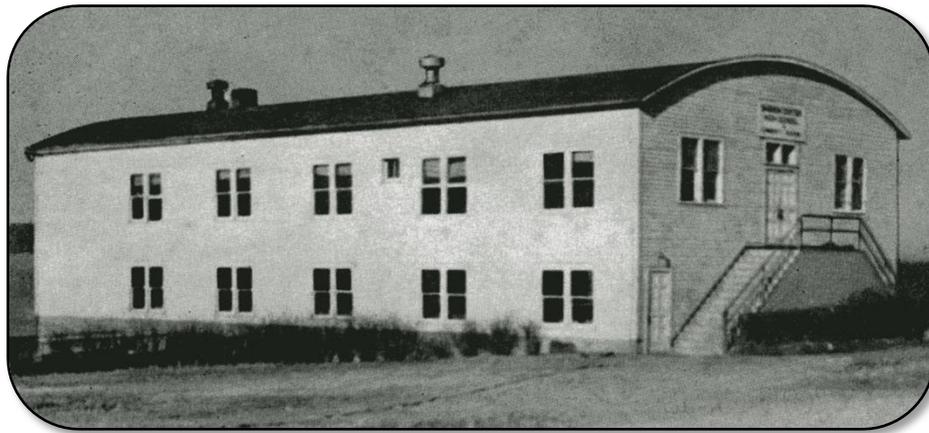


# Sharon Center Village Plan 2014

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*The former Sharon Center High School  
Photo courtesy of the Johnson County Historical Society*

*The Village of Sharon Center desires to remain a small, rural community with rural values where agricultural land and operations are protected and where infill development is preferred and growth is managed, incremental, and consistent with the Johnson County Land Use Plan.*



Prepared by the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Department,  
Johnson County, Iowa

Adopted by the Johnson County Board of Supervisors: February 13, 2014

**RESOLUTION 02-13-14-07**  
**RESOLUTION APPROVING THE SHARON CENTER VILLAGE PLAN AS AN**  
**APPENDIX TO THE 2008 JOHNSON COUNTY LAND USE PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors finds that the Sharon Center Village Plan is intended to supplement the 2008 Johnson County Land Use Plan specifically regarding future growth in Sharon Center and the surrounding area; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors finds that it is in the public interest to adopt said Sharon Center Village Plan as an appendix to the 2008 Johnson County Land Use Plan.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE JOHNSON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**, that the following Sharon Center Village Plan, copies of which can be obtained at the Johnson County Planning and Zoning Office, Johnson County Auditor's Office, or at www.johnson-county.com, is hereby adopted as an appendix to the Johnson County Land Use Plan.

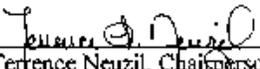
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this Sharon Center Village Plan shall become effective as an Appendix to the Land Use Plan upon adoption of this Resolution.

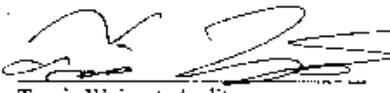
It was moved by Etheredge and seconded by Sullivan the Resolution be adopted this 13<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2014.

Roll Call

	<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
Etheredge	<u>X</u>	_____	_____	_____
Harney	<u>X</u>	_____	_____	_____
Neuzil	<u>X</u>	_____	_____	_____
Rettig	<u>X</u>	_____	_____	_____
Sullivan	<u>X</u>	_____	_____	_____

ATTEST:

  
Terrence Neuzil, Chairperson  
Board of Supervisors

  
Travis Weipert, Auditor  
Johnson County, Iowa

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**Acknowledgments**

Special thanks to the Sharon Center area residents who shared their input. This plan could not have been created without your involvement. Background Information: Ellen Johnson, intern.

## Introduction

Per the 2008 Johnson County Land Use Plan ([Appendix A](#)), the following document, *once discussed and revised, as needed*, will be submitted to the Johnson County Board of Supervisors to act as a guide for future development in the Village of Sharon Center. The Sharon Center Village Plan is a result of a joint effort between residents and County officials.

The goals of the Village Plan are consistent with the Johnson County Land Use Plan and the Sharon Center Village Vision Statement. The plan focuses upon maintaining the high quality of life that residents currently enjoy in the Village, while at the same time providing a framework for the future of the community. Specifically, the plan addresses the prevention of future incompatible land uses within the Village, the preservation of the historic nature of the Village, and the conservation of agricultural land and other sensitive areas within Johnson County.

## Background Information

### Location

The unincorporated village of Sharon Center is located in southwest Johnson County, Iowa, near the center of Sharon Township ([see Appendix B, Map 2](#)). Sharon Center's central point is at the intersection of 500th Street SW and Sharon Center Road SW. The closest population cluster is the unincorporated village of Frytown, which is directly west of Sharon Center, about 3.7 miles down 500th Street SW. The closest incorporated cities to Sharon Center are Iowa City and Hills, which are both located slightly more than 6 miles to the northwest and southeast, respectively.

