for 50 area law enforcement officers.

Iowa Post Construction **Stormwater Conference & EPIC Green Infrastructure Tour**, a two-day conference on water quality.

Community events involving interaction with **North Liberty Police Officers**: Shop with a Cop, Citizen Police Academy, Summer Lunch Program, Trunk or Treat, Kites for Kids, Safety Village, empathy training to elementary students, and other school class presentations.

**North Liberty Community Library** launched the following **new programming**: 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program which promotes school readiness; the 100 Books Before Birth and Read to the Bump initiatives, both groundbreaking for expecting and new parents with the latter being a joint program with the North Liberty Food Pantry; Autism Friendly Browsing Night extended hours for autistic individuals and their families; Integration in Motion for special needs adults; and patrons can check-out iPads, device chargers, bike locks, air quality monitors, and white boards & markers.

Joined the countywide **Bike Month** recognition, which includes associated promotions and events.

# outreach

# NTS

# involved

## PUBLIC EVENTS & VOLUNTEERISM

North Liberty Police Officers provided **ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate)** Violent Intruder training to businesses, City departments, and schools, as well as environmental design assessment.

Our participation in National **Drug Take Back Days** (held two times per year) has kept over 210 pounds of prescription drugs out of the landfill and waste water.

Police Department held **Town Hall Meeting** with the public to address national tension between law enforcement and citizens.

Prepared and provided staff support for the council & mayoral **elections** on April 25, 2017 (Special Election) and November 7, 2017.

Staff assisted the Federal government to complete the **special census**. Since then, North Liberty has grown to an estimated population of over 19,000.

Inaugural **Another Episode** events which bring community members together to binge watch popular television shows.

Inaugural **Slow Roll** event; a short community bike ride at a leisurely pace around town, with a free picnic and games at the conclusion of the ride.

Inaugural **Business Boom** social event for business owners and regional managers.

The **North Liberty Community Hall of Fame** recognition program, which highlights individuals who provided extraordinary public service and dedication to the community, is in its fifth year.

The City of North Liberty won the **2016 Severson Challenge**, a charity challenge between local governmental and non-profit entities.

Police Department continues **Community Policing initiatives**, including staffing events or parties upon request.

City Staff **volunteers** their time to serve on boards and commissions including, but not limited to, the North Liberty Community Pantry, Domestic Violence Intervention Program, Rape Victim Advocacy Program, Iowa Law Enforcement Intelligence Network, and International Association of Chiefs of Police.

**Surveys** completed or in process: Police Department Internal Operations and External Perceptions (2016), Community Satisfaction Survey (2017), Community Aquatics Interest Survey (2016), Community Recreation Needs Survey (2017), and Fire Department Community Expectation Survey (2017).



**Property tax rate has not increased and fund balances continue to be healthy.**

**North Liberty's bond rating improved to Aa2 (Moody's Investors Service).**

Administration was awarded Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) **Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds** for Phase 3 of the Ranshaw Way Project in the amount of \$1,986,833.

Administration, Parks, and Storm Water was awarded \$1,438,800 in special financing from the **State Revolving Fund (SRF)** for the Water Resource Restoration Project to install permeable paving and a the state's largest storm water bioswale at Centennial Park, and grants for over 300 North Liberty homeowners for soil restoration and water runoff projects. This is believed to be the largest soil quality restoration program in the state of Iowa.

Administration was awarded an Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) **Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) grant** for \$1,412,200 to pave Kansas Avenue.

Administration was awarded an Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) **Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP) grant** for Penn Street improvements in the amount of \$408,000.

Fire Department received a **Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) grant** of \$283,024 for volunteer recruitment to help increase/maintain the number of trained, front line firefighters.

Communications staff worked to raise about \$200,000 in **private sponsorships** for community festivals.

**North Liberty Youth Baseball & Softball (NLYBS)** contributed approximately \$145,000 of their \$250,000 pledge for the construction of the new concession & restroom facility at Penn Meadows Park.

Police Department was awarded a US Department of Justice **COPS Hiring Program grant** of \$125,000 to hire an officer to cover the increased need for law enforcement personnel during the school day, including athletic events in the evening.

Community members procured \$56,000 in **donations** for the Police Department's new K-9 expenses, which includes the dog, training, and special vehicle. This effort began with a Colony Pumpkin Patch fundraiser.



# finance & grants

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Police Department was awarded \$14,900 in funding from the US Department of Justice **Body-Worn Camera Policy and Implementation Program**, which was used to replace the entire body-worn camera system.

