

SOUTH CENTRAL KANSAS PROSPERITY PLAN

**Butler, Harvey, Reno,
Sedgwick, & Sumner Counties**

January 2015



The work that produced the South Central Kansas Prosperity Plan was supported by funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and consortium partners from South Central Kansas. Local partners were responsible for the development of the planning documents and the content reflects the vision and strategies of local communities in our region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The South Central Kansas Prosperity Plan is a result of 3 years of intensive collaboration among elected officials, local government staff, partners, stakeholders, and citizens. Their participation in the planning process involved numerous meetings, presentations, data and information collection, document review, and idea sharing. Their commitment to the region resulted in the creation of a regional plan and toolkits to ensure that South Central Kansas is a prosperous place where people can live, work, play, and learn.

This document represents a vision and plan for our future. It was created by individuals who want to ensure a continued high quality of life through implementation of strategies that address the challenges and opportunities before us. It is a reflection of local values and a vision for setting priorities and allocating limited resources. This is an important tool for implementing sound strategies around the issues of workforce and business development, water, transportation, natural resources, the built environment, and healthy community design. All of these are vital issues that are at the core of our communities and connect us as a region.

We are a diverse region with many assets and great sense of pride. We have a strong foundation in agriculture, manufacturing, oil and gas, entrepreneurial opportunities, and a landscape of rural, suburban and urban living. We are economically, socially, and community rich. This planning process has allowed us to proactively think about where we are today and evaluate trends that will need to be addressed moving forward. This thoughtful and proactive planning opportunity provided us the advantage to begin to think differently about our future and how to meet the needs of our communities.

The development of this planning document was guided by the Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP), the Consortium Leadership Team, and the six Work Teams, who provided, not only insight and ideas, but strong leadership and commitment to making the region strong, sustainable, and resilient. The South Central Kansas Prosperity Plan is a valuable, genuine, and unique resource that was created as a blueprint of choices. It is intended to enhance local decisions, policies, and planning efforts by offering new perspectives and recommendations on critical topics.

This plan reflects the views and concerns of our local communities and reflects the strong desire to enhance and strategically shape our region over the next 20 years. For this planning process to be successful there needs to be a continued commitment to advance its strategies and focus on opportunities to think and act regionally by encouraging the efficient use of resources and promote residents' concern for quality of life issues. Continued collaboration will ensure our ability to address future challenges and meet the needs of our communities.

We appreciate the dedicated commitment of the region to complete the South Central Kansas Prosperity Plan and look forward to continued collaboration and strategy implementation.



John Waltner

South Central Kansas Prosperity Plan
Consortium Leadership Team Chair

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN

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South Central Kansas strives to offer prosperous and innovative communities of choice that offer opportunity and quality of life to all people and create connections throughout the region and the world.

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the Regional Economic Area Partnership a grant of \$1.5 million to create the South Central Kansas Prosperity Plan (Prosperity Plan). Local partners supplemented the grant with an in-kind match valued at \$813,000. The purpose of the Prosperity Plan is to develop short- and long-term strategies to increase the South Central Kansas region's economic competitiveness, enhance the quality of life for all residents, and establish a framework for regional coordination and planning.

The Prosperity Plan expresses the collaborative efforts of numerous individuals, organizations, partners and stakeholders throughout the region. After identifying challenges in reaching the goals of prosperity and a high quality of life for all residents, the plan provides a series of recommendations for addressing key issues. Many of these issues are not specific to one political jurisdiction: adequate water, efficient transportation, and a prepared, skilled workforce are just three examples of needs that transcend city and county boundaries. A regional approach to these issues promotes the most efficient

use of available resources and allows organizations to work together toward a common goal. At the same time, each city, county, for-profit entity, and non-profit organization takes actions every day that affect local and regional prosperity and quality of life. The plan provides a menu of recommendations that stakeholders can use to enhance opportunities for residents.

The strategies and recommendations resulting from the Prosperity Plan will build on the following principles, based on HUD's six Principles of Livability:

- **Provide more transportation choices.** Develop a safe regional transportation system that includes strategic, responsive, and sustainable transportation options that enhance economic production and the connectivity of people and goods in the region.
- **Promote equitable, affordable housing.** Ensure a wide variety of housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds in urban, suburban, small-town, and rural areas of the region.
- **Enhance economic competitiveness.** Ensure continued prosperity throughout the region by establishing the framework to grow businesses and create jobs in South Central Kansas.
- **Support existing communities.** Enhance and create connected, attractive, and value-added neighborhoods through strategies like mixed-use and infill development to support the revitalization of communities, the increased efficiency of public works investments, and the safeguarding of rural environments.
- **Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection.**

Remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth.

- **Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

PLAN PARTNERS

Since 1997, the Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP) has been guiding stakeholders to think and act regionally. The city and county local governments that make up REAP have come together to create a regional vision for economic development, engage partners in inter-jurisdictional planning efforts, and advocate for state and national policies that affect the region. Since the inception of REAP, local leaders have been advocates for regional cooperation, recognizing that economic prosperity can be achieved by working across political boundaries. REAP has provided a forum to continue making that cooperative dialogue a reality. The HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant aligns with the mission of REAP by allowing our region to integrate housing, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments into a regional planning initiative that considers economic competitiveness, social equity, and public health.

REAP has created a work plan to support opportunities for economic growth in our region. Specific actions of the plan include:

- Develop and support a regional legislative agenda and policy priorities for the 2015 Legislative Session;
- Create stronger working relationships between and among economic development agencies/offices in the region;

- Raise awareness of municipal water issues in South Central Kansas in relation to state policy, possible legislation, and best practices;
- Work with REAP members, state officials, WAMPO, and other stakeholders to develop a regional forum to enhance and coordinate regional transportation issues and projects;
- Identify and implement services for REAP Members related to best practices, community development and leadership; and
- Expand REAP membership

In 2006, REAP formed a Water Resource Committee (WRC) due to the increasing need to address regional water supply, quality, and affordability concerns, which directly relate to long-term economic prosperity. The REAP WRC has been coordinating regional water planning efforts to maximize the utilization of existing water resources, protect surface water and groundwater quality, and provide educational opportunities for efficiencies in water infrastructure and distribution in the region. The REAP WRC is a key partner of the Consortium Leadership Team and the Natural Resources Work Team in coordinating inter-jurisdictional water infrastructure planning.

REAP has also provided oversight and feedback on the Prosperity Plan. The REAP annual work plan includes advancing the strategies developed through the planning process, such as establishing task forces around transportation, workforce development, regional branding, and water. They have created opportunities for regional topic discussions through open forums and presentations. Their work will continue to support the implementation of the Prosperity Plan and bring together partners and stakeholders to enhance South Central Kansas.

The regional consortium of government and non-profit agencies that led the Prosperity Plan includes, in addition to REAP:

- City of El Dorado
- Harvey County
- City of Hutchinson
- Independent Living Resource Center
- Kansas Health Foundation
- City of Newton
- Reno County
- Sedgwick County
- City of Wellington
- City of Wichita
- United Way of The Plains
- University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita Campus

and businesses can take to maintain the diversity of high-quality-of-life options in the region, while ensuring sound training and job opportunities and supporting greater prosperity for all. The South Central Kansas region competes with other regions and employers throughout the country, and its economic resources, transportation systems, and natural resources do not recognize political boundaries. Only by working together, to enhance these assets will the region prosper.



- Visioneering Wichita
- Wichita Downtown Development Corporation
- Wichita Independent Neighborhoods
- Wichita State University Center for Community Support and Research
- Wichita State University Hugo Wall School of Urban and Public Affairs

Representatives of each of these organizations served on the Consortium Leadership Team (CLT), which provided oversight of the planning process and gave input and direction for the final plan. Many CLT members were also active participants on work teams that developed plan content.

The Prosperity Plan addresses opportunities and challenges in Section 4 and subsequent topic area sections. The plan provides a blueprint of strategies and specific actions that regional leaders, residents,

After several introductory sections, Section 6 of this document presents three alternative future scenarios that study partners considered, followed by a description of the preferred scenario. Section 8 begins a series of sections devoted to individual work team prosperity and livability goals, along with recommended strategies to achieve those goals. These strategies vary from voluntary action steps geared toward individuals, nonprofit organizations, and businesses to policy and coordination recommendations for local governments. The strategies reflect the work of many individuals and, if accomplished will support a healthier, more resilient, and prosperous region with options for all citizens to lead the lives they desire. Sections 14 and 15 describe the priority strategies and key implementation steps necessary to move the Prosperity Plan and the region forward.

SOUTH CENTRAL KANSAS

Study Area

For purposes of the Prosperity Plan, the South Central Kansas region study area consists of Butler, Harvey, Reno, Sedgwick, and Sumner Counties. **See Figure 1.1.** The region is highly diverse, ranging from Kansas' largest city in Wichita, to numerous small communities such as Newton and Wellington. Wichita and Sedgwick County dominate the region in terms of population and employment, but the vast majority of regional lands are rural, supporting important agricultural and natural resources.

The region offers a rich and diverse array of cultural and recreational amenities and community settings from urban living in downtown Wichita and single-family suburbs to small town life in Hutchinson and rural life in Sumner County. Wichita has experienced considerable growth in recent decades and accounts for more than 25 percent of the state's total population. Population projections anticipate that the South Central Kansas region will experience an 18 percent population increase by the year 2040, but the projected growth is uneven, with much of the growth in Butler and Sedgwick Counties.

In recent years, many rural areas across the country have seen the loss of young adults to larger metro areas, and regional leaders seek to reverse this trend in South Central Kansas by making its communities more attractive to people moving into careers from high school, technical school, and college. Strong regional partnerships can add momentum to overall growth, while bringing greater economic opportunity to all residents and communities throughout South Central Kansas.

South Central Kansas has also enjoyed relatively low unemployment rates with strong employment in the aerospace, education, medical, and resource extraction industries. Given its strengths in aviation and advanced manufacturing, the region



has a very high per capita level of exports. Concentration of employment in these sectors and a dependence on global demand, however, make the region vulnerable to economic swings, and create challenges in developing an adequate

supply of qualified labor. Regional partnerships offer opportunities to build on our core assets, further diversify the economy, and prepare the workforce for quality job opportunities.



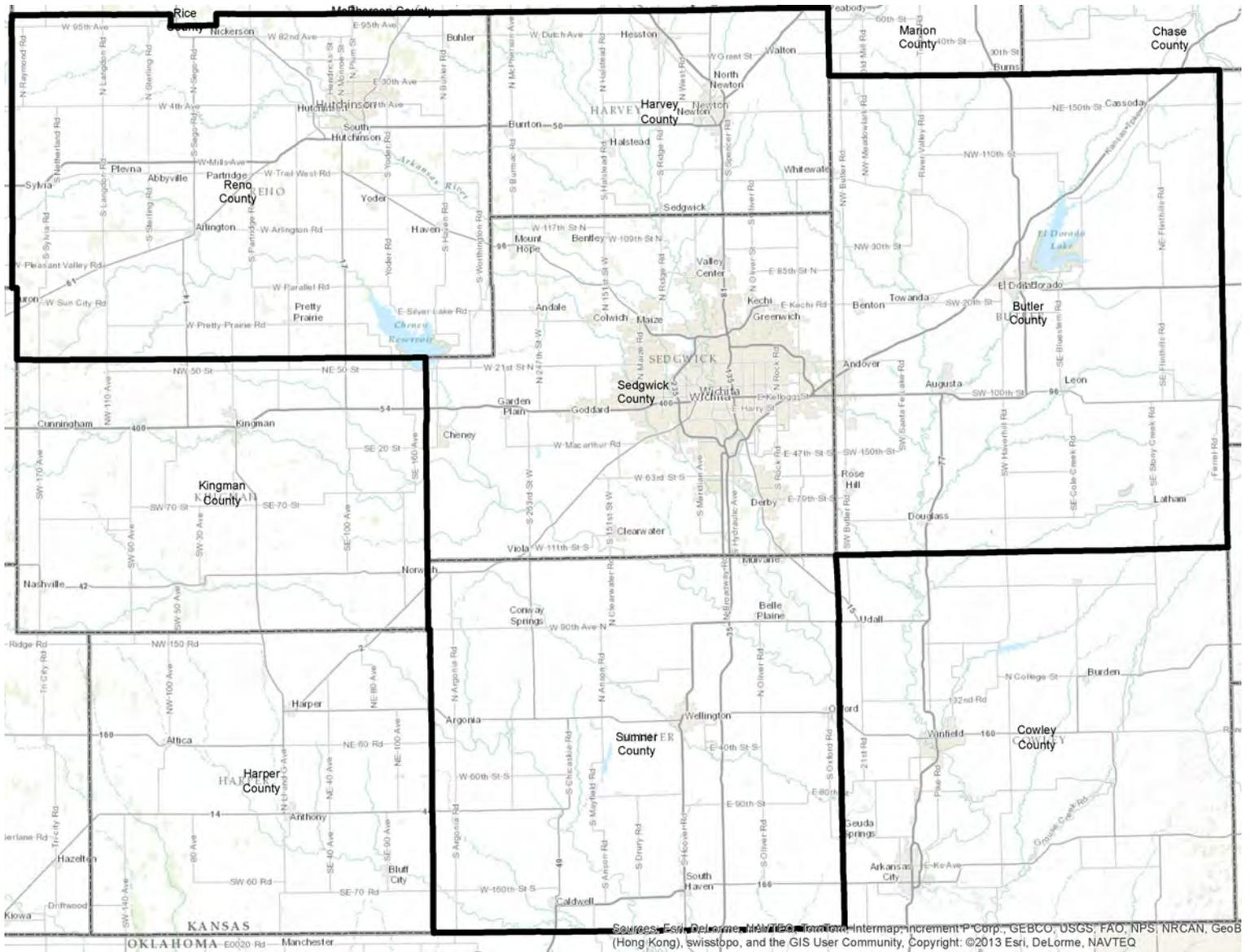


Figure 1.1 South Central Kansas Study Area

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING PROCESS

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PLANNING PROCESS

Figure 2.1 illustrates the Prosperity Plan process. The five-phase process included:

- **Kickoff:** Goal setting, issue identification, and data collection.
- **Assessment:** Current conditions in each topic area.
- **Technical Analysis:** Technical analyses for issues identified in each topic area.
- **Growth Analysis:** Three alternative

scenarios or approaches to the regional plan that respond to the big challenges identified in technical analyses. Section 6 describes these alternatives and Section 7 describes the selection of a preferred scenario.

- **Plan Recommendations:** Recommendations for each study area to address the big challenges and move the region toward the desired vision for prosperity.

The planning process addresses three fundamental questions:

- **Where are we now?** What are the baseline conditions and capacities of the region across a broad spectrum of physical, economic and social resource areas; and what is the quality of life that the region seeks to maintain?
- **What are the gaps?** What issues require more resources or expanded

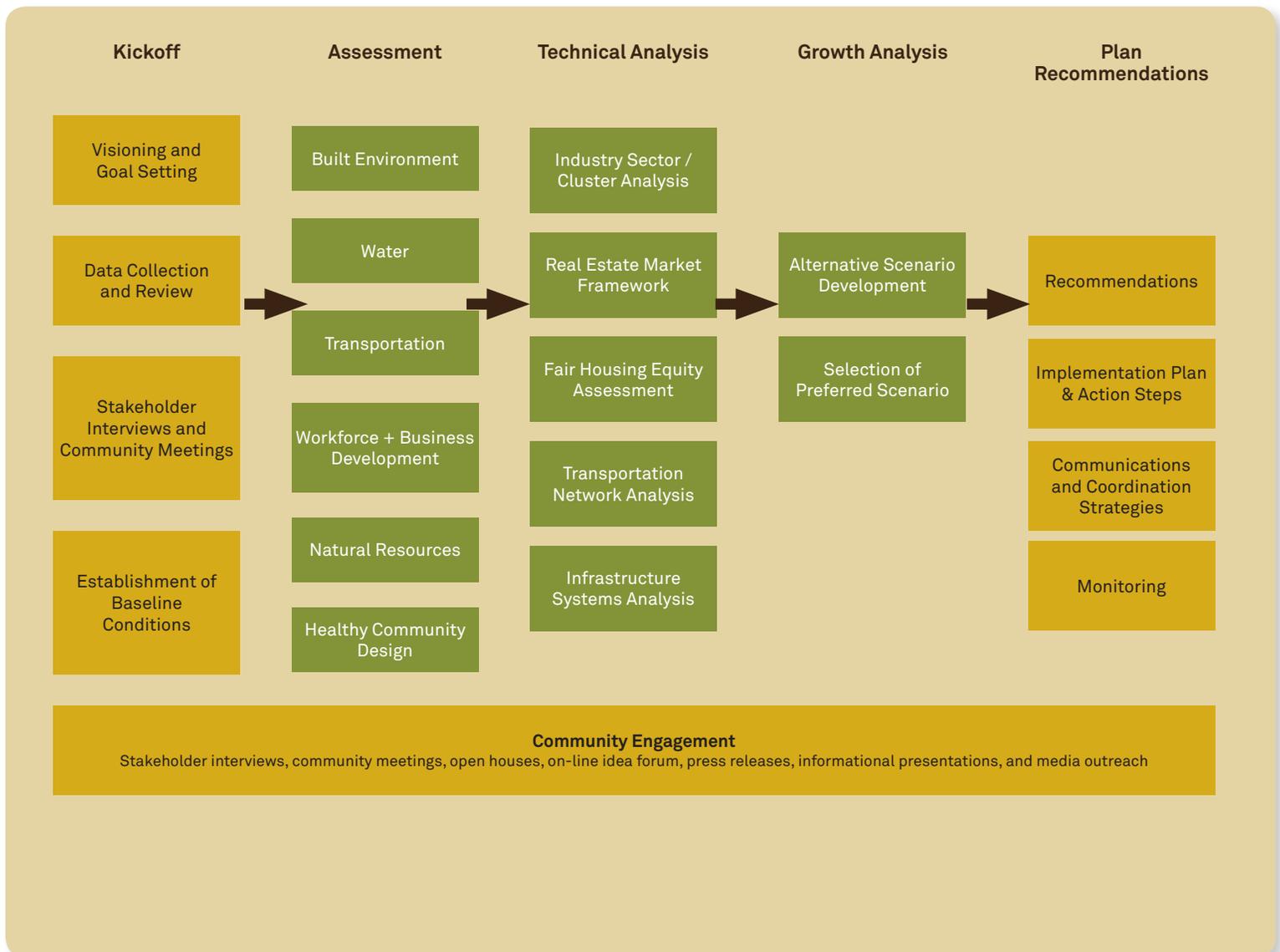


Figure 2.1 Planning Process

capacity to ensure continued economic growth and to protect the quality of life for current and future residents?

- **How do we change?** What specific action steps can local governments, the private sector, non-profits, and other key stakeholders take to meet the changing needs of the region?

Additional detail regarding each planning phase is described below.

Phase 1: Kickoff

The project team developed answers to the opening questions based upon broad-based community engagement, including the CLT and Work Teams, and extending to the reaches of the five-county region. Feedback from individuals, organizations, major employers, and the elected and appointed officials of Butler, Harvey, Reno, Sedgwick and Sumner Counties was essential in establishing the issues and policy gaps ultimately addressed by the plan.

Phase 1 also included the development of a public engagement plan, which called for the use of a variety of tools to engage the region's stakeholders. These tools included stakeholder interviews, large-format open houses, a statistically valid survey, smaller community meetings, attendance by project team members at standing community meetings, and the project and MindMixer websites. Section 3 more fully describes these activities.

Phase 2: Assessment

This phase included a gap analysis for each Work Team category (Built Environment, Healthy Community Design, Natural Resources, Transportation, Water, and Workforce and Business Development). In addition, planners assessed fair housing conditions in this phase. Phase 2 concluded with needs assessment working papers, which reviewed existing plans and policies,

discussed current conditions and trends, and identified initial opportunities.

Phase 3: Technical Analysis

Planners refined technical analysis of existing conditions and needs during this phase, as Work Teams developed goals and recommended actions. Public engagement also continued via the websites, survey and attendance at numerous community meetings.

Phase 4: Growth Analysis

Planners prepared future development scenarios for analysis during this phase. A highlight was a joint meeting of all the Work Teams to assess the scenarios. That session resulted in a regional preferred scenario and a general framework to guide strategy development.

Phase 5: Plan Recommendations

The core purpose of this study is to create a set of realistic, clear, and prioritized action steps to work toward a sustainable future. This phase produced specific strategies for each topic area, and all Work Teams participated in an interactive workshop to review the draft final recommendations. They also refined the overall plan vision and identified priorities for implementation.

Consortium Leadership Team

The CLT, comprised of representatives of all of the study partners, provided general oversight of the preparation of the plan. The CLT developed, analyzed, and evaluated scenarios beyond the "do nothing alternative," which assumes that present day trends and conditions continue unchecked.

The CLT worked to prepare a plan that was both inclusive and flexible, engaging diverse stakeholders, communities, and individuals that do not typically participate in traditional planning initiatives. The CLT also sought to develop a set of strategies and tools that governing jurisdictions and

stakeholders could adopt at their discretion to ensure that land use, transportation, and environmental considerations align with local processes and planning.

Specific consortium leadership structure, roles and responsibilities were:

- Meet monthly to discuss and approve planning elements and build knowledge of issues discussed in the planning effort.
- Provide communication to organizations and communities on the planning process.
- Provide in-kind resources and participate in the planning effort.
- Report on activities to REAP.
- Establish the working team structure.
- Provide input on Work Plan activities and integrate information across different working teams.
- Participate in the community engagement process.
- Provide project management direction and oversight.
- Assist in collecting broad based data about the region to serve as baseline information for topic areas.
- Assist in developing plan content.
- Endorse the regional plan and support the implementation of the strategies, processes and tools developed in the plan.

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING PROCESS

WORK TEAMS

The Work Teams were at the heart of the planning process, producing the majority of the plan contents: their products included a guiding vision, goals, focus areas, key issues, and recommended strategies for each study area. Sections 8 through 13 of this document describe the vision, issues, and recommendations. The Technical Appendix contains detailed Work Team matrices used to organize content.

Though the Prosperity Plan features distinct Work Teams—Transportation, Built Environment, Healthy Community Design, Natural Resources, Water, and Work Force and Business Development—these six areas overlap significantly to influence one another.

- **Workforce and Business Development.** This topic is at the core of the Prosperity Plan. It covers the topics of employment, worker training, and readiness for employment, the soundness of the regional economy, and the climate for large and small business creation. The purpose of this topic is to ensure that the regional plan will support existing communities, businesses, and workforce development opportunities, as well as identify and promote emerging business and industry clusters. The Work Team considered the competitiveness of South Central Kansas and recommended strategies to improve the region's image. As elements of a prosperous community, all the other Work Team topics provide the social, physical, and natural infrastructure to support a healthy business climate and a quality of life in the region that will attract businesses and workers alike.
- **Built Environment.** This topic focuses on regional housing, infrastructure, and community facilities such as parks and recreation. The purpose of including this topic in the plan is to ensure that the organization of land uses and transportation throughout the region supports the goals of livability, efficiency, and economic development. The Work Team evaluated general land use patterns and the practice of planning in the region. The team worked to identify strategies to create communities for the 21st century: places that effectively connect people to jobs, quality public services, and other amenities, and provide the quality of life desirable to the region's residents. Included in their analysis were ways to expand housing choices for people of all ages and incomes throughout the region as part of the Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA) report.

The Built Environment provides the framework for a healthy business community and workforce by efficiently connecting housing, jobs, and schools, and by providing the kinds of living environments desired by all ages and affordable to people of all income ranges. This topic relates closely to Transportation, as it addresses connections among neighborhoods and between housing and jobs; and to Healthy Community Design, which considers the role of the built environment in supporting healthy choices.
- **Transportation.** This topic addresses better ways to connect people to jobs and schools, people to people, and people to the places where they want to live, shop, and play. In addition, maintenance and maximizing the efficiency of existing

transportation infrastructure fall under this topic. The purpose of including the topic in the plan is to optimize investments and strive to ensure that residents throughout the region have affordable, convenient choices for getting to work and school. Modes of transportation considered included roads and bridges, public transportation, rail, and biking and walking trails. The desired outcome is to develop reliable and affordable transportation options in the region to assist in increasing accessibility for all residents, supporting economic growth, making more efficient use of resources, and improving quality of life and air quality. Transportation is vital to a healthy workforce and business development climate, as well as access to health services, and overlaps with the Workforce and Business Development, Built Environment, and Healthy Community Design topics.



- **Water.** This topic emphasizes water supply issues. The Work Team’s central purpose was to ensure that the water supply continues to serve the needs of the region and its communities. Adequate, clean water obviously sustains the physical health of human, wildlife, and vegetative communities. Similar to transportation, the water system can also shape the pattern and character of development in the region. Additionally, water intensive uses, including manufacturing, agriculture, and energy extraction rely on a steady and adequate supply. The Work Team considered current water supply and delivery systems to support existing and future populations in wet, normal, and drought conditions. Water resources relate closely to Natural Resources, community development issues addressed in Healthy Community Design and Built Environment, and the availability of adequate water clearly affects economic development issues considered by the Workforce and Business Development team.
- **Natural Resources.** This topic addresses the healthy natural systems that are critical for humans, animals, and plants and promote economic vitality and growth. This topic was included because industries and businesses, from the traditional agricultural economy to the emerging energy sector, require clean and abundant soil, air, and water. Additionally, resilient and intact environmental systems, such as wetlands and riparian buffers perform important functions, such as cleansing and draining water, thus reducing the costs associated with building and maintaining more

physical infrastructure and mitigating the impacts of natural hazards. The Work Team considered water quality, air quality, and solid waste. Natural Resources strongly support the Water and Healthy Community Design topic areas, and relate to quality of life issues addressed by the Built Environment team.

- **Healthy Community Design.** Healthy community design is the broadest and most inclusive of the Prosperity Plan topics. It specifically links the traditional concepts of planning (land use, transportation, community facilities, parks, and open space) to health-related themes (physical activity, public safety, healthy food access, mental health, and air and water quality). Communities that feature open spaces, parks, and transportation options can support more active lifestyle choices that reduce the risk of disease. This topic was included because healthy communities also create more interconnected places that spark social interaction, invite private investment, link people to critical services, offer safe, quality housing, and increase quality of life for residents. Healthier and more engaged residents are also essential in sustaining a more productive and economically competitive workforce. The Work Team considered the physical, educational, economic, and social resources that provide opportunities for healthy living.

WORK TEAM PROCESS

Directed by the CLT, planners worked with six Work Teams to develop the elements of the plan. Each Work Team consisted of representatives of government, private, and non-profit entities throughout the South Central Kansas region. The Work Teams

met on a monthly basis over the course of approximately 16 months and undertook the following activities:

- **Visioning:** Each Work Team developed a vision and mission statement.
- **Focus Areas:** Each team identified several “focus areas,” or a clustering of issues around which to organize and prioritize their efforts.
- **Goals and Issues:** For each focus area, the teams developed a goal statement and identified two to five issues for the plan to address.
- **Data collection:** Each team helped the professional staff identify and gather data to analyze the focus areas and identify key challenges and gaps to inform recommendations.
- **Scenarios:** The teams analyzed and discussed the regional scenarios.
- **Recommendations:** Each team developed recommended actions to address identified challenges.

In addition to their individual meetings, the Work Teams participated in two Work Team Congress sessions in December 2013 and September 2014. The congress sessions provided the opportunity for Work Team members to learn about the issues identified by other teams, analyze and discuss the regional development scenarios, develop an overarching vision, and prioritize plan strategies.

The South Central Kansas Prosperity Plan reflects the feedback of individuals and groups throughout the five-county region. Outreach included one-on-one interviews of business representatives, government officials, and citizens; in-person meetings; open house events; surveys; and an online idea forum. The diverse perspectives heard on the concerns, hopes, and priorities for the region and its communities strongly shaped plan recommendations.

Across all input activities, stakeholders stressed the importance of economic development initiatives, including job creation, education and training, infrastructure maintenance, and reliable, adequate water supplies. Feedback also recognized the value of regional cooperation in making South Central Kansas stronger and more competitive.

KICK-OFF EVENT

Outreach for the project began with a high-energy kick-off event at the National Center for Aviation Training on February 1, 2013. Attendees included more than 125 elected officials, study partners, and stakeholders, who heard presentations about the project and the state of the region, and provided feedback to four questions:

1. *The biggest benefit to living in my community or in this region is? It is important because?*
2. *The most significant disadvantage to living in my community or in this region is? Why?*
3. *To make a difference in the future of our region, we need to?*
4. *Our lives and the lives of our children and grandchildren will be better if.....?*

This feedback set the foundation for the planning process.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The project team conducted a series of 36 interviews with stakeholders from throughout the South Central Kansas planning area. Stakeholders represented a variety of organizations, governments, and private entities. The purpose of the interviews was to confirm initial study issues, identify additional issues, and establish study priorities. The team organized conversations around the following general questions:

1. *What do you see as the largest opportunities and challenges your community faces?*
2. *What do you see as the largest opportunities and challenges the region faces?*
3. *What issues are most important to you? Which do you think are most important to your constituents or clients?*
4. *The planning effort is looking at 6 key areas: Transportation, Water, Natural Resources (water quality, air quality, and waste management); Workforce and Business Development; Built Environment, and Healthy Community Design. What two areas would you prioritize as the most important?*
5. *What are some suggestions for effectively reaching out to your constituents or clients about these issues?*
6. *Are there specific infrastructure challenges that the region faces that may limit the future pace of regional growth?*
7. *What are the region's strengths and weaknesses from an economic development standpoint?*
8. *Post-recession, is your view of the region's competitive position half empty or half full, and why?*

Generally, the interviewees were very positive about the South Central Kansas region and saw a bright future for its people and economy. The Technical Appendix contains a summary of main themes from the interviews.

According to stakeholders interviewed around the region...

- ... the regional economy is improving
- ... finding qualified workers is a major challenge for companies
- ... the region suffers from a lack of a coordinated economic development strategy
- ... water supply is emerging as an important issue
- ... region suffers from a poor self-image
- ... many young people leave for a perceived better quality of life in other areas
- ... some communities need housing strategies to attract workers and other new residents
- ... local governments need to structure regulations that respond to market forces
- ... we need consistent attention to business needs
- ... more leadership is needed to develop a regional mindset
- ... growth is concentrated in Sedgwick County, with little occurring in surrounding counties
- ... there are concerns about future infrastructure funding



SOCIAL MEDIA

A social media plan included a Facebook page, a Twitter account and MindMixer. Regular posts on Facebook and Twitter kept friends and followers up to date on project activities.

Supplementing and running concurrently with other community participation activities, MindMixer provided an online forum for public input and discussion. The Let's Talk Prosperity MindMixer website allowed individuals to engage in the planning process at their convenience.

The MindMixer site had over 801 visitors and 53 registered participants. Of those visitors, 46 participants were actively engaged in ongoing dialogue. These participants responded to questions around the values of the South Central Kansas region of today and tomorrow, and reviewed and commented on concepts and topics that coincided with the content of other public and Work Team activities throughout the project.

Overall, participants generated 76 ideas and 29 comments, ranging from thoughts about economic development to parks and transportation. The Technical Appendix contains a summary of MindMixer activity.

WEBSITE

The project website www.thinktomorrowtoday.org provided information throughout the life of the project, including the background of the plan and its funding, CLT and Work Team agendas and minutes, a calendar of events, and a link to the MindMixer site. In addition, visitors could make comments directly on the website and submit photos from around the region.

OPEN HOUSES

In September and October of 2013, the project team held one open house in each of the five participating counties. Approximately 50 people attended the open houses, where they viewed exhibits providing information about regional issues and had the opportunity to fill out a survey asking about regional priorities and preferences.

Each participant took part in an exercise to prioritize challenges and opportunities in the region, using a series of dots to rank issues from 1 to 5 with 5 being most important and 1 being not important at all. **Table 3.1** summarizes the results of those exercises. Results emphasized the following priorities:

- Attracting, retaining, and supporting businesses
- Strengthening workforce skills and capabilities
- Supporting new development and redevelopment in appropriate areas
- Developing regional vision, mission, and marketing
- Expanding housing choices and improving access to affordable, quality housing

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Beginning in July and continuing through November 2013, the project team conducted 38 presentations for approximately 370 people in groups representing diverse interests from business owners and civic volunteers to environmental activists to homeowners' associations.

The goal of each engagement opportunity was to gather input on the strengths of South Central Kansas, as well as what the region needs to improve and what the focus of the Prosperity Plan should be.

QUESTIONNAIRE

During the open houses and community meetings, participants had the opportunity to complete a multi-part questionnaire in which they could describe the region, give reasons why they like living where they live, and rate a series of ideas for future prosperity.

Why live in South Central Kansas?

The questionnaire asked stakeholders to consider what they liked about the community in which they live. Based upon that reflection, participants let us know that their top three reasons for living in South Central Kansas were (*see Figure 3.1*):

- Affordable lifestyle
- Friendly people
- Family orientation

Retaining Our Residents and Attracting New Ones

To be a prosperous region, it is imperative that current residents of South Central Kansas stay here, while we also find ways to bring new residents to our region. The questionnaire asked stakeholders to rank a series of factors that could retain current residents and attract new ones, with one being very unimportant and five being very important.