### History

Sharon Township, in which Sharon Center is located, was established on February 1, 1858. As of 1882, a post office was operating in Sharon Center, headed by postmaster G. Hertlein.<sup>1</sup> The population of Sharon Township in 1880 was 1,159; the population Sharon Center was not individually counted at that time or in later U.S. Census counts.<sup>2</sup>

Development of community services in Sharon Center began predominately in the later decades of the 1800s. The Sharon General Store was constructed during this time and run by John P. Memler. It offered food and merchandise and rented out rooms on the second floor. The business changed hands many times over the years until it was replaced in 1960 by a new structure. The General Store closed its doors in 1965.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *History of Johnson County, Iowa 1836 – 1882.*

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census, 1880. "Population of Civil Divisions Less Than Counties."

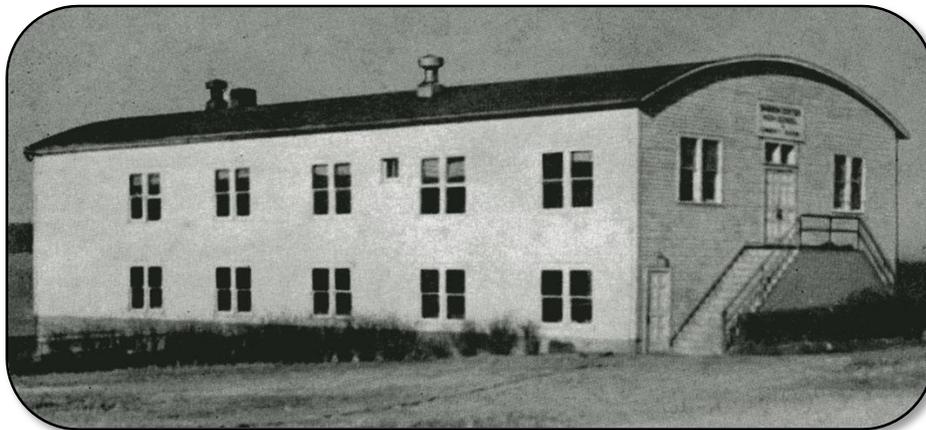
<sup>3</sup> Johnson County Historical Society Community Stories Project.

Before the start of the 1900s, the community desired to have a high school in Sharon Center. For the school's first semester, the upper floor of the Sharon General Store was rented out, and approximately 20 students attended. Needing more space, a school house was built through the formation of a stock company and the selling of shares. The Sharon High schoolhouse opened in 1890 and offered a two-year program that was not accredited. Expenses were funded by the \$3 per month tuition paid by each pupil. The school closed in 1914 due to lack of adequate funds. The building was sold to the Masonic Lodge.<sup>4</sup>



*Sharon High schoolhouse; later, Masonic Lodge. Photo courtesy of the Johnson County Historical Society.*

In 1923, the Sharon Center community decided it should have a high school once again. Classes were first held in the Masonic Lodge, which was the former Sharon High schoolhouse. By 1930, more space was needed, so a new high school was constructed across the street.<sup>5</sup> Funding to construct the new Sharon Center High School was obtained through community donations. As such, the large gymnasium was used by the community.<sup>6</sup> The high school had a women's and men's basketball team, and was granted an award for the best school in Johnson County by the Iowa City Daughters of the American Revolution in 1932. However, the school closed its doors in 1944 due to a lack of teachers. The building has since been torn down.<sup>7</sup>



*Sharon Center High School  
Photo courtesy of the Johnson County Historical Society*

Another business in Sharon Center was the Sharon Garage, which was run by Si Brenneman from 1920 to 1980. Mr. Brenneman repaired cars, tractors and household items. The community held Si

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Gingerich, M. *The Mennonites in Iowa: Marking the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Coming of the Mennonites to Iowa*. State Historical Society of Iowa: Iowa City, Iowa. 1939.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson County Historical Society Community Stories Project.

Brenneman Day in the 1970s to honor his service to the community. Nearly 1,000 people attended the celebration.<sup>8</sup>

### Demographics

Approximately 96 people in 26 households live within a ½-mile radius ([Appendix B, Map 3](#)) of Sharon Center’s central point (the intersection of 500th Street SW and Sharon Center Road SW).<sup>9</sup> This constitutes about 7.4% of Sharon Township’s total population of 1,291.

Tables 1–4 provide demographic information for the population living in Sharon Township, as U.S. Census data is not available for a smaller geographic area, compared to that of Johnson County. For our purposes, we are assuming that the population of Sharon Center has similar characteristics as that of Sharon Township.