Police Department receives an annual reimbursement of \$12,000 in funds from the Iowa Department of Public Safety **Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau (GTSB) program** for impaired driving traffic enforcement, which covers officer overtime expenses and preliminary breathalyzer and in-car recording equipment.

Parks was awarded a **MidAmerican Energy Trees Please! grant**, which resulted in trees valued at \$2,000 (number does not include funds awarded prior to 2016), many planted in Fox Valley outlot.

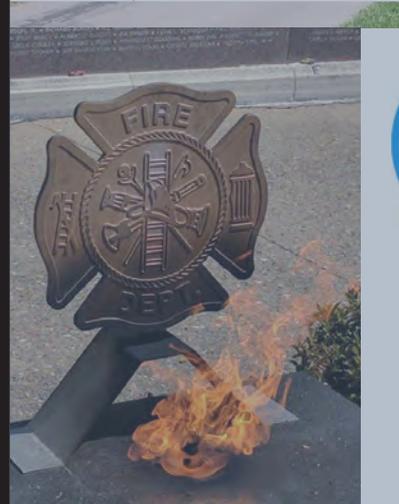
Police Department was repeatedly awarded a **Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Program grant** for vest replacements, amounting between \$2,000 and \$1,500 each year.

Library was awarded a \$1,000 **Hy-Vee One Step Community Garden grant** to help fund the Library's garden project.

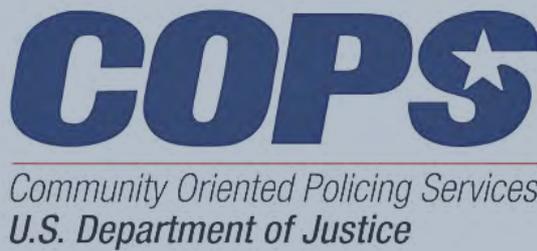
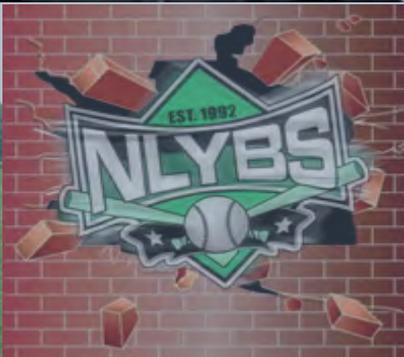
Library Lactation Room was paid for by **Mercy Hospital, Iowa City**.

Fire Department established the **Robert Parker Memorial Fire Scholarship**.

Library established the **Friends of the North Liberty Library Endowment Fund** with the Community Foundation of Johnson County.



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS



**Iowa Department of Public Safety**  
GOVERNOR'S TRAFFIC SAFETY BUREAU

# Capital Projects & Assets

**Major road projects** on Dubuque Street/North Liberty Road (including a roundabout), Highway 965/Ranshaw Way Phase II (from Penn Street north to City limits, including Scales Bend Road/240th Street), and Penn Street widening projects completed. The Interstate 380 Forevergreen ramp project is underway.

**Eastside Utilities Project** sewer and water extensions to service Liberty High School, including the City's newest lift station (on North Liberty Road), was done quickly, efficiently, and with transparency.

**Water System Improvements and New Water Treatment Plant Project** is near completion. Two new high-capacity water wells in Quail Ridge Park have been added to our system.

**Waste Water Plant Expansion Phase II** included upgrades to pre-treatment, secondary treatment, the control building & supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) control system; advancements in biological treatment; and the addition of the bio-solids dewatering process.

Police Department and Administrative staff completed the request for qualifications process for the design of the **new Police Headquarters** and selected an architect from a series of interviews. This project is underway. Staff has given many tours of the current station to garner support for the new project.