COMMUNITY VISION

Transportation	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
Expanding transportation choices for all residents of the region	9	13	13	15
Better coordinating decisions about transportation, land use and the environment	4	13	15	16
Addressing maintenance challenges for transportation infrastructure	5	6	10	31
Promoting regional coordination on transportation decisions	5	13	15	15
<i>Other</i>				
Built Environment				
Promoting ways to build healthier, safer neighborhood designs	1	8	15	28
Supporting new development and redevelopment in appropriate areas	1	0	13	35
Increasing access to parks and green spaces for residents	7	17	5	22
Expanding housing choices and improving access to affordable, quality housing	5	6	9	34
Encouraging sustainable architecture and design	7	10	14	18
<i>Other</i>				
Healthy Community Design				
Discouraging tobacco use	10	13	5	22
Improving access to health care for residents	4	3	18	25
Encouraging physically active lifestyles	2	6	15	27
Increasing access to healthy food	3	15	16	17
Improving educational outcomes as a way to support healthier lifestyles	3	12	23	14
<i>Other</i>				
Natural Resources				
Maintaining and improving the quality of groundwater and surface water	1	2	6	
Maintaining and improving air quality	5	5	18	19
Reducing the amount of solid waste produced and managing solid waste in a way that protects public health and the environment	1	7	16	27
Promoting more sustainable and cost efficient ways to manage floodplains	7	18	17	6
Conserving habitat to support healthy fish, wildlife, and plant populations and protect natural functions	9	12	13	18
<i>Other</i>				
Water Resources				
Developing regional water supply models to understand water supply and demand	1	5	14	26
Promoting water conservation and education	1	4	17	30
Promoting regional drought resilience	2	6	20	23
Understanding and quantifying the value of water	2	3	15	30
<i>Other</i>				
Workforce & Business Development				
Developing regional vision, mission, and marketing	3	7	6	35
Attracting, retaining, and supporting businesses	0	1	1	48
Strengthening workforce skills and capabilities	1	1	12	36
<i>Other</i>				

Table 3.1 Open House Exercise Results

As is shown in **Figure 3.2** below, respondents indicated that the three most important factors to retain current residents and attract new ones are:

- Provide incentives for existing businesses to expand and/or grow here
- Ensure a safe and healthy living environment
- Ensure water supply and water quality

On what areas should the regional plan focus?

Each person in the five-county area has a unique perspective regarding how to achieve regional goals. The questionnaire asked stakeholders what they thought the focus of the plan should be, again using a rating scale of 1 to 5 with one being very unimportant and five being very important.

As is shown in **Figure 3.3**, participants believe the priority focus areas should be:

- A resilient, adaptable and diverse economy and skilled workforce;
- Education and training opportunities; and,
- Clean, plentiful water, air and soil.

Opportunities Necessary for Economic Development

Finally, participants identified the top three elements necessary for economic development. As is illustrated in **Figure 3.4**, the top three priorities for economic development were:

- Support for locally owned business
- Workforce training for adults
- Technology Training

ELECTED OFFICIALS

During 2013, Work Teams, content experts, regional representatives, and citizens assessed existing regional conditions and began to identify focus areas for each of

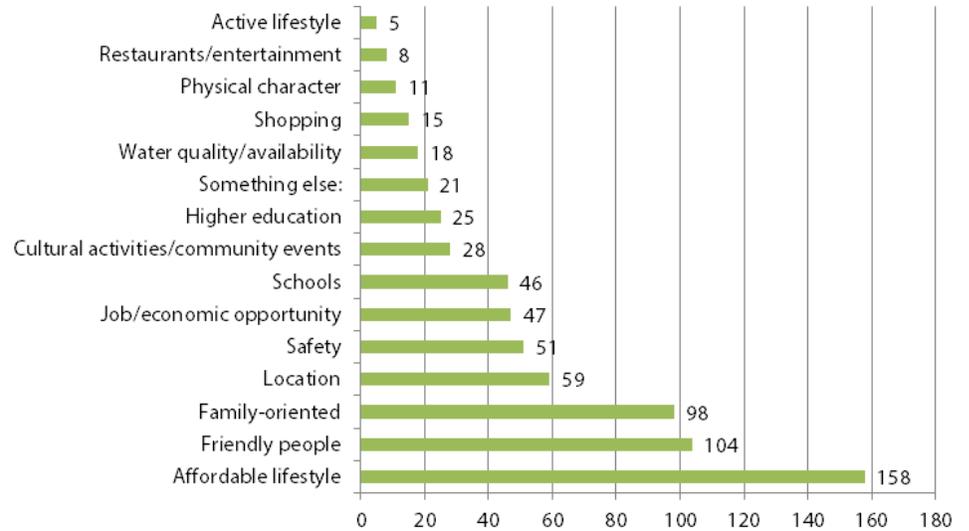


Figure 3.1 Reasons to Live in South Central Kansas

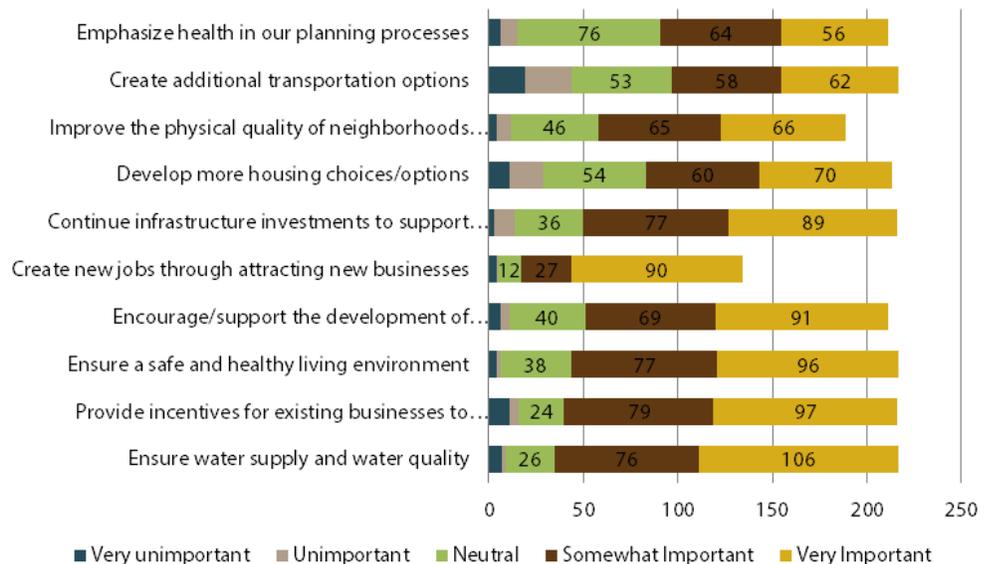


Figure 3.2 Retaining and Attracting Residents

COMMUNITY VISION

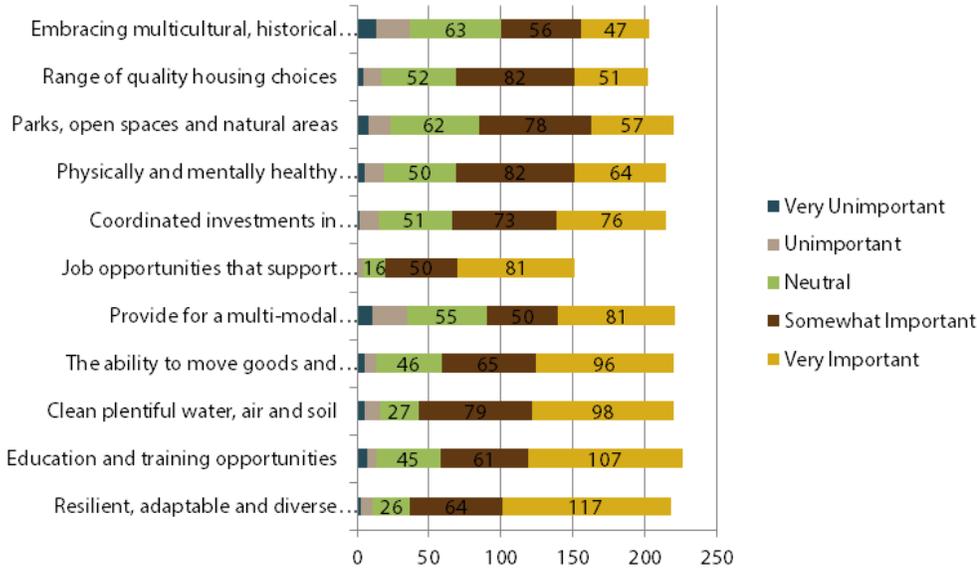


Figure 3.3 Focus Areas of the Plan

the six planning topics. To ensure that the Prosperity Plan reflected the priorities of local officials, the project team met with 30 elected boards from across the region to gain their insight on opportunities in each topic area, as well as top regional issues.

Team members provided elected bodies with an overview of the current conditions in the region and a list of focus areas for each planning topic. With this information, elected bodies gave input on the following questions:

- What the region is currently doing well and should build upon?
- What are we not doing, but should be?
- What are the priorities in your community?
- What is the single most important priority for our region's prosperous future?

The exchange of information helped project staff understand the values and needs of the region's individual communities.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Wichita State University administered a random-sample community survey. Respondents returned 2,131 surveys. When asked to complete the sentence "People living in South Central Kansas should be concerned about...", respondents emphasized:

- Region's aging infrastructure (streets, bridges, water, sewer, etc) and the rising cost of maintenance and/or replacement
- Decline in the number of good paying jobs
- Whether communities will have an adequate supply of water

The results reinforced the value of regional collaboration. More than 90 percent of respondents said that if communities in South Central Kansas work together, we can

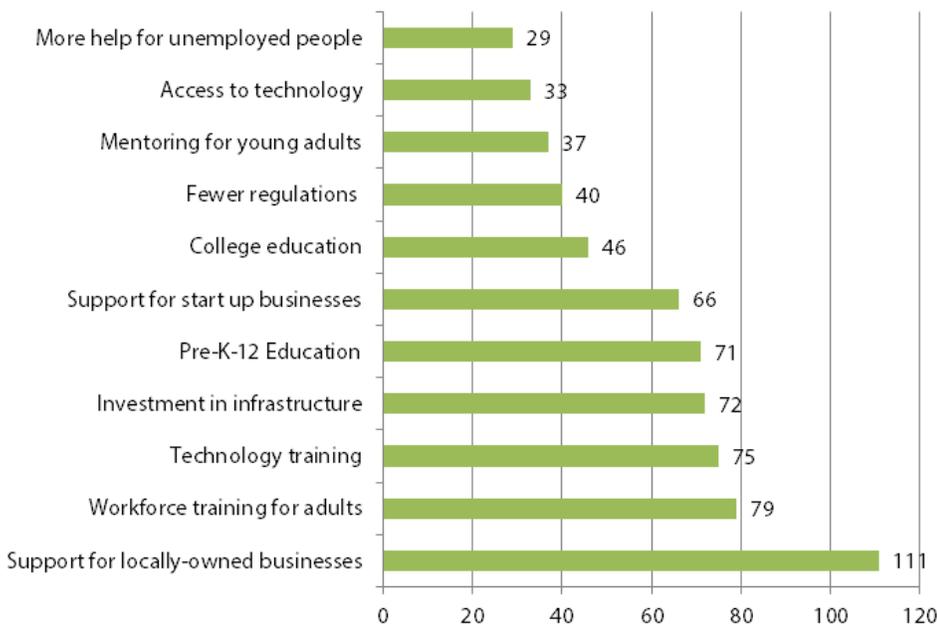


Table 3.4 Necessities for Economic Development

build a regional economy that is stronger and better able to compete globally, while improving the quality of life for citizens throughout the region.

When asked to describe a recommended course of action, respondents highlighted steps to:

- Encourage high schools and higher education to work with industry to promote technological advancements and to prepare students for employment upon graduation
- Encourage business and industry investment that diversifies the economy and increases employment access and opportunity

When asked to complete the sentence "South Central Kansas should act as a region to..." the top actions were to:

- Secure reliable sources of water for current and future generations
- Adopt programs to encourage water conservation
- Preserve current green space and parks
- Coordinate land use planning to protect water resources
- Coordinate land use planning to protect agricultural land

When asked to recommend changes in investments for the long-term well-being of communities and the region, respondents said they wanted to see strategic public investment in:

- Reliable sources for the future water needs of the region
- Job growth through retention, expansion and attraction of business and industry
- Maintenance of existing streets and roadways



WORK TEAMS

As representatives of their communities, Work Teams were also an important source of local input. Each Work Team established a series of focus areas for action, which shaped key priorities for the plan:

WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT:

- Enhancing the region's image
- Preparing the region's workforce
- Growing businesses

BUILT ENVIRONMENT:

- Improving community and neighborhood design
- Promoting reinvestment and infill development
- Encouraging sustainable architecture and design
- Understanding and strengthening the regional housing market

TRANSPORTATION:

- Creating structures for regional coordination

- Connecting transportation and land use
- Increasing transportation choices
- Addressing maintenance challenges

WATER:

- Ensuring an adequate water supply
- Promoting conservation and education
- Increasing understanding of the cost of water

NATURAL RESOURCES:

- Creating structures for regional coordination
- Promoting land use planning that protects natural resources
- Protecting groundwater and surface water quality
- Protecting air quality
- Encouraging recycling and reuse

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES:

- Addressing preventable causes of illness such as tobacco use
- Improving access to health services
- Increasing opportunities for physical activity
- Improving access to healthy foods
- Improving education outcomes
- Improving access to transportation

SUMMARY

The overlap among stakeholder, community, and Work Team input highlighted several unifying themes that gave overarching structure to plan analysis and content:

A Need for Regional Thinking and Regional Action:

A commonly expressed theme was a desire for tools and structures that support coordinated, strategic decision-making across jurisdictions and sectors (public, private, and non-profit).

COMMUNITY VISION

Dealing with Shrinking Resources:

Citizens throughout the region recognize the challenge of shrinking resources, especially federal funds, and seek to offset fiscal constraints through various approaches, such as public-private partnerships, innovative financing strategies (especially for water and transportation projects), dedicated funding streams, or the strategic planning of improvements to maximize public investments.

Expanding Choices:

Many stakeholders recognized the idea of expanding choices to meet changing demographics and shifting needs, especially in housing, transportation, and the built environment. As the region gets older and more diverse, it must adapt to meet the changing needs of residents.

Improving Access:

Better access for residents to housing, jobs, and services—not just in the traditional sense of more physical connections (though that is essential) but also a greater ability to take advantage of available economic, education, and social opportunities—was another common theme.

Combining Public Investments:

Several sources stressed the importance of synergy or combining public investments in a concentrated area to achieve a greater impact for the public and private sectors.

Encouraging Economic Development:

All input emphasized increasing the economic competitiveness of the region as a priority. Challenges include improving the access of businesses and entrepreneurs to the resources necessary to grow; an efficient, reliable transportation system that can move people and goods through the region; a skilled, prepared, and healthy workforce; technical and financial support; and adequate and affordable water.

Enhancing Quality of Life:

Stakeholders agreed upon the need to maintain a high quality of life to retain and attract residents and businesses to the region. Many people cited the existing character of the region—rural, suburban, and urban—as the region’s strength, but all communities must work to improve their “soft” assets, such as parks, community amenities, transportation options, and quality housing.

While there are obvious commonalities among the five counties, the diversity of the region also results in differing local priorities. Population growth in Wichita and Sedgwick County has been strong, but some rural communities are struggling and losing population. Small communities outside of Sedgwick County, for example, have a particular need for housing development to attract new businesses and employees. Rural areas also have high concentrations of senior citizens and low-income residents, requiring an effort to connect these households with economic development opportunities and critical support services.

Many suburban communities continue to develop single-family, auto-dependant residential areas, thereby highlighting the need to offer more housing types, transportation links, and a mix of land uses. Downtowns and urban areas face ongoing challenges in the reuse and revitalization of their existing buildings and mature neighborhoods, suggesting opportunities to promote rehabilitation and infill development. Much like some rural areas, the urbanized core of Wichita also experiences some distinct pockets of poverty and lower educational attainment that warrant a focus on enhancing neighborhood safety and access to social and economic resources for residents. The recommendations of the plan seek to reflect this diversity of need by offering a range of tools that is sensitive to community context.



THE BIG CHALLENGES

- Fragmented planning for the region’s physical and natural systems
- Modest and uneven projected population growth
- Modest projected job growth
- Lack of diverse housing choices and limited supply of newer, quality housing
- Lack of diverse transportation choices
- Lower public health outcomes and prevalence of health risk factors
- Aging infrastructure and declining and unstable funding for maintenance and repair of systems

To develop recommendations for the Prosperity Plan, planners working in collaboration with the Work Teams created a ‘snapshot’ of the region’s existing economic, social, and environmental context. South Central Kansas consists of very diverse places from downtown Wichita to suburban neighborhoods, small towns, and very rural areas with natural and agricultural landscapes. Each of these communities is distinct with its own character, sense of place, and values, and faces unique challenges. Rural and small-town areas must confront shrinking populations and a lack of suitable housing for middle-class workers; at the same time preservation of community character is of great importance. Suburban areas lack connectivity but offer a single-family lifestyle that most of the region’s residents desire. Urban areas offer more diversity

in housing and employment choices, but some areas suffer from lack of reinvestment and need redevelopment. At the same time, the snapshot also highlights critical challenges common to communities across the region.

MAJOR REGIONAL CHALLENGES

Planning for the Region’s Future
 Much of the planning for major systems in South Central Kansas – both natural resources and physical infrastructure - continues to occur at the local level. While local decision-making remains essential, the lack of regional planning limits the ability of local governments to pool resources and knowledge, capture efficiencies in service delivery, and develop connected, coordinated systems of infrastructure that better meet the needs of residents and businesses.

Growing Communities and the Economy
 Future job and population growth will be very uneven within the region and generally modest overall. According to 2040 projections, the five counties will grow by approximately 18 percent. Butler

and Sedgwick Counties will continue to see most of the population increase, while Harvey County could continue to experience a slower rate of residential growth. Sumner and Reno Counties could continue to lose residents. **See Figure 4.1.**

Employment projections for South Central Kansas anticipate a modest annual employment growth rate of 1.1 percent through the year 2020, with a total estimated increase of 11.3 percent. South Central Kansas has long been a world leader in aviation, aerospace, and manufacturing industries. The region is heavily manufacturing-oriented and is the most export-intensive metropolitan area in the U.S. However, employment projections indicate that manufacturing jobs will decrease slightly, while other sectors, such as health care, finances, and professional services are likely to expand at higher rates. Wages in many of the fastest growing occupations in the region have traditionally been below that of jobs in the manufacturing and professional sectors. **See Figure 4.2.** The region will also see growth in jobs that require a bachelor’s degree or higher. While the population is

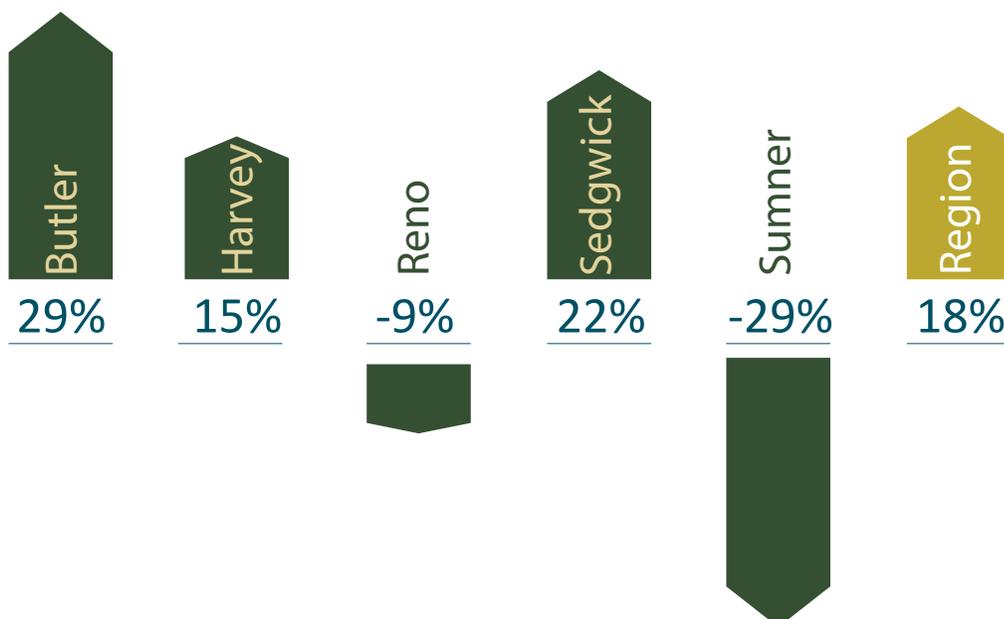


Figure 4.1 Population Projected Growth, 2010 to 2040
 Source: Wichita State University, Center for Economic Development and Business Research



Figure 4.6 Fastest Growing Occupations, 2010-2020
Source: Kansas Labor Information Center Labor Market Information Services, Kansas Dept. of Labor; U.S. Dept. of Employment and Training

becoming more educated on average, the rate of higher educational attainment in South Central Kansas lags the state. **See Figure 4.3.**

Housing and Transportation Choices

The lack of housing and transportation options leaves the region less prepared to meet changing needs resulting from demographic shifts. Almost one in five residents in the region will be 65 or older by the year 2040. As the population ages, the demand for smaller, flexible housing types in neighborhoods with safe walking or transit options increases. Younger residents similarly show a long-term preference for smaller housing types, including rental units in walkable, mixed-use areas. However, housing in South Central Kansas consists mostly of single-family units in automobile-dependant neighborhoods. **See Figure 4.4.** Only 0.9 percent of all trips occurred on public transportation; yet residents, particularly seniors and college students have indicated that the ability to get around by bus, bike, walking, or rail is a high priority.

This narrow range of housing and transportation choices affects the region in two ways. With few options to automobile use and single-family home ownership,

older residents will be less able to age in place in their neighborhoods. Communities may also struggle to attract and retain young workers.

Population data illustrate the challenge of retaining young residents. From 2000 to 2010, four of the five counties experienced a negative net migration rate of residents age 20 to 29. A negative net migration rate means that more individuals in that age group left the county than entered it. Sumner County had the sharpest drop in residents ages 20-24 and 20-29 at -47 percent and -38 percent respectively. Sedgwick was the only county to experience a positive gain in individuals age 20-29. **See Table 4.1.**

Along with a lack of housing types, the age of the housing stock can act as a barrier to reinvestment and growth. **See Figure 4.5.** The prevalence of older housing and the

lack of new housing reflect a cycle of low population growth and limited housing construction that reduces the ability of some of the region's smaller communities to attract new residents and workers.

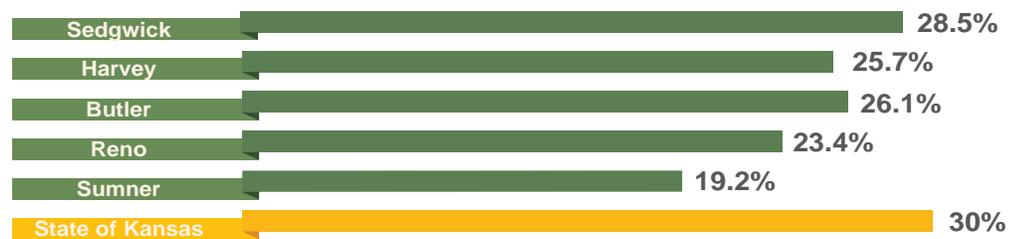


Figure 4.3 Percent of Population with Bachelor's Degree or Higher, 2012
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

REGIONAL PROFILE

	Age 20 - 24	Age 25 - 90
Butler County	-23%	-24%
Harvey County	-19%	-19%
Reno County	-12%	-15%
Sedgwick County	2%	18%
Sumner County	-47%	-38%

Table 4.1 Estimated Net Migration Rate, 2000-2010

Note: Estimated Net Migration Rate = Net Migration 2000-2010/ Population 2000

Source: Census 2000, Census 2010, University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Demography and Ecology

Aging Infrastructure

While older housing stock is an issue in some communities, all jurisdictions in South Central Kansas confront the challenge of older infrastructure. Local governments require increasing resources to maintain and update their aging roads, bridges, and water and wastewater systems. In addition to rising regular maintenance costs, funding constraints, including declining state funding and a lack of dedicated revenue, as well as the potential for more stringent federal environmental mandates could raise the infrastructure burden on the region's counties and municipalities.

Public Health

The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program is a partnership between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. The program's measures reflect many factors that affect the health of residents, such as high school graduation rates, unemployment, limited access to healthy foods, air and water quality, income, and rates of smoking, obesity, physical activity, and teen births. The study ranked 102 of the 105 counties in Kansas with a lower ranking indicating that the county is toward the top in the state and is thus healthier. Higher numbers indicate that the county fell lower in the state ranking and is less healthy. The five counties in South Central Kansas ranked from the top one-quarter (Harvey County) to the lowest one-third (Sedgwick and Sumner Counties) among the state's counties in overall health outcomes **See Figure 4.6.**

Rates of adult smoking, adult obesity, and physical inactivity in the region are generally at or above the state and national benchmarks. The prevalence of fast-food restaurants also influences health risk factors, such as rates of obesity. In all counties, over 50 percent of the restaurants are fast food establishments, compared to the national average of 27 percent. **See Table 4.2.**

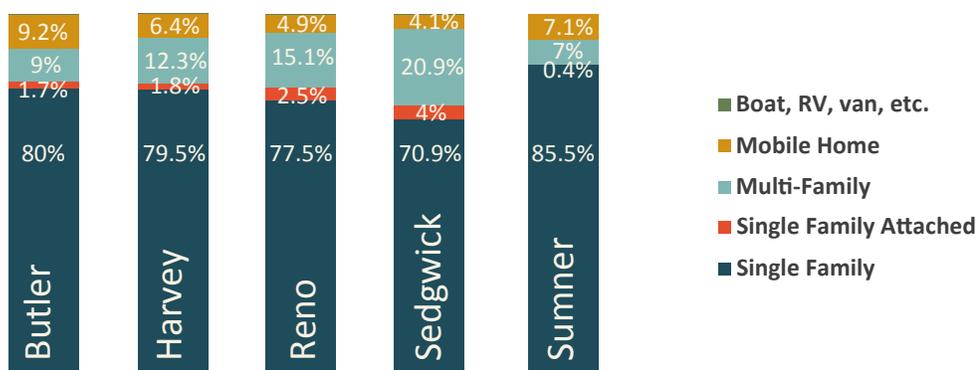


Figure 4.4 Housing Mix, 2012

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey



Figure 4.5 Percentage of Housing Stock Built Prior to 1980

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

The sections below highlight the major needs identified through technical analysis. Sections 8 through 13 of this document further describe challenges and opportunities by Work Team topic. The County Profiles under separate cover also include more detailed information organized by each of the five counties.

Workforce and Business Development
Local and regional economic health has major implications for socioeconomic

- Greater alignment of workforce skills with current and emerging jobs
- Upgrading of worker skills
- Resources to support entrepreneurial development

These gaps suggest opportunities for:

- Conducting regional marketing and promoting a coherent brand for South Central Kansas
- Building on core employment

current housing stock and house demand, development and redevelopment trends, and the land use patterns that define the region's diverse communities, including urban centers, small towns, and rural landscapes. Access to quality and affordable housing options is one of the most critical elements of a healthy built environment and a range of housing options that meets the needs of individuals and families of all incomes and life stages supports healthy neighborhoods.

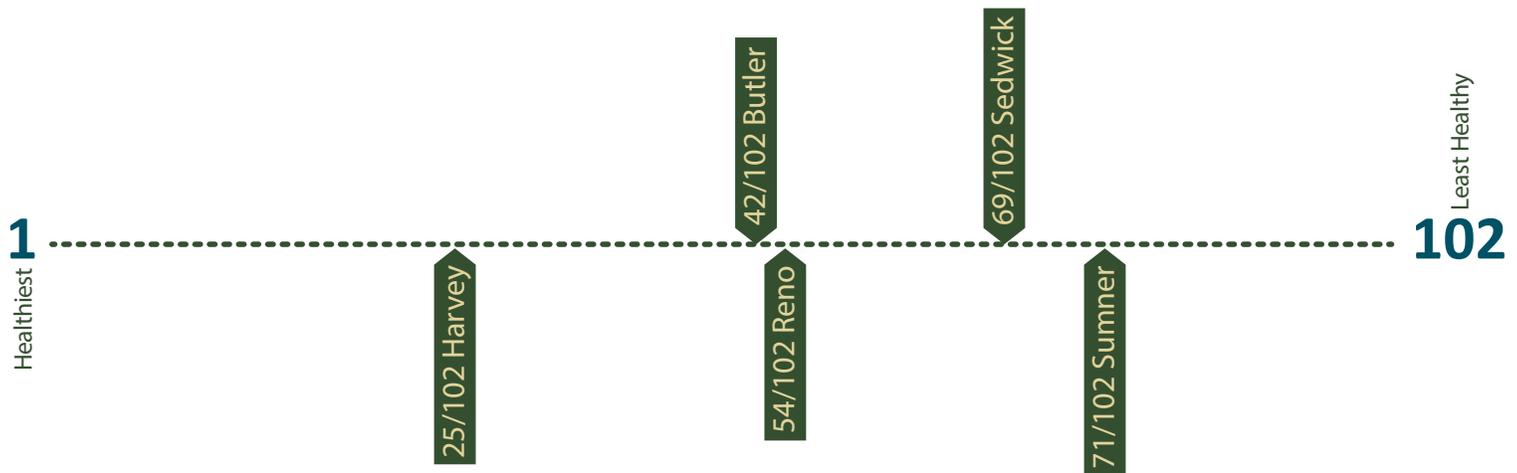


Figure 4.6 Overall Health Outcome Ranking by County, 2014

conditions, public health, educational quality and attainment, and the provision of community services. South Central Kansas must build on existing economic development and job growth initiatives to ensure its long-term economic competitiveness and resiliency.

The analysis of existing economic and workforce conditions in the region highlighted a need for:

- Regional brand to enhance national competitiveness
- Diversification of the regional economy

strengths to attract related, complementary business investment

- Expanding export-oriented businesses
- Improving workforce training opportunities and creating stronger links between educational and training programs and regional companies
- Connecting entrepreneurs to available support services

Built Environment

The region's downtowns, neighborhoods, parks systems, utilities, and roadways comprise the South Central Kansas built environment. An assessment of built environment includes an analysis of

The South Central Kansas region has many existing assets, including historic downtowns, Wichita's urban core and economic center, and established communities and neighborhoods—all of which serve as a foundation for the region's future development and growth. However, continued uneven distribution of growth will pose a challenge for rural communities and small towns as population trends shift growth away from some of the region's small towns.

An assessment of the built environment in the region identified the following major issues:

REGIONAL PROFILE

	National Benchmark	State	Butler	Harvey	Reno	Sedgwick	Sumner
Adult Smoking	13%	18%	18%	11%	20%	20%	21%
Adult Obesity	25%	30%	33%	29%	33%	30%	34%
Adult Physical Inactivity	21%	24%	24%	25%	23%	23%	29%
Fast Food Establishments	27%	48%	55%	51%	60%	54%	56%
Low-Income Population that does not live close to a Grocery Store	1%	8%	6%	7%	9%	9%	8%

Table 4.2 Selected Health Outcomes and Risk Factors by County, 2014

- Limited availability of transportation choices
- Lack of diversity in housing and neighborhood choices, particularly in small-town and rural areas
- Lack of regulatory flexibility in rehabilitation and infill tools
- Aging physical infrastructure

These ongoing challenges highlight opportunities for:

- Creating more diverse and better connected neighborhoods and communities
- Supporting building rehabilitation and community revitalization through incentives and more flexible codes and policies
- Improving the efficiency of infrastructure investment choices and maintenance and identifying sustainable funding options

Transportation

An efficient and well-connected transportation network is critical to the long-term economic viability of the region, as well as to a high quality of life for residents. In addition, transportation routes cross political boundaries and are generally best considered at the regional scale.

The state of the region's transportation system and its current planning initiatives face the following major challenges:

- Limited coordination among jurisdictions
- Limited work-home connectivity
- Lack of transportation options beyond automobile use
- Need to expand freight and passenger rail service
- Rising cost of maintenance of current infrastructure

Strategies with the following focus can assist in addressing these issues:

- Supporting regional coordination of transportation decisions
- Connecting housing and major employment centers
- Expanding mobility options, including active transportation and transit
- Developing freight and passenger rail service
- Developing more efficient systems to plan, build, and maintain transportation infrastructure

Water

Access to an adequate, stable water supply is vital to the region's health and prosperity. Water resources are finite, requiring coordinated decision-making to ensure a long-term supply.

The region's water system faces challenges related to:

- Limited nature of water resources and recent droughts
- Lack of consistent drought resiliency planning
- Limited information about the need for conservation
- Lack of preventative infrastructure maintenance and replacement

These gaps highlight opportunities for:

- Increasing the drought resiliency of the region and its communities
- Expanding and extending the water supply
- Improving marketing around conservation education and the cost of water
- Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance efforts

Natural Resources

Natural resources in South Central Kansas support the region's plants, animals, and people and enhance quality of life through recreational, educational, and tourism opportunities. Aside from the most basic role of maintaining livability, the system of air, water, soil, and land performs vital natural functions that contribute to the growth and prosperity of the region. Intact environmental resources are the cost-effective complement to the region's physical infrastructure, cleansing air and water and reducing environmental risks such as flooding. Most natural systems including watersheds, wetlands, and habitat also cross the boundaries of individual jurisdictions, requiring inter-governmental coordination to manage these complex and critical resources.

Major natural resources issues include:

- Lack of land use planning in some areas of the region, which can result

in negative impacts to natural resources, including fragmented ecosystems

- Need to manage solid waste, including increasing recycling
- Development in floodplains
- Effects of non-point source runoff on water quality

The region can address these challenges through efforts:

- Promoting more sensitive land use practices that reduce the loss of open space and agricultural land and protect ground and surface water
- Increasing opportunities for recycling and reuse
- Limiting or prohibiting development in floodplains and increasing understanding of where flood prone areas are

Healthy Community Design

The physical environment around us plays a role in shaping choices about how we live, learn, work, and play. The design of our communities and the presence of fresh food sources can influence exercise and eating choices, which in turn affect individual health. Good community design, therefore, gives people lifestyle options to engage in healthier behavior. Participating in regular physical activity reduces the risks of chronic diseases like heart disease, high blood pressure, and some cancers. Studies demonstrate a clear link between the availability of transit, sidewalks, parks, and recreational amenities and higher rates of physical activity. Healthy communities are also about creating more interconnected places that spark social interaction, connect people to educational and economic opportunities, give access to critical services, offer safe, quality housing, and support a higher quality of life for residents.

