

# CHAPTER

# 10

# County Character

# Introduction

The character of the county is established by all of the elements of the previous chapters of this Comprehensive Plan. This chapter supplements that bucolic character with special events and amenities that create a sense of pride in county residents.

## Special Events + Amenities

### Jasper County Fair

This week-long event attracts hundreds of Jasper County residents to show livestock, crafts, and enjoy family friendly activities and entertainment.

### Small Town Festivals

Community festivals are an important way to bring together the community and often celebrate the community's history. Local festivals include Prairie Days, Newton Fest, Sully 4th of July Celebration, Baxter Fun Days, and Monroe Old Settlers Days.

### Iowa Speedway

This 7/8-mile paved oval motor racing track in Newton is owned by NASCAR. It has over 25,000 permanent seats as well as a unique multi-tiered recreational vehicle viewing area along the backstretch. The facility also offers the Rusty Wallace Racing Experience and The Formula Experience, where visitors have the opportunity to experience the speedway from behind the wheel of a race car.



## Jasper County Historical Museum

This museum preserves and exhibits the agricultural, commercial, industrial, and societal history of the county. The museum campus includes the Agricultural Building, 1875 Barn, Blacksmith Shop, Smokehouse, and the Engine House which houses a Minneapolis Steam Engine.



## Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge

The Refuge protects, restores, and reconstructs the tallgrass prairie, oak savanna, and sedge meadow within its 5,600 acres. It provides environmental education and outdoor recreation. It also conducts research of the native ecosystems.

## Public Feedback + Best Practices

The public ranked Community Character as the sixth most important area out of eight options in the online public survey. There was generally consistent support for all strategies including improved property maintenance, growth management, county-wide special events, historic preservation, and public art. In the comments, there was support for making the community attractive to newcomers. This included property maintenance and general clean up, entertainment, festivals, and libraries. Comments noted a need to have more family-friendly events and to spread them to seasons beyond just the summer. Support for historic preservation was dependent upon the expense of the restoration if funded with public dollars.

Regarding the small town or rural feel of the community, some respondents noted that they feared the desire to maintain a rural feel would prohibit progress, and that development was necessary to provide a strong tax base. Comments also noted that they preferred responsible growth strategies to limit sprawled development and maintain a distinction between the towns and the countryside.

Planning best practices encourage communities to leverage their assets to create a unique sense of place. This requires growth management and development polices as well as special events and celebrations that bring people together and foster community cohesion. This chapter incorporates the goals and objectives necessary to address the remaining influencing factors of community character for the county.

# Goals + Objectives

## Goals

**CC:** Establish a county character that is family-friendly, evokes a rural feel, and celebrates the unique attributes of the county.

### Objectives

**CC-1:** Support and expand special events and festivals showcasing locations throughout the county

**CC-2:** Create a unique identify for the county and its towns and villages

**CC-3:** Be an environmentally-conscious leader