# New Community Amenities

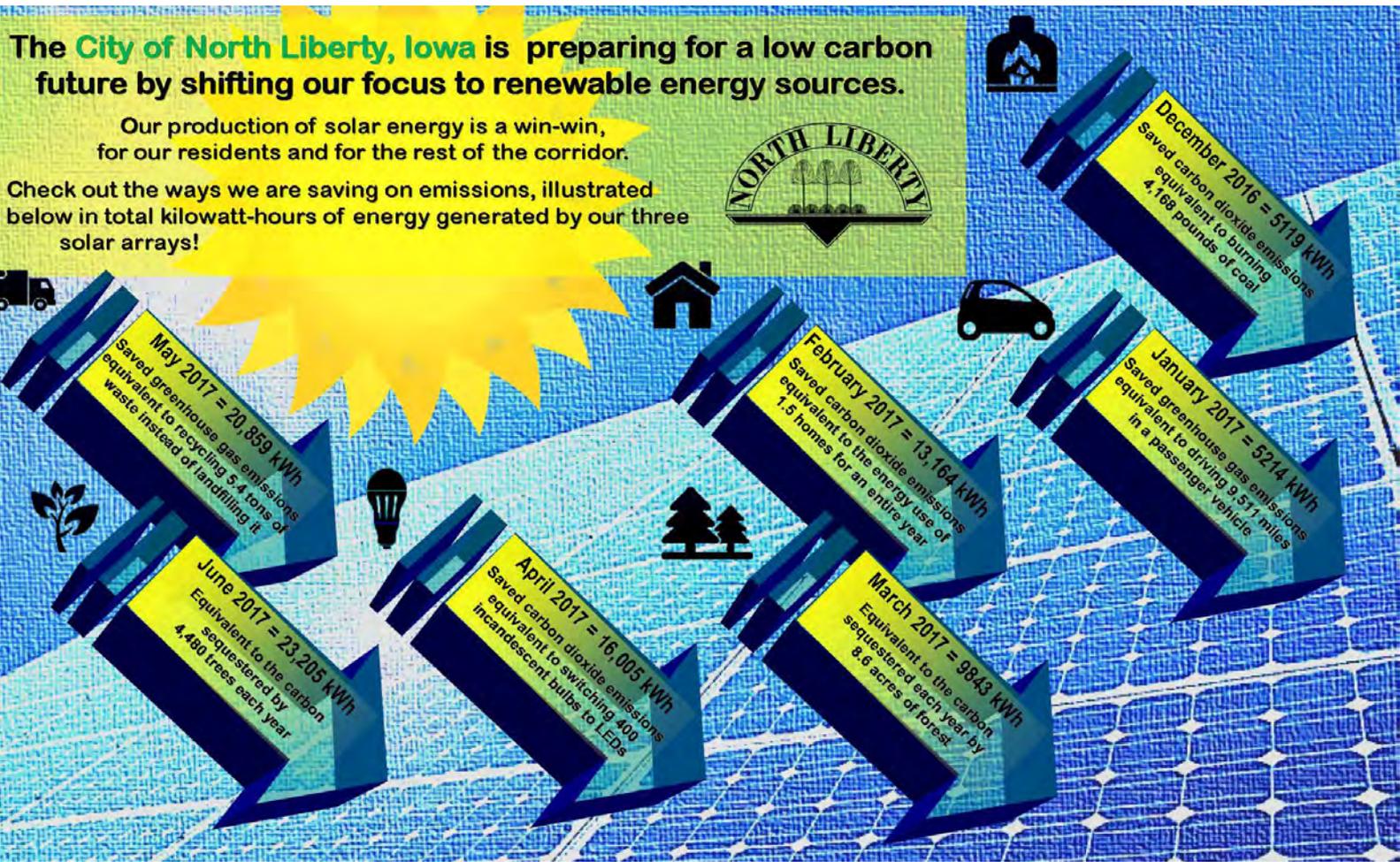
Iowa City Community School District built **Liberty High School** - which required infrastructure planning and installation, surrounding street network, traffic study, and related activities.

Many new **businesses, retail, and restaurants** established in North Liberty, including the GEICO regional office relocating to Liberty Executive Park. With this, have come new developments to house the workforce, both single family and multi-family.

The City has obtained dozens of **easements** for public projects, including Liberty High School project.

Streets installed a **new warning siren** in southeast North Liberty.





# Sustainable Energy Initiatives

North Liberty perceived as a **leader in the state in sustainability initiatives**

The City installed **solar arrays** at Parks, Streets, and Fire Station, which have produced a totaling 186.27 MWh of energy (the equivalent of burning 151,669 pounds of coal).

Streets staff adopted an **LED street lighting program** for City-maintained lights, installed LED lighting at the pedestrian crossing of Penn Street/Dubuque Street/Stewart Street intersection, and 18 LED School Zone speed signs. New LED lighting installed at Liberty Centre Pond trail, the Quail Ridge Park shelter, the Parks facility, Police Station, Community Center (over half the lights replaced).

City made Blues & BBQ a **fully-compostable event**.