Major issues for this topic area include:

- High rates of tobacco use in adults and teens
- Access to healthcare providers for zero-vehicle households
- Lack of mental health and substance abuse services
- Built environments that are not conducive to physical activity
- Lack of access to fresh food in some communities

Efforts to address these challenges should revolve around:

- Increasing support for tobacco use cessation
- Connecting residents to critical health services through both improved physical access and increased options
- Designing neighborhoods that support healthier lifestyles

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA) is to develop an understanding of housing conditions in South Central Kansas, including the ways in which current development patterns shape social and economic opportunities for all residents, particularly for individuals in traditionally underserved groups. The analysis highlights neighborhoods that face continued challenges in accessing critical services and resources, such as quality, affordable housing, public transportation, jobs and high-performing schools.

The FHEA is regional in scope, highlighting broad issues, challenges, and opportunities. Housing conditions will continue to vary across the diverse urban, suburban, and rural communities of the region. This section summarizes the main findings of the FHEA. The full report identifies tools, best practices, and informational sources that stakeholders can adapt for use in their local settings.

Stakeholders should use the findings of the FHEA to promote public investment decisions and policy changes that support greater opportunity in areas of concentrated poverty and underinvestment and to build partnerships that address specific housing issues and expand access to opportunity across the region. The ultimate goal of the FHEA is to create “geographies of opportunity,” or places that effectively connect people to jobs, quality public schools, essential services, and amenities.

STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Fair Housing sub-committee, which functions as part of the Built Environment Work Team consists of representatives from local governments, public housing authorities, and the non-profit, educational, and real estate sectors.

The Fair Housing sub-committee met four times during the planning process to review housing conditions, highlight strengths and weaknesses in the local and regional housing markets, and identify strategies to promote greater quality, diversity and affordability in housing. The CLT and committee members reviewed and refined the resulting housing priorities and recommendations.

Overarching goals to guide the FHEA and ultimately the recommendations of the Prosperity Plan are to:

- Increase housing choices
- Set a high standard of affordability
- Promote housing rehabilitation and infill development
- Address housing impacts on low income and minority individuals
- Consider housing for an aging population
- Place emphasis on various housing choices (types/price/etc.)
- Address age/condition of homes, including weatherization and energy efficiency and identify if the stock meets demand
- Establish appropriate workforce housing
- Improve rental housing conditions and make rental owners more responsible for their property

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN THE REGIONAL HOUSING MARKET

The analysis of the regional housing market identified the following strengths and weaknesses. The data analysis that is part of the full FHEA report builds on, and when feasible, quantifies these findings.

Regional Strengths

- Economic stability/certainty in some areas
- General affordability
- Generally conservative lending market, which contained foreclosure crisis
- Housing tax credits for low-income individuals/families
- Municipalities that embrace growth through:
 - Tax rebates
 - Neighborhood revitalization policies
 - Inclusive attitudes

Regional Weaknesses and Challenges

- Lack of housing choices and stagnant home construction in some communities, which further limits supply
- Lack of new jobs and/or an increase in under-employment
- Inefficient regional marketing of new development and growth opportunities
- Stringent qualifications for loans, which can limit home ownership opportunities for some low-income individuals
- Availability and quality of low-income housing
 - Substandard housing leads to blighted conditions
- Substandard conditions in rental housing
 - Persistent market for sub-standard rental units



- Lack of reporting of housing infractions out of fear of losing homes
- Lack of education regarding rights of tenants
- Lack of housing codes and/or lack of or insufficient number of inspectors
 - Many municipalities lack an enforcement mechanism
- Inability of residents to maintain homes due to disability or low-income
- Infill development challenges due to lack of flexibility in existing zoning codes and persistent market barriers, which increase development cost
- Inflexible/restrictive building codes and/or zoning, which can limit opportunities to deliver smaller, less expensive units
- Lack of resources related to land banking
- Aging housing infrastructure
- Vacant housing leading to unstable and unsafe neighborhood conditions
- Diminishing state/federal assistance for housing programs

The planning team conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders from non-profit organizations, local governments, and private entities throughout the five-county area. The interviews featured questions about growth, housing, and economic development trends, opportunities, and challenges. The results reflected several themes related to housing, particularly the need for housing strategies in smaller communities to attract workers and other new residents. Cities, such as Hutchinson and Wellington, specifically cited an aging housing stock and declining structural conditions as significant barriers to growth and investment. Several stakeholders also noted that the lack of quality, mid-level housing creates a gap in the housing market that limits the ability of younger and/or low to middle-income residents to purchase housing near jobs. Stakeholders in the building industry also cited the need for increased flexibility in zoning and land use regulations to facilitate infill development and walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods.

SUMMARY OF FHEA FINDINGS

Affordable Housing Supply

Housing in South Central Kansas is generally affordable for households earning close to the area's median family income or higher (\$47,789 or more). The percentage of owner and renter households spending 30 percent or more of total household income on housing costs in the region is comparable to the state overall. However, more than 90 percent of households in Butler, Harvey, Reno, and Sumner Counties spend more than 45 percent of income on combined housing and transportation costs due to longer commutes.

Analysis indicates that rental housing is generally affordable to most residents except for individuals with the lowest relative incomes. However, only about one-quarter of owner units are affordable to owner households earning 80 percent of the area's median family income or \$38,231. Even fewer affordable housing units are available to households below the 80 percent threshold. This finding is consistent with feedback from stakeholders citing the lack of quality mid-range housing in many communities.

Access to Opportunity Disparity – Geographic

Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty

Five U.S. census tracts in and around the City of Wichita qualify as Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty (RCAPs). This concentration of poverty can contribute to underperforming public schools, poor housing and public health conditions, and limited access to services and job opportunities. In total, 12,776 residents live in the five RCAP census tracts, equaling 3.4 percent of the City of Wichita's population. These areas fare considerably below state benchmarks on indicators related to housing affordability, neighborhood vacancy, poverty, and educational attainment. The analysis clearly indicates geographic barriers to opportunity in these neighborhoods.

FAIR HOUSING EQUITY ASSESSMENT

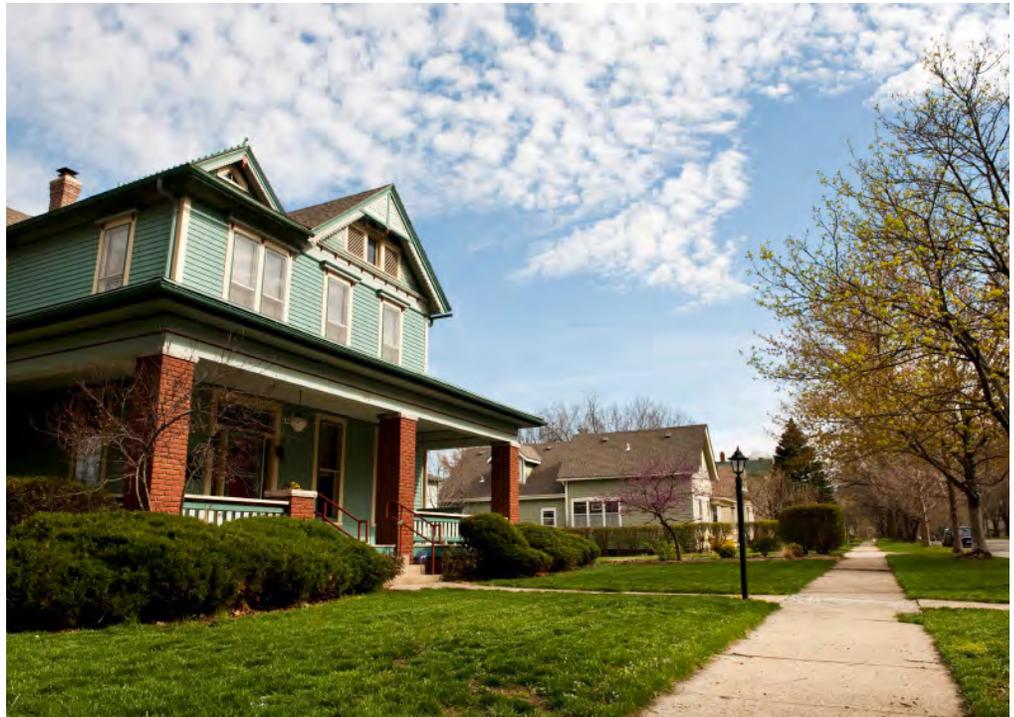
Sumner and Reno Counties

Sumner and Reno Counties also experience an interrelated set of socio-economic and housing issues that can limit access to quality, affordable housing and overall opportunity. Both counties lost population over the previous decade and are likely to continue losing residents over the next two decades according to population forecasts. Household income falls below the regional average in both counties, particularly in Reno. Reno County also has the region's highest percentage of residents 65 years old or older. Both counties have the highest rates of disability among residents in the region, exceeding the state and regional average.

These trends produce challenges for the housing market in both counties and create special housing needs for residents. Sumner County continues to show the highest percentage of high cost loans in the region. The average foreclosure rate in Reno and Sumner Counties also exceeded the state's foreclosure rate. In the case of Sumner, foreclosure likely contributes to the county's high vacancy rate of 14.8 percent. The housing stock is aging in both counties with a percentage of houses built before 1980 that surpasses the rest of the region and the state. Stakeholders and local plans have identified specific pockets of deteriorating housing, such as the area south of 11th Avenue in the City of Hutchinson. Sumner and Reno Counties also have the highest percentage of houses in the region with a value below \$100,000.

This lack of quality housing can become a barrier to economic growth in some communities within the region. The 2014 Business Conditions Survey for Hutchinson and Reno County, for example, noted that the quality and diversity of available housing received the second lowest satisfaction score among rated dimensions of community quality and 11 percent of respondents identified housing as a

recruitment obstacle. Survey participants identified new development, condition of existing inventory, and need for quality apartments as areas to address.



Access to Opportunity Disparity – Demographic

Prevailing residential patterns in the region point to the uneven distribution of racial and ethnic minorities. African-American residents in particular tend to live in more racially homogenous neighborhoods. The analysis also suggests that this concentration correlates with less access to opportunity for the region's minority residents.

The five-county area has relatively low scores for all of HUD's opportunity indices, highlighting that residents across the region regardless of race or ethnicity do not have equal access to resources such as jobs, high-performing schools, and

transit. The results, however, also show that disparities in access are more significant for residents of ethnic/racial minorities. Whites have higher scores for all indices except job and transit access, likely because

rural areas have a higher percentage of white residents. Residents of racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to live in neighborhoods with higher levels of poverty, lower performing schools, and less employment.

Income also affects access to opportunity. For residents with low incomes, scores are lower than for the five-county region overall. Transit access and elementary school performance are the lowest, and for most indices, Hispanics and African-American residents fare worse than white residents do. Similarly, for children, regional scores are relatively low, but African-American, Hispanic, and Asian children have lower scores than whites in most opportunity categories.

Overall, low-income residents have less access to jobs and educational opportunities than other residents and non-white adults and children have less access than white residents. The results indicate that poverty and race linked to limited job opportunities and poor educational outcomes remain significant barriers to equitable access for South Central Kansas residents.

Housing Needs

Several specific housing needs emerged through data analysis, plan review, and stakeholder input. Region-wide, approximately 20.5 percent of all owner-occupied households reported having one or more housing problems. Self-reported problems were more prevalent among renters, with 44.4 percent of all renter households indicating one or more housing problems. The most cited housing problem was cost burden or spending more than 30 percent of household income on housing costs.

Data findings and stakeholder feedback also highlighted several deficiencies in the current housing market. In most parts of the region outside of the City of Wichita, the housing stock is less diverse and features mainly single-family detached housing. The lack of alternative housing options leaves the region less prepared to meet changing needs and preferences related to demographic shifts. The trend of an aging population, for example, will increase demand for diverse housing types, including attached housing, rental housing, and independent and assisted living facilities. Younger people are also likely to prefer smaller housing units set in walkable neighborhoods with easy access to schools, work, and recreation. Housing analyses in Hutchinson and Newton specifically highlighted a lack of quality mid-level housing units for both renters and homeowners. Fair Housing sub-committee members also noted continued demand

- New housing in the \$150,000 to \$175,000 range
- Workforce rental/ownership (\$600-\$800 per month rent)
- Alternatives to single-family detached units, including multi-family housing condominiums/ town homes/patio homes (appropriate for individuals/families of all ages and income levels)
- Improved rental stock
- Mixed-use development
- Housing modified to accommodate seniors and people with disabilities
- Transitional housing (related to long-term shelter for low-income, ex-offenders, low-income individuals, etc...)
- Infill development

for housing to accommodate special needs populations, including the elderly and people with disabilities, mental illnesses or untreated addiction. Based on these findings, specific housing needs in the region include:

Public/Subsidized Housing Demand and Organizational Capacity

Housing providers indicate that the demand for public and subsidized housing currently exceeds available supply and wait lists for public housing in the City of Wichita and Section 8 housing in other parts of the region are long. Stakeholders have also cited funding challenges in fully assessing and adequately meeting housing needs in the community and in bridging continued resource gaps.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the FHEA findings, this section identifies housing strategies to narrow specific gaps in the availability of quality, affordable housing in South Central Kansas and promote broader access to opportunity for all residents in communities throughout the region. The strategies overlap and interact with many recommendations from other Work Team areas of the Prosperity Plan, particularly the Built Environment section, which features numerous actions related to housing, land use, and community development. Where appropriate, the Work Team sections further highlight the linkages between FHEA strategies and other recommendations designed to enhance the economic, physical, social, and natural environment of the region.

Housing Recommendation 1: Broaden the supply of quality, affordable housing types for all segments of the population.

The region, particularly outside of the City of Wichita offers limited choices beyond single-family detached housing. Local plans and stakeholder feedback have also cited strong demand for public and subsidized housing units among low-income residents and a continued need for additional quality market-rate rental properties and new mid-level for-sale houses. Stakeholders should explore strategies to increase the number of public and subsidized housing units for low-income households and widen the mix of market-rate housing types and prices, particularly for entry-level buyers (\$150,000 to \$175,000).

Strategies to expand the housing supply should be two-pronged: a continued collaboration among regional public housing authorities, non-profit entities, and the private sector to meet the needs of low-income households; and public-private partnerships to develop additional

FAIR HOUSING EQUITY ASSESSMENT

mid-range housing to accommodate low- to middle-income households. Tools should include the use of incentives such as down payment assistance, tax credits, and low-cost loans to encourage affordable and accessible housing development.

Housing Recommendation 2: Promote participation in housing and financial education programs.

While regional homeownership rates are comparable to or slightly higher than the state, analysis indicates some affordability challenges for owner households earning 80 percent or less of the area's median family income. There are also persistent pockets of poverty in the region, especially in some census tracts in the City of Wichita, as well as Reno and Sumner Counties. The average foreclosure rate in Reno and Sumner Counties exceeded the state's foreclosure rate, indicating that some residents lack the resources to sustain homeownership.

Stakeholders and partner agencies can address this challenge by expanding the reach of comprehensive financial and housing education programs. Improved access to financial education programs and counseling could assist residents in connecting with available home ownership resources and understanding the full costs of homeownership and property maintenance prior to purchase.

Housing Recommendation 3: Align regulatory and land use policies to promote housing affordability.

Even when not designed explicitly to exclude affordable housing, local zoning, land use, and building regulations can sometimes restrict residential choices by influencing the location, site characteristics, and costs of housing in the private market. Large-lot zoning and large lot width and setback requirements for subdivisions are some of the most common local regulatory constraints on affordable housing. Many

of the region's cities, including Wichita, Hutchinson, and Newton have actively embraced mixed-use, infill development, and neighborhood revitalization concepts that support affordable housing strategies. However, a review of local zoning codes in the region identified some larger minimum lot size requirements that can limit affordable housing opportunities. Communities should take steps to align their zoning and development processes with affordable housing goals.

Housing Recommendation 4: Promote mixed-use development patterns along key corridors and in community cores around the region.

The region still has relatively few examples of mixed-use environments that combine housing, retail, and other community services and amenities. Communities should revisit and refine their zoning and land use policies to encourage additional mixed-use settings, particularly in existing community cores and downtowns, planned growth and reinvestment areas, and along major corridors.

Housing Recommendation 5: Establish housing and neighborhood design criteria to create living environments that are more responsive to the needs of residents.

Demographic trends, such as the aging of the population and higher percentages of residents with disabilities in parts of the region, particularly in Reno and Sumner Counties require more flexible, affordable, and accessible housing types. Communities should promote the design of housing units and neighborhood forms that can meet the varied needs of their residents. Aging in place concepts reflect the ability of all residents regardless of age, ability, or income to live at home and participate safely, independently, and comfortably in the community. Many of the accessibility concepts designed for the elderly can also better accommodate residents with mobility challenges.

Housing Recommendation 6: Establish options to conventional skilled nursing facilities to expand residential choices for seniors and people with disabilities.

Stakeholders have cited gaps in the supply of affordable housing for residents with specialized needs, including the elderly and individuals with disabilities. To address this need, the region should examine community-based alternatives to skilled nursing facilities.

Housing Recommendation 7: Enhance the quality of housing stock and focus on challenged neighborhoods.

Preserving and enhancing existing housing is a critical component in efforts to provide affordable housing choices to residents. The region's aging housing stock places greater maintenance burdens on residents and stakeholders have specially cited declining property conditions in some neighborhoods. Vacancy and blight can also combine in a cycle that dampens reinvestment and accelerates deterioration. Communities and housing advocates should continue to emphasize home repairs, structural rehabilitation, weatherization, and energy efficient improvements to increase the quality of current housing options, particularly in areas with deteriorating structural conditions and low housing values.

Housing Recommendation 8: Develop a community-based marketing campaign that includes housing, as well as broader amenities.

As noted earlier, the lack of quality housing can become a barrier to population growth and business investment in smaller cities within the region. Communities should emphasize the critical role of quality housing options as part of broader economic development efforts to retain and attract residents. Such strategies can assist in bolstering weaker local housing

markets and addressing continued population losses and uneven regional growth. Housing investment thus becomes a tool for strengthening neighborhoods and improving the quality of life for residents of all income levels.

Housing Recommendation 9: Use land banking as a tool to stabilize neighborhoods and promote revitalization.

Tax-delinquent, abandoned, and vacant properties can reduce surrounding property values and dampen investment in affected areas, thereby accelerating neighborhood decline. Land banking enables government or non-profit entities to acquire, hold, and manage these properties for purposes of redevelopment or the production of affordable housing. The Kansas legislature has granted cities and counties the authority to form land banks. In 2013, the City of Hutchinson established a land banking program to strengthen neighborhoods by returning vacant, abandoned, foreclosed, and unwanted residential properties to productive use.

Housing Recommendation 10: Establish a housing trust fund.

Cities and counties can establish housing trust funds to support the construction, acquisition, and preservation of affordable housing and related services to meet the housing needs of low-income households. Housing trust funds can reduce funding uncertainty by identifying dedicated revenues to ensure a steady stream of funding, rather than reliance on general fund allocations.

Housing Recommendation 11: Create a regional housing collaborative forum.

Establish a regional mechanism, such as a housing roundtable, to promote information sharing and identification of partnership, funding, and consulting opportunities.



OVERVIEW

The purpose of the regional scenarios is to help officials, stakeholders, partners, and citizens envision a path forward to a more prosperous, resilient, and competitive South Central Kansas. Since physical growth and corresponding development in the region are not dramatic, scenarios organized around spatial change are unlikely to reveal meaningful differences among communities. Instead, the alternatives focus on the types of investments, coordination steps, and organizational tools and structures that can strengthen neighborhoods, cities, and counties across South Central Kansas. The scenarios are a lens through which communities can understand, evaluate, and prioritize potential strategies. Each scenario is a package of choices, emphasizing a particular theme or course of action.

The process of arriving at a preferred scenario for the region consisted of three major steps:

- Developing an initial set of scenarios based on an understanding of major opportunities and challenges
- Narrowing the initial alternatives to a set of draft scenarios
- Choosing a preferred scenario based on stakeholder and public input

The project team did not design the evaluation process to produce a single winner among the preliminary set of choices. The scenarios also do not align completely with individual Work Team topics. For example, there is not a water or built environment alternative. Instead, scenarios incorporate overlapping ideas drawn from the six plan areas. Input activities asked participants to consider the individual elements of each scenario, along with the alternatives as a whole. The intent was to arrive at a guiding framework that combines critical strategies across multiple areas and reinforces the interdependency of Work Team actions.

Additionally, the process does not eliminate or de-emphasize strategies that do not fit neatly within the selected framework. The six Work Teams developed detailed, focused strategies, including some action steps not featured in the Preferred Scenario. These additional recommendations remain a key part of the plan's implementation. The Preferred Scenario instead gives a sense of priority to possible implementation actions and communicates a clear and common purpose as the region prepares actively for a strong, healthy future.

PRELIMINARY SCENARIOS

To begin the evaluation process, the project team built an initial set of alternatives that included the following elements:

- Strategies to address the top opportunities and challenges that emerged from existing conditions analysis of the region and its communities;
- The Prosperity Plan's guiding principles, which build on HUD's six Principles of Livability; and
- The fundamental plan themes of economic development/job creation and regional coordination or branding

The six preliminary scenarios were:

- **Scenario 1: Regional Investment/"Fix it First"**

This scenario highlighted efforts to maintain the existing capital assets of communities across the region. Primary themes included:

- Maximizing the return on public investments in physical infrastructure;
- Guiding investment toward existing communities to spark growth across the region and use existing infrastructure;

- Supporting quality of life by strengthening the basic building blocks of livable communities (roads, water and wastewater systems, housing); and
- Establishing an organizational vehicle to support inter-jurisdictional and inter-agency coordination in service delivery, planning for major infrastructure investments, and data sharing

- **Scenario 2: Growth through Entrepreneurship**

This scenario placed the most emphasis on making infrastructure and organizational investments to attract, retain, and expand targeted industries, grow local businesses, and foster innovation. Primary themes included:

- Building on the region's history of entrepreneurial spirit to spark job creation through economic diversification and the growth of local, start-up businesses; and
- Coordinating resources to invest in infrastructure, conduct workforce training, and develop marketing and support strategies to attract, retain, and expand businesses

- **Scenario 3: Managing Natural Resources**

This scenario stressed management of the region's existing natural assets, including water, air, wildlife habitat, agriculture, and the rural landscape; investing in green industries and green jobs; and implementing low-impact infrastructure. Primary themes included:

- Ensuring adequate resources to maintain quality of life and economic growth; and

- Coordinating land use, transportation, and natural resource decisions to protect environmental assets, including wetlands and watersheds that cross jurisdictional boundaries and develop regional strategies to manage critical resources such as the water supply
- **Scenario 4: Great Communities**
In this scenario, the main goal was to create the amenities that ensure the highest possible quality of life and health for existing and

future residents with a particular focus on making neighborhoods and communities safe, attractive, and prosperous. Primary themes included:

- Creating the quality of life that retains and attracts residents
- Building greater resilience and livability in the region's communities and neighborhoods;
- Improving the overall health of the population and productivity of the workforce; and

- Coordinating land use, transportation, and infrastructure decisions to create an interconnected system of regional amenities, including bike paths, trails, and transit

- **Scenario 5: Building on Traditional Assets**
This scenario placed the most emphasis on strengthening and marketing the existing assets of the region, including small towns and rural communities; established industries such as aviation,

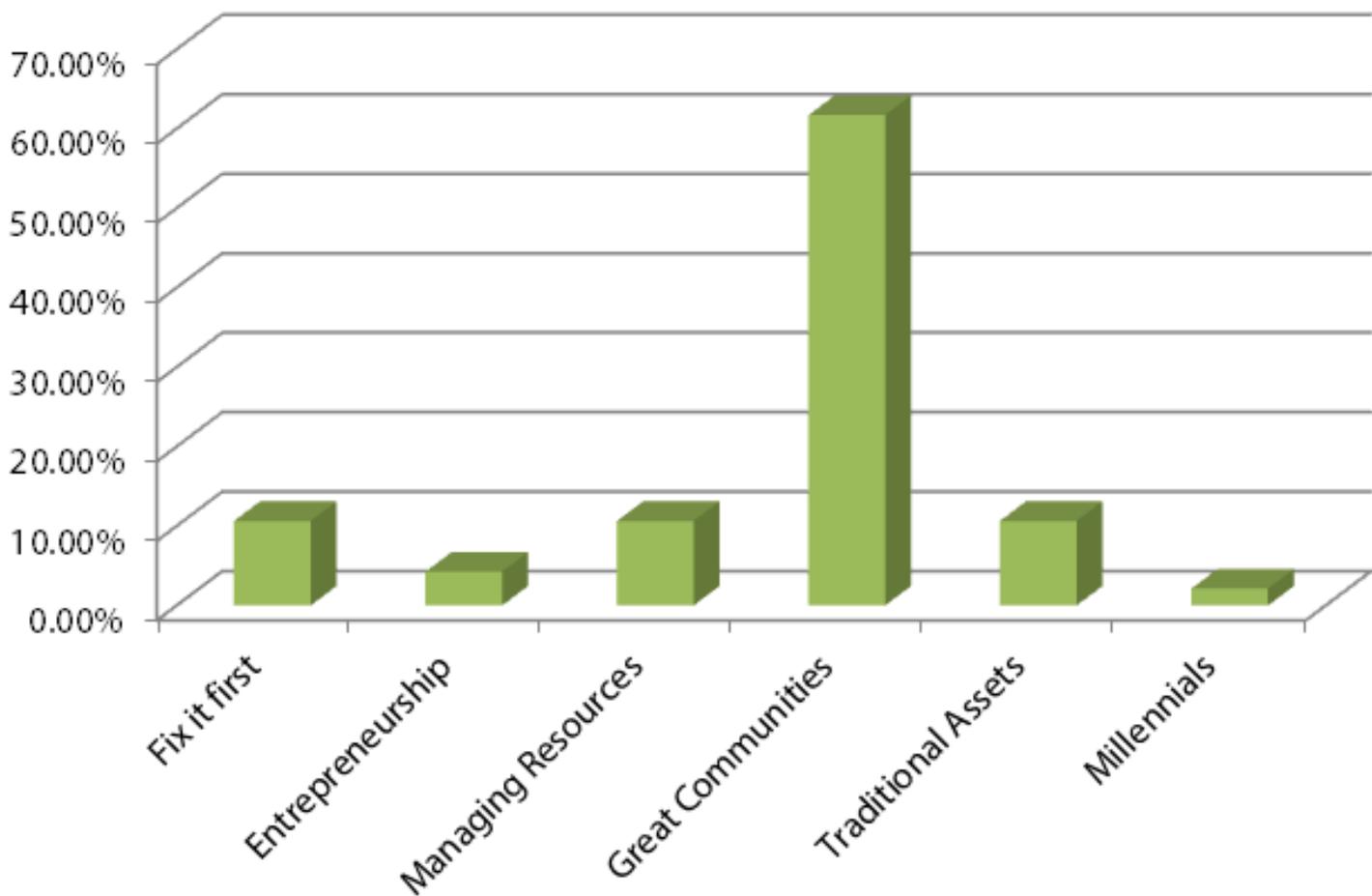


Figure 6.1 Preliminary Scenario Evaluation Results

REGIONAL SCENARIOS

agriculture, gas/petroleum and health care; affordability; friendliness; and short commute times (by car). Primary themes included:

- Creating the quality of life that retains and attracts residents across the region
 - Leveraging existing strengths and advantages to spur economic growth; and
 - Developing a cohesive marketing/branding identity around regional affordability and quality of life
- **Scenario 6: Preparing for Millennials**
This scenario focused on reversing the movement of young people away from South Central Kansas by attracting and retaining young residents as a means to spark economic innovation and population growth. Primary themes included:
 - Increasing the ability of the region's employers to attract and retain needed talent;
 - Coordinating land use, transportation, and infrastructure decisions to create an interconnected system of regional amenities, including bike paths, trails, and transit; and
 - Developing a regional marketing strategy to retain and attract young workers

The project team presented these initial scenarios during a joint Work Team and CLT Congress in December of 2013. Participants received written descriptions of the six preliminary scenarios, including the challenges addressed by the alternatives and preliminary ideas for strategies. Following the presentation, participants discussed the scenarios in small groups, listing positive and negative characteristics. Finally, attendees participated in a wireless

audience response exercise, rating the importance of each scenario and the ability of its strategies to meet the most pressing needs of the region.

The Great Communities scenario resonated most strongly among Congress attendees. **See Figure 6.1.** Participants also offered other feedback to shape the choice among the six alternatives. Comments, for example, emphasized that infrastructure investment and maintenance are an essential component of any regional approach. Input also reflected a desire to be forward thinking and advance beyond the region's current practices. Other themes stressed the need to build bottom-up strategies that recognize and respect communities of all sizes and locations and the importance of healthy communities, good schools, and mobility choices throughout the region. Participants noted that natural resources are vital but must ultimately support other scenarios, including economic development. Attendees also suggested a focus on the region's aging population, as well as its young residents.

DRAFT SCENARIOS

Based on the feedback gathered, the project team:

- Retained the Great Communities scenario as the generally preferred course of action;
- Eliminated the Preparing for Millennials, Building on Traditional Assets, and Growth through Entrepreneurship scenarios as free-standing alternatives, but combined key elements into other alternatives; and
- Developed two new scenarios that expanded on the Regional Investment/"Fix it First" and Managing Natural Resources themes

The project team then developed a set of four alternatives, including a business as usual choice. These draft alternatives were:

- **Alternative – Business as Usual**
If South Central Kansas continues to develop as it has in the past, there will likely be modest population and job growth in the region but this growth will be uneven. Butler and Sedgwick Counties will continue to see most of the population increase, while Harvey County could continue to experience a slower rate of growth. Sumner and Reno Counties could continue to lose residents. New residential development would be mostly single-family housing in lower-density neighborhoods, and residents would need to rely almost exclusively on cars to get to jobs, school, and services. Manufacturing jobs, which have been a traditional strength of the regional economy, will continue a modest decline, while other sectors, such as health care, finance, and professional services will grow. More new jobs will require a bachelor's degree or higher, but at current levels of education, just under one in four residents will have a bachelor's degree or higher. The region will continue to struggle to retain young college graduates and attract workers to fill jobs. There will be no regional identity for South Central Kansas to market itself nationally and globally. Economic development efforts will continue to be decentralized and focused mainly on attracting new industries to the area. Fixing and maintaining aging transportation and water and wastewater infrastructure will continue to happen but without an overall plan and mostly through annual budgeting processes. Planning for critical resources, such as supplying water and responding

to drought conditions will continue primarily at a local level.

- **Alternative – Prosperity through Growth**

In this alternative, the emphasis is on South Central Kansas creating more jobs in fields such as health care, renewable energy, aviation and aerospace, and advanced manufacturing. New businesses would be interested in the region because they will have access to adequate, reliable infrastructure and a skilled workforce. Governments would spend tax dollars more efficiently because decisions on investments would be coordinated and focused on fixing infrastructure problems before building new systems. Physical systems across the region—roads, bridges, wastewater, storm water, rail—would be in good condition, reducing long-term costs to residents, businesses, and local governments. Development would probably tend to concentrate around existing infrastructure because there is less emphasis on extending and building new systems. The region would build on its tradition of entrepreneurship. More residents would take advantage of technical and financial support to start or expand their own businesses, and more residents would complete their degrees or participate in training and placement programs to fill available jobs. The strong economic opportunities would bring new people to the region and keep more young people once they graduate. People beyond the region would come to think of South Central Kansas as the home of entrepreneurs.

- **Alternative – Prosperity through Health**

In this alternative, both the people and natural environment of South Central Kansas would be healthier than ever. Fewer people would experience health risks like obesity, diabetes, and smoking. More people would take advantage of sidewalks, trails, and parks to exercise, and there would be more local fresh food choices to support healthy eating. The region would have an advanced and connected health care system that offers quality care, including preventive health services for all residents. Improved health outcomes would also boost the economy. Because workers are healthier, they would be more productive and public health costs would decline. The region would also have access to abundant and clean natural resources. Air and water quality would improve with the protection of wetlands, habitat, rivers, and lakes. Water resource planning would take place at a regional level and meet the needs of all communities and industries through drought resilience, water conservation, and water supply efforts. Residents would also place fewer demands on infrastructure and the environment by using less water and energy and producing less waste.

- **Alternative – Prosperity through Communities**

This alternative emphasizes safe, attractive, and prosperous communities and neighborhoods, offering a high quality of life for all residents. Each community would encourage redevelopment of their existing areas first, and there would be increased development of new housing in small towns around the region. The downtowns would be

active and revitalized. There would be more quality housing choices available for residents of different ages, incomes, and backgrounds. Programs would emphasize the rehabilitation of older housing, which would become more energy efficient and less costly to maintain. People would take advantage of the wider choice of ways to move around their communities—car, transit, walking and biking. It would be easier and less expensive for people to get to jobs, school, shopping, and other important services. New development would emphasize mixed use (housing next to retail and jobs), walkability, and cultural and recreational facilities. Population growth around the five counties would spread more evenly because many communities would have a stronger sense of place and services and amenities would be available for residents.

These four alternatives formed the basis for continued scenario evaluation using Work Team and public input and technical analysis. Section 7 of this document describes the Preferred Scenario.

PREFERRED SCENARIO

7

OVERVIEW

To arrive at a Preferred Scenario that can guide implementation, the project team drew from CLT and Work Team feedback, as well as public input to select the top elements among the four draft scenarios. Each Work Team, for example, identified three to five focus areas along with top strategies. The team used this list of highlighted areas and actions to prioritize among potential strategies. Team members also reviewed all strategies to identify common themes that cut across Work Team topics and thus could form the basis of a shared approach for addressing the region's challenges. These common themes included:

- **Establishing Regional Organizational Structures and Tools:**

The most prevalent theme throughout all Work Team areas was a desire for tools and organizational structures that support coordinated, strategic decision-making across jurisdictions and sectors (public, private, and non-profit). Examples ranged from regional forums to discuss complex issues related to housing, water, transportation, and natural resources to expanding workforce training and identifying regional assets to support more coordinated marketing. Underpinning these recommendations was recognition that resource management transcends the boundaries of individual jurisdictions to affect all parts of the region.

