

## 2020 Vision: A Strategic Plan for the Center of our City

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We have come a long way since January 8, 1950, when the Village of Town & Country was formed consisting of 162 residents in an area of about two square miles generally centered around the intersection of Clayton and Ballas Roads. With steady growth and major annexations approved by the voters in 1977 and 1991, Town & Country now consists of nearly 12 square miles and 11,000 residents. That growth and geographic expansion transitioned the center of our City further west to Clayton and Mason Roads.

At that central location, the City built our current firehouse in 1991 to better serve our entire community and its new boundaries. In the span of just a few years, a Strategic Plan (1997), a Parks and Open Space Plan (1997), and a Trails and Parks Master Plan (1998) were all completed providing valuable direction to our maturing town. Consistent with this resident-oriented and community-minded planning, 30 acres of land were purchased in 2000 on the adjacent corner from the firehouse around Clayton and Mason Roads and dedicated as Longview Farm Park in 2002. Since then, this *de facto* center of our City has become a focal point and gathering place where we enjoy a steadily emerging sense of arrival and community in Town & Country.

### Why Continued Planning is Essential

I would like to echo what my late friend and original member of the Strategic Planning Committee, Jamie Cannon, once wrote:

*Anyone familiar with town planning will know that we have just skimmed the surface of possibilities. What all of this implies is that Town & Country must continue to plan for the future. The quality and nature of that future depends on us.<sup>1</sup>*

The City of Town & Country is located in the geographic center of St. Louis County and assumes a pivotal position within the seven-county East-West Gateway Planning Region. In fact, we sit at the crossroads of the primary north/south connector (I-270) and east/west interstate (I-64) of the metropolitan area, making the City an ideal location for residents, places of worship, educational institutions, healthcare providers, businesses and other organizations. For this reason, our central geographic location regularly attracts the focus of developers and the various interests they represent. Therefore, it is essential that Town & Country move from the back seat of reactive assessment of various proposals to the driver's seat of forward-thinking planning so that we may best manage our City's future. Clearly, we are in the best position to determine what assets or enhancements would bring true value to our community.

In the last issue of the *Times*, I suggested examining this area of our City by stepping back *and* looking forward consistent with a resident-centered 2020 Vision—a continuation of our Strategic Plan published in 1997 with a narrower focus on the area that surrounds the Clayton and Mason intersection. I firmly believe that the future of Town & Country is best guided by charting a decisive path today, so that we can shape how the center of our town will look and serve our community, not just in the foreseeable future but beyond.

Those who call Town & Country home have a strong sense of who we are and what we hold dear. Our commitments to green space preservation and one-acre residential neighborhoods were established long before many of us arrived and will continue long after we are gone. Consistent with those fundamental beliefs, we can add value to our surroundings by assuming control over our future through comprehensive planning among all stakeholders. This placemaking process should occur sooner rather than later, so that we may be more proactive with our vision for Town & Country, rather than continuing to react or respond to the desires of others, particularly those who may not share the vision we have for our community.

2020 Vision: Bringing Value to the Center of our Town

It is widely recognized that the area surrounding Clayton and Mason Roads is the hub of our community wheel. From the pastures and playgrounds at Longview Farm Park, to the quaint shops and amenities in and around Mason Woods Village, this has been and will long be a central gathering place. The recent completion of the Clayton Road Trail, with its trailhead feature in front of our iconic firehouse, has connected many neighbors and neighborhoods to this special location, with additional connector trails in various phases of discussion or planning. In fact, the idea that you can drive *through* Town & Country, but you cannot drive *to* Town & Country, is slowly beginning to change as our sense of place and identity continues to coalesce in this area. With Longview Farm Park, the shops at Mason Woods Village, our firehouse and even our community garden, we have the building blocks of a traditional *town square*...a place in the heart of our community where friends and neighbors can gather together to discuss local issues, celebrate community events, and enjoy various amenities suitable for this modest area. The potential for a town square would then connect to many of our neighborhoods by roadways, sidewalks and walking trails.