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Parks enhancements:**

- New trails at Beaver Kreek Park and Fox Valley Pond;
- New playground structure at Beaver Kreek Park and a splash pad, pavilion, and tot lot at Penn Meadows;
- New ballfield dugouts at Quail Ridge Park, expanded the Babe Ruth Baseball field with new fencing and batting cage (to accommodate a Liberty High Baseball program), and completed the new restroom & concessions facility at Penn Meadows Park; and
- Parking lots, roads, and a trail at Centennial Park.

**Parks maintenance and upgrades:**

- Removed brush and invasive species, like garlic mustard, as well as improved the landscaping at the Cornerstone Nature Area, Freedom Park, Joy Park, Liberty Centre Pond, and the West Lake Nature Area & Wetlands;
- Reestablished the turf grass, repainted the parking lot, and remodeled the storage shed at Penn Meadows Park;
- Completed major underground electrical repairs at Liberty Centre Pond;
- Installed new park monument signs at Fox Run Neighborhood Park, Mar Lee Park, and the West Lake Nature Area & Wetlands; and
- Cleared large trees from the Public Works Campus storage area.



With the assistance of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Parks staff **restocked seven ponds with fish.**

Streets staff has begun painting the streets with **durable epoxy paint**, with a significant number already completed.

Streets Department erected a **new brine building** and purchased equipment for **pre-treating streets** before snowfall.

Building Department implemented a **backflow prevention inspection program.**

# ACCOMPLI



# Maintenance, Improvement & Beautification



Water staff built a **new storage building** for service trucks and equipment; rebuilt the water softeners and upgraded the water meter equipment; and **removed Water Tower 1**.

The North Liberty Community Center is now equipped with a **new security camera system** and **keycard door access system**.

Library staff redesigned the North Liberty Community **Library children's area** with new carpet and the addition of multiple activities. They also installed a **lactation room** for nursing parents, and began a **seed library and community garden**.

# SHMENTS

Human Resources staff updated the **Travel Policy**.

Streets staff adopted a new **Snow and Ice Removal Policy** to use more salt and less sand, as well as more pre-treatment of streets.

Library adopted a behavior-based and welcoming North Liberty Community **Library Child Safety Policy** and updated their **Library Strategic Plan**.

Recreation Department staff is working with the Parks and Recreation Board to develop an **Aquatics Plan** and increased the age of unsupervised children in their **Community Center user policy**.

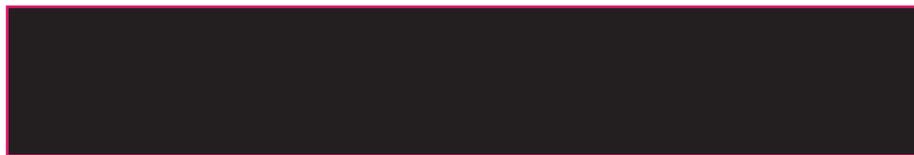
Water Department staff has adopted a new **Water Conservation Plan**, as required by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Parks and Recreation updated the comprehensive **North Liberty Park Plan**.

Communications Department defined the role the City plays in **supporting events in the community**.

Staff updated a variety of **ordinances and resolutions**.

North Liberty's **residential occupancy ordinance** was modified as a result of State law



# New or Updated Policies & Plans

RECOMMENDATIONS

# Workplace Environment & Staff



City staff maintained **high quality services** in the face of high rate of growth with modest budget increases.

City staff and elected officials' **relationships** with other jurisdictions and community members are strong and healthy, with the outreach efforts of the Police Department and Communications being particularly significant.

North Liberty experienced the following City employment **additions and upgrades:** the City's first fulltime Fire Chief; new positions of Canine Officer, Community Engagement Coordinator, Special Projects Coordinator & Storm Water Coordinator; vacant positions of Waste Water Superintendent and Streets Superintendent; and re-established position of Police Lieutenant.

Administration and Human Resources staff completed all **employee engagement meetings.**

County Attorney's Office and Judges have reported many **compliments** regarding North Liberty Police Officers, resulting from interactions during investigations and case presentations. Staff has also received thank you notes and emails.

Police Department organized and presented the **Officer of the Year Award program.**

Police Department and Human Resources successfully negotiated a three-year **bargaining unit contract.**

## PROGRAMMING CHANGES

Waste Water staff implemented **advanced laboratory procedures** and purchased new equipment which allows for the ability to test additional parameters and also streamlines the antiquated, more time consuming procedures.

Streets staff wrote and adopted a more organized **Sanitary Sewer Cleaning Program** and **Street Crack Sealing Program**.