- **Dealing with Shrinking Resources:** All Work Teams recognized the challenge of shrinking resources, especially federal funds and sought to offset fiscal constraints through various approaches, such as public-private partnerships, innovative

financing strategies (especially for water and transportation projects), dedicated funding streams, or the strategic planning of improvements to maximize public investments. Transportation, water, and natural resources focused on developing more efficient and flexible types of infrastructure (doing more with less), comprehensive asset management

in housing, transportation, and the built environment. The region is getting older and more diverse. The continued aging of the population, for example, will produce greater demand for smaller, accessible housing and alternatives to automobile travel. Younger people also express distinct long-term preferences for housing,



systems, and proactive maintenance to address fiscal limitations. The built environment emphasized the reuse of land and buildings as a way to make public service delivery less costly. Housing strategies recommended ways to preserve the existing residential stock.

- **Expanding Choices:**

The idea of expanding choices to meet changing demographics and shifting needs was common throughout the plan especially

neighborhood, and transportation types that are not widely available in the region. Many young residents are willing to trade house size for smaller, flexible living options in vibrant, pedestrian-friendly settings. Examples of expanded choice included more walkable neighborhoods, viable transit services, trails and bike paths, varied housing types (townhouses, condos, apartments, attached single-family), and different neighborhood types (urban, suburban and rural).

- **Improving Access:**

Several Work Teams emphasized better access for residents—not just in the traditional sense of more physical connections but also a greater ability to take advantage of available economic, educational, and social opportunities. Examples ranged from workforce development and entrepreneurial support to quality housing choices in healthy neighborhoods with good schools, fresh food outlets, and parks, sidewalks, and trails. The overriding theme was connecting people to resources, services, and amenities through better physical infrastructure, the integrated design and planning of communities and neighborhoods, and the availability of informational and support programs.

- **Combining Public Investments:**

Several sections stressed the importance of synergy or combining public investments in a concentrated area to achieve a greater impact for the public and private sectors. Examples included using transportation improvements (sidewalks, trails, transit where appropriate, and pedestrian-friendly streets) and gathering spaces (parks, pedestrian-friendly retail areas) to activate neighborhoods and invite more private investment by local businesses. The basic idea of healthy communities was to combine many types of land uses and infrastructure (housing, retail, critical services, parks, transit) into an area to create a setting that is livable, dynamic, and appealing. Almost all jurisdictions in the region also use mechanisms such as the designation of revitalization and redevelopment areas to direct incentives, infrastructure improvements, and resources to

challenged neighborhoods to generate economic momentum and accelerate investment.

- **Encouraging Economic Development:**

Every Work Team topic included recommendations that relate directly to increasing the economic competitiveness of the region. Strategies focused on improving the access of businesses and entrepreneurs to the resources necessary to grow—an efficient, reliable transportation system that can move people and goods through the region; a skilled, prepared, and healthy workforce; technical and financial support; and adequate and affordable water. Recommendations in built environment also sought ways to reduce barriers to private investment through policies such as more flexible development regulations or financial incentives that encourage infill development and the reuse of land and buildings. A basic theme of the plan was that the “soft” assets, such as parks, community amenities, transportation options, and quality housing are just as critical to catalyzing economic development as the traditional elements of physical infrastructure and land. For example, the neighborhoods envisioned as part of healthy community design often serve as strong anchors for renewed commercial activity, business investment, and residential growth. The business development strategies also reinforce the regional nature of the economy in South Central Kansas by calling for cooperative approaches to marketing, building workforce skills, preparing for global markets, understanding supply chain impacts, and distributing business leads.

- **Increasing Awareness/Education:**

Many recommendations encouraged the use of education and the sharing of best practices to promote a greater understanding of regional issues and strategies and actions. Topics for improved communication include natural resources and water supply management, energy and water efficiency and conservation, affordable housing, infrastructure development and maintenance, and healthy lifestyle choices. Outreach and education are so critical because many strategies rely not on policy mandates but partnerships among residents, businesses, elected officials, and the media to address complex issues. The greater visibility that comes with outreach can also attract funding for implementation, establish a more cohesive regional voice for effective policy advocacy at the state and national levels, and encourage collaborative problem solving.

As discussed in Section 3, public feedback also emphasized broad, guiding themes, including:

- Creating new jobs through attracting new businesses
- Ensuring a safe and healthy living environment
- Ensuring water supply and water quality
- Creating job opportunities that support good quality of life
- Building a resilient, adaptable and diverse economy and skilled workforce
- Ensuring clean plentiful water, air and soil

The Preferred Scenario reflects this input by building on the principle of prosperity through healthy, quality communities throughout the region, while emphasizing

PREFERRED SCENARIO

the core strategies of economic development, job creation, and regional collaboration. The recommendations included in the Preferred Scenario center around actions related to the workforce, infrastructure, housing, neighborhoods, and natural resources, particularly water.

PROSPERITY THROUGH GREAT COMMUNITIES AND EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

Vision: “South Central Kansas strives to offer prosperous and innovative communities of choice that offer opportunity and quality of life to all people and create connections throughout the region and the world.”

Prosperity through Great Communities and Effective Collaboration emphasizes attractive and healthy communities supported by strong public-private partnerships across the region. Under this alternative, neighborhoods would offer a high quality of life for all people. Each community of the region would prioritize redevelopment of its existing areas. As a result, small towns would see more housing development and downtowns would become vibrant and revitalized. People of different ages, incomes, and backgrounds would have more quality housing choices. Policies, codes, and incentives would encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of older houses and buildings, which would become more energy efficient and less costly to maintain. Local governments would have access to the tools and resources to maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure before extending or building new systems in previously undeveloped areas.

People would take advantage of the wider choice of ways to move around their communities—car, transit, walking, and biking. It would be easier and less expensive for people to get to jobs, school, shopping, and other important services. More people would make healthier lifestyle choices because they are close to parks, trails, sidewalks, and fresh food outlets. Population growth around the five counties would spread more evenly because many communities would have a stronger sense of place and more services and amenities would be accessible.

Though there would be a strong focus on building the assets of individual communities, cities and counties would look beyond their borders to embrace tools and organizational structures that encourage strategic, coordinated decision-making. Community representatives would participate regularly in regional forums to share information on topics, such as

housing, water, economic development, and transportation. Local governments would be able to pool resources to invest in projects and would conduct important economic development initiatives, such as workforce training, business recruitment, and marketing on a regional basis. Schools and industries would be part of a connected network that prepares students for good jobs, meets the needs of businesses, and encourages innovation and entrepreneurship. National and global markets would come to recognize South Central Kansas as one thriving regional economy with traditional strengths in aviation, agriculture, transportation, and manufacturing complemented by growth in emerging industries.

Communities would build broad outreach and educational partnerships among residents, businesses, elected officials, and the media. There would be more information and marketing available on topics such as natural resources, water, energy, and healthy lifestyles. Residents and businesses would have a greater understanding of the importance of conservation, drought preparedness, and best practices to protect air and water quality. People would also have more awareness of the relationship between lifestyle choices and their health. People around the region would take the small, voluntary steps that make them and the environment around them healthier and stronger.

WHY IS THIS ALTERNATIVE IMPORTANT?

Currently, the region faces overarching trends that affect its long-term prosperity and competitiveness: fragmented planning; modest and uneven job and population growth; a lack of housing and transportation choices, particularly for the region’s older and younger populations; aging infrastructure; and public health



risks. This alternative addresses these challenges by emphasizing more attractive, vibrant communities and downtowns, and expanded housing and transportation options. The scenario also promotes tools and cooperative partnerships to develop solutions for complex resource and infrastructure issues that cross boundaries.

South Central Kansas will achieve Great Communities and Effective Collaboration through ...

- *Developing a Partnership Approach to Regional Problem-Solving*
Create collaborative bodies and informational tools that encourage coordinated and integrated planning across all issues, promote a more unified voice for advocacy, share best practices and data, and build partnerships among federal, state and local governments, the private sector, non-profit groups, and residents.

- *Expanding Mobility Choices*
Encourage communities to provide multiple forms of transportation, including walking, biking, transit, rail, and automobiles and promote connectivity throughout the region to increase access for all people.
- *Supporting Healthy Lifestyles*
Increase access to resources that support healthy lifestyle choices, including walkable neighborhoods, health care services, fresh food outlets, and educational initiatives.
- *Providing Adequate and Efficient Infrastructure*
Develop management tools and dedicate resources to support the preventive maintenance and replacement of existing infrastructure systems.
- *Redeveloping Existing Areas, Neighborhoods, and Houses*
Reinvest in existing areas as a means to enhance the safety and attractiveness of communities across the region, increase quality, affordable, convenient housing choices for all segments of the population, and reduce impacts on the surrounding environment.
- *Fostering Opportunities for Education and Innovation*
Connect schools, industries, workers, and entrepreneurs through a network of education, training, business development, and technology transfer.
- *Building Pride of Place and Marketing the Region's Economic Assets*
Promote South Central Kansas's culture of innovation and entrepreneurship and champion a brand that leverages the region's strengths in technology, education, transportation, and exports.
- *Promoting Comprehensive Management of Water Resources*
Increase the resilience of the region by exploring alternative water supplies, implementing best management practices to protect ground and surface water quality, and promoting water conservation and drought preparedness.

VISION AND FOCUS AREAS

Vision

The workforce and business development section of the Prosperity Plan focuses on economic competitiveness, including the ability of the economy to generate opportunities for all residents and businesses. A healthy, diverse, and inclusive economy is the foundation for prosperity in the region, enabling households, communities, and businesses to build assets and creating the resources to maintain safe, attractive, and appealing neighborhoods.

Vision: “Develop a collaborative regional environment that coordinates assets and implements strategies to grow businesses and create jobs in South Central Kansas.”

Mission: “Produce recommendations to collaboratively advance a regional workforce and economic development system that enhances South Central Kansas’ ability to be competitive in a global economy to ensure the region is a great place to work, live, play and grow a business.”

Focus Areas

The three focus areas for workforce and business development are:

- Regional Image
- Workforce Development
- Business Development

These areas represent the top priorities for the workforce and business development element of the Prosperity Plan and organize the individual recommendations in this section.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

The Technical Appendix contains an analysis of the region’s economic profile, including economic development organizations, state and local incentives, the economic and export base, population growth and migration trends, current and projected employment, income, and educational attainment. The purpose of this profile is to highlight issues, gaps, and opportunities that can form the basis of recommendations in the workforce and business development section.

Economic Base

The South Central Kansas region has long been a world leader in the aviation, aerospace, and manufacturing industries. The region employed an estimated 311,444 workers as of third quarter 2013, which constitutes about one-quarter of all employment in the State of Kansas. The top two industries are manufacturing, followed by health care and social assistance. Manufacturing comprises more than 18 percent of jobs in the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The MSA includes Butler, Harvey, Sedgwick, and Sumner Counties, as well as Kingman County. This share of manufacturing is more than double the national percentage. The region includes 40 percent of all manufacturing jobs in the state.

The region is also home to McConnell Air Force Base (AFB). McConnell AFB will receive \$219 million to improve its facilities in support of the new KC-46A Refueling Tanker mission arriving in 2016. The base is a major economic driver in the region with an estimated annual impact of more than \$600 million.

Major employers represent the aerospace, education, medical, and resource extraction industries. **See Table 8.1.** Spirit Aerosystems employs 12,000 individuals, followed by Koch Industries at 10,000 employees, and Wichita Public Schools at about 5,400 employees.

Given that aviation and manufacturing have traditionally been the foundation of the South Central Kansas economy, the region has been vulnerable to the effects of the recession. **See Figure 8.1.** The regional economic output of the Wichita MSA

shrank from 2008 to 2011, but began to recover in 2012. Private goods-producing industries, especially in the manufacturing sector, saw declines in economic output. Manufacturing-related economic output dropped by almost 14 percent from 2008 levels. The region also saw the steepest drop in the value of exports among peer metros in the wake of the recession. The post-recession recovery has been less robust in South Central Kansas than in other Midwest metropolitan areas. **See Figure 8.2.**

Analysis of the economic base indicates opportunities to build on established strengths, such as aviation and manufacturing, while developing strategies to diversify regional economic sectors, invest in and expand existing businesses, and develop a workforce whose skills align with growing global market opportunities.

Business Survey Results

Analysts have generally recognized the State of Kansas for its business-friendly environment. Forbes compiles an annual list of Best States for Business, assessing performance in six categories: costs, labor supply, regulatory environment, current economic climate, growth prospects and quality of life. Overall, the state ranks 17th on the list with particularly high scores in the regulatory environment and business climate categories. The state performed most poorly in the growth prospects category, likely reflecting modest forecasted population and job growth rates.

Specific rankings include:

- Pacific Research Institute U.S. Economic Freedom Index ranked Kansas #10 among the 50 states
- The U.S. Chamber Institute for Legal Reform 2012 State Liability Systems Study ranked Kansas as having one of the nation's most business-friendly litigation environments.
- Pollina Corporate Real Estate's 2012 report ranked Kansas among the top 10 pro-business states.

Company	City	Employment
Butler County		
Butler County Community College	El Dorado	877
Eldorado Unified School District 490	El Dorado	750
Circle Unified School District 375	Towanda	475
Frontier El Dorado Refining Company	El Dorado	400
Andover Board Of Education	Andover	370
Harvey County		
B N S F Inc.	Newton	1,000
Unified School District 373	Newton	700
Newton Medical Center	Newton	539
Eagle Med	Newton	250
KFC	Newton	200
Northview Development Services Inc.	Newton	200
Reno County		
Kwik Shop	Hutchinson	1,507
Promise Regional Medical Center	Hutchinson	1,000
Hutchinson Heart	Hutchinson	1,000
Collins Industries Inc.	Hutchinson	900
City Of Hutchinson	Hutchinson	400
Sumner County		
Tect Aerospace Wellington Inc.	Wellington	249
Unified School District 357	Belle Plaine	245
County Of Sumner	Wellington	197
Sumner Regional Medical Center	Wellington	148
Futures Unlimited Inc	Wellington	140
Sedgwick County		
Spirit Aerosystems Inc.	Wichita	12,000
Koch Resources LLC	Wichita	10,000
Wichita Public Schools	Wichita	5,406
Bombardier Aviation Services	Wichita	4,482
Via Christi Hospitals Wichita Inc.	Wichita	4,100

Table 8.1 Largest Regional Employers by County
Source: ESRI Business Analyst, Dunn & Bradstreet

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In partnership with the Kauffman Foundation, Thumbtack.com conducts an annual survey to determine the friendliness of state and city environments to small businesses. The survey reflects data gathered from a nationwide group of over 7,000 small business owners, freelancers, and entrepreneurs. Kansas ranked seventh among states on Thumbtack's Small Business Survey, receiving a grade of "A" for overall friendliness in 2013, up from an "A-" in 2012. Wichita received a grade of "B-" in 2013 for overall small business friendliness. Wichita scored lower than the state in every category, lagging especially in the areas of tax code and training and development programs. Wichita scored highest in the ease of starting a business; employment, labor, and training regulations; and environmental regulations. The findings suggest opportunities to facilitate job growth and businesses investment through tax code policy and improved workforce training and development initiatives.

Export Base

Many aspects of the regional economy in South Central Kansas are export-oriented, particularly aircraft, aircraft parts, and agricultural products. **See Figure 8.3.** More than 55 percent of the general aviation planes built in the United States originate in the State of Kansas. The region serves as an international production hub. Exports account for nearly 20 percent of gross metropolitan product (GMP), making Wichita the most export-intensive metropolitan area in the country. Compared to the U.S. average (67 percent of total exports), Wichita's exports relate more to goods (90 percent of total), rather than services, with specialties in transportation equipment, machinery, and petroleum products.

Though export activity brings the prospect of strong growth, it can also create challenges for regions and firms. Markets active in the global economy are vulnerable

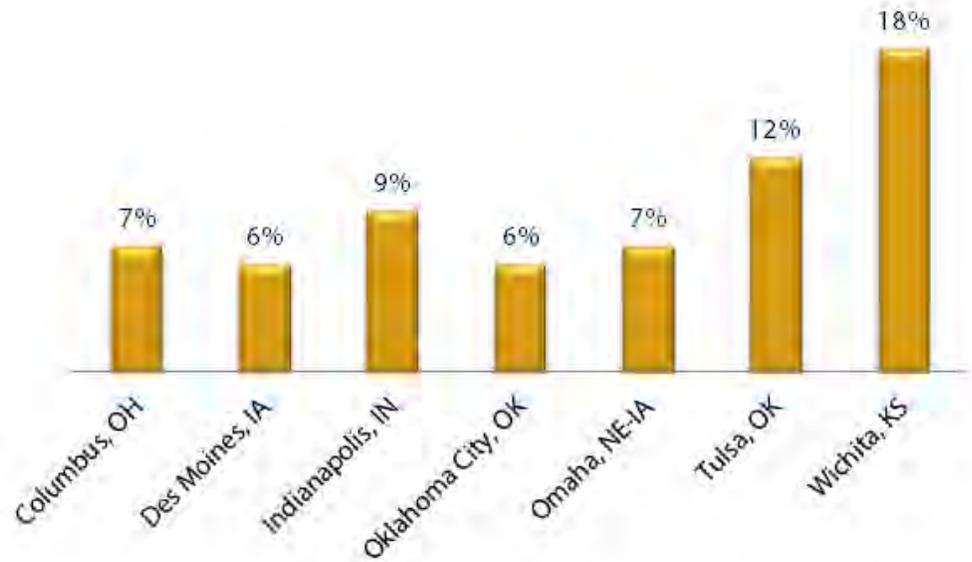


Figure 8.1 Share of Jobs in Manufacturing, 2013
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Employment Statistics

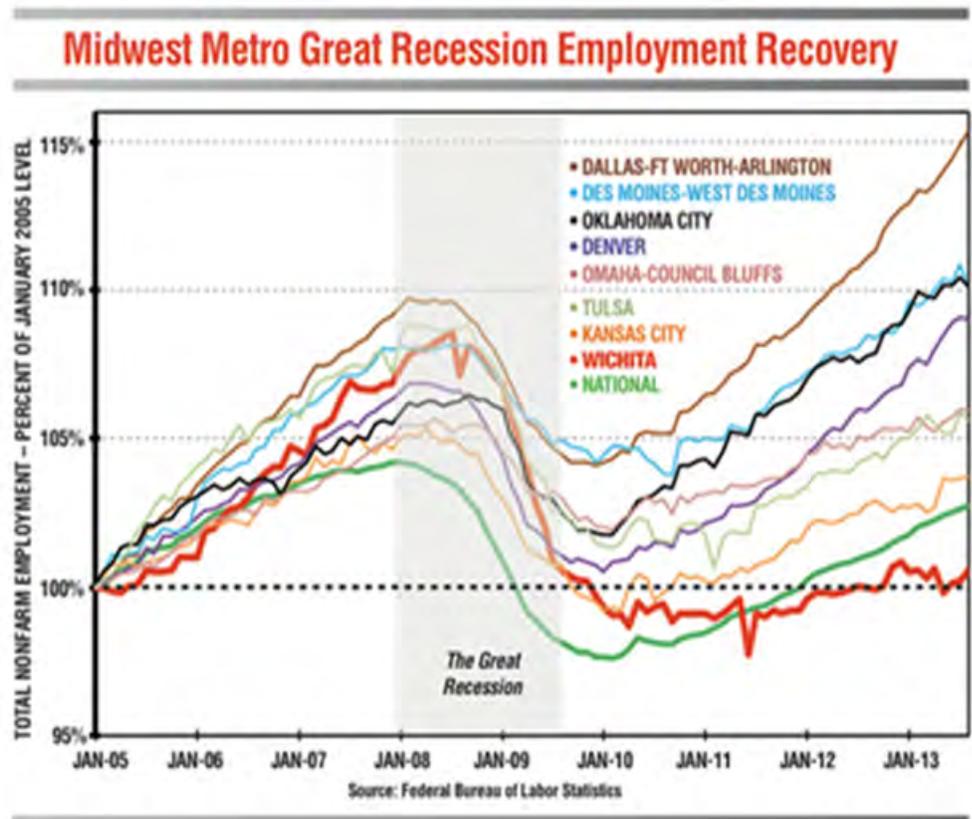


Figure 8.2 Midwest Metro Economic Recovery, 2013

to instability or shifts in worldwide market conditions. The last recession, for example, strongly affected the aviation industry. The economy suffered a nearly \$3,500 per capita drop in exports from 2008 to 2009 entering the recession, and a subsequent \$2,500 per capita loss from 2010 to 2011. Still, per capita exports in the Wichita MSA are significantly higher than in other peer

MSAs. The prominence of exports in the economy emphasizes the importance of strategies to connect more regional businesses to global markets.

Employment and Wages

Unemployment in the region has historically been low. The peak unemployment rate in the wake of the

recession was 8.7 percent in 2010. Since 2010, the unemployment rate has fallen at an average annual rate of 11 percent. Though it outperforms the nation as a whole, parts of South Central Kansas lag the state in employment. **See Figure 8.4.** As of May 2014, the unemployment rate in Kansas was 4.8 percent, ranking it 13th best in the U.S.



Figure 8.3 Exports per Capita
Source: US Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration

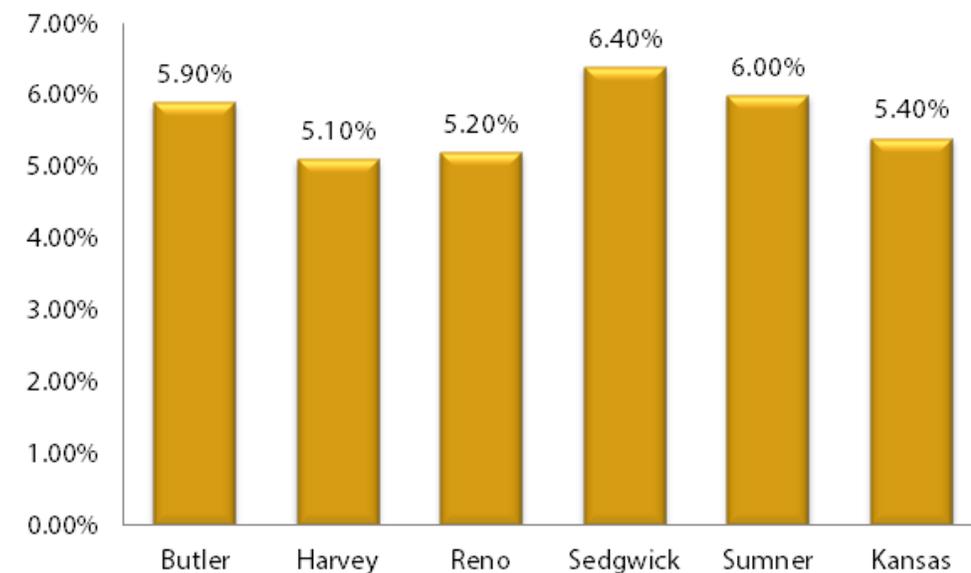


Figure 8.4 Annual Average Unemployment Rate by County, 2013
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Employment projections for South Central Kansas anticipate a modest annual employment growth rate of 1.1 percent through the year 2020, with a total estimated increase of 11.3 percent. Projections indicate that manufacturing jobs will grow through 2014, but then decrease by 2018. Other sectors, such as health care, finances, and professional service jobs are likely to expand at higher rates. Of the top five fastest growing occupations in the next decade (home health aides, personal and home care aides, other personal care and service workers, meeting and conventional planners, and helpers/carpenters) three are health care related. This trend reflects the expansion of the health care industry within the region, as well as the increasing demand for medical services and care, particularly for an aging population. Since wages in these industries have traditionally been below that of jobs in the manufacturing and professional sectors, the projected mix of jobs indicates the need for strategies to attract, retain, and expand higher paying employment opportunities.

While the unemployment rate is one measure of the health of the labor market, wages are another critical dimension of the region's ability to maintain quality of life. According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator, the average living wage for South Central Kansas is approximately \$17.78 per hour, or \$36,978 per year. The living wage is the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support a family, if that individual is the

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sole provider and is working full-time (2,080 hours per year). The \$17.78 average wage reflects an average of the five counties for a family of four (two adults, two children). The median annual household income for each of the five counties is higher than this living wage. However, the median income level for four of the five counties still lags the statewide median of \$51,273. **See Figure 8.5.** The median household income in Reno County is particularly low. The lowest median incomes concentrate in the urbanized center of Wichita and in the most rural parts of the region. In 2012, Sedgwick County had the highest poverty rates in the region at 16.4 percent, followed by Reno and Sumner Counties. **See Figure 8.6.** The highest rates of individual poverty are in Wichita's core neighborhoods and correlate with minority population concentrations. These findings reinforce the value of strategies to bring additional economic opportunities to struggling parts of the region.

Key Sectors and Industry Clusters

The top ten fastest growing sectors in South Central Kansas from 2009-2013 were:

- Warehousing and Storage
- Waste Management and Remediation Services
- Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores
- Support Activities for Mining
- Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing
- Publishing Industries (except Internet)
- Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries
- Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing
- Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing
- Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers



Figure 8.5 Median Income, 2012 by County
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

The Greater Wichita Economic Development Council identified the following sectors as key industries based on employment share, economic impact, and long-term growth prospects:

- Aerospace/Aviation
- Manufacturing
- Engineering
- Composites and Advanced Materials
- Energy
- Business and Professional Services
- Value-added Agriculture
- Information Technology

Clusters represent geographic concentrations of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions in a given sector. Clustering can increase the productivity and competitiveness of businesses. Using IMPLAN (Impact Analysis for Planning) modeling, the project team identified the following industry clusters in South Central Kansas:

- Petroleum refineries
- Turbine and turbine generator set units manufacturing
- Aircraft manufacturing
- Aircraft engine and engine parts manufacturing
- Other aircraft parts and auxiliary equipment manufacturing
- Surgical appliance and supplies manufacturing
- Data processing, hosting, ISP, web search portals and related services
- Architectural, engineering, and related services
- Specialized design services
- Management of companies and enterprises

IMPLAN modeling assesses the total economic impact of the identified cluster industries on three levels throughout the Wichita MSA: direct, indirect, and induced. Direct impacts refer to the initial "first-round" expenditures associated with the identified traded industries. Indirect and

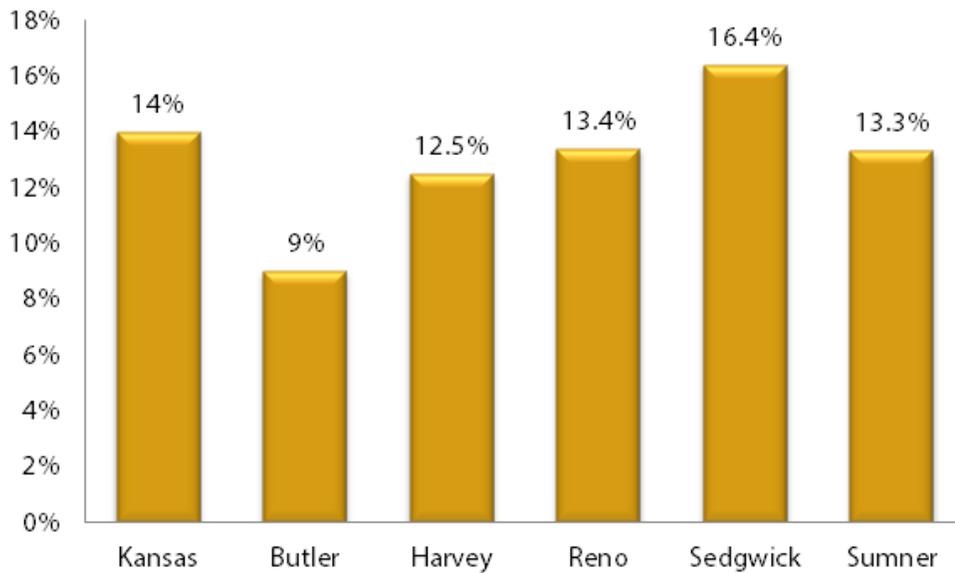


Figure 8.6 Individual Poverty Rate
Source: U.S. Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2012

induced impacts, also commonly referred to as the multiplier or “ripple” effect, resulting from the subsequent rounds of re-spending the first-round expenditures by businesses and employees (i.e. households).

Based on examining the related impacts of typical spending in these industries, the analysis determined that for every \$1 million dollars spent in the Wichita MSA approximately 28 total jobs (full and part-time) are created with an associated average labor income of \$58,000 (inclusive of direct, indirect, and induced output). Furthermore, for each dollar spent in these industries an additional 58 cents of additional output is created in the region. The aviation industry represents approximately 14 percent of the regional employment, 16 percent of the labor income, and 65 percent of total economic output across the entire region.

The data suggest opportunities to identify and build on the region’s assets and to

develop job and investment strategies that align with emerging industry strengths and build additional supply chain capabilities around critical technologies.

Workforce

The regional labor force is highly skilled, in large part due to the concentration of manufacturing firms using high technology design and production methods. These skills can be applied to other related fields, including industrial-commercial machinery, computer equipment, fabricated metal products, instrumentation and controls, photographic equipment, plastic and composite products, chemicals, petroleum refining equipment and electronic equipment.

The anticipated shift in sector mix to a more balanced economic base with more service and professional jobs will produce a corresponding change in educational and skill set requirements. By the year 2020, jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree or higher will

increase by 47.2 percent. The region’s population is becoming more educated on average. The share of population with a high school diploma or less fell from 2008-2012, while the share of the population with at least some college education increased. Collegiate enrollment increased 16.4 percent in the same period. However, the rate of higher educational attainment falls below the state, indicating an ongoing gap in workforce preparation.

Shifting demographics will continue to shape the region’s workforce. Paralleling a national trend, the region is aging. Employment projections for Sedgwick County anticipate that by 2018, employees aged 55+ will comprise 24 percent of the total labor market, Almost one in five residents will be 65+ by the year 2040. Challenges in retaining young people could exacerbate gaps in the availability of workers as the existing workforce continues to age and approach retirement.

From 2000 to 2010, four of the five counties experienced a negative net migration rate of residents age 20 to 29. A negative net migration rate means that more individuals in that age group left the county than entered it. Sumner County had the sharpest drop in residents ages 20-24 and 20-29 at -47 percent and -38 percent respectively. Sedgwick was the only county to experience a positive gain in individuals age 20-29. **See Table 8.2.**

Recommendations

The recommendations identified in the workforce and business development section are the result of technical analysis and stakeholder and community input gathered throughout the planning process. The recommendations address key challenges that affect the prosperity of the region and its residents and businesses. Strategies build on highlighted opportunities to create a more prepared workforce, market the region, and retain,

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	Age 20 - 24	Age 25 - 90
Butler County	-23%	-24%
Harvey County	-19%	-19%
Reno County	-12%	-15%
Sedgwick County	2%	18%
Sumner County	-47%	-38%

Table 8.2 Estimated Net Migration Rate, 2000-2010

Note: Estimated Net Migration Rate = Net Migration 2000-2010 / Population 2000

Source: Census 2000, Census 2010, University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Demography and Ecology

grow, and attract jobs. The Technical Appendix contains a list of links and informational resources to support the recommendations.

Regional Image

Goal Statement: “Promote and encourage a coordinated, cooperative, and comprehensive regional partnership that works to develop a regional identity and branding plan that enhances opportunities more effectively for economic development purposes with coordinated materials and strategies”

1. Develop a regional image for economic development purposes that understands global connection and utilizes asset map information.

South Central Kansas has not communicated a clear and consistent message about its economic strengths or broader quality of life. This strategy seeks to strengthen the region’s image as a way to generate increased economic development and investment opportunities. Specific actions could include:

- Create a multi-disciplinary regional partnership to develop and champion the regional brand. Elements of an integrated strategy could include:
 - Leverage the region’s established

strengths, such as its affordability, business friendly climate, aviation and advanced manufacturing capabilities and other industry clusters (engineering, composites and advanced materials, energy, business and professional services, value-added agriculture, information technology), history of entrepreneurship and export orientation

- Target marketing in adjacent metropolitan areas of the U.S. Midwest, as well as other aviation and aerospace oriented metropolitan areas
 - Targeted marketing to other metro areas that specialize in aerospace could assist in drawing new workers with industry-relevant skill sets or in attracting investment from related businesses that may benefit from sector clustering
- Emphasize quality of life assets as part of a branding strategy
 - While traditional, physical infrastructure is essential to accommodate job growth, the most competitive cities of the future also offer attractive, interesting, and diverse communities for their residents
 - Young professionals value living and working in walkable,

highly inter-connected environments

- An example of an appealing urban workspace is the Airbus Americas engineering facility in Old Town
- Branding strategies designed to retain and attract talent should focus on highlighting the variety of community types in the region, including revitalized small towns and urban centers, such as Old Town in Wichita and assets such as walking trails, parks, entertainment, and other amenities
- Connect workers who have relocated to the broader community as a way to strengthen social networks and encourage long-term family investment in the region

2. Expand the economic development area included in the South Central Kansas region.

The region as currently defined does not include geographic areas that are functionally part of the South Central Kansas economy. Efforts to coordinate economic development should focus on a broader geography that aligns with economic interdependencies. The action associated with this strategy is:

- Expand the five -county planning influence area to the 10-county labor shed and work toward a 14-county workforce and business development planning area. Counties would include:
 - Butler County, Chautauqua County, Cowley County, Elk County, Greenwood County, Harper County, Harvey County, Kingman County, Marion County, McPherson County, Reno County, Rice County, Sedgwick County

and Sumner County

Workforce Development

Goal Statement: “Promote and enhance a regional integrated system that recognizes the value and high priority of a current and future workforce that addresses industry and business needs and identifies partnerships that create a pipeline that supports the ability to retain and recruit a competitive workforce.”

An adequate, prepared supply of workers is an essential component of a healthy, competitive, and inclusive economy.

1. Develop and implement a sector-based system that educates and engages businesses to talk about current and future workforce needs and solve issues occurring in the field.