Table 1 shows the distribution of population by age for the two geographical areas. The population of Sharon Township is generally younger than that of Johnson County, with a median age of 27.5 years vs. 29.3 years. While Johnson County as a whole has a larger population of college-aged residents due to the University of Iowa, Sharon Township has almost twice the percentage of children (31.4% of the population) than does Johnson County. This indicates that a prevalence of families with children live in Sharon Township. However, a slightly higher percentage of senior citizens live in Sharon Center (6.7%) vs. Johnson County (5.8%).

Table 1: Population: Sharon Township and Johnson County

	<b>Sharon Township</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Johnson County</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Population</b>	1,291		130,882	
<b>Age 14 and Under</b>	405	31.4%	22,074	16.9%
<b>Age 15 to 24</b>	202	15.6%	31,972	24.4%
<b>Age 25 to 39</b>	212	16.4%	30,112	23.0%
<b>Age 40 to 54</b>	202	15.6%	22,468	17.2%
<b>Age 55 to 69</b>	184	14.3%	16663	12.7%
<b>Age 70 and over</b>	86	6.7%	7,593	5.8%
<b>Median age</b>	27.5 years		29.3 years	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010

Household characteristics are shown in Table 2. Approximately 6.6% of Johnson County households live in Sharon Township. A large percentage of Sharon Township households are made up of families (83.2%), while 16.8% of households are made up of non-families.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, the distribution of family versus non-family households is almost equally split for Johnson County as a whole. The average

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Population was calculated by multiplying the average household size in Sharon Township according to the 2010 U.S. Census (3.68 people) by the number of housing units within a ½-mile radius of Sharon Center).

<sup>10</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau defines “Family Households” as a household consisting of one or more people related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. “Non-family Households” are defined as a household consisting of people living alone or that do not have any members related to the householder.

household size in Sharon Township is also larger than that in Johnson County, with 3.68 people and 2.33 people, respectively.

Table 2: Households: Sharon Township and Johnson County

	<b>Sharon Township</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Johnson County</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total households</b>	351		52,715	
<b>Family households</b>	292	83.2%	27,883	52.9%
<b>Non-family households</b>	59	16.8%	24,832	47.1%
<b>Average household size</b>	3.68 people		2.33 people	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010

Sharon Township's 372 housing units make up about 6.6% of the total number of housing units in Johnson County (Table 3). Nearly equal proportions of occupied and vacant units exist in the two geographical areas. However, Sharon Township has a much greater percentage of owner-occupied units (77.2%) than Johnson County (59%). Just 22.8% of housing units in Sharon Township are rentals.

Table 3: Housing Occupancy and Tenure- Sharon Township and Johnson County

	<b>Sharon Township</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Johnson County</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total housing units</b>	372		55,967	
<b>Occupied units</b>	351	94.4%	52,715	94.2%
<b>Vacant units</b>	21	5.6%	3,252	5.8%
<b>Owner-occupied units</b>	271	77.2%	31,299	59.4%
<b>Renter-occupied units</b>	80	22.8%	21,416	40.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010

Households in Sharon Township also earn substantially more, on average, than all Johnson County households, as shown in Table 4. The median household income in Sharon Township is well over \$83,000, which is about \$30,000 higher than the Johnson County median.

Table 4: Household Income- Sharon Township and Johnson County

	<b>Sharon Township</b>	<b>Johnson County</b>
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$83,839	\$53,703

Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2007-2011

## Land Use and Zoning

Sharon Center is located in a predominately agricultural part of Johnson County. However, parcels surrounding Sharon Center's central point are zoned for uses other than agriculture ([see Appendix B, Map 4](#)). These parcels are all within a ¼-mile radius of Sharon Center. A total of nine parcels are zoned R- Residential. Most of these parcels contain a dwelling and are between ½ and 1 acre in size.

There are also nine parcels zoned CH – Highway Commercial, while four parcels are zoned ML- Light Industrial. However, most of these parcels are currently used residentially. Existing business operations in Sharon Center are Steve’s Farm Supply and an automotive body and welding shop. Iowa Masons Fellowship Lodge #549 is also located in Sharon Center.

Within a ½-mile radius of Sharon Center, six subdivisions have been platted between 1967 and the present. The largest subdivision, platted in 1967, created eight residential lots. Another four subdivisions were single-lot, residential subdivisions. One of these was part of a farmstead split, and another is currently zoned CH – Highway Commercial. The final and most recent (2012) subdivision combined two parcels (Steve’s Farm Supply).

## Infrastructure and Services

Sharon Center is served by two fire departments: Kalona and Hills. The Kalona Fire Department serves most of the area, though a small portion of the eastern side of the Sharon Center ½-mile radius is served by the Hills Fire Department.

Two school district catchment areas also fall within Sharon Center. Most of the Sharon Center ½-mile radius is covered by the Iowa City Community School District. However, a majority of the central area of Sharon Center, as well as R – Residential zoned land directly east of Sharon Center’s central point, falls within the Mid-Prairie Community School District.