Library began a partnership with JM Swank to provide **after school snacks** to kids who utilize the library and expanded their **Pop-Up Library program** to the North Liberty Living Center.

Police Department established the **new K-9 program**, resulting in a new officer classification, special training and equipment. Canine Falco joined the team in November 2017.

Police Department created a North Liberty **text messaging public safety emergency notification system** for school and bus officials; modernized the **Neighborhood Watch program** to include home video cameras; and completed the **public education and approval process** related to the encryption of law enforcement radio channels.

The City implemented a **Fat-Oil-Grease (FOG) program**.

North Liberty piloted a **public transit program**.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## TECHNOLOGICAL & OPERATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



Human Resources purchased **TargetSolutions** training and recordkeeping database. Police Department purchased **PlanIt** software for scheduling and payroll and **Lexipol** software to manage policies and daily training. Library added meeting room scheduling software.

Library produced eleven **podcasts** with over 700 views/listens; expanded their **digital** offerings to magazines and language learning via their partnership with Coralville and Iowa City; launched a new **redesigned website** and started a **newsletter** via MailChimp.

Juries found in favor of the City in several significant **lawsuits** and the Police Department has no other ongoing claims.

Police Officers and Administrative staff **completed all required training**. The training on **medical combat and tourniquets** resulted in three successful tourniquet uses in the field and a request to train neighboring departments. 60% of Police Officers have attended **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training**. All Officers have completed Blue Courage training on the heart, mindset, and inspirational skills of law enforcement. Police Department maintains **in-house instructors** on Human Trafficking, Defensive Driving, Verbal Judo, Bias-based Policing, Use of Force, Radar/Lidar, Rapid Response, Violent Intruder, and Blue Courage.

Police Officers have had several successful **major investigations** and arrests, including three robbery suspects involved in a string of incidents.



Police Officers participated in the countywide **Bomb Squad** and **Dive Team**. Two Police Officers will join the Johnson County Special Emergency Response Team. Police Department completed two evidence disposals.

Police Department passed the National Crime Information Center computer security **audit**, Criminal Justice Information Services audit, National Crime Incident Report audit, Federal forfeiture fund audit, internal evidence control audit, and quarterly Performance-Based Audit.

The Fire Department switched to a more robust, **web-based records management system** in 2017, which allows the department to document responses as provide for response time analytics.



# ISSUES, CONCERNS, TRENDS & OPPORTUNITIES



**This section lists issues, concerns, trends, and opportunities that may affect future city services, policies, finances or operations, as identified by Elected Officials and Department Heads.**

## MEETING PUBLIC DEMANDS

As the population grows, the needs of the public generate heavier demands on staff, equipment, budget, and a higher rate of new service requests. Department heads and elected officials are concerned with...

- **...ensuring City staffing is adequate to maintain our current quality of service.**
  - In the current annual trash sticker program, the workload on Administration staff increases considerably in June and July. In addition, the City is issuing more late water payment notices and eventual shutting off of water.
  - The call volume for our volunteer fire department is increasing beyond response capability. Emergency response turnout times are lengthy.
  - More people mean more public safety incidents and concerns, thus a demand for more officers.
  - In particular, the new Liberty High School increased the need for law enforcement, investigations, threat assessments, security, and public relations.
  - The rise in utility companies' requests of right-of-way usage and permits overloads staff.
- **... the lifespan of current infrastructure and the adequacy of the current equipment replacement schedule.**
  - Continued increase in traffic makes the maintenance of streets and utilities increasingly difficult.
  - Older infrastructure needs to be upgraded, including the aging trail network.
  - The boom in business and increased annexation requests are beneficial for tax revenue and resident convenience, but comes with a required servicing of infrastructure and utilities.
- **... the recent obstacles in trying to supply residents and neighboring jurisdictions with their requests.**
  - The City would like to offer public transit options to residents; an attempt was launched, yet was unsuccessful.
  - The time and effort spent on issues like Disproportionate Minority Contact, Crisis Intervention Team training, sex offender housing and community policing program are valuable, but unpredictable and expensive. These new functions require foresight, staff buy-in, long-range budgeting, and considerable investment.
  - Recreation and library staff is concerned with their ability to meet the demands for activities at the Community Center.
  - More challenges with certain population groups at Library and Community Center
  - Current residential recycling level has grown beyond the small bins.
- **... whether land is being developed to satisfy the demand placed upon it.**
  - North Liberty is experiencing continued commercial development despite vacant storefronts.
  - This demand will increase once GEICO is operational. What is the actual need for workforce housing?