Some companies in the region have cited difficulty in attracting workers with the skills required to fill positions. This strategy seeks to strengthen an understanding of industry needs and help eliminate the gap between available jobs and workers. Specific actions that are part of this strategy include:

- Develop and implement a regional forum that engages and surveys businesses and their needs on a regular basis
 - Sectors should align closely with established, as well as emerging sectors, including aviation, manufacturing, information technology, composites and advanced materials, energy, and health care
- Assess the gaps in the workforce by analyzing the persistent job openings and develop a way to address employment needs

2. Establish a partnership among technical training entities to develop mechanisms that upgrade worker skills, utilize career pathway models,

and raise awareness about technical education.

For regions with a manufacturing tradition such as South Central Kansas, there are continued concerns about the need for short-term training to fill advanced manufacturing jobs, as well as a long-term need to replace retiring skilled workers, many of whom are in the manufacturing sector. These recommendations address the worker side of the skilled workforce gap.

Specific actions include:

- Develop an information database and infrastructure that provides businesses with a one-stop-shop for the “talent and skill set” levels of regional workers
- Partner with school districts to develop curriculum/programs that promote various workforce paths, including college and technical careers
 - Promote apprenticeships and

other programs that provide high school students with additional pathways to a career, beyond a traditional four-year college degree

- Explore opportunities to create an advanced manufacturing career pathway at high schools that enables students to explore the field of manufacturing and learn skills for application in college or the work force
 - As an example, in Wheeling, Illinois, high school students completing the advanced manufacturing career program can receive National Incident Management System Certification, Manufacturing Skill Standards Council Safety Certification, and a National Career Readiness Certificate and qualify to participate in an internship program
- Focus on increasing participation



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by women, minorities, and other groups typically underrepresented in the manufacturing sector

- Establish an infrastructure that connects school district advisory boards, workforce boards, and businesses to develop training and educational curricula that meet workplace needs
- To retain students in the region, develop and promote opportunities for scholarships, internships, plans of study, work-study, and mentoring
 - Leverage potential funding opportunities, best practices, and partnerships from initiatives undertaken as part of the Trade Adjustment Assistance and Community College and Career Training (TAA-CCCT) program and the American Apprenticeship Grants
 - Ongoing efforts include launching apprenticeship models in new, high-growth fields, aligning apprenticeships to pathways for further learning and career advancement, streamlining GI Bill benefits for apprentices, connecting apprentices with college credit, developing scalable apprenticeship models in high need advanced manufacturing, and developing a best practices website for community colleges and employers (Skills for America's Future)

3. Align workforce strategies and organizational structures with the changing priorities emphasized in the Workforce Innovation and

Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The WIOA seeks to streamline the existing workforce development system. The legislation places more emphasis on real-world education and workforce development opportunities and outreach to disenfranchised youth. Likely changes resulting from the WIOA are:



- Reductions in the number of required seats on state and local workforce boards
- Elimination of the 'sequence of services' delivered by one-stop centers that are currently required under the Workforce Investment Act, allowing for a more tailored approach to meeting the needs of job seekers
 - "Sequence of services" can introduce rigidity and impede the effectiveness of training by requiring that programs deliver

services in a particular order regardless of need

- Use of career pathways and sector strategies specific to the goals of local and regional economies
- Requirement for state boards to include direct local input in the creation of the state strategic plan for workforce

- development
- Inclusion of economic developers at the national, state, and local levels for workforce development planning and execution, including a greater emphasis on consistency between state and local workforce strategies and regional economic development strategies

Business Development

Goal Statement: "Support regional economic engines through the development, retention, expansion, and

recruitment of key industry clusters, small businesses, and entrepreneurs.”

These strategies focus on growing jobs in South Central Kansas by sparking small start-ups, expanding existing businesses, increasing exports, and attracting new investment.

1. Support, promote, and utilize strategies from the Wichita Regional Export Planning Initiative export plan to assist regional business around export and trade.

The Wichita MSA is the most export-intensive metropolitan area in the country. Economic development plans should reflect this strong global orientation and focus on connecting additional businesses to expanding global market opportunities. Specific actions include:

- Develop a regional export plan
 - The Global Cities Initiatives (GCI) Exchange is a joint project of the Brookings Institution and JPMorgan Chase. Using GCI research and guidance from the Brookings Institution, Exchange metro areas will produce a data-driven Export Plan, Trade Policy memo, and Foreign Direct Investment Strategy. The resulting export plan will:
 - Connect services to companies
 - Fulfill company-identified needs
 - Serve manufacturing and service companies
 - Focus on industry strengths and potential
 - Create a long-term global competitive advantage
 - The initiative focuses on building a strong export ecosystem integrated within the region’s economic development initiatives

and other regional efforts to maintain a modern freight and infrastructure network, enact sound government policy, develop a trained, skilled workforce, and support companies producing innovative goods and services.

- Support, promote, and utilize strategies developed from the regional export plan to assist businesses in participating more fully in export and trade
 - The benefit of export assistance is that it allows local companies to increase sales through exports, which reduces reliance on local markets. Export assistance helps companies manage complex challenges, such as export regulations, tariffs, etc... and offers a platform from which to visit and engage other outside markets.
 - Leverage the expertise of the U.S. Export Assistance Center in Wichita to create an efficient service provider network, offering readily accessible information on export basics, online training and resources, financing and insuring export transactions, export compliance and regulation, international market research, finding and engaging trading partners, and export forms and tools
 - Provide support and education to regional businesses on developing individual export/trade plans
 - Ensure that regional transportation plans and other infrastructure projects align with available sites to support the creation of new jobs and export-producing businesses

2. Develop collaborative partnerships around economic development efforts through agreements, protocols, and a cooperative lead

system.

The South Central Kansas will be stronger if communities work together, rather than compete against one another. The purpose of these strategies is to build and sustain a regional economic development process that is inherently more collaborative and connects interested businesses with the best economic development opportunities across the region. Specific recommendations include:

- Develop a regional lead distribution model that coordinates economic development efforts and provides all appropriate business location options in the region. The model could process and respond to business leads as follows:
 - *Retail.* Ideally, retail leads are channeled immediately to local jurisdictions
 - *Business Attraction.* Ideally, these leads are handled by a central regional organization that has all the data and tools at its disposal to respond to companies asking for information about a specific site or office location.
 - *Business Retention.* These leads tend to originate at a local level through existing companies. Ideally, city or county economic development organizations would initiate dialogue with businesses. Regional collaboration becomes essential if the specific company is not interested in sites within a given county and wants to explore other options in the region.
 - As an example, Cuyahoga County, Ohio formed a Business Retention and Expansion Advisory Council structured around the following implementation activities for its members:
 - Designate one person to the

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“deal team network” as the community’s point of contact for all economic development matters

- Provide the community’s updates to the region’s “deal team database,” which gives information about participating communities’ economic development programs and incentives
- Provide the community’s updates to a central “available property” database
- Assist other economic development organizations when economic development leads are identified
- Develop an anti-poaching protocol, in coordination with the Kansas Department of Commerce, that discourages the active pursuit of businesses that are not currently considering relocation from a community and establishes appropriate communication with affected communities and local economic development organizations should companies express interest in relocation
- Confirm the number of available sites for industrial, office, distribution and general commercial use and share the resulting site availability information with all local economic development participants
 - Given the increasing need of companies to make location decisions quickly, sites should have both zoning and key infrastructure in place
- Conduct an annual economic development summit to generate dialogue on economic issues and sustain local awareness of regional strengths
- Design a method of outreach to businesses that surveys their needs and produces usable information

3. Identify and attract key industry clusters.

Addressing industry recruitment and retention on a regional scale will lead to increased economic opportunities for all jurisdictions. A cluster-based economic approach can help businesses to achieve a greater economic advantage and ultimately market competitiveness. Recommended actions related to this strategy include:

- Develop a supply chain map. Supply chain mapping could incorporate the following facets:
 - As part of broader business retention and expansion efforts, outreach with the private sector should include dialogue about company supply chains and suppliers
 - The intent is to confirm where companies source their materials, who their suppliers are, what they do with their waste product, and whether there are other companies that could make use of these “excess materials.”
 - Understand the local supplier base
 - Second and third tier firms provide specialized services (tool and die for example). The intent is to determine if these firms have developed skills and services that would enable expansion or product applications in other fields.
 - Given relative distance from Kansas City (a major intermodal hub) and local interest in enhanced intermodal connectivity, assess railroad and shipper interest in refilling empty containers locally (agricultural products, as one example) for later export
- Identify and combine manufacturing

advisory boards to promote the industry and understand needs around retention, expansion, and attraction

- Improve the infrastructure around the region’s critical business/ economic sectors (manufacturing, health, technology, etc.)
 - The development of specific industry clusters requires the support of sector champions, who can align public and private



strategies and focus infrastructure dollars on specific projects.

- For South Central Kansas, the current strength in aerospace has significant applicability in other emerging fields, including advanced materials (nano materials and carbon fiber) and manufacturing processes (3D printing), as well as adhesives, automotive and medical device sectors, and alternative energy

- Nanomaterials can be metals, ceramics, polymeric materials, or composite materials that are minute in size. The addition of nanoparticles can improve the mechanical properties and thermal stability of products.
- Develop a regional forum that brings together various manufacturing sectors to identify needs and worker skill sets, both short and long-term

4. Support entrepreneurial development.

The development and support of new entrepreneurs is an important element of economic prosperity. Specific actions include:

- Assist with connecting small businesses and entrepreneurs to crowdfunding and venture capital sources
 - Crowdfunding involves raising small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet

- There are two primary models of crowdfunding—donation-based funding and investment crowdfunding, in which businesses seeking capital sell ownership stakes online in the form of equity or debt. In this model, individuals who fund become owners or shareholders and have a potential for financial return, unlike the donation model.
- Examples of sites include Kickstarter, Crowdfunder, Somolend, AngelList, and Invested.in.

- Create a pipeline that identifies and supports early entrepreneurial development
 - Expand participation in programs such as Youth Entrepreneurs (YE). YE is a nonprofit organization that teaches business and entrepreneurial education in high schools. Current programs include Hutchinson, Newton, Wichita, Augusta and Andover, Kansas.
- Create a regional environment that is supportive of entrepreneurial development, through efforts to:
 - Develop a catalog of all regional

entities that are involved in entrepreneurship and develop a plan for enhanced, easy access to existing regional entrepreneurship resources, including educational institutions

- Leverage the resources and technical expertise of the Center for Entrepreneurship at Wichita State University
- Evaluate the climate and capacity for entrepreneurial and small business development across the region, defining local strengths and weaknesses, funding gaps and industry best practices
- Help local companies expand export opportunities to global markets, particularly in Asia and Latin America
- Research the technical feasibility of regional business incubation facilities, and the potential role of local educational institutions in supporting the effort
- Research the role and need for a civic champion to pursue additional “cluster” opportunities
- Work with local units of government to standardize planning and development regulations to ensure greater consistency and efficiency across jurisdictions

5. Support and partner around the innovation and tech transfer efforts of Wichita State University.

Technology transfer is the process of taking new ideas, processes or products from the research and development stage to the private marketplace. Technology transfer can be a significant source of innovation and economic growth. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Leverage the expertise and resources of the Office of Technology Transfer at Wichita State University



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- Connect private industry to partnership opportunities at the Innovation Campus at Wichita State University

Top Priority Strategies

The workforce and business development strategies seek to build a competitive, resilient, and diversified economy through greater regional coordination and workforce development. The strategies also recognize the value of developing a coherent regional brand that highlights the region's strengths. While all of the actions contribute to improving the region's economy, the selection of a prioritized list of key recommendations is critical for organizing the implementation effort.

The following strategies are a high priority because they fill gaps in the region's ability to retain, grow, and attract businesses and investment and prepare its workforce for emerging opportunities.

Top Priority Strategies

- Develop a regional image for economic development purposes that understands global connection and utilizes asset map information
- Support, promote, and utilize strategies from the Wichita Regional Export Planning Initiative
- Establish a sector based system that brings businesses together to discuss and solve issues occurring in their fields across the region
- Develop collaborative partnerships around economic development efforts through agreements, protocols, and a cooperative lead system that is supported by an asset map and regional image
- Support and partner around the innovation and tech transfer efforts of Wichita State University and connect this effort to the Prosperity Plan

process drew from CLT and Work Team feedback, as well as community input and technical analysis to highlight priority strategies within a single framework—Great Communities and Effective Collaboration—that can guide overall resource allocation and inform plan implementation. The Preferred Scenario builds on the theme of prosperity through healthy, quality

communities throughout the region but also emphasizes economic development, jobs, and regional coordination strategies.

Great Communities and Effective Collaboration strategies are:

- Developing a Partnership Approach to Regional Problem-Solving
- Fostering Opportunities for Education and Innovation
- Building Pride of Place and Marketing the Region's Economic Assets
- Promoting Comprehensive Management of Water Resources
- Expanding Mobility Choices
- Supporting Healthy Lifestyles
- Providing Adequate and Efficient Infrastructure
- Redeveloping Existing Areas, Neighborhoods, and Houses

The workforce and business development section features multiple strategies that align with the priorities of the preferred framework, including an emphasis on:

- Marketing of the region's assets and its support of innovation and entrepreneurship; and
- Promoting a more coordinated approach to planning for economic development and workforce issues across jurisdictional boundaries

Relationship with Other Plan Topics

A robust economy generates opportunities to enhance individual quality of life and enables communities and businesses to build assets and resources. A stronger economy also supports more stable and prosperous neighborhoods, and better health and educational outcomes for residents. Conversely, many other elements of the region's physical setting affect the ability of businesses and individuals to participate fully in the economy.

Relationship to Preferred Scenario

As described in Section 7, the scenario

Expanded transportation choices and the availability of nearby affordable housing can increase access to jobs, particularly for lower income residents. Businesses in turn require adequate, reliable access to a skilled workforce, infrastructure, land, energy, water and other resources in order to maintain and grow operations.

Examples of the overlap between workforce and business development and other strategies include measures to:

- Develop regional organizational structures and information sharing tools to promote greater collaboration in decision-making and facilitate the application of best practices;
- Improve training and educational opportunities to enhance the ability of all residents to participate fully in the economy, thereby improving the stability and overall health of individuals, households, neighborhoods, and communities;
- Integrate transportation, transit, and land use to make it easier for residents to get to jobs and training and educational opportunities;
- Promote energy efficiency practices and development patterns to reduce financial impacts on businesses and thus to increase the affordability and overall economic competitiveness of the region;
- Develop housing options that meet the needs of the region's workers and facilitate employer access to the workforce;
- Reduce regulatory and market barriers to redevelopment in mature or economically distressed areas, thus spurring economic activity through private investment; and
- Facilitate continued economic growth by ensuring access to quality natural resources for the region's industry and agriculture, promoting

more efficient and thus cost-saving practices for businesses, and seeking to reduce potential increases in operating costs resulting from any future compliance with more stringent air quality standards.

Relationship to Prosperity Plan Guiding Principles

The Prosperity Plan will build on the following principles, based on HUD's six Principles of Livability:

- *Provide more transportation choices.* Develop a safe regional transportation system that includes strategic, responsive, and sustainable transportation options that enhance economic production and the connectivity of people and goods in the region.
- *Promote equitable, affordable housing.* Ensure a wide variety of housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds in urban, suburban, small-town, and rural areas of the region.
- *Enhance economic competitiveness.* Ensure continued prosperity throughout the region by establishing the framework to grow businesses and create jobs in South Central Kansas.
- *Support existing communities.* Enhance and create connected, attractive, and value-added neighborhoods through strategies like mixed-use and infill development to support the revitalization of communities, the increased efficiency of public works investments, and the safeguarding of rural environments.
- *Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection.* Remove barriers to

collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth.

- *Value communities and neighborhoods.* Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Workforce and business development strategies are consistent with all of the livability principles and specific recommendations relate directly to the core themes of enhancing economic competitiveness and coordinating policies among jurisdictions, particularly through the development of regional branding and enhanced support systems for workforce training and businesses development.

VISION AND FOCUS AREAS

Vision

The built environment section of the Prosperity Plan focuses on creating livable, enduring, and resilient places that connect all residents to jobs, education, social opportunities, housing, critical services, and amenities. The built environment is fundamentally about the ways in which communities organize housing, open spaces, commercial and industrial uses, and public infrastructure. The layout of neighborhoods and the connections among them shape the ability of residents to meet daily needs and to participate more fully in the community and economy. The use of land also influences the efficiency of broader infrastructure systems and the health of the surrounding environment.

Mission: “To create connected communities that link people to jobs and services that enhance quality of life in urban, suburban, and rural environments.”

Focus Areas

The four focus areas for built environment are:

- Community/Neighborhood Design
- Reinvestment/Infill Development
- Sustainable Architecture and Design
- Regional Housing Market

These areas represent the top issues for the built environment element of the Prosperity Plan and organize the individual recommendations in this section.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

The Technical Appendix contains an analysis of the region’s built environment profile, including shifting housing and neighborhood preferences resulting from demographic change, land use patterns, the housing market, the transportation system, parks and open space, local government planning initiatives, and development policies, regulations, and incentives. The purpose of this profile is to highlight issues, gaps, and opportunities that can form the basis of recommendations in the built environment section.

Demographics

The South Central Kansas five-county region experienced a 9.1 percent growth rate in total population between the years 2000 and 2013. While the region overall grew, Reno and Sumner Counties both lost population during this period. Population projections through the year 2040 anticipate a continued negative population trend for Reno and Sumner Counties. **See Figure 9.1.**

Along with population losses, the rural cities and counties of the region have an older median age than the urbanized area of Wichita/Sedgwick County. In 2010, just over 12 percent of the five-county region total population was 65 years old or older and the total number of residents over the age of 65 increased by nearly 7,000 over the previous decade. This steady aging of the population is consistent with national trends and will continue to be one of the most significant demographic shifts affecting the region. Almost one in five residents will be 65 or older by the year 2040.

As of 2010, young adults age 20 to 29 comprised 13 percent of the region’s

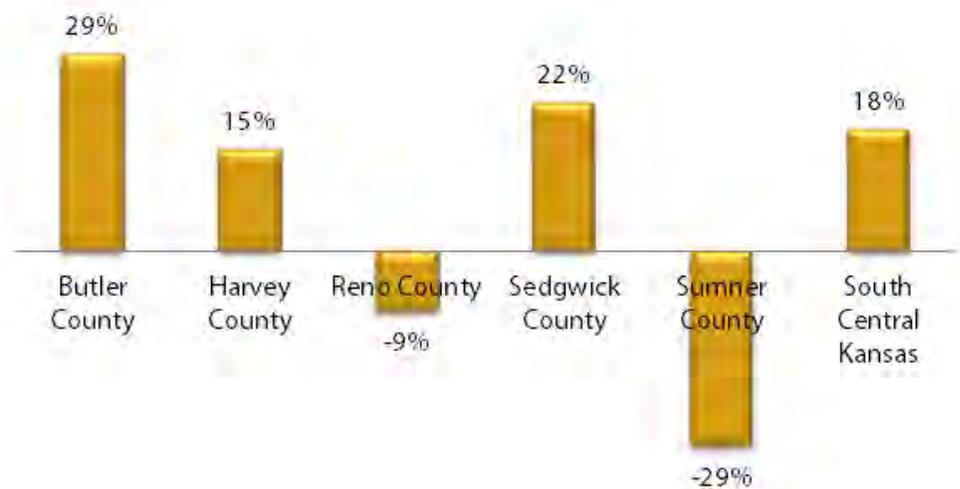


Figure 9.1 Population Projected Growth, 2010 to 2040
Source: Wichita State University, Center for Economic Development and Business Research

population. Population data, however, illustrate the challenge of retaining these young residents. From 2000 to 2010, the region as a whole experienced a net population loss of three percent across all age groups. However, the rate of population loss was sharper among young people. The net migration rate of the age group 20-29 fell by seven percent, with over 6,000 individuals age 20-29 leaving the region. Sumner County had the largest drop in residents age 20-29 at 69 percent. Sedgwick was the only county to experience a positive gain with a modest one percent increase in individuals age 20-29.

Population growth trends indicate opportunities to stabilize rural areas that are losing population and enhance economic opportunity and quality of life in these communities to attract and retain residents. The trend of an aging population also reinforces the value of exploring housing and community design policies that emphasize aging in place or the ability of residents regardless of age, income, or ability level to live safely, independently, and comfortably in their own homes and communities. The continued loss of adults beginning their educations and careers also highlights the need for diverse living and entertainment environments that appeal to younger adults.

Land Use and Transportation Patterns
Urban residential and industrial/commercial uses cluster around the major population areas in the region. Given the modest but steady population growth rate of 18 percent to 2040, South Central Kansas does not face dramatic consequences from dispersed, low-density growth patterns. The region displays a distinct organization around centers with a strong core in Wichita complemented by established areas in Hutchinson, Newton, El Dorado, and Wellington. However, recent rapid growth in some communities such as Andover, Derby, and Goddard has blurred sharper distinctions between urban and suburban or small town settings.

Current land use and development patterns in the region heavily favor reliance on automobiles. According to results from the Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WAMPO) travel survey, single occupancy vehicles are the dominant mode of travel for residents in the region. Only 0.9 percent of all trips occurred on public transportation; yet residents, particularly seniors and college students have indicated that the ability to get around by bus, bike, walking, or rail is a high priority.

While some parts of the region, particularly downtowns and their older, adjoining neighborhoods, feature many of the physical elements of healthy communities—walkability, diverse housing types, gathering spaces, and easy access to shopping and amenities—newer development within the region offers limited choices for interconnected, mixed-use settings.

A review of the built environment in the region suggests opportunities to incorporate more features consistent with healthy community design and planning (**See Section 13: Healthy Community Design**). Elements include:

- Homes, shops, schools, and work that are close together so that people can walk or bike;
- Pedestrian and bicycle-friendly streets and neighborhoods;
- More green spaces, trails, and parks that are easy to access;
- Fresh, healthy food outlets such as grocery stores, community gardens or farmers' markets; and
- Access to transit.

Housing

The Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA) (**See the Technical Appendix for the full FHEA report**) analyzes housing conditions in South Central Kansas, including the ways in which current development patterns

shape social and economic opportunities for all residents, particularly for individuals in traditionally underserved groups, such as lower-income households, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and racial and ethnic minorities. The analysis highlights neighborhoods that face continued challenges in accessing critical services and resources, such as quality, affordable housing, public transportation, jobs and high-performing schools.

The findings of the FHEA indicate that there are challenges in both the housing supply and overall access to opportunity within the region. While housing in the region is generally affordable, only about one-quarter of owner units (with a mortgage) are affordable to owner households earning 80 percent of the area's median family income or \$38,231. For purposes of this discussion, housing is considered affordable if it costs less than 30 percent of a household's income. This finding reinforces feedback from stakeholders about the lack of quality mid-range housing in some communities.

The analysis also identified specific geographic areas that underperform relative to the region overall. These areas include five U.S. census tracts in and around the City of Wichita that qualify as Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty (RCAPs) or neighborhoods in which the racial composition is more than 50 percent non-white and more than 40 percent of families live below the poverty line. This concentration of poverty can result in underperforming public schools, poor quality housing, lower individual health outcomes, such as the prevalence of disease or health risk factors, and limited access to services and job opportunities for residents. A large body of social science studies indicates that concentrated poverty places additional burdens on lower income households and leads to a cumulative effect that accelerates neighborhood decline.

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Sumner and Reno Counties also experience an interrelated set of socio-economic and housing challenges, including higher rates of poverty and higher percentages of seniors and people with disabilities with limited access to quality, affordable housing and overall opportunity.

Prevailing residential patterns in the region also point to the uneven distribution of racial and ethnic minorities. African-American residents in particular tend to live in more racially homogenous neighborhoods. The analysis also suggests that this concentration correlates with less access to social, economic, and educational opportunity for the region's minority residents. Residents of racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to live in neighborhoods with higher levels of poverty, low-performing schools, and less employment. Low-income residents in all parts of the region regardless of race also have reduced access to jobs and educational opportunities.

Data findings and stakeholder feedback also highlighted several deficiencies in the current housing market. In many parts of the region, the housing stock is less diverse and features mainly single-family detached housing. The lack of alternative housing options leaves the region less prepared to meet changing needs related to demographic shifts, including the long-term preference among younger residents for multi-family and rental units. Stakeholders also noted continued demand for housing to accommodate special needs populations, including the elderly and people with disabilities.

Additionally, housing providers indicated that the demand for subsidized housing currently exceeds available supply. Wait lists for Section 8 housing are long in the Wichita and Sedgwick County Housing Authority programs. Housing authorities have also cited funding challenges in

meeting housing needs in the community and in bridging continued resource gaps.

Based on the findings, the FHEA identifies a series of housing strategies to narrow specific gaps in the availability of quality, affordable housing in South Central Kansas and promote broader access to opportunity for all residents in communities throughout the region. The regional housing market priority area of the built environment section incorporates and builds on many of these recommendations.

Local Planning

City and county comprehensive plans serve as the blueprint for local growth and development and are a strong indicator of a community's willingness to embrace innovative planning and design concepts and tools. While older comprehensive plans in the region are in need of updates, South Central Kansas continues to build on a sound legacy of land use planning. Across the region, the complementary goals of preserving rural character and active farmland, while concentrating more intense residential and commercial land uses within revitalized downtowns and centers, has been a major focus of local planning for at least two decades. In all communities, there is increasing support for quality growth both to enhance the livability of the region and to promote greater fiscal control.

Increasingly, comprehensive plans and subsequently adopted development regulations in the region's counties and municipalities reflect a desire to direct new development to areas where the cost to provide utilities and other urban services can be most efficiently allocated. Plans reflect best practices for rural land preservation, natural resource conservation, and urban design and an increasing emphasis on cross-jurisdictional cooperation.

The review of plans suggest opportunities to align local zoning and development regulations with broader policies to ensure that future development incorporates desired outcomes and to promote a more consistent application of options for mixed-use, infill and pedestrian-friendly design in appropriate areas across the region. For purposes of this discussion, infill is the use of land within a built-up area for further construction, especially as part of a community redevelopment or growth management program.

Recommendations

The recommendations identified in the built environment section are the result of technical analysis and stakeholder and community input gathered throughout the planning process. The recommendations address key challenges that affect the health, function, and attractiveness of the region's communities. Strategies also build on highlighted opportunities to increase affordable, quality residential options, ensure access to critical services and amenities, and promote social interaction. The Technical Appendix contains a list of links and informational resources to support the recommendations.

Community/Neighborhood Design

Goal Statement: "To create connected, attractive, and value-added neighborhoods that offer housing choices to all"

The purpose of these strategies is to give communities across the region tools, policies, and guidance to create livable, self-sustaining, and attractive environments. A central focus of the strategies is to maintain flexibility and sensitivity to surroundings so that development complements rural, suburban, or urban contexts. The recommendations below also emphasize the design and planning of transportation systems, buildings and neighborhoods to accommodate a diverse range of people

and uses. Many of the strategies in this priority area relate to recommendations found in **Section 13: Healthy Community Design**.

1. Encourage complete communities that offer a variety of living environments.

South Central Kansas functions as a network of communities, ranging from



rural areas to small downtowns to suburban neighborhoods and urban settings. Planning and design should emphasize the viability and livability of each of these contexts and preserve a sense of place and the identity of communities across the region. Neighborhoods should accommodate a mix of land use and building types that support “living in place” or “lifelong neighborhoods.” A balanced mix of uses sustains the appeal and livability of neighborhoods and communities throughout residents’ life stages. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Develop a community planning “toolkit” of guidelines, policies,

and implementation steps for communities, including options for urban, suburban and rural areas

- Structure the toolkit as a menu of best practices that communities can choose to integrate into individual city and county plans
- Include planning and design guidance and identify potential financial resources

around topics such as

- Mixed-uses
- Parking
- Street standards
- Walkability
- Stormwater
- Design of the public realm
- Protection of agricultural and sensitive natural areas
- Context sensitive zoning
- Create a regional forum for research, education, and the identification of funding, technical resources, and best practices in residential, neighborhood, and community design. This forum would occur on a regularly scheduled basis and feature:

- Public education about the perceived and actual impacts on property values from various design and development options
- Education for the development/banking/real estate/leadership segments of the community on issues and incentives related to development, appraisal, and demand of neighborhoods and communities that are mixed-use, connected, and healthy
- Develop model zoning, subdivision and other development regulations for use by communities to remove barriers to development and promote more diverse and flexible land uses
 - Promote live/work combinations
 - Accommodate home improvements for multi-generational living and cohabitation without changing land use from single- to multi-family classification
 - Promote mixed-use development (horizontal/vertical) to provide easy access to commerce and services
- Develop “Healthy Community Design” examples that are pedestrian-friendly, promoting physical activity and social connectivity
 - These should include strategies for linking gathering and green spaces and increasing usable outdoor space without having to construct new parks
- Develop a checklist to address issues of aging in place to enable seniors to live in traditional single-family residences as long as possible. Examples include:
 - Physical adaptations to homes, strategies for repairs and future maintenance needs, the availability of senior services, and assessment of the safety aspects of the outside built environment, such as walkability

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- Form partnerships with developers and contractors to incorporate Universal Design features into new residential construction. Essential Universal Design elements include:
 - No-step entry
 - Single-floor living
 - Wide doorways and hallways
 - Reachable controls and switches
 - Easy-to-use access handles and switches
 - Use a Healthy Community Design Checklist to evaluate the comprehensiveness of new neighborhood development or revitalization efforts and integrate health outcomes with land use, transportation, and infrastructure decisions
 - The checklist is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy Community Design Initiative. The checklist includes elements that:
 - Support more physical activity
 - Increase access to healthy and affordable food choice
 - Expand walking and bicycling options
 - Improve community safety
 - Include attractive gathering spaces
 - Accommodate people of all ages, abilities, or incomes
 - Support a clean environment
 - Use the Healthy Kansas Communities Assessment and Planning Tool developed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to evaluate community conditions and identify opportunities for improvements
 - Develop strategies to provide broadband services throughout the region, including rural areas. Access is critical to keep residents connected, maintain education and health care quality, and support economic investment.
 - Partner with USDA Rural Development to access funding sources and technical assistance to expand broadband access
 - Develop measures to assist in determining what types of nonresidential development is necessary to support a complete and healthy community
 - Examples may include level of service standards and accessible travel times for uses such as parks, grocery stores, and community facilities
 - Align regulatory and land use policies to promote housing affordability and more mixed-use environments (**see the full FHEA report in the Technical Appendix**)
 - Revisit and refine zoning and land use policies to encourage additional mixed-use settings, particularly in existing community cores and downtowns or planned growth and reinvestment areas
- 2. Provide communities with pedestrian-friendly "Complete Streets" design to increase community appeal, safety, and provide access to all users.**
- Expanding transportation choices, including automobile, transit, walking, and biking increases community appeal and enables older citizens, people with disabilities, children, lower income households and others who do not have access to personal vehicles to navigate safely through their neighborhoods and access jobs, schools, services and amenities. Greater mobility options also appeal to younger residents who demonstrate a preference for walkable environments. Actions related to this strategy include:
- Develop guidance on "Complete Streets" design for various neighborhood and community settings and sizes
 - A Complete Streets policy promotes a balanced roadway system that encourages walking, bicycling, and transit use. Complete Streets elements emphasize design features that contribute to a safe, convenient, and comfortable travel experience for all users, including sidewalks; shared use paths; bicycle lanes; street trees and landscaping; crosswalks; bicycle parking facilities; public transportation stops and facilities; and dedicated transit lanes.
 - Include special considerations to create environments that are user-friendly for all residents, such as places to rest, easily readable street signs, adequate stoplight timing to facilitate safe street crossings, and bus stop availability and amenities
 - Encourage planning for infrastructure improvements that support dual purposes, thereby maximizing the positive impacts of public resource expenditures
 - Examples include walking and biking paths in utility corridors
 - Develop sidewalk, trail, road, transit, and other transportation systems as an interconnected multi-modal network for moving around the region
 - Connect community-wide trail and path systems to neighboring jurisdictions when possible to promote regional linkages
- Reinvestment/Infill Development*
Goal Statement: "Foster public/private collaboration that maximizes reinvestment in available land and buildings."
- The reuse of land and buildings achieves several complementary outcomes. Promoting growth and adaptive use in

built areas reduces the loss of open space and agricultural land and minimizes the impacts of development on the natural environment. Activity organized in recognizable centers also produces a synergy that spurs more economic investment and creates a safe, appealing and more vibrant atmosphere for residents, visitors, and businesses. Orderly, contiguous growth also maximizes public investments, making infrastructure delivery more efficient and easier to maintain. However, local codes and policies can create ongoing financial, regulatory and marketplace barriers to land and building reuse. Many of the strategies in this priority area seek to lower these barriers and facilitate private investment in older areas of the region.

1. Target and apply finance incentives and dedicated funding for infill development.

Infill development is new construction on scattered vacant or underused lots in established neighborhoods and business districts. Infill provides numerous benefits, including making better use of available land, while reducing the loss of open space and agriculture, increasing access to jobs and services, strengthening real estate markets and property values, renewing older neighborhoods and housing stock, and increasing the efficiency of existing infrastructure and lowering costs of public services. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Direct financial incentives for public and private investment to infill and redevelopment areas and dedicate public funding sources to support redevelopment. Examples include:
 - Use a housing trust fund model to increase affordable housing resources (***See the FHEA and the Regional Housing Market priority area of this section***)

- Promote location efficient mortgages (LEMs) in urban neighborhoods of the region
 - With LEMs, lenders recognize the potential savings of a more accessible housing location (near transit or in neighborhoods with greater walkability) when assessing a household's borrowing capacity. The evaluation considers combined transportation and housing costs and treats vehicle cost savings as additional income in qualifying for a mortgage, giving the homebuyer more borrowing power. LEMs give homebuyers an incentive to choose housing options in more compact, close-in neighborhoods, and thus favors infill development, rather than conventional automobile-dependent development.
- Designate Tax Increment Financing Districts to help fund qualifying improvements in eligible areas, such as blighted areas, conservation areas (older, but not yet blighted), or Enterprise Zones
- Develop cost reduction incentives in the form of reduced system connection fees, monthly billing, and other utility costs in target infill and redevelopment areas
- Develop strategies and partnerships to lower construction costs, particularly in rural areas
 - Use Rural Housing Incentive Districts (RHID) to spur housing construction within the redevelopment districts of smaller communities
 - The RHID program assists in the financing of public improvements, such as site preparation, sidewalks and stormwater infrastructure in designated areas

- Develop partnerships with employers and not-for-profit housing developers to build housing

2. Develop rehabilitation-oriented building codes and land use/suite design standards to address neighborhood/community rehabilitation needs.