Law enforcement is provided by the Johnson County Sherriff’s Office. All roads that run through Sharon Center are maintained by the Johnson County Secondary Roads Department. Both primary roads in Sharon Center, Sharon Center Road SW and 500th Street SW, have a chip seal surface.

Johnson County considers soils with a Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) over 65 to be prime agricultural soil. A majority of soils within the ½-radius of Sharon Center have a CSR over 65.

## Public Meeting Process

### Meeting One

The first public meeting for the Village of Sharon Center planning process was held on July 9, 2013, at Steve’s Farm Supply, 2777 500th Street SW. Thirty area residents were present at the meeting. County planning staff attending the meeting included Rick Dvorak, Planning and Zoning Administrator; R.J. Moore, Assistant Planning and Zoning Administrator; and Becky Soglin, Planning and Zoning Assistant. County Supervisor Janelle Rettig also attended this meeting.

Janelle Rettig explained the purpose of village planning. R.J. Moore reviewed the 2008 Land Use Plan, Sharon Center history, relevant policies, and sample vision and goal statements. Staff also explained the purpose of defining a village boundary.

The meeting was then conducted as a discussion and question-and-answer session, with a focus on whether planning was needed, as well as topics such as taxes, housing, roads and zoning. Before the

meeting ended, participants were asked to brainstorm what they felt are the strengths and weaknesses of Sharon Center. These strengths and weaknesses were recorded ([Appendix C](#)).

## Meeting Two

The second public meeting for the Village of Sharon Center planning process was held on August 6, 2013 at the Sharon Center United Methodist Church, 2804 520th Street SW. Forty-three area residents were present at the meeting.

County staff attending the meeting included R.J. Moore, Assistant Planning and Zoning Administrator; Josh Busard, Assistant Planner; and Becky Soglin, Planning and Zoning Assistant. County Supervisors Rod Sullivan and John Etheredge also attended.

John Etheredge welcomed meeting participants, and Rod Sullivan summarized why planning was relevant and the meeting objectives. Josh Busard went over what had been accomplished at the previous meeting and that the tasks now were to set a Vision Statement, Goals and a village boundary.

After some discussion about the village plan process, Josh Busard reviewed the Strengths and Weaknesses identified at the prior meeting. The attendees then discussed potential goals for the Sharon Center Village Plan. The group also discussed growth boundary possibilities, as well as a current conditional use application, views on land ownership, and the basis for planning and its relation to the Johnson County Land Use Plan. An important clarification was made: creating a village boundary does not simultaneously involve rezoning any land inside or outside the boundary.

Rod Sullivan provided background on boundaries that have been set in the other villages. Participants then broke into four groups, each of which was tasked with drawing a possible boundary for Sharon Center. The remainder of the meeting was taken up with this activity.

## Meeting Three

The third public meeting for the Village of Sharon Center planning process was held on September 10, 2013, at the Sharon Center United Methodist Church, 2804 520th Street SW. Twenty-five area residents attended the meeting. County staff attending the meeting included R.J. Moore, Assistant Planning and Zoning Administrator; Josh Busard, Assistant Planner; and Becky Soglin, Planning and Zoning Assistant. County Supervisor Rod Sullivan also attended.

Rod Sullivan welcomed participants and summarized the aim of the planning effort and how it could benefit area residents: eventual adoption of a village plan and boundary.

Josh Busard reviewed previous input, the draft Vision Statement and the three categories of goals: Quality of Life, Growth, and Infrastructure and Services. Participants did not have any changes to the goals or vision statement. Discussion centered on specifics of how the boundary might benefit property owners, issues of implementation, signage and traffic concerns, open space possibilities, and how farmstead splits function.

The proposed boundary was described and discussed: roughly 320 acres, following quarter-quarter sections and supporting the subdivision code, including the 40-foot frontage requirement. It is roughly one mile wide (East-West) and a half-mile in length (North-South).

Some participants initially felt the boundary was too big. However, after discussion, many agreed the boundary appropriately provides flexibility to property owners within the boundary. Staff also clarified that the boundary needs to be large enough so that the question of its size does not need to be revisited every three to five years. It was noted that *creating* the boundary does not change property taxes; only an actual use change could result in a tax change.

### **Meetings: Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors**

At its November 12, 2013, meeting, the Planning and Zoning Commission voted 3-0 to recommend adoption of the Sharon Center Village Plan and proposed boundary. Prior to the December 12th meeting of the County Board of Supervisors to consider the matter, a Sharon Center area resident with property adjacent to the proposed boundary asked that it be included within boundary. This resident subsequently spoke at the December 12th board meeting.