ISSUES, CONCERNS, TRENDS & OPPORTUNITIES

# PHYSICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL

One resounding physical concern is how to meet the current and future **space needs** of City departments. The City is constructing a new Police Headquarters, which will meet our public safety parking, security, and space requirements for ten years; however, other needs are ongoing. In particular, staff is concerned about the leasing of space for City Hall and the lack of security measures – and control over implementation of security measures – to keep employees safe.

All **developable land** is held by relatively few landowners and – despite the recent boom – development is slowing down. Southwest development, in particular, is threatened by annexation difficulties (island of county issues).

North Liberty is involved in the discussion of a joint entities **Crisis Intervention Team facility**.

Current development trends necessitate the installation of **sanitary sewer lift stations**, which burden the system and increases maintenance needs.

Planning for **future school placement** gives us more time to meet those heavy and unique infrastructure needs. Street & sewer system and traffic flow, public safety, water, and waste water demand was met for Liberty High School, but longer visioning with the school districts will help the City plan further ahead for those requests.

Need for development of a **master plan** for the Front Street, Dubuque Street, and Cherry Street intersections

The City needs to be concerned about the impending threat of the **Emerald Ash Borer**. The City will need to budget for the expense to deal with this certain crisis.

The **I-380/I-80 Interchange project** will affect traffic flow in North Liberty; in particular, because the Iowa Department of Transportation intends to use the new Forevergreen ramp system to detour traffic during construction. North Liberty also needs to plan for when accidents occur, because both events will impact local traffic and strain City staff.

## Department heads and elected officials see prime opportunities in...

- New land development at the I-380/Forevergreen Road interchange
- Centennial Park as a community park with many amenities and the development of the park system as a whole
- Ranshaw House as an opportunity to have a vision for focused programming and use
- Keeping the Park Plan current and updated to accommodate new and future needs, determining where future parks should be located throughout the City (utilize input from the Parks & Recreation Board, Tree & Storm Water Board, and developers)
- Blues & BBQ and Beat the Bitter are becoming well-known area events with recent growth in support. North Liberty has a great opportunity to capitalize on this and make these priorities, from a financial and resource-providing perspective.

# STAFFING

**Concerns about staffing include:**

- Recruiting quality part-time staff
- Being more inclusive/diverse
- Lack of succession planning at the department head level
- Retention of high performing staff members
- Information about personnel issues, challenges, and limits being communicated to City Council
- Maintaining a minimum amount of staff to cover sick time, vacation, training, and other time-off requests without burdening other employees with forced overtime to cover absences
- Satisfying Union contracts, including grievances, employee demands, and short-notice scheduling issues
- Continue the support of staff training opportunities that will make them better employees and better public servants.

**Areas where staffing level is a current, or imminent, issue:**

- Staff for zoning and nuisance enforcement
- Staff for administrative frontlines
- Staff on military leave and replacement of those employees
- Staff to operate new water treatment plant and larger distribution system
- Staff for Fire Department to work on fire prevention efforts
- Need to determine appropriate response model for Fire Department
- Staff for animal control to cover the increasing amount of time it takes to process lost/found pets, dangerous animals, and serious bites, which is escalated by the distance to the shelter
- Staff to cover specialized needs, instead of expecting one employee to wear many hats and be the expert in all fields. The result is that some of these "shared functions" get dropped for immediate issues. Right now, law enforcement is reactive, instead of proactive
- Staff to focus on economic development and work with local businesses. North Liberty needs are growing beyond the Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce.

# FINANCIAL

The City needs to continue to be fiscally responsible, with an extended long-term approach to **budgeting**. The City should not expect the current rate of growth and increasing revenues to last forever.

Balance the use of **tax increment financing** and issuance of general obligation bonds and their payments.

There is consensus to keep the **tax rate** as low as possible; however, the current tax rate does not produce enough in the budget to complete necessary maintenance, update of aging infrastructure, and new projects.

Water and sewer rates are increasing; currently, we do not have a mechanism to pay for **major sanitary sewer repairs** in the City's collection system.

The increasing cost of **health care** creates financial unknowns for employees and residents alike.

Other governmental units (in particular, State and federal) are reducing funding to **social service agencies**. City staff is experiencing an increase in requests for City funding and space to cover the difference so organizations can keep up with their operational costs.

The Legislature is expected to eliminate **backfill funding**. The City will need to reprioritize the budget to favor necessities and save for emergency projects. Thus, the coffer of flexible spending will shrink, having a downstream effect on recipients like social service organizations, parks, and recreation. Taking this into consideration, attention should be given to ensure maintenance of the current State funding streams.