Regulatory requirements can create barriers to improving structures built under prior codes. The unintended result is the continuation of unsafe or inadequate conditions or underutilization of existing buildings. Flexible standards can promote rehabilitation efforts and spur the revitalization of older neighborhoods and commercial districts. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Develop creative solutions to address gaps between rehabilitation cost and after-rehabilitation market value of the property
 - Promote the use of rehabilitation tax credits, which grant relief from real estate taxes for property owners who rescue, repair and rehabilitate qualified older buildings
- Develop sample rehabilitation-oriented building codes that can flexibly meet neighborhood and community rehabilitation needs
 - Explore use of the Nationally Applicable Recommended Rehabilitation Provisions developed by HUD to promote more flexible standards
- Develop land use and site design standards that promote infill solutions that are sensitive to context and existing community character
 - Consider lot redesign and consolidation

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- Develop strategies to reduce existing barriers, such as state statutes, related to liens to streamline the acquisition and sale process of land and buildings
- Develop methods to reduce mitigation risks associated with potential and existing brownfield reuse
 - Partner with Kansas Department of Health and Environment to conduct Brownfields Targeted Site Assessments on properties that: are abandoned or publicly owned; have low to moderate contamination; may be linked to environmental justice issues; have had prior liability issues; or have a prospective purchaser willing to buy and pay for the cleanup of the property
 - Consult with small businesses and provide environmental assistance to eliminate the risk of creating brownfields that will require future remediation

3. Address blight and safety in neighborhoods by developing vacant lots and buildings.

Continued underinvestment produces impacts beyond community aesthetics. Blight can contribute to the destabilization of neighborhoods and pose public safety risks for residents. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Develop tools for dealing with blighting impacts of property lacking investment, including determination of ownership, dealing with lenders in cases of foreclosure, and expediting processes with property owners
 - Examples include code enforcement methods, procedures, and criteria for identifying structures to demolish
 - Create guidance to address “mothballed” or vacant and abandoned properties, including the use of tools, such as land banks, value capture, and other related options
 - Tax-delinquent, abandoned, and vacant properties can reduce surrounding property values and dampen investment in affected areas, thereby accelerating neighborhood decline. Land banking enables governmental or nonprofit entities to acquire, hold, and manage these properties for purposes of redevelopment or the production of affordable housing. The Kansas legislature has granted cities and counties the authority to form land banks.
 - Value capture is an alternative to tax increment financing. In value capture, public sector commitments in the form of plans, denser zoning, or capital projects stimulate private sector investments in commercial space and housing. Together, these

public and private investments result in higher property values. Public jurisdictions then recapture land values either through property taxes or developer-provided benefits, such as below market-rate housing or open space. Value capture does not tax improvement values on buildings, and therefore increases the incentive for new private investment.

- Reduce crime related to blight though joint efforts involving:
 - Code enforcement, planning, police, neighborhood and community-based organizations, schools, faith-based institutions, residents and other stakeholders
- Incorporate safety design features in all guidance and model policies with an emphasis on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles
 - CPTED uses environmental design concepts such as lighting, clearance, landscaping, building angles, and active uses to create safer neighborhoods
- Develop guidance for communities to determine appropriate infill and redevelopment areas. Examples may include:
 - Percentage of structures failing to meet property code standards, previous land use, socio-economic and demographic characteristics, property values, vacancy, and neighborhood features, including infrastructure and community facilities
 - Use HUD data related to housing and economic characteristics including Areas of Racially Concentrated Poverty to identify areas of concern that warrant policy interventions

4. Address aging infrastructure, including roads, bridges and water and wastewater systems.

Aging infrastructure requires increasing public expenditures to repair and replace systems and thus emphasizes the importance of coordinating growth and infrastructure decisions and developing flexible, adaptable infrastructure that can serve multiple functions.

- Develop guidelines that communities can use to design infrastructure improvements with the flexibility and adaptability to maximize the lifespan of the systems and public investment
 - Connect communities with resources available through the Environmental Finance Center (EFC) at Wichita State University
 - The EFC provides professional training, technical assistance and applied research in areas such as utility asset management, drought and emergency planning, water and wastewater energy efficiency assessments and utility financial analysis
- Highlight best practices in capital improvement programming to identify and address maintenance and lifecycle replacement timing in a proactive manner
 - Examples could include an Asset Management Program that:
 - Conducts ongoing condition assessment
 - Evaluates the existing condition of all assets
 - Establishes Level of Service (LOS)
 - Establishes a system of ranking and prioritization to identify the asset most likely to experience failure and identify alternatives for renewing the asset (e.g., rehabilitation versus replacement)

- Performs life cycle costing
- Identifies long term funding needs and strategies
- Educate communities on how to perform a comprehensive infrastructure inventory and determine usable life for targeted improvement and expansion plans
- Develop infrastructure solutions that take advantage of unique features or serve to enhance the quality of the area, as well as improve the functioning of the infrastructure system
 - Examples include low-impact development strategies such as on-site infiltration and native plantings, which retain and filter stormwater but also provide green space and attractive landscaping features for the surrounding community

Promote Sustainable Architecture and Design

Goal Statement: “Encourage energy efficient practices in new and existing development and construction.”

The housing stock in the region is aging, particularly in Sumner, Reno and Harvey Counties. The overall age of housing generally correlates with lower energy efficiency, producing higher ownership costs. Low-density development also tends to be less energy efficient than organized, compact arrangements of land uses. Automobile use requires more energy than walking and biking, resulting in higher associated production costs for fuels. The following strategies seek to reduce household costs through energy efficient practices. Actions related to this strategy include:

1. Develop informational tools and resources to raise awareness of the community and investor benefits of energy-efficient design and planning.

Energy efficient practices can achieve the complementary benefits of lowering costs for the region’s households, while also reducing impacts on the environment and natural resources. The specific actions associated with this strategy are:

- Develop definitions of “energy efficiency” that apply to new development and construction, and to various age ranges of existing homes
- Create a “payback” tool that shows the financial return over time to support informed, economic-driven investments
- Develop materials to inform developers, homeowners and buyers, and other real estate-related entities about energy-efficiency options and best practices
 - The information should include site design considerations, as well as building features:
 - Heating, cooling, hot water, lighting, appliance efficiencies, and water-conserving fixtures
 - Building orientation: passive energy techniques
 - Passive techniques include the design of windows, walls, and floors to collect, store, and distribute heat in the winter and deflect solar heat in the summer
 - Independent energy production: solar, wind, geothermal, etc...
 - Storm water management best management practices
 - Landscape design
 - Form partnerships with local building officials, homebuilders, designers, building supply companies, and contractors for insulation, heating, and cooling equipment to review existing building codes, identify opportunities to enhance energy-

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efficient measures, and develop demonstration projects for use at housing fairs and other community events

- Develop a guide for use by local builders and contractors that features innovative energy efficient practices
- Continue to connect homeowners to available informational and grant resources for repairs, weatherization, and other home improvements
 - Kansas Weatherization Assistance Program (K-WAP) helps qualified lower income households reduce their utility bills by providing energy efficiency upgrades
- Use tax rebates and cash incentives, etc. to promote energy-efficient practices
 - Promote the use of Energy Efficient Mortgages, which provide the borrower with special benefits when purchasing a home that is energy efficient, or can be made efficient through the installation of energy-saving improvements

Regional Housing Market

Goal Statement: “Promote a mixture of housing options that are aligned with current and future community and regional needs”

As noted earlier, the Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA) evaluates housing conditions in South Central Kansas, including the ways in which current housing choices shape social and economic opportunities for all residents. The FHEA findings indicate challenges in both the housing supply and overall access to social, economic and educational opportunity within the region. While housing is generally affordable, only about one-quarter of owner units are affordable to

owner households earning 80 percent of the area’s median family income or \$38,231. This finding reinforces feedback from stakeholders about the lack of quality mid-range housing in some communities.

The analysis identified specific geographic areas that face specific housing and broader socio-economic challenges, including five U.S. census tracts in and around the City of Wichita and Sumner and Reno Counties. Data findings and stakeholder feedback also highlighted several deficiencies in the current housing market. In most parts of the region, the housing stock is less diverse and consists mainly single-family detached housing. The lack of alternative housing options leaves the region less prepared to meet changing needs related to demographic shifts. In some smaller and rural communities, there is insufficient middle-class or upper-middle class housing to support the workforce. Stakeholders also noted continued demand for subsidized housing and housing to accommodate special needs populations, including the elderly and people with disabilities. The strategies in this priority area focus on expanding current housing choices to meet the needs of all residents of South Central Kansas and developing residential environments that respond to demographic shifts and changing preferences.

1. Develop, implement, and sustain viable housing projects that meet market demands and needs.

Housing needs vary across the region based on community context, demographic trends, and current and future employment opportunities. Communities should use data to develop housing types that reflect both current and emerging social and economic conditions. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Develop guidelines to assist communities in assessing housing needs and identifying appropriate housing types based on factors such as community demographics, future jobs and housing affordability goals
 - Promote mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented community design and amenities alternatives to single-family housing, including apartments, condos, and townhouses to meet the needs of both older and younger residents in the region
 - Communities throughout the United States are experiencing a shift in preferences, as more young professionals, families, and retirees choose to live in walkable neighborhoods in proximity to employment centers, schools, and recreation opportunities and as more local and regional governments are allocating limited resources towards projects emphasizing efficiency and accessibility. An Urban Land Institute survey on neighborhood preference suggests that desirable characteristics vary by generation. Young people are likely to trade larger lots and housing sizes for safe neighborhoods, walkable environments, and access to schools, work, and recreation.
- Create a regional housing collaborative forum, such as a housing roundtable, to promote information sharing and identification of partnership opportunities
- Leverage available tools to strengthen understanding of market conditions and issues and develop data to inform marketing and investment strategies



- The Kansas Department of Commerce Housing Assessment tool (HAT) helps local communities identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and priorities before allocating resources to implement strategies. HAT includes analysis of demographics, housing characteristics, and infrastructure.
- Develop a marketing strategy to promote and advertise new housing construction

2. Identify housing needs around job centers to support communities in attracting and retaining workers and identify workforce housing programs so workers can live near jobs.

The lack of quality housing options can limit the ability of some communities

to attract workers. While many of the region’s residents choose to commute, other households would prefer housing options in proximity to their workplaces. Having housing near jobs can lower transportations costs and serve as an economic development tool that efficiently connects workers to businesses. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Provide tools to determine employer preference regarding proximity of workers to jobs
 - Educate employers about the benefits of having workers live nearby, including:
 - Reduced turnover, absenteeism, improved loyalty, and productivity

- Strengthened financial stability for workers, including foreclosure prevention, when employers provide housing counseling and financial assistance to buy or rent homes near jobs
- Reduced commutes and reduced traffic
- Explore opportunities to launch employer-assisted housing (EAH) initiatives. EAH programs can include:
 - Counseling for employees about housing choices and financing
 - Direct financial help to employees for rent, closing costs, or mortgage payments
 - A real estate investment by an employer

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- An Individual Development Account (IDA) or other savings program for employees interested in purchasing a home
- Use of government matching funds and tax credits as incentives for private investment
- Provide tools, strategies, and recommendations to determine worker preferences for housing in a community
 - Identify regional housing preferences and trends to align options and community settings, taking into account available transportation options and current and future transportation costs
 - Include rental units in the housing analyses to fill critical gaps in the supply of quality rental options in many regional communities

3. Broaden the supply of quality, affordable housing types for all segments of the population.

The region offers limited choices beyond single-family detached housing. Local plans and stakeholder feedback have cited strong demand for public and subsidized housing units among low-income residents and a continued need for additional quality market-rate rental properties and new mid-level for-sale houses.

Strategies to expand the housing supply should be two-pronged: a continued collaboration among regional public housing authorities, non-profit entities, and the private sector to meet the needs of low-income households; and public-private partnerships to develop additional mid-range housing to accommodate low- to middle-income households. Tools should include the use of incentives such as down payment assistance, tax credits, and

low-cost loans to encourage affordable and accessible housing development. Specific strategies include:

- Zone adequate areas for smaller lot and more compact residential development with a focus on property near community cores with established infrastructure and services
- Use available tax rebates or other financial incentives to spur residential investment, particularly for garden homes, townhomes, condominiums and other alternatives to single-family detached units
- Construct additional rental properties that are affordable to low-income households
- Add a small lot housing district to maximize site flexibility and thus affordability by reducing the site and design requirements that commonly contribute to higher housing costs
- Develop additional workforce housing options that address the needs of middle to low income households.
 - Explore the use of incentives such as down payment assistance, tax credits, and low-cost loans to encourage affordable and accessible housing development
 - Develop an affordable housing guidebook such as the City of Springfield, Missouri's Affordable Housing Design Guidelines to provide a standard framework for the construction or rehabilitation of affordable single-family and duplex housing

Top Priority Strategies

The built environment strategies focus on creating neighborhoods that are attractive, livable and functional, facilitating reinvestment, redevelopment, and reuse, improving the energy performance of buildings and neighborhoods, and promoting inclusive, affordable, quality

housing options throughout the region. While all of the actions contribute to strengthening the health of the region, the selection of a prioritized list of key recommendations is critical for organizing the implementation effort.

Top Priority Strategies

- Provide communities with pedestrian-friendly "Complete Streets" design to increase community appeal, safety, and provide access to all users
- Identify housing needs around job centers to support communities in attracting and retaining workers and identify workforce housing programs so workers can live near jobs
- Target and apply finance incentives and dedicated funding for infill development that creates opportunities to lower construction costs and assists communities in addressing the gap between rehabilitation costs and market value
- Address blight and safety in neighborhoods by developing vacant lots and buildings
- Develop rehabilitation-oriented building codes and land use/suite design standards to address neighborhood/community rehabilitation needs

The priority strategies are a high priority because they fill key gaps in the region's overall built environment or they seek to reverse ongoing trends that affect opportunities for the region's residents.

Relationship to Preferred Scenario

As described in Section 7, the scenario process drew from CLT and Work Team feedback, as well as community input and technical analysis to highlight priority strategies within a single framework—Great Communities and Effective Collaboration—that can guide overall resource allocation and inform plan implementation. The Preferred Scenario builds on the theme of prosperity through healthy, quality communities throughout the region but also emphasizes economic development, jobs, and regional coordination strategies.

Great Communities and Effective Collaboration strategies are:

- Developing a Partnership Approach to Regional Problem-Solving
- Fostering Opportunities for Education and Innovation
- Building Pride of Place and Marketing the Region's Economic Assets
- Promoting Comprehensive Management of Water Resources
- Expanding Mobility Choices
- Supporting Healthy Lifestyles
- Providing Adequate and Efficient Infrastructure
- Redeveloping Existing Areas, Neighborhoods, and Houses

Since it reflects a broad understanding of how communities are organized, the built environment section features strategies consistent with many of the priorities of the preferred framework, including an emphasis on:

- Structures to promote more coordinated regional planning across jurisdictional boundaries;
- Programs to improve existing housing conditions, including rehabilitation and weatherization;
- Increased access to diverse, affordable housing choices;
- Expanded mobility choices;
- Policies and incentives to encourage redevelopment of existing areas and neighborhoods; and
- Strategies to plan for neighborhoods that meet the needs of people of different ages, incomes, and backgrounds.

Relationship with Other Plan Topics

Land use influences the social, economic, and physical functions of a community. Community patterns determine the feasibility of transportation options for residents. While more compact and interconnected areas support alternative modes of travel, including public transit, dispersed, low-density patterns increase reliance on automobile use. Numerous studies also cite the link between the availability sidewalks, paths, and trails and the prevalence of walking and biking.

The layout of communities shapes the ability of residents to access job and educational opportunities, as well as critical services, such as health care. The separation of uses commonly seen in many communities poses a challenge for residents without reliable automobile transportation, including the elderly, lower income households, younger residents, and people with disabilities. The prevailing design characteristics of a community also strongly influence housing options, as well as affordability. As evaluated more fully in the FHEA, factors such as housing mix and lot size can either expand or restrict the ability of neighborhoods to accommodate people of varying life stages and incomes.

Aside from promoting access to essential services, the built environment can play a significant role in supporting economic development. Attractively designed streets and mixed-use settings, healthy neighborhoods, and the presence of amenities such as gathering spaces and trails can spark local commercial investment and attract families and young workers to communities.

The use of land also affects the broader environment. More compact patterns and the ability to develop in existing areas limits the loss of green space and agricultural land and assists in maintaining the integrity and function of natural systems such as watersheds. Examples of built environment strategies that overlap with other work team areas include measures to:

- Design and plan transportation systems using complete street design concepts to accommodate walking, bicycling and transit, as well as automobiles;
- Design of communities that balance and mix land uses to support active lifestyles and the associated positive health benefits;
- Promote more compact and walkable neighborhoods in appropriate areas, thus achieving greater efficiency in public service delivery and infrastructure maintenance and reducing impacts on the natural environment;
- Develop flexible, adaptable infrastructure, particularly for transportation, water and wastewater systems to promote greater efficiency and less costly maintenance.
- Integrate transportation, transit, and land use to make it easier for residents to get to jobs, schools, retail, and critical services;
- Promote energy efficiency practices and development patterns to reduce

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financial impacts on individual households and businesses and thus to increase the affordability and overall economic competitiveness of the region;

- Create a regional structure to promote information sharing, best practices, and inter-jurisdictional planning;
- Develop housing options that meet the needs of the region's workers and facilitate employer access to the workforce; and
- Reduce regulatory and market barriers to redevelopment in mature or economically distressed areas, thus spurring economic activity through private investment.

Relationship to Prosperity Plan Guiding Principles

The Prosperity Plan will build on the following principles, based on HUD's six Principles of Livability:

- *Provide more transportation choices.* Develop a safe regional transportation system that includes strategic, responsive, and sustainable transportation options that enhance economic production and the connectivity of people and goods in the region.
- *Promote equitable, affordable housing.* Ensure a wide variety of housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds in urban, suburban, small-town, and rural areas of the region.
- *Enhance economic competitiveness.* Ensure continued prosperity throughout the region by establishing the framework to grow businesses and create jobs in South Central Kansas.
- *Support existing communities.* Enhance and create connected, attractive, and value-added

neighborhoods through strategies like mixed-use and infill development to support the revitalization of communities, the increased efficiency of public works investments, and the safeguarding of rural environments.

- *Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection.* Remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth.
- *Value communities and neighborhoods.* Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Built environment strategies are consistent with all of the livability principles and specific recommendations strongly emphasize the core themes of supporting existing communities and valuing existing communities and neighborhoods through infill development, reinvestment, and revitalization.



VISION AND FOCUS AREAS

Vision

The transportation section of the Prosperity Plan focuses on creating an efficient, flexible, and balanced system that meets the needs of individuals, businesses, and institutions around the region. Transportation is such a critical part of our communities because it organizes social and economic activity and shapes the pattern and character of resulting development. Transportation options also strongly influence quality of life and opportunity for residents and contribute to the overall economic competitiveness and resilience of the region.

Vision: “Achieve a safe regional transportation system that includes strategic, responsive, and sustainable transportation choices.”

Focus Areas

The four focus areas for transportation are:

- Regional Structures
- Connection between Transportation and Land Use
- Transportation Choices
- Maintenance

These areas represent the top issues for the transportation element of the Prosperity Plan and organize the individual recommendations in this section.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

The Technical Appendix contains an analysis of the region’s transportation profile, including federal, state, regional and local transportation planning agencies and processes, planned system improvements, capacity, condition, travel patterns, affordability, and the availability of transit and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The purpose of this profile is to highlight issues, gaps, and opportunities that can form the basis of recommendations in the transportation section.

Roadway Capacity

Overall traffic congestion is not a severe or persistent issue for South Central Kansas. Traffic on highways and roads in the region generally travels at or above the posted speed limits, even during the morning and evening rush hours, indicating that the system is not routinely congested. The region, however, has isolated congestion and safety issues at critical interchanges (Kellogg and I-235; I-135/K-96/I-235, east of Rock Road on U.S. 54, west of Maize Road on U.S. 54). The freight industry is very interested in addressing these critical areas in addition to creating new corridors to reduce conflicts with local traffic (Northwest By-Pass, U.S. 54 to K-96). The region also has uncompleted highway segments.

Though systematic congestion is not a major challenge in the region, roadway conditions indicate opportunities to address key bottlenecks through improvements to existing interchanges on interstate highways and to complete highway projects.

Infrastructure Condition and Maintenance

The Pavement Condition Index (PCI) is a numerical index between 0 and 100, which reflects the general condition of a roadway. The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), and city and county jurisdictions in the region maintain PCI data for roadways under their jurisdiction. A score of 100 represents the best possible condition, while 0 reflects the worst condition. Those segments with values of 50 or less perform at fair to poor levels.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) data indicate that half of all major state roads in the US were in fair or poor condition in 2008, and in 2009 the American Society of Civil Engineers gave the nation’s roads a D- grade. Over 70 percent of the interstates, US highways, state highways, and arterials in the region received a “good” or “very good” rating on a national rating system. Over 85 percent of the bridges in the region are also highly rated. Conditions on local roads, however, vary by community. PCI ratings for Wichita’s network, for example, indicate that nearly half (48 percent) of city roadways fall below the nationally accepted satisfactory benchmark standard.

The aging of roadways and infrastructure in general is a major challenge for the region’s communities. State and federal funding has diminished over time and local agencies must create other forms of revenue to meet rising demands for maintenance and repairs. Local options could include raising the mill levy, passing a local sales tax, creating a local wheel tax or local gas tax, developing creative special assessment

districts for new roads or rehabilitated road construction and/or increasing fees dedicated to transportation services. State and federal agencies could also pursue partnerships with private companies to develop new roads and bridges through the use of private financing and toll roads.

In most communities, the state and federal road systems are in better condition than the local/residential roads and bridges. The funding systems in place such as Surface Transportation Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, or Bridge funds from the state and federal government tend to address conditions on local arterials, but connectors or residential streets rely on local sources, such as the general fund to pay for maintenance and repair activities. Without additional revenue for the local street system, the streets and bridges will fall further behind in their maintenance cycles. The current MPO system is an advocate for regional road networks (i.e. highways, arterials, and regionally significant projects); the only advocate for the local street system within residential areas or non-regionally significant infrastructure is either local Public Works departments or elected officials. Money tends to flow to high traffic areas and systems that are eligible for grant funds. The lack of strong regional advocacy and consistent funding sources for other parts of the system contributes to deteriorating local conditions.

Analysis of physical conditions indicates opportunities to identify stable, long-term funding sources to repair and maintain infrastructure and the need for additional revenue to address the needs of the total transportation road network, including local roadways.

Modes of Travel

Development patterns across the region are low density and many areas are rural in character. As a result, the dominant

mode of travel in South Central Kansas is the automobile. People who drive or travel as passengers in a private vehicle make up 90 percent of trips in the region. A significant share of residents in the region commutes to Sedgwick County for work. Almost half (48.2 percent) of workers commuting from Butler County travel to Sedgwick; 37.6 percent of workers living in Sumner and 22.2 percent of workers living in Harvey County also travel into Sedgwick for employment. Just over five percent of Reno County residents commute to Sedgwick County. There are currently no transit options along major corridors for commuters living outside of Sedgwick County. Communities throughout the region, however, offer fixed, on-demand, and paratransit services.

Only 0.9 percent of all trips occurred on public transportation, reflecting the limited transit options in the region. Mass transit (buses) operates only within the city limits of Wichita and offers no connections to transit providers in other counties. Wichita Transit has conducted a study to extend service up to the City of Maize and there has been additional discussion of extending to other communities within Sedgwick County. A comparably small percentage of trips in the region occur on foot or by bike. People who walk to their destinations make up about three percent of all trips. Residents riding a bicycle completed 0.4 percent of all trips. Despite the relatively low rates of travel by alternate modes, the ability to get around by bus, bike, walking, or rail was a high priority for many residents completing a Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization travel survey. Interest in non-automobile modes of travel was particularly high among college students and seniors.

The region's reliance on automobile travel can pose an accessibility barrier for seniors, children, people with disabilities, and low-income households. More than 33,000

people in the five-county area or about 4.5 percent of the population live in a zero vehicle household, meaning that they have no access to an automobile either by choice or due to economic circumstances or physical conditions. Given the lack of transit options in the region, particularly outside of the City of Wichita, these households face major constraints in accessing critical services, as well as economic, educational and social opportunities. Ongoing demographic trends such as the aging of the population will further increase the number of transportation-disadvantaged households. Younger people also show a long-term preference for more walkable living environments.

These findings suggest strong opportunities to expand and enhance mobility choices beyond automobiles, including transit, walking and biking options.

Transportation Affordability

Transportation is a major component of a household's yearly budget. The Housing-Transportation Affordability Index (H+T) is a measure of affordability that combines the cost of housing with the cost of transportation associated with the location of the home. The index illustrates the trade-off of lower housing cost but longer and more expensive commutes for houses located in outlying areas.

According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology, households that allocate more than 45 percent of their annual income to both housing and transportation experience affordability challenges. Based on this definition, Sedgwick County households have the highest level of affordability in the region. Two out of three households in Sedgwick County spend more than 45 percent of total income on housing and transportation costs. The lower housing-transportation cost in Sedgwick County is due to proximity to

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jobs and services. However, the majority of Sedgwick County households still exceed the affordability threshold.

Many other workers commute from communities throughout the region. As a result, upwards of 90 percent of households in other counties spend more than 45 percent of income on housing and transportation costs. In South Central Kansas, residents often choose where to live based on quality of life and then commute as necessary to work. There are not enough jobs spread throughout the region to enable everyone to live close to employment.

The higher combined costs of transportation and housing, however, still suggest opportunities to improve the jobs-housing balance in parts of the region, adding more employment in those counties from which workers are currently

commuting and increasing the availability, affordability, and attractiveness of housing near existing employment centers. Smaller communities have specifically cited the lack of attractive mid-range housing as an obstacle to attract new residents. Although many residents will continue to value the quality of life found in rural communities and smaller towns, bringing jobs and housing together in appropriate areas expands choices for residents who prefer greater accessibility.

Recommendations

The recommendations identified in the transportation section are the result of technical analysis and stakeholder and community input gathered throughout the planning process. The recommendations address key challenges that affect the region's transportation systems and the mobility options available to residents. Strategies also build on highlighted

opportunities to coordinate transportation planning, expand transportation choices, enhance accessibility, and strengthen resources for system maintenance. The desired outcome of the transportation strategies is to enhance economic production and connectivity of people and goods in the region. The Technical Appendix contains a list of links and informational resources to support the recommendations.

Regional Structures

Goal Statement: "In order for local jurisdictions, partners and stakeholders to better collaborate, cooperate and coordinate decisions on transportation issues, an ongoing regional transportation forum should be established."

A truly integrated regional network that connects communities, large employers and institutions, activity centers, and



multi-modal facilities requires coordinated decision-making across jurisdictions. However, both geography and finances can constrain regional collaboration on transportation issues. Though there are distinct centers, much of the population in South Central Kansas spreads out across the five counties. Fiscal resources are also shrinking, placing more emphasis on immediate and local transportation concerns. This lack of clear regional connections combined with resource scarcity makes it more challenging for communities to focus on broader, longer-term transportation needs. The strategies in this priority area seek to promote greater coordination by developing regional structures and tools that support comprehensive, strategic system-wide transportation decisions.

1. Develop a regional forum to enhance and coordinate regional transportation issues and projects.

Regional collaboration will lead to resource allocation decisions that support broader regional goals, such as promoting economic development, increasing connectivity across multiple jurisdictions, minimizing impacts to environmentally sensitive areas or encouraging more organized and efficient regional growth patterns. This strategy includes actions to:

- Develop regional project and funding partnerships on projects affecting multiple jurisdictions
- Create a regional transportation website where local jurisdictions can share information, best practices, and issues
- Develop an evaluation scoring system, available to local jurisdictions, that ensures projects consider connectivity and development goals
- Develop a regional design standards manual that includes:

- Roadway Design
- Intersection Design
- Pedestrian Access
- Bikeway Design
- Traffic Calming
- Funding Toolbox
- Context sensitive design and guidelines related to network connectivity, multi-modal uses, and integration of transportation and land use
- Create a regional forum that supports and enhances coordination around transit services in the region
- Support the regional economy by strategically allocating transportation funding to projects that facilitate economic development

2. Update policies and procedures for asset management, maintenance, and infrastructure life-cycle analysis to reflect a more regional approach.

To ensure efficient allocation of resources, transportation agencies should develop and coordinate a regional asset assessment process and prioritize those projects that can secure financial support and meet the demands of individual communities, as well as the region. The assessment process should include measures and benchmarks to evaluate the impact of potential transportation system improvements. Actions include:

- Explore opportunities to establish a Transportation Asset Management (TAM) process
 - TAM is a strategic and systematic process of operating, maintaining, improving and expanding physical assets throughout their lifecycle. It seeks to make informed and prioritized resource decisions based on reliable data. Asset management provides decision makers with information on current asset conditions,

investment levels required to meet specific objectives, such as desired level of service, and optimal resource allocation. TAM program implementation typically includes:

- Goals and objectives
- Asset inventory, including listing of all fixed assets by type, condition, remaining life and value
- Condition assessment process
- Decision support tools to analyze and prioritize long-term investment needs
- Options and tradeoff analysis to evaluate the investment tradeoffs and investment returns of alternate investment options
- Decision-making processes to allocate resources between competing uses
- Performance measures and performance targets based on agency and community goals and objectives
- Funding strategy
- Partner with KDOT, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, and the Federal Highway Administration to leverage available technical resources and guidance on TAM implementation

Connection between Transportation and Land Use

Goal Statement: “The regional transportation system should support and complement how property is used to connect goods to people and people to where they live, learn, work and play, while minimizing environmental and resource impacts”

Transportation systems that connect people to jobs, schools, critical services, and amenities play a major role in

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broadening access to social and economic opportunities. The design and scale of transportation infrastructure also significantly shapes the character of the surrounding community. Systems that are balanced, appropriately sized and sensitive to context can help to promote a sense of place and add value for both the public and private sector by creating attractive, vibrant, and inviting places.

1. Encourage governing bodies to adopt transportation plans that promote regional connectivity of hike/bike/trails, pedestrian needs, and transit routes in the region.

A truly integrated transportation system creates connections across jurisdictions to build a comprehensive network of mobility options for residents and businesses. Specific actions include:

- Establish regional transportation priorities that can be used to shape local jurisdictions decisions around growth patterns and land development projects
- Designate a system of regionally significant corridors that considers the movement of people, goods, and services
 - Criteria for designating regionally significant corridors should emphasize:
 - Access to employment, commercial centers and residential areas
 - Cross-regional travel
 - Goods movement
 - Links to the current transit system or enhanced long-term opportunities to anchor future transit expansion
 - Opportunities to accommodate regionally-linked bicycle and pedestrian facilities
 - An initial list of key corridors in the region includes:

- I-35 (KTA)
- I-235
- I-135
- US-400
- US-166
- US-160
- US-77
- US-54
- US-50
- US-8
- K-96
- K-49
- K-44
- K-42
- K-15
- K-14
- K-6
- K-2
- 53rd Street north from 247th Street west to Greenwich Road
- 95th Street South from 119th Street west to Greenwich Road
- 21st Street North
- Red Bud Trail from Wichita to Andover
- SW Butler Road from Andover to Rose Hill
- Complete a study to determine/designate regional transportation routes and commit funding to maintain these routes as a high priority
- Standardize PCI ratings across all jurisdictions to promote a comprehensive understanding of infrastructure conditions in the region

2. Implement flexible strategies that consider how transportation and land use intersects and connects to surrounding streets, transit stations, public spaces, buildings, and neighborhoods.

Community plans should evaluate the relationship between transportation infrastructure and surrounding buildings, parks and gathering spots, and neighborhoods. Careful integration of transportation and land use can

create dynamic social and commercial spaces in a community. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Improve environmental quality through alternative transportation modes, including pedestrian and bicycle activity
- Develop and implement zoning regulations that do not inhibit development options
- Adopt development regulations that promote better connectivity between residences and employment, including zoning provisions
 - Develop guidelines for use by local communities to assist in integrating transportation and land use and economic goals with a focus on elements such as density and mixed use, connections and linkages, pedestrian-friendly features and parking
- Provide for transit-oriented development (TOD) where feasible to reduce commuting times and household transportation costs. TOD can also increase accessibility for zero vehicle households
 - TOD consists of denser, development within walking distance (typically a half mile) of transit. More broadly, it is an area with a rich mix of housing, shopping and transportation choices. Even communities that do not currently have well-developed transit systems can apply the principles of TOD by arranging land uses so that people can walk, bike or take a bus from home to various destinations.
 - Focus on creating more compact and diverse land use patterns in areas appropriate for future transit expansion. Examples of



such areas include downtowns, designated redevelopment and reinvestment areas, and key corridors, including those corridors currently served by Wichita Transit.