Given that it appeared reasonable to include this individual's property and that of another individual within the boundary (adding three quarter-quarter sections to the village area), the Board voted to return the matter to the Planning and Zoning Commission for reconsideration on January 13, 2014. At that meeting, the commission voted to recommend adoption of the plan and proposed boundary. The plan and boundary were then forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for consideration and formal adoption. The Board of Supervisors officially adopted the Sharon Center Village Plan on February 13, 2014.

## Village of Sharon Center Goals

### Quality of Life

Maintain the community's rural lifestyle.

Ensure special events, such as the annual bicycle race, involve input from residents.

Continue to reduce conflicts with surrounding agricultural operations

### Growth

Support planned, intentional development.

Promote village-level commercial development.

Promote single-family residential developments on small, adjacent lots that preserve open space and agricultural land (clustered-type development).

Shared well and wastewater systems shall be preferred.

### Infrastructure and Services

Add signage to promote safety for automobile and truck drivers, pedestrians, horse-drawn carriage, farm equipment, and school buses.

The condition of the road network should be properly maintained, to include bridges.

Additional safety measures should be provided at the intersection of Highway #1 and Sharon Center Road as well as 500th Street and Sharon Center Road.

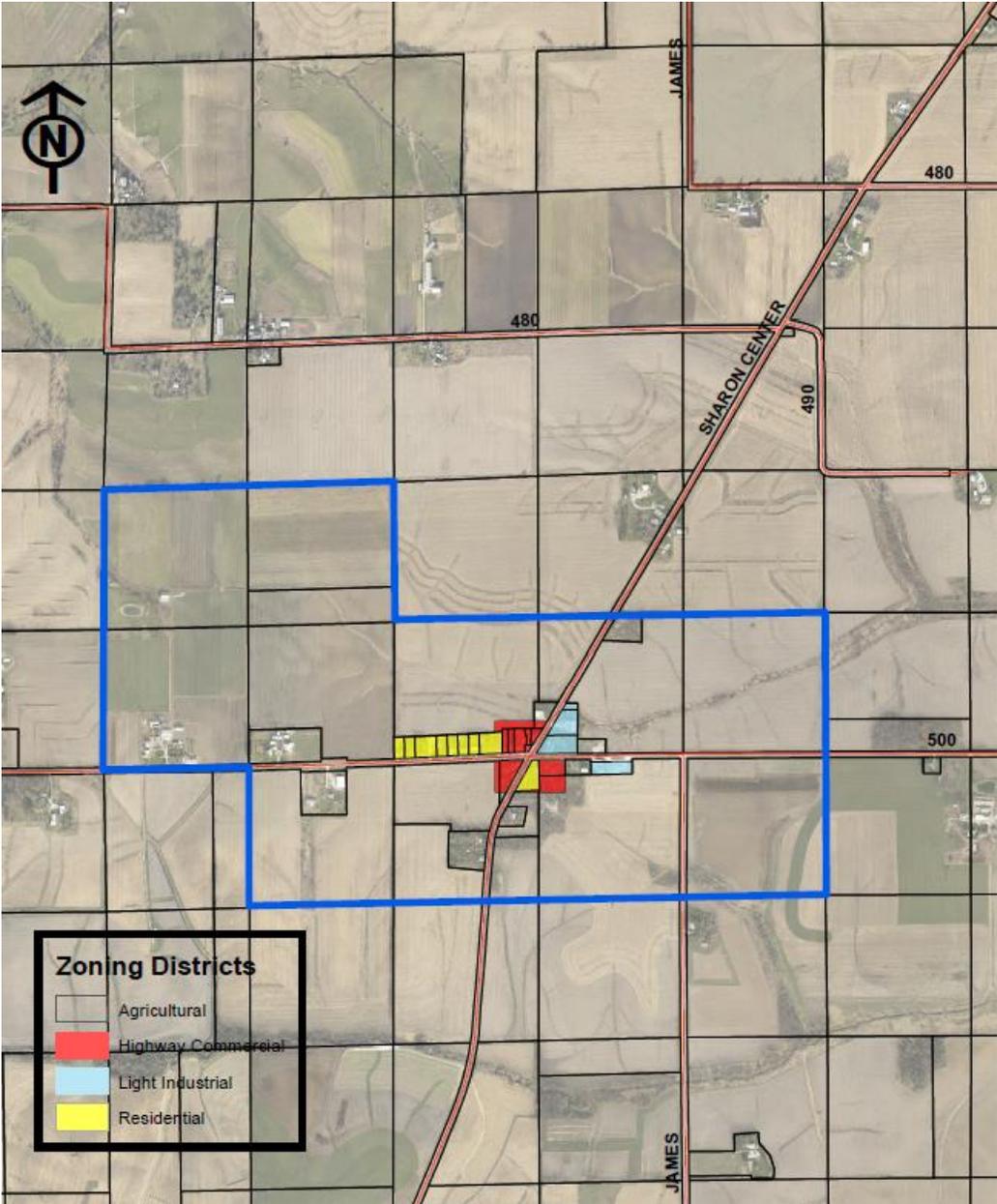
### Vision Statement

*The Village of Sharon Center desires to remain a small, rural community with rural values where agricultural land and operations are protected and where infill development is preferred and growth is managed, incremental, and consistent with the Johnson County Land Use Plan.*