***"Change is inevitable. We won't be able to simply stand still and run in place. City building doesn't work that way. Identify the qualities of a community that would have universal appeal, and we have a benchmark we can use to judge the nature of the community in which we want to live."***<sup>1</sup>

**Jamie Cannon**

Town squares are public spaces adorned with art and cultural exhibits, as well, which make significant contributions to the cultural fabric of a community, enhancing its shared vision, identity and quality of life. Art has also been recognized by business and municipal leaders for invigorating public places and its significant contribution to economic vitality.<sup>2</sup> The Longview Farm Park House has already become a prominent showcase of artwork for some very talented local artists. In addition, the Public Art Commission hosts art galleries and exhibits, the plein air competition known as *Impressions of Town & Country*, as well as our annual *Art, Wine and Music* event there. In fact, the St. Louis County Municipal League recently recognized our City's focus on such efforts, led by Alderman Wright and the Public Art Commission, when Town & Country was named the recipient of the League's *Art and Culture* award at its annual banquet on May 29<sup>th</sup>.

Building on this success, the Public Art Commission has embarked upon another ambitious project to place an original piece of public art to help celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Town & Country’s incorporation next year. Specifically, renowned artist and sculptor, Harry Weber, has been commissioned to fashion a realistic bronze statue of a horse and dog with additional bronze pieces to be added over time [PHOTO]. The Commission feels that the sculpture, named “Discovery,” embodies the spirit of Town & Country, and recommends placement of this iconic piece at the Clayton Road trailhead in front of the firehouse, further beautifying the center of our community.

For reasons stated previously, this central location, which extends north along Mason Road to Highway I-64 (where the new pediatric care facility is being developed) and south to Queeny Park (where the dog park is being sited) has inspired considerable attention and concern for its future . By moving into the proverbial driver’s seat with respect to all proposals in this area, it would be the collective community that plans and oversees any future development or modifications of key parcels of land in our town square. This is planning at its best—a process driven by community input and thoughtful dialogue by first establishing a collective vision for the property (a 2020 Vision), followed by an implementation process that is open and transparent to all stakeholders and interested parties.

***“Why would it not make sense for the city to acquire those lands deemed critical to the future success of this city and to do it right now? When the time comes for the city to use the land, we will do so knowing that we bought the property before it appreciated further.”<sup>1</sup>***

**Jamie Cannon**

### The 2020 Vision Process

It is essential to the success of our 2020 Vision planning process that we work with everyone from the adjoining neighborhoods and properties, along with gaining input from others across the City, to develop a blueprint that fosters planning and development consistent with our shared values that will lead to enhancing our surroundings and community assets—a blueprint that reflects who we are and preserves that identity for future generations.

***“As both a resident and a business owner in Town & Country, I look forward to working with my neighbors, customers and the city in pursuing the 2020 Vision surrounding our Straub’s location at Clayton & Mason Roads.”***  
**Trip Straub**

Let me conclude by underscoring some essential aspects of our 2020 Vision strategic planning process. First, it will be a *communal* process. 2020 Vision, like top-tier placemaking processes that are occurring around the country, represents an incredibly exciting opportunity for our

community. Citizens will have a direct role in shaping what our City will look like and who we will be...*the community transforming places so places can transform the community.*

Second, our 2020 Vision will be an extended and thoughtful process involving public discourse, deliberation, even disagreement. Inevitably, some opinions may clash and the vision of one individual may conflict and compete with that of another, but all of these interactions will occur within a forum that not only invites, but welcomes, a multitude of ideas. True democratic

processes can sometimes appear chaotic, yet out of chaos can emerge beauty, order and a mutually shared vision that has been shaped and refined by discourse rather than by decree.

The old axiom is certainly true when it comes to the future of Town & Country—if we fail to plan, we will certainly plan to fail; conversely, if we can roll up our sleeves, seize the moment and the opportunity, we will greatly improve our community today and the chances for its prosperity tomorrow.

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I hope and trust the foregoing has drawn your attention to this very important value proposition for our beloved City. Regular communications will continue as our 2020 Vision planning process begins to emerge in earnest over the coming weeks and months. If you have a particular interest or wish to actively participate, please contact me directly at (314) 486-9991.

In the interim, best wishes to all for a healthy, happy and joyous summer season. See you at Fire & Ice!

Jon Dalton  
Mayor

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<sup>1</sup> All excerpts from Jamie Cannon are taken from his work, “Welcome to the New Millennium, Town & Country 2010: A vision for an edge city.”

<sup>2</sup> American Planning Association. Retrieved from <http://www.planning.org/research/arts/briefingpapers/vitality.htm> on March 28, 2014.