- Plan transportation systems and related land uses, such as TOD to achieve synergies that enhance sense of place and invite investment,

achieve reduced or more efficient auto travel, and promote community health through increased pedestrian and bicycle activity

- Implement an evaluation scoring system for development projects that rewards integration, connectivity, accessibility, and mobility options
- Promote street designs that embody the Complete Streets philosophy, including:

- Reduced design speeds achieved through wider sidewalks and narrower streets
- Reduced through-lanes achieved through the inclusion of bike lanes, sidewalks, on street parking
- Intersection design for pedestrian amenities and safety
 - Reduced turning radii
 - Safe pedestrian crossings and signals

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- Streetscape guidelines
- Sidewalks
- Street trees
- Street lighting
- Stormwater management features
- Standards for pedestrian and bicycle safety, particularly around schools
- Design and connectivity standards, including the provision of terminus points for future street connections to adjacent properties

3. Reduce transportation impacts to air quality.

In 2008, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revised the federal ozone standard to 0.075ppm. The EPA may designate the Wichita Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as a nonattainment area if the three-year rolling average at any one of the ozone monitors exceeds the 0.075ppm limit during ozone season (April 1 – October 31). A nonattainment area is an area considered to have air quality worse than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The 3-year averages for 2010-2012 and 2011-2013 exceeded the 0.075ppm standard.

Ozone is an air pollutant that can cause lung damage in healthy people and can have severe effects on vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly and people with respiratory diseases. A nonattainment designation may result in stringent regulatory requirements, increased fuel costs, loss of federal highway or transit funding, restrictive permitting and mandatory emissions offsetting, all of which reduce economic development opportunities and increase the cost of living in the region. Typically, at least half of the pollutants that cause ozone to form come from cars, buses, trucks, and off-highway

mobile sources such as construction vehicles and boats. To reduce harmful emissions, governments and businesses in the region should collaborate on opportunities to reduce ozone sources. Actions associated with this strategy include:

- Establish incentives to purchase alternative technology fleet vehicles
- Encourage businesses and agencies to partner with KDHE Bureau of Air to take part in the Kansas Clean Diesel Program to fund strategic diesel emission reduction projects using EPA's National Clean Diesel funding
- Promote and establish no idling policies and educational programs for local governments, businesses, school districts, individuals and agriculture
- Develop and implement strategies that reduce single occupancy vehicle use
 - Establish Transportation Management Associations (TMAs)
 - TMAs are non-profit, member-controlled organizations that provide transportation services in a particular area, such as a commercial district, mall, medical center or industrial park. TMAs are generally public-private partnerships, consisting primarily of area businesses with local government support. TMA functions can include:
 - Freight transport management
 - Parking management and brokerage
 - Pedways
 - Rideshare matching and vanpool coordination
 - Shared parking coordination
 - Access management
 - Shuttle services

Transportation Choices

Goal Statement: "The regional transportation system should reflect strategic, responsive and sustainable transportation choices."

1. Promote alternative forms of transportation.

A comprehensive transportation strategy for the region includes providing options for all residents, including senior citizens and people with disabilities and mobility challenges, and young adults, who have shown a preference nationally for less driving and more walking and biking. This strategy relates directly to many recommendations in **Section 9: Built Environment** and **Section 13: Healthy Community Design**, which promote expanded mobility choices and physical environments that encourage active lifestyles. Recommended actions related to this strategy include:

- Develop and promote car-sharing and ride-share programs and reduce barriers to expand their coverage
- Establish and support a bike-sharing program and explore cost-sharing partnerships
- Develop and implement park and ride facilities with bicycle and pedestrian access
- Develop and promote a public and private vehicle brokerage system
- Develop a viable regional transit system
 - Establish Wichita Transit as a regional transit authority and dedicate a source of funding for authority operations. The purpose for this recommendation is two-fold.
 - Ensure that all transit services are coordinated on a regional basis, eliminating duplication and ensuring provision of services where needed.

- Permanently dedicate a source of funds could support regional service operations
- Coordinate a high level of mass transit service with routes that service major travel corridors coming to the city, and small city/rural services that connect with major travel corridor services
 - The development of multi-modal connections with transit such as peripheral park and ride locations would provide a wider range of transportation options as well. Scheduling and delivery of paratransit services could also be coordinated through use of new scheduling software that links independent providers to a central scheduling and dispatch center operated by the authority.
- Implement recommendations from the Wichita Transit comprehensive plan to update and expand the current transit offerings
 - This plan calls for either improving the base system linking fixed routes to suburbs or improving commuter services to the suburbs. There is also a planned increase in operating hours and some Sunday service. Phase 1 of the plan anticipates a 10 percent increase in ridership, and a 35 percent increase after the Final Phase is complete.
- Implement recommendations from the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of potential changes to the City of Wichita's transit system
 - The Kansas Health Institute, University of Kansas School of Medicine – Wichita, and Wichita State University

collaborated to conduct the HIA, which explores how proposed public transit concepts could influence health through improved quality, exposure to injury, and access to employment, health care, food sources and educational and recreational resources. The study identified the following recommendations:

- Locate bus stops near health care offices and specialty clinics, especially those that serve children
- Encourage health care organizations to inform and link their patients to available transit services
- Explore the reasons for low ridership in the southeast part of Wichita
- Increase frequency of bus routes and availability of routes at night or on weekends to align the transit schedule with shift workers' needs
- Explore the viability of a grid system
- Locate future grocery stores near transit routes, using zoning changes or other incentives
- Use buses with a low floor area for rolling carts on the routes that have the most grocery stores.
- Review and change the two-bag limit on buses to a higher number, such as six
- Identify the need for transit services to access after-school activities and classes
- Develop a Wichita Transit universal pass for university students

- Incorporate questions about recreational-related transit use in future assessments
- Increase coverage of routes used to access recreational resources

2. Design transportation systems for all users/uses (people, goods).

An effective and balanced transportation system should accommodate all users, including residents with differing mobility needs, as well as businesses. Actions to support successful implementation of this strategy are:

- Adopt Complete Street policies
 - A Complete Streets policy promotes a balanced roadway system that encourages walking, bicycling, and transit use. Complete Streets elements emphasize design features that contribute to a safe, convenient, and comfortable travel experience for all users through sidewalks; shared use paths; bicycle lanes; street trees and landscaping; crosswalks; bicycle parking facilities; public transportation stops and facilities; and dedicated transit lanes.
- Implement a regional wayfinding strategy
- Evaluate the need for additional entry points to access the airport facility
- Identify a priority commercial network for the region

3. Improve and expand freight and passenger rail services.

Rail service is an essential element of a balanced transportation system and supports enhanced economic competitiveness, particularly for a regional economy that is heavily

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manufacturing, agricultural and export-oriented. Adequate rail capacity is essential for export-based economies, as producers must receive materials from suppliers or ship goods to outside markets. Goods shipped on rail include non-metallic minerals, food, petroleum/coal chemical/allied products, and materials for the aircraft industry. The region is also an active location for the transfer of agricultural goods from rural Kansas to the national rail system.

The region is also a major hub for passenger rail service. The Southwest Chief serves six stations along approximately 463 miles of BNSF-owned track within the State of Kansas. Of the six stations in Kansas, Newton is consistently in the top tier, with almost 14,000 passengers boarding or alighting in 2010. There has been active dialogue and continued interest in expanding intercity passenger rail service. One option is daytime service from Fort Worth to Kansas City. The second option is extending the current Heartland Flyer that runs from Fort Worth to Oklahoma City northward through Wichita to Newton connecting with the Southwest Chief. Recommendations for rail service include:

- Establish multiple regional forums to discuss South Central Kansas' role in passenger rail service, light rail opportunities, and freight rail needs
- Improve rail access with targeted investment to re-activate lines, switches and spurs
- Improve connections by road and rail to reduce "last mile" challenges to industrial parks and manufacturing centers
 - "Last mile" refers to the difficulty of getting people or goods from a transportation hub (such as rail or a bus stop) to the final destination due to a lack of connectivity

- Develop a strategy to locate transload sites to improve freight rail service and ease "last mile" issues
 - Transloading refers to the transfer of goods from one mode of transportation, such as rail car to another mode, such as a truck

Maintenance

Goal Statement: "Strategic maintenance and improvements that promote the integrity of assets in the regional transportation system should be a high priority."

Proactive maintenance of roadways is essential. According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, every \$1 spent to maintain a road in good condition reduces the need to spend \$6 to \$14 later to rebuild the same segment after significant deterioration. Stakeholders consistently cited the costly maintenance of roadways and bridges as one of the primary challenges of the region's transportation system. In the City of Wichita, annual depreciation cost to rebuild all transportation assets is an estimated \$102 million. Previous analysis has indicated additional maintenance needs of \$12 million annually. Recommended strategies seek to prioritize funding and identify stable, dedicated revenue sources for ongoing maintenance efforts.

1. Develop and adopt policies that commit financial support devoted to the maintenance and replacement of existing assets and future transportation system projects and programs.

Local governments require increasing resources to maintain and update their aging roads and bridges. In addition to rising regular maintenance costs, funding constraints, including

declining state funding and a lack of dedicated revenue could raise the infrastructure burden on the region's counties and municipalities and limit the ability to plan for future projects. Local jurisdictions should implement policies that commit financial support to existing and future transportation projects and programs. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Develop state partnerships to increase funding for transportation systems
- Explore potential funding options:
 - Special/Improvement Assessments (square foot, lineal foot, fractional share, traffic impact related) Districts/Incentives for industrial parks or regionally significant projects
 - Sales tax referendum
 - Local wheel tax or local gas tax
 - Regional war chest for projects
 - Regional coalition of willing communities agrees to contribute funds to the development of designated regionally significant projects
 - General fund or general obligation bonds
 - Sales Tax Improvement districts allowed under Kansas law for businesses to charge additional sales tax for site improvements for local street improvements within the improvement district
 - Dedication of land for public improvements
 - For major projects such as NW By-Pass or other regionally significant improvements, developers or landowners could dedicate land for right-of-way in return for tax breaks or increased land values due to connectivity

2. Allocate resources efficiently.

While the prior actions focus on increasing funds to support transportation improvements, this strategy seeks to maximize the impact of available resources through tools and processes that assess and prioritize public investments. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Establish and coordinate measures, benchmarks, and an asset assessment process to evaluate transportation system improvements and prioritize projects that meets the needs of the community and region
- Implement a matrix system that evaluates operating and maintenance obligations, prior to approval, for all transportation projects
- Identify, prioritize, and fund solutions for interchanges in need of safety, efficiency, and access improvements

Top Priority Strategies

The transportation strategies focus on promoting sustainability and economic competitiveness through coordinated, strategic decision-making, improving accessibility through more mobility choices for all residents, and enhancing quality of life by linking transportation with land use and community design. While all of the actions contribute to strengthening transportation in the region, the selection of a prioritized list of key recommendations is critical for organizing the implementation effort.

The following strategies are a high priority because they fill key gaps in the region's overall transportation system or they seek to reverse ongoing deficiencies that affect accessibility for the region's residents and businesses.

Top Priority Strategies

- Encourage government bodies to adopt transportation plans that promote the connectivity of hike/bike/trails, pedestrian needs, and transit routes across the region
- Expand purchase of alternative fuel fleet vehicles in the region
- Develop a viable regional transit system
- Develop and adopt policies that commit financial support devoted to the maintenance and replacement of existing assets and future transportation system projects and programs
- Develop a regional forum to enhance and coordinate regional transportation issues and projects
- Update policies and procedures for asset management, maintenance, and infrastructure life-cycle analysis to reflect a more regional approach

Relationship to Preferred Scenario

As described in Section 7, the scenario process drew from CLT and Work Team feedback, as well as community input and technical analysis to highlight priority strategies within a single framework—Great Communities and Effective Collaboration—

that can guide overall resource allocation and inform plan implementation. The Preferred Scenario builds on the theme of prosperity through healthy, quality communities throughout the region but also emphasizes economic development, jobs, and regional coordination strategies.

Great Communities and Effective Collaboration strategies are:

- Developing a Partnership Approach to Regional Problem-Solving
- Fostering Opportunities for Education and Innovation
- Building Pride of Place and Marketing the Region's Economic Assets
- Promoting Comprehensive Management of Water Resources
- Expanding Mobility Choices
- Supporting Healthy Lifestyles
- Providing Adequate and Efficient Infrastructure
- Redeveloping Existing Areas, Neighborhoods, and Houses

The transportation section features strategies consistent with many of the priorities of the preferred framework, including an emphasis on:

- Structures to promote more coordinated regional planning across jurisdictional boundaries;
- Resources to maintain adequate infrastructure;
- Expanded mobility choices;
- Policies and incentives to encourage redevelopment of existing areas and neighborhoods; and
- Strategies to plan for neighborhoods that meet the needs of people of different ages, incomes, and backgrounds.

TRANSPORTATION

Relationship with Other Plan Topics

Transportation interacts strongly with other Prosperity Plan areas, influencing quality of life and opportunity for residents and strengthening the overall economic competitiveness and resilience of the region. Numerous studies cite the link between the availability of sidewalks, paths, and trails and healthier, more physically active lifestyles. The presence of non-automobile infrastructure is also an appealing amenity that draws many households, especially younger residents to communities designed for walkability. Along with enhanced quality of life, expanded mobility choices, including transit, improve residents' access to jobs, educational opportunities, and critical services such as health care, particularly among the region's aging and low-income households and persons with disabilities. Additional transportation options can also support varied housing styles, such as development in community cores. The narrower and more balanced roadways typical of traditional main streets and now reflected in today's Complete Streets philosophy, are a complementary fit with the pedestrian-oriented environment sought in many revitalizing downtowns and mature neighborhoods.

Transportation systems also reach beyond their immediate physical surroundings to affect the broader economic climate. Adequate capacity by road, air, and rail are essential components of a healthy business base. Increased transportation options can also reduce individual business and household costs, contributing to greater efficiency and competitiveness. Additionally, the design of transportation systems can improve the health and function of the natural environment. The ability to opt for transit, walking or biking along with car travel lowers total vehicles miles traveled, thus protecting air quality. Low-impact construction techniques

such as the use of special pavements and landscaping features along roadways can supplement the role of stormwater management infrastructure in reducing flooding impacts and maintaining water quality.

Examples of transportation strategies that overlap with other work team areas include measures to:

- Design and plan transportation systems using complete street design concepts to accommodate walking, bicycling and transit, as well as automobiles;
- Enhance the link between transportation and land use to promote more compact and walkable neighborhoods in appropriate areas, thus achieving greater efficiency in public service delivery and infrastructure maintenance and reducing impacts on the natural environment;
- Develop flexible, adaptable transportation infrastructure to support other infrastructure functions such as improved stormwater management.
- Integrate transportation, transit, and land use to make it easier for residents to get to jobs, schools, retail, and critical services;
- Enhance air quality through efforts to reduce automobile use or improve the efficiency of automobile travel;
- Create a regional structure to promote information sharing, best practices, and inter-jurisdictional planning;
- Enhance the economic competitiveness of the region's businesses by improving access to the workforce and freight options;
- Increase the overall affordability of residential environments by expanding mobility choices and lowering the transportation costs for

the region's residents choosing to live in accessible settings; and

- Leverage transportation improvements to add value to surrounding properties and spur private investment and redevelopment in the built environment.

Relationship to Prosperity Plan Guiding Principles

The Prosperity Plan will build on the following principles, based on HUD's six Principles of Livability:

- *Provide more transportation choices.* Develop a safe regional transportation system that includes strategic, responsive, and sustainable transportation options that enhance economic production and the connectivity of people and goods in the region.
- *Promote equitable, affordable housing.* Ensure a wide variety of housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds in urban, suburban, small-town, and rural areas of the region.
- *Enhance economic competitiveness.* Ensure continued prosperity throughout the region by establishing the framework to grow businesses and create jobs in South Central Kansas.
- *Support existing communities.* Enhance and create connected, attractive, and value-added neighborhoods through strategies like and infill development to support the revitalization of communities, the increased efficiency of public works investments, and the safeguarding of rural environments.
- *Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource*

protection. Remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth.

- *Value communities and neighborhoods.* Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Transportation strategies are consistent with all of the livability principles and specific recommendations directly emphasize expanded mobility choices through settings, complete streets design, and improved transit options. Strategies also enhance economic competitiveness by stressing efficient links in the movement of goods and connecting people to jobs. Compact, walkable environments with transit options can also promote more affordable and diverse housing choices for the region's residents.



VISION AND FOCUS AREAS

Vision

The water section of the Prosperity Plan focuses on creating an adequate, affordable, efficient, and resilient water supply that meets the needs of all users. This section also seeks to balance the supply of water with broader efforts to manage finite resources through conservation and education. Water is so essential because it sustains the health of the region, but also shapes growth and development opportunities and supports overall economic competitiveness. The following vision guides development of the recommendations in this section:

Vision: “Regional collaboration to ensure an ample, high-quality water supply”

Focus Areas

The three focus areas for water are:

- Water Supply
- Conservation and Education
- Cost of Water

These areas represent the top priorities for the water resources topic of the Prosperity Plan and organize the individual recommendations in this section.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

The Technical Appendix contains an analysis of the region’s water resources profile, including water sources and providers, the existing regulatory and planning environment, infrastructure conditions, conservation initiatives, water availability, and the cost of water. The purpose of this profile is to highlight issues, gaps, and opportunities that can form the basis of recommendations in the water section.

Public Water Sources and Providers

The Walnut River Basin and Lower Arkansas River Basin are the primary water sources for South Central Kansas. Within the region, the main water sources are the following: Alluvial Wells, Little Arkansas River, Augusta City Lake, Cheney Reservoir on North Fork Ninnescah River, Chikaskia River, El Dorado Lake/Reservoir, Equus Bed Aquifer, Walnut River, Wellington Lake, and Winfield City Lake. Municipal public water suppliers and rural water districts (RWD) obtain their

supply from the eastern Lower Arkansas Basin and Walnut Basin, as well as lakes and reservoirs. The RWDs provide domestic water service to residents of less densely populated areas.

Water Use

The five-county region uses approximately 224 million gallons of water per day (MGD). Nearly half of the region’s daily water use or 104.3 MGD is for agriculture irrigation, followed by public supply (municipal utilities, rural water districts or private systems that supply water for human use). **See Figure 11.1.** Irrigation accounts for a much bigger share of use in mostly rural and agricultural areas, while public water supply use is higher in the predominantly residential counties of Butler and Sedgwick.

The residential population-based component of regional water demand (public supply of 85 MGD + domestic use of 4 MGD) is approximately 89 million gallons per day. Based on this figure, current per capita water consumption

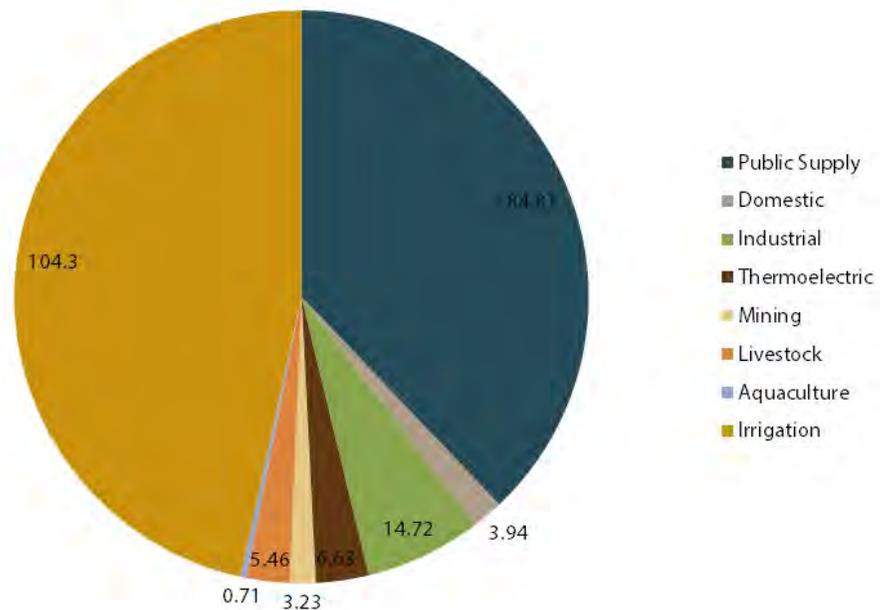


Figure 11.1 Regional Water Use by Type
Source: U.S. Geological Survey

for residential household uses in the region is approximately 137 gallons per person per day. Assuming an increase of 120,000 residents by 2040 as indicated in population projections, the region must supply an additional 16 million gallons of water a day to meet increased public and domestic demand.

Water Availability

The ongoing drought and continued population growth have raised awareness that water resources in the region are finite. These issues, as well as infrastructure concerns, have prompted municipalities to examine various efforts to ensure their long-term water supply.

In the Wichita Well Field Area, the Equus Beds Aquifer has dropped more than 40 feet in some locations from the 1940s through 1993, and the use exceeds the aquifer's natural recharge rate. Estimates indicate that 65 billion gallons of water is necessary to recharge the aquifer to a pre-1950s level. In response, the City of Wichita developed an integrated plan for water supply. The plan recommended significantly diversifying water sources and testing new approaches to water supply and delivery. One of the earliest projects was the Equus Beds Aquifer Storage and Recovery Demonstration Project, which successfully showed that the diversion of water above base flow in the Arkansas River to the aquifer could speed recovery. The success of this demonstration project has attracted global attention.

As recently as 2013, the City of Wichita drew most of its water from the Cheney Reservoir, estimated at 65 to 75 percent of its supply. The remaining 25 to 35 percent comes from the Equus Beds. During drought conditions, the city can opt to pull a higher percentage of their water supply from the Equus Beds instead of the Cheney Reservoir. The Equus Beds Aquifer also provides the water supply for the surrounding counties of Reno, Harvey, McPherson, and Butler and RWDs.

Wellington Lake is a source of water for the City of Wellington, portions of Sumner County, and Sumner Rural Water Districts. In 2013, the lake was 61 inches below normal due to the drought. The city pumped water from Chikaskia River into the lake to raise the level 9 inches. Currently, the City of Wellington consumes (on average) 1 to 3 MGD dependent upon the season. In addition to Wellington Lake, water supplies use the Chikaskia River and multiple water wells.

El Dorado Lake is a reservoir on the Walnut River, originally constructed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. It serves as the primary source of water for the City of El Dorado and Butler County's RWDs. The reservoir has a storage capacity of 50 billion gallons, which should allow the city to draw 22 MGD during a 50-year drought.

Drought presents challenges for the public water systems through depletion of the availability of raw water supply, resulting in low stream flow, low surface water in reservoirs, and alluvial aquifers not recharging. Increases in customer demands for irrigation, industrial, manufacturing, retail and other uses during drought can also strain the systems. Drought conditions in Kansas persist. As of May 2014, all 105 counties were either under an emergency, warning or watch status. The state has assigned emergency status to all five counties in South Central Kansas. An emergency indicates widespread major crop and pasture losses, stock water shortages, and extreme rangeland fire danger. Severe public water supply shortages are also possible.

Aging Infrastructure

Many of the region's water systems are aging and in need of maintenance or replacement. Funding for infrastructure replacement is limited, which can delay critical improvements. Aging infrastructure can restrict the maximum capacity available

to communities, posing supply constraints during periods of peak usage or drought. Older infrastructure can also affect water quality. Pipes can begin to breakdown and particles or contaminant, such as lead can occur in the composition of the water.

The American Society of Civil Engineers in their 2013 national Infrastructure Report Card found that Kansas' drinking water infrastructure (pipes, treatment plants, storage towers, etc.) has a financial need of \$4 billion over the next 20 years. The study also identified an additional \$3.2 billion in wastewater infrastructure needs. The EPA's 2013 report, based on a 2011 Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs survey and assessment, indicates Kansas has \$4.2 billion in drinking water infrastructure needs primarily in transmission and distribution.

A 2012 Water, Sewer and Stormwater Infrastructure and Facility Assessment indicates that the total replacement cost of Wichita's water, sewer, and storm drainage infrastructure is an estimated \$2.1 billion. Nearly one-third of the city's sewer pipes and one-fourth of its water lines are over 50 years old. Typical of communities in the region, the vast majority of Wichita's sewer and water pipe systems will require replacement or significant maintenance within the next 30 years.

Water Conservation

Water conservation is essential to ensure that a long-term supply of water is available. State policies and guidelines encourage all public water suppliers to develop and implement water conservation and drought response plans, including the use of drought triggers to maintain supply. Triggers are signals that relate to supply conditions (drought) or demand levels. Many of the cities in the region have implemented their individual drought response initiatives, which include conservation or restrictions.

Water Rates

The cost of water and the design of the utility rate structure can influence water use by the consumer. As price increases, water demand will typically decrease. An opportunity exists to encourage conservation, thus causing consumers to evaluate their use habits in response to rate structures. In general, there are four basic utility rate structures:

- **Flat rate:** the consumer's cost of water for a given billing period is fixed regardless of the level of use.
 - Example of communities that use this rate: City of Cheney
- **Decreasing block:** comprised of a fixed customer charge per month, plus two or more usage blocks, with the price per unit of water consumed decreasing in each subsequent block.
 - Examples of communities that use this rate: City of El Dorado, City of Halstead, City of Hesston, City of Hutchinson
- **Uniform rate:** comprised of a fixed customer charge per month, plus a constant, uniform charge for each unit of water consumed.
 - Example of communities that use this rate: City of Mulvane
- **Increasing block:** comprised of a fixed customer charge per month, plus two or more usage blocks, with the price per unit of water consumed increasing in each subsequent block. (An example: \$1.25 for the first ten thousand gallons, \$1.50 for the second ten thousand gallons, \$2.00 for the third ten thousand gallons, etc.).
 - Examples of communities that use this rate: City of Kechi, City of Rose Hill

The City of Wichita has a progressive fee structure. In addition to water fees, there are minimum monthly fees for the water meter, which increase based on the size

of the meter. The city has a different rate structure based on meter consumption. It also offers a conservation contract, which can help lower the water utility cost. Flat rates and decreasing block rates generally do not provide the incentive to use water more efficiently. Uniform rate structures, however tend to promote greater conservation.

The amount charged by the municipalities in the region varies. Some rates are more progressive and may encourage conservation, while others lack such incentives. Lack of consistent pricing or standardized pricing can also affect revenue funds for maintenance or replacement. Some of the smaller communities may not be charging enough for their water to maintain water supply infrastructure. Deferred maintenance due to a lack of revenue can lead to future water supply issues. Though conservation can assist in extending long-term availability, reduced consumption can also result in lower revenues for providers. Providers must offset this challenge by identifying sources of revenue for infrastructure maintenance. Revenue options can include flat fees for maintenance, municipal bonds for infrastructure repairs and updates, or additional sales tax percentage. The costs associated with water and availability of water also effect economic development. Communities should have an understanding of water usage associated with particular industries so that decision-makers can tailor water planning and conservation initiatives to support desired economic development activity.

Recommendations

The recommendations identified in the water section are the result of technical analysis and stakeholder and community input gathered throughout the planning process. The recommendations address key challenges that affect the region's water resources and its planning and

management initiatives. Strategies also build on highlighted opportunities to create a reliable, efficient and adequate supply. The Technical Appendix contains a list of links and informational resources to support the recommendations.

Water Supply

Goal Statement: "Provide a regional collaboration structure that addresses current and future supply demands through drought planning and the development of long-term regional supply alternatives."

The presence of numerous water providers across the region tends to fragment resource planning. Factors such as the continuing drought, diminishing revenue, and deteriorating infrastructure conditions also constrain opportunities for long-term, regional planning. The strategies in this priority area focus on developing data, tools, and organizational structures to promote coordinated water resource management throughout the region.

1. Determine the possible need for alternative water supplies in the region.

The area wide water supply is dependent upon the natural hydrological cycle. Reservoirs supply the majority of the water in the region, but periods of low rainfall and/or drought can deplete the supply. The region should explore other water opportunities, including:

- Interbasin transfer or the withdrawal of water from one basin with an adequate supply to another basin with higher demand or constrained availability
- Re-use/recycling
 - Water recycling involves the reuse of treated wastewater for purposes such as agricultural and landscape irrigation, industrial

processes, toilet flushing, ground water recharge, and general municipal use

- Form partnerships across government, industry, and agriculture to explore feasible technologies for water reuse
- Remediation to remove pollutants from water sources

2. Develop an inventory of water resources and uses.

To ensure an adequate water supply for the region, providers and users should build a comprehensive understanding of available resources and current usage. Examples include:

- Establish a transparent collaborative model for all regional users and service areas to maximize the use of available water. The model should:
 - Identify deficits and non-essential usage

- Restrictions for watering lawns
- Individual water waste (i.e. broken sprinkler)
- Infrastructure issues causing loss of water

- Define essential and beneficial use during a dry and drought event
- Identify the structure for water supply development, management, and delivery
- Develop an understanding of water rights and unappropriated levels of water
 - Unappropriated water is the amount of water that could be available for use from a water source after meeting all existing water rights
 - Leverage the technical resources of the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Water Resources to determine remaining unappropriated water supply

- Use information on water rights and unappropriated supply to support water planning initiatives and drought resiliency

3. Develop drought resiliency planning elements, including drought triggers and water use priorities.

Drought is a critical variable that can affect regional water supplies. Proper planning and preparation can improve the ability of water resources to respond to the effects of drought, while maintaining an adequate supply to meet user needs. Related actions include:

- Develop a consistent set of drought triggers for those communities with common water sources to support a coordinated response to stress on the water supply
 - Drought triggers are indicators that determine the type of response during a drought. Plans usually classify droughts as mild,



moderate, severe, and extreme, or stages 1-4. Drought responses can include long-term or short-term actions. Communities typically implement short-term actions during a drought and long-term actions, such as conservation measures prior to a drought.

- Many municipalities only control triggers and related actions within their communities, or for their water source. While one community may be reducing their water draw during a drought, another community may not require reductions. All users accessing a shared water resource should agree on the elements of the drought response plan. The region could benefit from an area-wide response plan that includes triggers and actions that each community can agree to enforce. Additionally, the region should explore more robust conservation measures at earlier stages in the drought watch/response plans to prolong the water supply when drought conditions continue for extended periods.
- The region could also evaluate opportunities to establish stringent triggers during drought periods
 - Communities could apply year-round water conservation measures to their retail customers, only allowing retailers to water certain amounts during certain times. Residential properties are also restricted to certain times and days.
 - In addition, communities could establish demand, supply, and emergency triggers for their water supply. Municipalities could implement a reduction of water use by a set percentage (i.e. 15 percent) if the demand exceeds a predetermined amount measured in MGD for a specified period. Another option communities could implement is to reduce water use by a determined percentage if the combined water storage lakes/reservoirs fall below a certain level. In order to end the restrictions, water levels must stay above the pre-determined amount for a specified period of time. Emergency triggers reduce water levels to only necessary usage.
- Examine existing agreements and laws to determine opportunities to establish user priorities, especially during droughts
 - The Kansas Water Appropriation Act does not contain user priorities. Examples to define priorities include:
 - Establish an assurance district, which consists of a group of municipalities and industries that pool their resources to purchase storage space in state-controlled federal reservoirs. The water right holders then receive enhanced flow during times of drought. There are currently three assurance districts in Kansas. They are composed of the following:
 - The Kansas River Water Assurance District consists of cities and industries along the Kansas River from Junction City to Kansas City, Kansas. They have storage space in Milford, Tuttle Creek and Perry Reservoirs.
 - The Marias des Cygnes River Water Assurance District has storage space in Melvern and Pomona Reservoirs, and provides water to cities and industries along the Marias des Cygnes River.
 - The Cottonwood/ Neosho River Water Assurance District has storage space in Marion, Council Grove and John Redmond Reservoirs.
- Explore and evaluate a local enhanced management area option which is a self-initiated, locally designed water management strategy. The complexity of this discussion needs to consider the full details of the option, including the impact on water rights and the availability of water for various users.
- Determine how domestic wells affect water availability during drought and develop a plan to address issues
 - Kansas law allows the state's Chief Engineer to delegate, to any city that has a conservation plan meeting state guidelines, the authority to require domestic (private well) water users in their city to follow the same water use restrictions as residents using public systems.
 - A city that wants to restrict non-essential water uses during a declared water warning or water emergency must adopt or modify their water drought/ emergency ordinance that implements their water conservation plan. To receive the Chief Engineer's delegation of domestic water well

regulatory authority a city must demonstrate that the domestic wells share the same source of supply as the city's wells. Thus far, only the City of Ellis has received this designation.

- Develop recommendations to allow for public water connections during periods of prolonged drought when private wells can no longer supply household needs

4. Develop a regional forum for advocacy around water policies/ issues.

A major benefit to regional water collaboration among municipalities and providers is the ability to share costs and maximize available resources. Collaboration also improves the management of water resources, increases communication, coordinates operational procedures, and increases water supply reliability. Regional collaboration can integrate all aspects of water resource management, including supply, treatment, quality, and flood control. In addition, collaboration can promote sustainable water resources for all participating communities and elevate the visibility of water issues in South Central Kansas. Related actions include:

- Establish a regional collaboration structure to coordinate and discuss regional water projects
 - Use webinars and online communities to promote coordinate and highlight best practice case studies.
 - Leverage resources such as the American Water Works Association's report entitled, "National Inventory of Regional Collaboration among Water and Wastewater Utilities" which provides case studies of regional

partnership efforts.

- Benefits of regional planning include the ability to:
 - Conduct region-wide No Adverse Impact Planning
 - Increase the ability of projects to secure federal and state funds
 - Establish sector-based alignments/collaborations, such as industry, institutions, energy or agriculture
 - Build on other multi-jurisdictional planning efforts (hazard planning, emergency response, etc...)
 - Spread project funding across multiple jurisdictions
- Explore partnerships for project funding
 - In 2014, Congress passed the Water Resource Reform and Development Act (WRRDA). The WRRDA encourages public and private partnerships to ensure available funds for water projects. This act provides low-cost loans capped at 49 percent of project costs and offers a funding source for capital improvement projects.
 - Communities should explore partnerships in order to maximize budgets for projects that can benefit each community. For example, communities can partner to replace infrastructure. Another example of an opportunity for sharing funding is the Public Wholesale Water Supply Districts created in Kansas. As recently as 2007, there were 25 public wholesale water supply districts. In 1977, the Kansas Legislature passed the Public Wholesale Water Supply District Act (PWWSD), which allowed public agencies (cities and rural districts) to cooperate formally in the wholesale supply of water.