### Village Boundary

The village boundary for the Village of Sharon Center includes 11 quarter-quarter sections outlined in blue below, totaling approximately 440 acres (Map 1). Any development application involving land within the boundary will be considered more favorably if in compliance with the stated goals and adopted vision statement for the Village of Sharon Center. It is important to note that this boundary does not change any current zoning designations or land uses, both inside and outside the village boundary.

**Map 1: Village Boundary for the Village of Sharon Center**



## Appendix A

### **Johnson County Land Use Plan – Village Excerpt**

The Johnson County Land Use Plan outlines its policies for Unincorporated Villages and the creation of village-area development plans. The following is an excerpt from the Land Use Plan which is available on the Johnson County Planning and Zoning website:

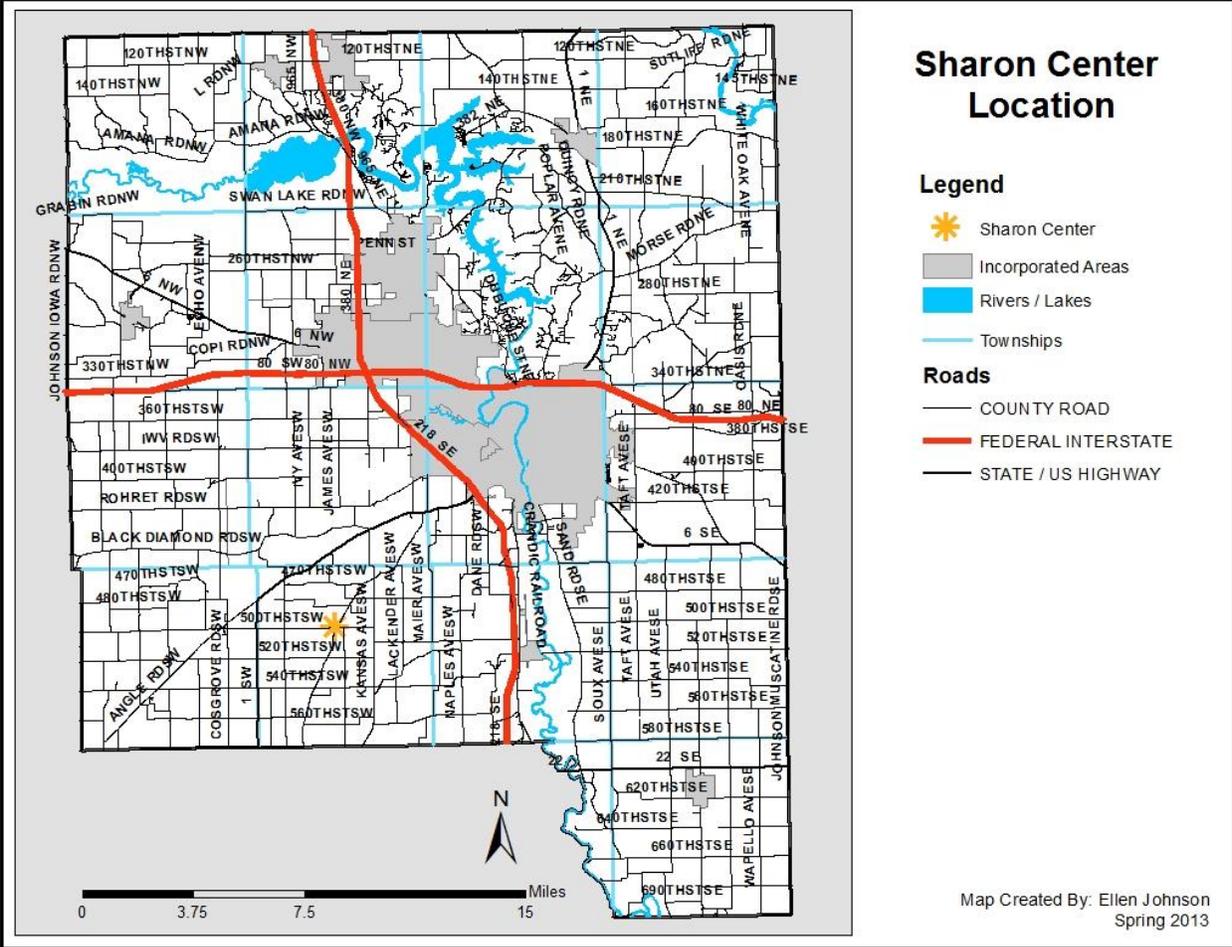
#### **3. Unincorporated Villages (Page 15)**