**Recreation Center user fees** are covering less of the total operating costs.

The City will need to invest in financial and accounting **software upgrades**.

**Law enforcement costs** are rising and the resources are unpredictable (federal funding and grants).

Up until the upcoming budget, the City has been able to balance **the "wish list"** with the "need list," but we may need to sacrifice some of the "wish" items to correctly allocate our funds for FY19.

Lack of funding for street improvements along **Penn Street**, especially where it intersects with Front Street, Dubuque Street, and lack of funding for the bridge over I-380.

The City needs to identify affordable **transit** solutions.

# PLANNING, POLICY & LAW

The **trash sticker** program and small recycle bins are unsustainable in their current form.

Continue engagement and implementation of **energy efficiency programs**.

The City needs to revisit **sustainability** goals. We have the opportunity to be a leader and be forward-thinking.

**Federal and State regulations** are continually updating and changing. Grace periods are given (to allow entities to establish limitations or meet impose limits) but, for wastewater, a new regulation almost always requires more stringent testing or treatment. Water Department has concerns about dealing with future regulation changes by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

**Court decisions** are continually changing precedent. The public has its own expectations/demands of law enforcement personnel, which often reflects what is seen on television. Police department has no control of what will happen in the court process or which cases are being prosecuted.

**Computer crimes** happen outside of the jurisdiction and are difficult to follow-up.

**Crimes of opportunity** continue to happen and increase each year for unlocked and unsecured items.

Determine what type of **commercial development** is needed to serve the public.

Identify a mechanism to integrate **sidewalks** on both sides of private streets.

**Park space** in new developments. The Park Plan should be reviewed and updated.

## **Other regulatory areas of concern:**

- Parking in cul-de-sacs
- Enforcement of fireworks ordinance
- Crisis Intervention Team involvement and level of participation
- Development of more detailed commercial sign standards
- Timely code enforcement initiatives
- False fire alarm ordinance.

**Emergency service sharing** with neighboring communities is enhancing our service provision.

## MISCELLANEOUS

The City should work to formulate a **vision** of who we are and where we want to be. An approved strategic plan, not just goals, would be helpful (e.g. What type of housing do we want? Do we have enough "low income" housing or not enough?). This might mean retaining an outside consultant or facilitator to work with staff and community members.

Find ways to improve how we connect residents to **social services** alternatives and community functions within North Liberty, the corridor, and the county (e.g. better communication).

**Unsupervised activity** at the Community Center and Library sometimes results in behavioral issues.

Need to promote **collaboration/cooperation** with other local governments to address common issues.





# ONGOING CITY COMMITMENTS

**Mayor and City Council reviewed the list of priorities from the 2016 Goal-Setting Session and determined that the following items are ongoing commitments for the upcoming 24-month period:**

- Ranshaw Way
  - Continue to plan for future phases, including identifying outside funding sources
  - Construction of Phase III and IV
  - Continue to provide on-going information/education to public
- Continue to plan and budget for playground equipment in parks
- Continue to lobby for Penn Street bridge
- Sanitary sewer upgrade – Cherry Street parallel line
- Centennial Park development – implement FY18 phase and define future phases in Capital Improvements Plan (CIP)
- Water Plant upgrades per Facility Plan
- Continue investigating transit options, including exploring opportunities for collaboration with Coralville, Iowa City, University of Iowa, and Johnson County
- Actively work towards partnership with citizens requesting dog park
- Construction of Police Headquarters
- FY18 trail connection project
- Forevergreen Road from interchange to Jones Boulevard
- Front Street reconstruction from Cherry Street to Zeller Street
- Update Personnel Policy manual, Substance Abuse Policy manual, job descriptions, and Compensation Program
- Continue the City's efforts to develop positive relationship with the community, including increasingly diverse population
- Explore financial options to fund more of our parks and recreation plan
- Make a decision regarding solid waste policies/rules/services, including recycling bins, fees, stickers and related issues

## NEW PRIORITY PROJECTS

**Mayor and City Council reviewed potential projects, programs, policies, and initiatives for consideration and selected the following as priorities for the upcoming 24-month period (listed in order of priority):**

- 1 (Tie) Develop over-arching strategic plan, including community identity and vision planning
- 1 (Tie) Develop a master plan for the Front Street, Dubuque Street, and Cherry Street intersection
- 1 (Tie) Conduct housing market inventory/needs analysis
- 1 (Tie) Update Park Plan, including recreation
  
- 5 (Tie) Street and sidewalk improvements on North Bend Drive from Centro Inc. to Dubuque Street intersection (related to new Grant Elementary School)
- 5 (Tie) Inventory sidewalks and accessibility of network to ensure people can physically get around

**Detailed information on the initiatives, action plan, and process outline for each new priority project is available in a separate progress report, which will be updated periodically.**

A complete list of all programs and initiatives considered is found in Appendix A.

## ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INITIATIVES

**Mayor and City Council reviewed the list of ways to improve organizational effectiveness submitted by Elected Officials and Department Heads and determined that the following items should be addressed during the upcoming 24-month period:**

- Enhance the goals and objectives tracking process.
- Mayor and Council members should continue to attend City-sponsored events, both as advocates for the City and to increase awareness of City operations.
- Consider developing calendar of events for use by City Council members.
- Elected officials should be prepared for City Council meetings by reviewing the agenda packet in advance and asking questions before the meetings to allow time for staff to research answers and respond.
- Clarify "requests for further information" so that respondents know what is exactly needed.





# FINAL COMMENTS

It was a pleasure to again assist the City of North Liberty with this goal setting process. I continue to be extremely impressed with the level of cooperation and positive attitudes of the elected officials and staff.

It is important to note that the prioritization of projects and initiatives is not "cast in stone." They can be modified as new circumstances may occur.

It is recommended that staff prepare an "action plan" for accomplishing the planning goals. The action plan would define the steps that would be needed to accomplish each goal, identify who is responsible for implementation, and establish a timeline for accomplishment. The action plan should then be presented to the City Council for review and approval. It is also recommended that staff review with the City Council the status of implementing the goals on a quarterly basis.



**Jeff Schott**  
**Institute of Public Affairs**  
**January 26, 2018**



# APPENDIX A

**Significant New Initiatives or Programs Considered** (parentheses indicate number of votes received).

<p>Develop over-arching strategic plan, including community identity and vision planning. (4)</p> <p>Develop a master plan for the Front Street, Dubuque Street, and Cherry Street intersection. (4)</p> <p>Conduct housing market inventory/needs analysis. (4)</p> <p>Update Park Plan, Including recreation. (4)</p>
<p>Street and sidewalk improvements on North Bend Drive from Centro Inc to Dubuque Street intersection (related to new Grant Elementary School). (3)</p> <p>Inventory sidewalks and accessibility of network to ensure people can physically get around town. (3)</p>
<p>Create a Recycling and Reuse Center in North Liberty (e.g., public-private partnership with Habitat Restore, Johnson County Refuse and Republic Recycling). (2)</p> <p>Financial support for Crisis Intervention Team center. (2)</p> <p>Provide funding for a robust program to repair minor street and sidewalk failures before they become larger issues. (2)</p>
<p>Develop a holistic transportation plan. (1)</p> <p>Work with the business community and social services organizations to hold initial and annual community workshops inviting citizens to identify gaps in needed professional, retail, and community services. (1)</p> <p>Overhaul the commercial sign design standard. (1)</p> <p>Establish an Employee Assistance Program. (1)</p>
<p>Create a committee to explore an outdoor public art program to add landmarks, place-making, and beauty. (0)</p> <p>Penn Street improvements from Stewart to Front Street. (0)</p> <p>Develop sub-area development plan for the northwest area to increase attention to development potential. (0)</p> <p>Establish insurance program for private water and sewer line repair. (0)</p> <p>Establish a local Animal Control Center. (0)</p> <p>Create facility space for social services entities to operate in North Liberty. (0)</p> <p>Install more sophisticated traffic signal operations to more efficiently move traffic. (0)</p> <p>Traffic camera speed enforcement in key locations, such as near schools. (0)</p> <p>Hire more zoning and nuisance enforcement personnel. (0)</p> <p>Hire economic development director to focus on strategic planning, recruitment and retention, and allowing us to differentiate ourselves from other cities. (0)</p> <p>Develop and implement a city-wide user-friendly geographic information system (GIS) - with global positioning system (GPS) capabilities - for infrastructure, utilities, and planning use. (0)</p> <p>Increase fees and membership prices at Recreation Center to better cover operational costs. (0)</p> <p>Review or establish performance standards for department heads based upon the City's current direction and expectations. (0)</p> <p>Identify land in undeveloped northwest area of North Liberty for a second Fire Station. (0)</p>