3.1 Create village-area plans which will detail a vision for the desired level of growth and development to occur in the future. As part of the village-planning process, the County should:

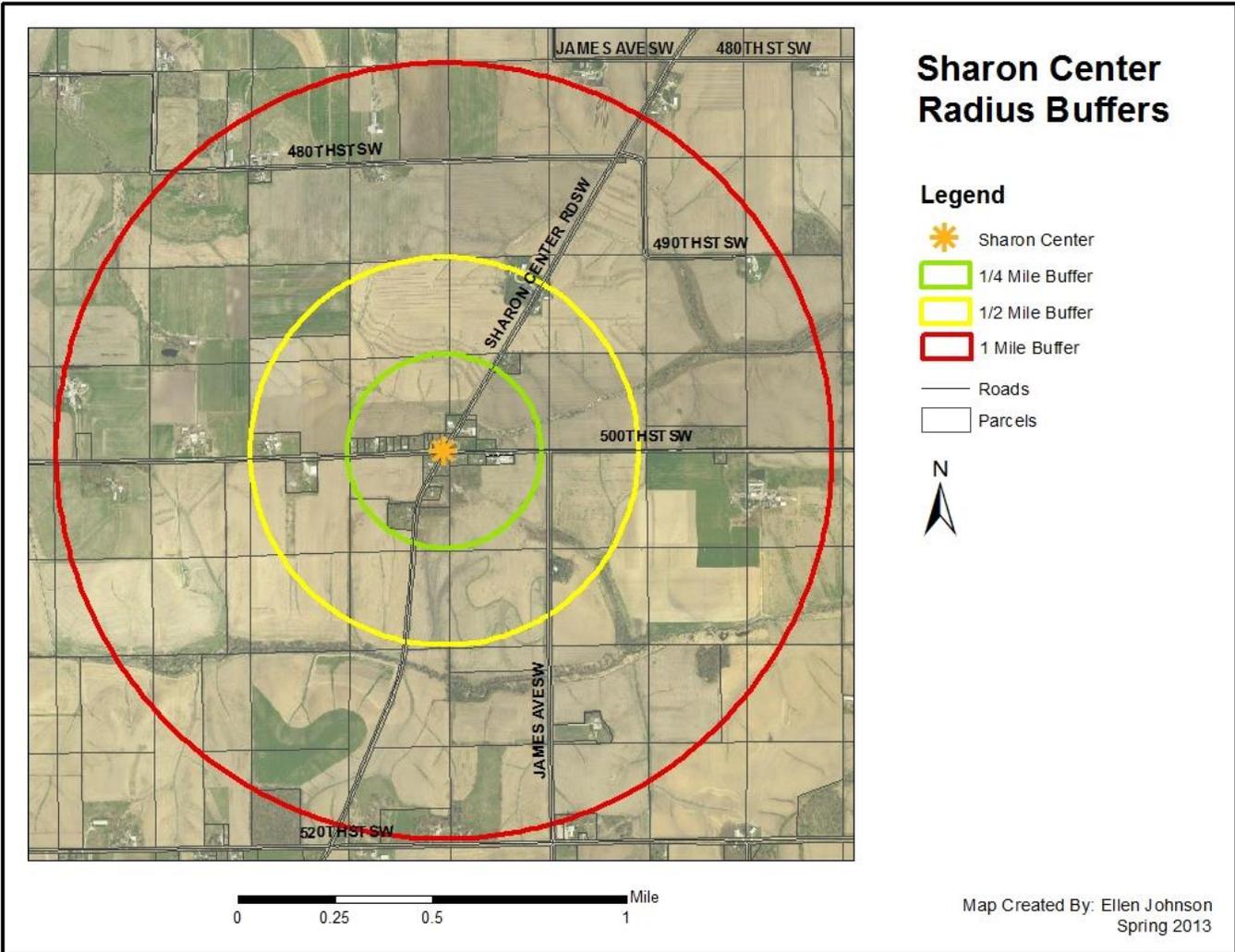
- a) Develop geographical growth areas for villages.
- b) Consider the resultant impacts of additional development within floodplains and to other environmentally sensitive areas.
- c) Encourage sustainability within villages by promoting mixed-use developments that foster live/work arrangements which are appropriate for the village-area being considered.
- d) Clustered subdivision design shall be the preferred type of residential development style within the village areas.
- e) Zoning classifications within the village areas shall be at a density that is appropriate and consistent with existing and historical patterns. The preferred zoning classes for residential development would be those with the highest densities.

# Appendix B

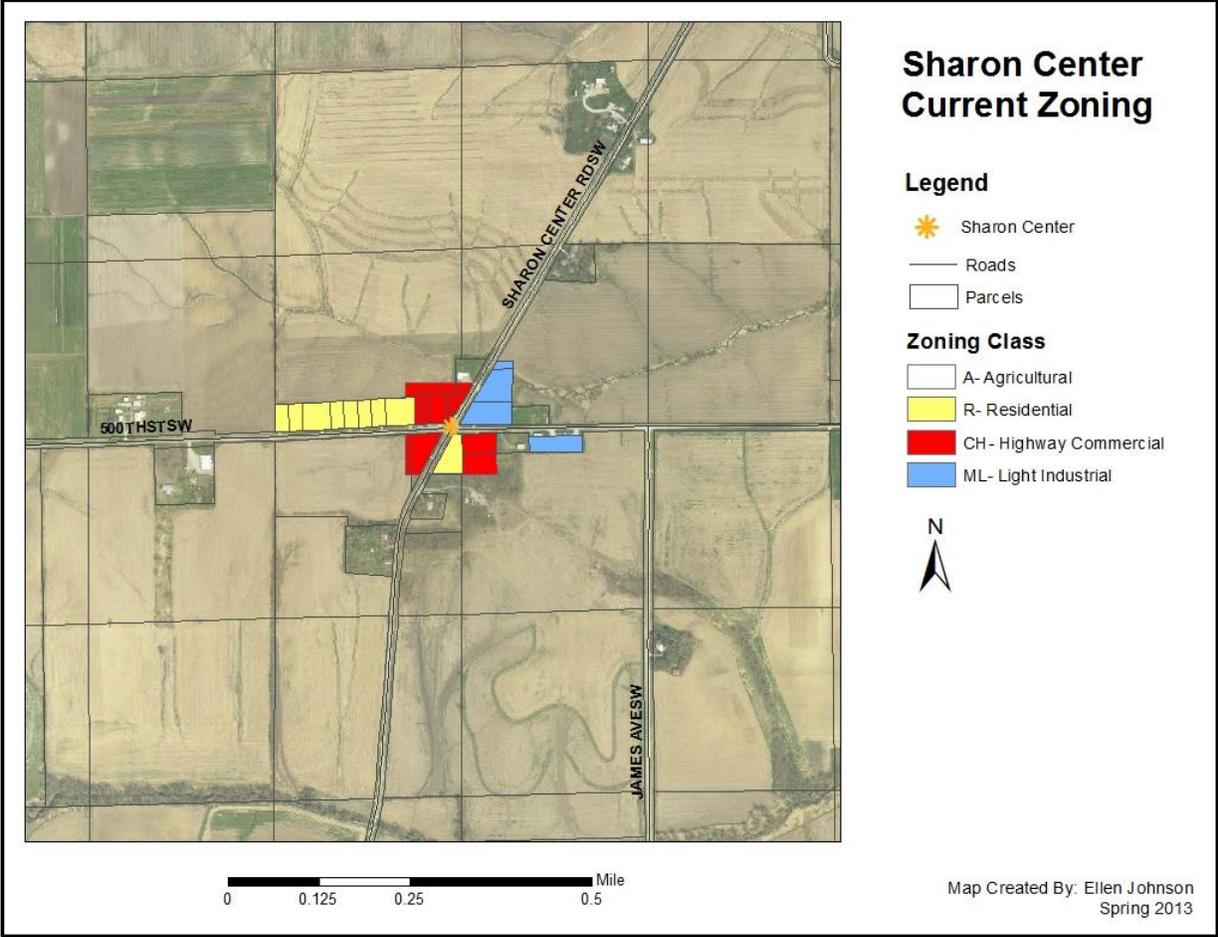
## Map 2: Sharon Center Location



Map 3: Sharon Center 1/4- to 1-mile Radii



Map 4: Sharon Center Zoning Designations



## Appendix C

### Meeting One: Strengths and Weaknesses

*(Listed in the order shared by the participants.)*

#### **STRENGTHS (17)**

- Open space
- Great farm ground
- Community
- It doesn't take a government to have a parade or put up Christmas decorations. People have shown leadership to do it.
- Independence
- Quiet
- Preservation of family ties
- Family land use
- Supportive community
- Prompt snowplowing
- Amish using horses
- Relatively safe biking
- Safe neighborhood
- Predictable and secure
- The people themselves in the community
- Little businesses
- We take care of each other

#### **WEAKNESSES (7)**

- Speed of traffic/curves on roads
- Dangerous intersection at Sharon Center Road and 500th Street. People run right through it without stopping.
- Drag racing
- Bicycle races—neighbors are never informed; held during farming season when large equipment is on the roads; organizers need to better time the events.
- No posted speed limits
- Wastewater management and septic issues
- Conditions of roads and bridges