The purpose of a wholesale water district is to secure a larger source of water than a single water system could secure, and sell water at wholesale to other PWSD, municipalities, public and private water systems. By forming districts and working together, smaller water systems are able to afford the costs of infrastructure, water supply contracts, and treatment plants. The planning region is composed of many smaller communities and districts, and the greatest opportunity comes from partnering on projects and development.

- Create and provide information and data tools to utilities, individuals, water districts, and agriculture to enhance both planning and an understanding of water issues
 - Examples include asset management, planning for financing, and future water issues, and rate structures
- Promote advocacy around water policies and issues to give the region a cohesive and visible voice at the state level
 - Insufficient funding for management of long-term water supply can pose significant challenges for the region. To address this issue, local providers should identify opportunities for increased participation on advisory and other boards and leverage that representation to:
 - Advocate for regional issues in the state legislature and in state-wide planning efforts
 - Identify currently available state funding opportunities for planning and implementation or infrastructure maintenance through the public water supply loan fund
 - Highlight the lack of adequate

investment and the need for increased state funding in long-term water supply infrastructure in South Central Kansas

Conservation and Education

Goal Statement: *“Develop public outreach program to make everyone in the region aware of actions they can take to preserve and make more efficient use of water resources.”*

1. Develop and implement effective conservation education programs with models of successful incentives/disincentives/programs categorized by user types.

- Develop cost information for residential, industrial, commercial, and agricultural users and a corresponding menu of conservation choices for each user type
- Residential conservation choices:
 - Energy efficient appliances, faucets, toilets, and showerheads
 - Turning off water when not in use
 - Limiting shower times, re-circulation units
 - Low water use plants, native plants in landscaping
 - Gray water/rainwater for watering outdoor plants
- Industrial and commercial conservation choices:
 - Fix leaks
 - Conduct water audits
 - Low water use plants, native plants in landscaping
 - Offer customers water upon request
- Agricultural conservation choices:
 - Base maximum annual allotments on water use needs per head of cattle.
 - Irrigation scheduling
 - Crop rotation
 - Tailwater re-use system
- Develop and implement effective

conservation education programs, with models of successful incentives and programs for all user types

- Use REAP or other planning groups to find assistance for communities with marketing their education programs to encourage users to participate in water conservation programs
- ### **2. Leverage existing resources.**
- Create an inventory of existing funding sources to identify current resources, gaps, best practices, and potential partnership opportunities
 - Develop and implement a structure that allows partners and stakeholders to share resources, such as funds, staff, or grant application materials
 - Expand distribution of educational and community outreach materials available through existing programs
 - Examples include WaterSense, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency partnership to promote water-efficient products, homes, and services.
 - Explore collaboration with partners beyond local governments and water providers, including universities, the private sector, industry, youth groups, and non-profit organizations to promote water conservation awareness

Cost of Water

Goal Statement: *“Provide comparative information for communities on the cost of water within and outside the region as well as strategies to maintain an affordable cost of service now and into the future.”*

1. Develop water rate models and best management practices tailored to individual needs that balance revenue sustainability with conservation and drought condition strategies.

Water utilities gain profit by their sales and reductions in demand produce

lower revenue. To address this challenge, providers should develop water rate models that promote revenue sustainability with strategies specifically designed to address reduced use due to drought conditions or conservation measures. Related actions could include:

- Use of phased conservation measures
- Reduce water loss through leaks, improve infrastructure
- Explore the decoupling of revenue from the sale of water. Instead, a rate of return is aligned with revenue targets, which allows utilities to track revenue losses when customers use less water than forecasted and then adjust future rates to recoup those losses.
- Assist communities in planning efforts by offering information on best management practices
 - Provide relevant information on conservation savings resulting from reduction in capacity needs for future growth.
 - Include information on how communities are compensated for lost revenue due to decreased water use.
- Explore varying price structures to meet the needs of consumers and communities
 - The natural gas industry has several rate design options available to recover expenses associated with infrastructure updates. Utilities can use trackers and surcharges to recover costs. A rate tracker is a regulatory mechanism that allows a utility's rate to fluctuate in response to changes in operating costs. A surcharge is a temporary adjustment to the customer's bill that will raise rates, by a fixed amount, for a limited time.
- Municipalities can also explore

the option of assessing fees on utility bills. The fee could be set up as a franchise fee, customer charge, or distribution charge, on customers. The rate of the fee can be low because it will have a large base of customers paying. Cable companies typically have a franchise fee that, like a sales tax, is a certain percentage of the monthly bill. Another potential option for financing would be tax-exempt bonds for various projects. States and communities can sell municipal bonds (General Obligation Bonds or Revenue Bonds) to help fund projects at various levels. Tax-exempt bonds are an effective tool for financing long-term, capital infrastructure projects.

- When examining water rate structures, suppliers should consider the following:
 - Increasing block rates
 - Increasing block rates, or tiered pricing, reduce water use by increasing the per-unit charges for water as the amount used increases. The first block is charged at one rate, the next block is charged at a higher rate, and so forth.
 - Time of day pricing
 - Increased prices are charged during a utility's peak demand periods.
 - Water surcharges
 - Higher rate is billed on water consumption that is considered higher than average.
 - Seasonal rates
 - Prices adjust according to water demands and weather conditions.
 - Utility fee charge
 - A fee charged specifically for water infrastructure. The fee

can be a percentage of the overall bill, or a flat fee

2. Explore innovative water system partnerships.

Innovative and collaborative approaches can help reduce costs on new projects, but funding these approaches can be difficult. Actions to address this issue include:

- Identify a collaborative structure to work with the State of Kansas to develop a targeted funding stream
 - Leverage the availability of State Revolving Fund principal forgiveness and planning grants for regional purposes.
- Implement energy efficient water system improvements and strategies that reduce long-term costs
- Develop best practices around conservation promotion, which can allow for future capacity expansion needs

3. Develop an asset inventory model to improve infrastructure, preventive maintenance and replacement.

Resource constraints and related maintenance issues tend to increase the focus on reactionary planning. More information about the condition, performance, and cost of system operations can assist providers in making efficient investment decisions regarding infrastructure repairs and upgrades. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Develop an asset management program that includes age and condition information to understand repair and replacement costs. An asset management program should address the following fundamental management issues and set forth guidelines for each:
 - Asset Inventory:

- Identify all assets, ownership by each water system and/or community
- Establish a map and updated Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database of all assets
- Condition Assessment:
 - Evaluate existing conditions of all assets and how the current conditions relate to asset performance and overall risk associated with the asset.
- Level of Service:
 - Evaluate level of service (LOS) goals for each utility
 - Establish LOS goals and communicate to customers
 - Identify the combination of maintenance activities resulting in the lowest costs, while providing adequate service
- Critical Asset Assessment:
 - Communities within the region have experienced water loss up to 30 percent. Water loss due to failure of infrastructure can lead to increased cost and decreased supply
 - Establish a system of ranking and prioritization to identify the asset most likely to experience failure and identify alternatives for renewing the asset (e.g., rehabilitation versus replacement)
- Life Cycle Costing:
 - Identify the remaining useful life, current value, and replacement value of the asset
 - Evaluation asset's ability to meet future needs
- Financing:
 - Identify long term funding needs and strategies
- Local, regional, and national benchmarking

- Provide best practice strategies and examples for proactive preventive system maintenance and asset management
 - An example of this would be a Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) that automatically schedules work orders for inspection, preventive maintenance, and repairs. The CMMS can also track customer complaints, cause of problem, costs of repairs, scheduling of work crew, etc...

4. Develop best practice information on the benefits of “full-cost pricing” and examples of its success with other utilities (for communities that wish to pursue).

Price signals the value of water as a resource to consumers and reflects the finite nature of the supply. Communities must also understand the full cost of water supply and delivery to promote adequate, long-term planning regardless of whether governments actually implement full-cost pricing. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Utilize cost information as a public education tool to explain where payment for water goes and how tax dollars are used

Top Priority Strategies

The water strategies focus on promoting the adequacy, affordability, and adaptability of the water supply through coordinated decision-making, conservation and education, and strategies to maintain affordability, while promoting revenue

Top Priority Strategies

- Determine possible need for alternative water supply in the region
- Develop drought resiliency planning elements, including drought triggers and water use priorities
- Develop a regional forum for advocacy around water policies/issues
- Develop and implement effective conservation education programs with models of successful incentives/disincentives/ programs categorized by user types
- Develop water rate models and best management practices tailored to individual needs that balance revenue sustainability with conservation and drought condition strategies
- Develop an asset inventory model to improve infrastructure, preventive maintenance and replacement
- Develop best practice information on the benefits of “full-cost pricing” and examples of its success with other utilities (for communities that wish to pursue)

sustainability for water systems. While all of the actions contribute to strengthening water resources in the region, the selection of a prioritized list of key recommendations is critical for organizing the implementation effort.

The following strategies are a high priority because they fill key gaps in the region’s management of water resources or they seek to reverse ongoing trends that affect access to an adequate, sustainable supply of water.

Relationship to Preferred Scenario

As described in Section 7, the scenario process drew from CLT and Work Team feedback, as well as community input and technical analysis to highlight priority strategies within a single framework—Great Communities and Effective Collaboration—that can guide overall resource allocation and inform plan implementation. The Preferred Scenario builds on the theme of prosperity through healthy, quality communities throughout the region but also emphasizes economic development, jobs, and regional coordination strategies.

Great Communities and Effective Collaboration strategies are:

- Developing a Partnership Approach to Regional Problem-Solving
- Fostering Opportunities for Education and Innovation
- Building Pride of Place and Marketing the Region’s Economic Assets
- Promoting Comprehensive Management of Water Resources
- Expanding Mobility Choices
- Supporting Healthy Lifestyles
- Providing Adequate and Efficient Infrastructure
- Redeveloping Existing Areas, Neighborhoods, and Houses

The water section features strategies consistent with many of the priorities of the preferred framework, including an emphasis on:

- Promoting a comprehensive approach to the management of water resources;
- Supporting more coordinated water resource planning across jurisdictional boundaries and building opportunities for regional advocacy of water issues; and
- Providing adequate and efficient infrastructure through innovative tools such as asset inventory models

Relationship with Other Plan Topics

Adequate, clean water obviously sustains the physical health of human, wildlife, and vegetative communities, but much like transportation, water infrastructure also interacts strongly with the built environment. It can play a role in shaping the pattern and character of development in the region. The availability of water through public systems can induce more growth in service areas. Water systems in many jurisdictions are also aging rapidly, requiring costly maintenance and repair and thus placing emphasis on the careful and more efficient coordination of decisions regarding local water delivery and land use. Additionally, water supports the economic competitiveness of the region. Water intensive uses, including manufacturing, agriculture and energy extraction rely on a steady and adequate supply.

Examples of water strategies that overlap with other work team areas include measures to:

- Create a regional structure to promote information sharing, best practices, and inter-jurisdictional planning;
- Promote regional or watershed level planning to enhance the quality and quantity of the water supply, while

reducing adverse impacts on the natural environment;

- Encourage more compact and organized growth and development to lower the cost of water delivery and increase the efficiency of infrastructure; and
- Enhance the economic competitiveness of the region's businesses by ensuring; and continued access to reliable and affordable water supplies

Relationship to Prosperity Plan Guiding Principles

The Prosperity Plan will build on the following principles, based on HUD's six Principles of Livability:

- *Provide more transportation choices.* Develop a safe regional transportation system that includes strategic, responsive, and sustainable transportation options that enhance economic production and the connectivity of people and goods in the region.
- *Promote equitable, affordable housing.* Ensure a wide variety of housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds in urban, suburban, small-town, and rural areas of the region.
- *Enhance economic competitiveness.* Ensure continued prosperity throughout the region by establishing the framework to grow businesses and create jobs in South Central Kansas.
- *Support existing communities.* Enhance and create connected, attractive, and value-added neighborhoods through strategies like mixed-use and infill development to support the revitalization of communities, the increased efficiency of public works investments, and the safeguarding of

rural environments.

- *Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection.* Remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth.
- *Value communities and neighborhoods.* Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Water strategies are consistent with all of the plan's guiding principles and specific recommendations directly emphasize the regional coordination and leveraging of public investments to enhance the quality, reliability and resilience of water systems.

VISION AND FOCUS AREAS

Vision

The natural resources section of the Prosperity Plan focuses on the quality and ongoing health of the natural environment, including land, water, wildlife habitat, and air. Natural resources are essential to regional prosperity because clean water, air, and green space meet the needs of industry and agriculture and support well-being and quality of life for residents.

Vision: “Thinking regionally and acting collaboratively as stewards of air, water, and land, through intergrated planning, for healthy environments”

Mission: “To identify and develop ways to work together to address Natural Resource issues and concerns to ensure a healthy living environment”

Focus Areas

The five focus areas for natural resources are:

- Regional Collaboration
- Land Use Planning
- Water Quality: Groundwater and Surface Water
- Air Quality
- Solid Waste Management

These areas represent the top priorities for the natural resources topic of the Prosperity Plan and organize the individual recommendations in this section.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

The Technical Appendix contains an analysis of the region’s natural resource profile, including water quality, floodplain, air quality, solid waste, and wildlife and natural habitats. The purpose of this profile is to highlight issues, gaps, and opportunities that can form the basis of recommendations.

Water Quality

Overall, water quality in South Central Kansas is good though some water bodies experience specific water quality issues related to excess nutrients, bacteria, and poor sediment and chemical management. The region’s residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses can all affect water quality through point (single identifiable source) and nonpoint (transfer of pollutants over and through the land surface into water) pollution. Major nonpoint pollutants in the region include:

- Excess fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides from agricultural lands and residential areas;
- Oil, grease, chlorides, and toxic chemicals from urban runoff and energy production;
- Sediment from improperly managed construction sites, crop lands, and eroding streambanks;
- Bacteria and nutrients from livestock, pet wastes, and faulty septic systems

Other factors such as the recent drought can further exacerbate water quality conditions. A Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL, reflects the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body can absorb, while still safely meeting water quality standards. Water bodies that exceed the TMDL are impaired. TMDLs related to nonpoint source pollution are primarily bacteria, sediment, and excess nutrients (phosphorous and nitrogen). The Walnut Basin and the Lower Arkansas Basin have impaired waters that do not meet one or more water quality standards. Both basins experience impacts from surface water nutrients, generally fertilizer runoff. Nutrient sources within basins include point and non-point, with the major point sources being large wastewater treatment plants. Non-point sources consist of agricultural and urban areas. Biofuel production has also increased within the Lower Arkansas River Basin, which can contribute to nutrient levels.

Nonpoint-related water quality issues in the region indicate additional opportunities to promote watershed planning strategies. The State of Kansas WRAPS, or Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy program creates a collaborative framework to engage citizens and stakeholders in watershed planning. Planning under WRAPS can address issues, such as water quality, public water supply protection, flooding, and wetland and riparian habitat protection or restoration.

The following WRAPS are active for the Lower Arkansas Basin and Walnut Basin and create the foundation for ongoing water quality planning practices:

- Cheney Lake
- Upper Walnut/El Dorado Lake
- Little Arkansas River
- Lower Arkansas River (aka RiverCity)
- Wichita Clean Streams (Lower Arkansas River watershed within the city limits)
- Grouse-Silver Creek
- Spring River (Turkey Creek)

Each WRAP plan identifies its own set of best management practices (BMPs) for cropland, stream bank and livestock activities. The BMPs include stream bank stabilization, stream buffers, vegetative filter strips, reduced tillage or no-till farming, the relocation of livestock feeding stations, rotational grazing, and the use of alternative herbicides.

Floodplain Management

Riverine flooding is the most common type of flood hazard in Kansas. The Walnut River Basin and Lower Arkansas River basin are priority flood hazard areas. Communities throughout the basins lie at the confluence of rivers and tributaries, adding to the flooding potential. Expansion of urban development into flood prone areas increases the risk of flood damages. Preventing inappropriate development

throughout the floodplain can reduce future damage. Prior damage and continued risk of flooding in parts of the region highlight opportunities for stronger floodplain management through local planning and zoning authority.

Air Quality

The City of Wichita monitors ambient air for the criteria pollutants ozone (ground level), nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide and particulate matter in accordance with regulations set forth in the federal Clean Air Act. Wichita has complied with all criteria pollutants since 1989. In 2008, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revised the federal ozone standard to 0.075ppm. The EPA may designate the Wichita MSA as a nonattainment area if the three-year rolling average at any one of the ozone monitors exceeds the 0.075ppm limit during ozone season (April 1 – October 31). A nonattainment area is an area considered to have air quality worse than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The 3-year averages for 2010-2012 and 2011-2013 exceeded the 0.075ppm standard. However, the EPA is currently reassessing the 8-hour ozone standard and will not make any nonattainment designations during the reevaluation period.

Ozone is an air pollutant that can cause lung damage in healthy people and can have severe effects on vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly and people with respiratory diseases, including asthma and emphysema. Ozone exposure is associated with respiratory symptoms, such as coughing, throat irritation, reduced lung function, and inflammation of airways.

A nonattainment designation may result in stringent regulatory requirements, increased fuel costs, loss of federal highway or transit funding, restrictive permitting and mandatory emissions offsetting, all of which reduce economic development opportunities and increase the cost of

living in the region. Cost estimates to regain compliance after a non-attainment designation range in the tens of millions of dollars annually with efforts ongoing for at least 10 years. Air quality issues in the region suggest opportunities for efforts to reduce ozone sources, including limiting emissions from industrial facilities and electric utilities, motor vehicle exhaust, gasoline vapors, and chemical solvents.

Solid Waste

The cities and counties of the region provide solid waste collection, disposal, and transport. In compliance with Kansas Department of Health and the Environment (KDHE) requirements, all counties must form a solid waste committee and develop a solid waste plan. Each jurisdiction within a county establishes its own waste collection and disposal system. Since the current network is market-based, numerous private companies provide services to communities, contributing to a fragmented system of solid waste collection across the region.

The estimated weight of municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in the region each day is approximately 1,500 tons. Major MSW landfills that receive waste from the five-counties are the Reno County, Butler County, and Plumb Thicket (in Harper County) facilities. Plum Thicket disposes of between 200 and 500 tons of MSW each day from the region's households. According to a 2013 KDHE analysis of disposal capacity, the Plumb Thicket landfill has a 55-year life span at its current operational levels. Remaining capacity at the Butler County facility is 43 years, while the Reno County landfill has the shortest remaining life span at just over 12 years.

Recycling is not mandatory in the region. Four of the five counties offer curbside recycling programs in their larger communities. Sumner County has drop-off recycling available. Additionally, Waste

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Connections of Wichita, a regional facility, provides waste removal and recycling. Many waste service providers also offer recycling. All counties have permanent options for the disposal of household hazardous waste.

Overall, a review of solid waste management practices in the region indicates progress in implementing waste reduction practices but opportunities remain to strengthen local policies in support of recycling and re-use through practices such as mandatory recycling, single-stream curbside recycling, and “pay as you throw” incentives offering reduced fees for low-generating users.

Wildlife and Natural Habitats

South Central Kansas falls within the Central Mixed Grass Prairie Conservation Region. Large areas in the center of this region have experienced conversion to agriculture. According to the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, the five counties host 44 distinct species designated as Threatened and Endangered or in Need of Conservation.

The Kansas Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan notes that the quality and quantity trends for key habitats in South Central Kansas, including Mixed Prairie, Sand Prairie, Herbaceous Wetland, rivers, streams, tributaries, seeps, and springs are all declining due to:

- Conversion and fragmentation of land to agriculture (accelerated by high commodity prices), as well as the loss of open space to urban development;
- Spread of urban areas and fragmented development;
- Expansion of industrial wind energy facilities;
- Presence of invasive woody and herbaceous species and the need to achieve a balance between invasive and natural species;

- Suppression of fires; and
- Excessive species populations, including deer and geese

The loss and fragmentation of habitats indicates opportunities to preserve connected systems of green space throughout the region and to shape more orderly and compact patterns of development where possible.

Capacity

Funding and organizational constraints can pose a challenge for effective and integrated natural resource planning within the region, including:

- Limited availability of baseline data on natural resources;
- Fragmentation of planning by individual jurisdictions; municipal boundaries do not align with more relevant geographic areas of interest for natural resource management, such as watersheds or airsheds;
- Lack of dedicated funding to pursue natural resource projects; and
- Lack of a regional vehicle to promote more coordinated decision-making on natural resource issues

Recommendations

The recommendations identified in the natural resources section are the result of technical analysis and stakeholder and community input gathered throughout the planning process. The recommendations address key challenges that affect the region’s natural resources and its planning and management initiatives. Strategies also build on opportunities to achieve desired outcomes, such as improved regional collaboration; more understanding of natural resource issues and trends, and the finite nature of existing natural assets; increased resilience and adaptability; a greater ability to leverage existing resources to address natural resources concerns; and policies and programs that encourage

conservation, protection, and wise use. The Technical Appendix contains a list of links and informational resources to support the recommendations.

Regional Collaboration

Goal Statement: “Routinely thinking regionally to recognize and address issues and collective concerns.”

1. Identify/create a collaborative body to engage in regional natural resources planning.

Natural resources, including air, water, and habitat, do not align with individual political boundaries. Despite the interconnectedness of these systems, no dedicated entity within South Central Kansas promotes a regional perspective on natural resource management. This strategy recognizes that effective resource management requires interagency planning and coordination. An implementation body would assist in building such collaboration and overseeing the implementation of recommended strategies. Specific actions include:

- Identify a non-governmental agency to serve as an information gatherer and project leader for continued work. This entity could be an outgrowth of an existing committee. For example, REAP could assist in identifying and convening key stakeholders in both the government and non-government sectors. Another example is the Central Plains Quad-County Planning Forum, which includes representation from Butler, Harvey, Reno, and Sedgwick Counties. The group holds quarterly meetings to discuss regional issues related to social, economic, and environmental needs, demographic changes, and legislative matters. The natural resource group’s role would be to:

- Identify trends in each county and the region as a whole
- Highlight natural resources actions currently underway, along with their sponsors and purposes
- Identify the specific allocation of water rights and other natural resources rights in the region
- Promote areas of agreement on natural resource issues and management actions
- Engage elected officials about the value of land use planning and clearly define the benefits
- Develop a system for establishing and maintaining agreements among government, public, and private entities
 - Agreements could be in the form of permits from environmental quality and wildlife regulatory agencies to minimize the impacts of development on natural resources. For example, Habitat Conservation Plans/Natural Community Conservation Plans (HCP/NCCP) provide an opportunity to preserve diverse ecosystems, unique species, and scenic landscapes, while clearing regulatory obstacles to continued economic development and growth. Typically, they result in the additional benefits of preserving open space/ green belts and concentrating development in areas with existing infrastructure.
 - Agreements could also form bodies to oversee environmental protection. These bodies could establish thresholds, conduct regional planning, development and redevelopment oversight, and regulatory enforcement, and

implement environmental protection and restoration programs necessary to achieve and maintain adopted regional standards.

- Provide and promote better access to floodplain resources for all communities and residents in the region, including information on recent legislative reforms, new rates and floodplain map updates, and flood mitigation techniques and tools
- Create better, more efficient methods of sharing data in the region

including land use, habitat, water resources and wetlands

- Collaborative regional land use policies to preserve and protect natural resources and guide development
- Enhance the effectiveness of existing regional natural resources boards by broadening representation
 - Representatives should include a mix of elected officials, as well as practitioners, who can offer technical expertise in natural resource fields and continuity in the implementation process



- Design a framework for a regional conservation plan. The plan should include:
 - Streams, wetlands, and habitats
 - Inventory of location and value of natural systems,

2. Promote a proactive and incentive-based approach to natural resources management.

The complexity of natural resource issues in the region requires a regional and proactive planning approach that emphasizes incentives to act. Actions associated with this strategy include:

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- Estimate the probable costs of events, such as flooding, drought, or air quality non-attainment to ensure that all regional entities understand the impacts of action and inaction
- Conduct “table-top” crisis planning (“*What would happen if...*”).
 - These exercises should address issues, such as flooding, drought, tornadoes, ice storms, and water supply production and protection. Participants should include cities and counties, permit issuers, irrigators, Division of Water Resources district representatives, Groundwater Management Districts, public water suppliers, and the KDHE
 - The purpose of mitigation planning is to identify policies and actions that communities can implement over the long term to reduce risk and future losses. It creates a framework for risk-based decision making to reduce

damage to lives, property, and the economy from future disasters.

- State, Indian Tribal, and local governments are required to develop a hazard mitigation plan as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance.
 - FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant programs (<http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance>) provide funding to protect life and property from future natural disasters. Currently, there are three programs:
 - Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) assists in implementing long-term hazard mitigation measures following a major disaster.
 - Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) provides funds for

hazard mitigation planning and projects on an annual basis.

- Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) provides funds for projects to reduce or eliminate risk of flood damage to buildings that are insured under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) on an annual basis.

3. Identify regional funding opportunities.

A successful regional approach to natural resource protection and enhancement includes funding sources to support implementation measures. Local funding should draw from dedicated revenue, rather than reliance on general budget allocations when possible to achieve revenue stability. Action steps to support this strategy include:

- Identify and secure national, state, and local sources of funding for technical resources and design projects
- Establish an allocation process for outside funding that uses means testing to limit eligibility to those local governments that cannot otherwise afford to undertake particular programs

4. Create a public education program to raise awareness of natural resource issues.

Public education and the promotion of best practices can assist in raising regional awareness. Greater visibility for natural resource issues could also lead to additional local funding. Actions to advance this strategy include:

- Develop a broad-based public education effort that focuses on



informing residents, businesses, elected officials, and the media of natural resource issues and recommended strategies and actions

Land Use Planning

Goal Statement: “To serve as proper stewards of our natural resources in partnership with economic prosperity”

The Natural Resources Work Team views land use planning as an overarching focus area to address many natural resources issues.

1. Provide incentives for infill to address urban sprawl and promote more efficient development patterns.

The use of land affects the broader environment. More compact development patterns and the ability to develop in existing areas limits the loss of green space and agricultural land and assists in maintaining the integrity and function of natural systems, such as the Walnut River Basin and Lower Arkansas River Basin. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Enact land use policies and/or provide incentives for preserving agricultural lands
 - Example strategies include incentives for conservation subdivisions and limiting subdivisions on agricultural land
 - Conservation subdivisions set aside a major percentage of a site as permanently protected land, clustering housing on smaller lots on the remaining buildable portion of land. This layout enables developers to achieve significant build out and economic return, while using flexible designs that create value for the property and offer open space amenities to residents

- Provide incentives for infill development for sites that are already built out or are in proximity to existing infrastructure
- Limit the extension of utilities in undeveloped areas
 - Rural water districts, for example, could require larger lot acreages, thus creating a disincentive for subdivisions in peripheral areas of the region

2. Encourage the use of native plants.

Native plants require less water and pesticides and are more drought-tolerant than non-native plants. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Educate the public as well as decision-makers on drought-resistant landscaping/xeriscaping.
 - As an example, the Kansas Native Plant Society encourages awareness about the native plants of the state and promotes education, stewardship, and scientific knowledge.
- Provide communities with examples of ordinances that require drought-tolerant natural plant species/xeriscaping
- Provide communities with information to help select native trees for public space plantings
- Provide examples of appealing drought-tolerant landscaping/xeriscaping to developers, homeowners, and homeowner associations
 - An example is the Coca Cola rain garden at the Wichita distribution facility. The property had previously suffered from persistent issues with runoff. The site redesign upgraded the drainage system and built a three-quarter acre rain garden. This feature treats runoff from nearly

eight acres of the property’s impervious surfaces. A selection of native Kansas grasses and wildflowers also filters out non-point pollutants washing off the asphalt parking lot, sidewalks and rooftop.

- Provide communities and homeowners with information about methods and benefits of putting yards into dormancy during summer months

3. Limit development in floodplains.

Developing in floodplains increases flooding downstream, generating hazards and costs for residents and properties in the floodplain. Actions related to this strategy are:

- Use local planning to promote open space uses for areas designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as flood hazards
- Minimize any building in floodplains:
 - Increased insurance rates could serve as a deterrent. The Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, for example, requires changes to all major components of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), including flood insurance, flood hazard mapping, grants, and the management of floodplains. Many of the changes make the NFIP more financially stable, and ensure that flood insurance rates more accurately reflect the real risk of flooding.
 - Use Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) technology to prepare more accurate mapping of floodplains in the region and thus support more informed decision-making and mitigation planning. LIDAR data can delineate watersheds with greater accuracy than the commonly used National Elevation Dataset (NED) and is particularly beneficial in very flat areas.

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- Engage stakeholders in educational efforts, including the following:
 - Elected officials workshop
 - Realtors and lenders conferences
 - Informational packets for home buyers and developers
 - Media outlets such as the Weather Channel
 - State/National Association of Floodplain Managers Conferences
- Place front-line planners and enforcement officials on regional planning and advisory boards to build support for implementation of floodplain management
- Build support for floodplain restrictions among county managers
- Conduct watershed-based planning that crosses county lines
- Start planning regionally, acknowledging that there are cumulative effects when altering floodplains. Goals should include:
 - Maintain existing hydrology (elevating for construction upstream raises floodplain for others, resulting in new flooding danger)
 - Planning to include on-site infiltration, detention ponds, rain gardens, runoff regulations
 - Cooperation between counties

4. Promote intact ecosystems.

Intact ecosystems provide important habitats and migration routes for wildlife. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Require protection of wildlife corridors to provide migration paths
- Design greenways as part of a larger network of corridors to provide secondary habitat
- Encourage low-impact development in comprehensive plans
- Provide communities with sample ordinances to create buffers along streams, rivers, and in floodplains.

Ordinance examples would also discourage low-flow dams (partially dammed areas)

- Coordinate the development of areas, encouraging infill by limiting development to areas with existing infrastructure capacity
- Provide communities with examples of how to include:
 - On-site infiltration and plantings
 - Best landscaping/trees for projects to ensure survival and reduce irrigation needs
 - Green space and trees in developments, including bike/pedestrian trails and “Rails to Trails”
 - Alternatives to large, impervious surface parking areas, such as smaller, rear parking design or pervious surface materials

5. Protect water quality through sensitive land use planning and development.

Soil erosion and runoff of harmful materials into streams can have severe impacts on ground and surface water quality. Low Impact Development (LID) techniques minimize adverse impacts to the environment that can result from increased or degraded stormwater flows associated with development. Stormwater quality, quantity, and the rate of stormwater flows post development can adversely affect streams, wetlands, and other water bodies. Low Impact Development techniques reduce these impacts by incorporating small-scale controls that detain and filter stormwater close to its source. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Encourage LID strategies such as on-site infiltration and native plantings
 - Use guidelines, changes in building codes, and site plan review to promote the use

of small-scale, low-impact treatments that can mitigate flood risk by slowing and reducing storm water discharges and providing groundwater recharge and pollutant removal. Many practices follow the principles of LID such as bioretention facilities, rain gardens, vegetated rooftops, rain barrels, and permeable pavements.

- Bioretention areas, also called rain gardens: uses soil and/or plants to slow water infiltration and/or filter out pollutants from storm water runoff
- Grassed swales: shallow grass-covered hydraulic conveyance channels that slow runoff and allow infiltration; used in low-lying natural areas that are less than 10 acres in size
- Green parking design: techniques include use of alternative pavers in overflow parking areas; bioretention areas to treat storm water; and encouraging shared parking
- Infiltration trenches: rock-filled ditches with no outlets that collect runoff during a storm event and release it into the soil by infiltration
- Permeable pavement: an alternative to asphalt or concrete surfaces that allows storm water to drain through the porous surface to a stone reservoir underneath
- Riparian buffers: an area along a river, wetland, or stream where development is restricted or prohibited and native vegetation is maintained
 - A riparian buffer is an area adjacent to a water body that is fully or partially protected from human

disturbances and thus is able to safeguard the water body from pollution and habitat degradation. A riparian area can perform various natural protective functions: filtering sediments, nutrients, and other contaminants; providing woody debris, temperature control, and light control for the adjacent aquatic habitat; and providing terrestrial habitat for wildlife.

- Buffers can be applied to new development though the establishment of specific preservation areas and by sustaining management through

easements or community associations. For existing developed areas, an easement may be needed from adjoining landowners. A local ordinance can help set specific criteria for buffers to achieve stormwater management goals. A model ordinance can be found at: <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/watershedmgt/DOCS/pdfs/StreamBufferOrdinance.pdf>, An effective buffer management plan should include establishment, management, and distinctions of allowable and prohibited uses in the buffer zones.

- Stormwater planters: small landscaped stormwater treatment devices that can be placed above or below ground and support infiltration or filtering
- Require buffer zones along streams and rivers through ordinance, easement, or special study during the permit review process
 - As an example, Johnson County developed stream protection guidelines that recommend a stream buffer width that is flexible to meet the needs of individual communities. The stream protection guidelines incorporate a three tier approach to establishing a stream buffer with a minimum width of 100 feet. Each of the three tier buffer widths can vary depending upon the width of the 100-year floodplain, bank stability, and /or preservation of wildlife habitat.
 - The City of Lenexa, Kansas, also located in Johnson County, developed a comprehensive stormwater management program that includes a recently adopted stream setback ordinance and promotes open space development in their “Turning Rain into Recreation” program. The program stresses the conservation of riparian greenways that are areas preserved along streams by requiring larger setback distances than traditional development. The greenways allow trails and other recreational facilities to be built, enabling citizens to enjoy the streams and wildlife.
 - Provide example homeowner association ordinances for buffer zones around ponds
 - Adopt conservation planning on government-managed waterways



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- Encourage a slope requirement of two to three percent to avoid standing water
- Provide communities with “green roofing” models
- Require permits for stormwater in new developments
 - The EPA indicates that the primary method to control stormwater discharges is the use of BMPs. In addition, most stormwater discharges are considered point sources and require coverage under an National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Like many states, the State of Kansas is authorized by the EPA to implement the NPDES Stormwater Program and administer its own stormwater permitting program. The Industrial Programs Section Stormwater Program of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment oversees three types of stormwater permits: construction, industrial, and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4).
- Raise awareness of Clean Water Neighbor Grant and other local, state and federal programs that promote the protection of water resources
 - The Clean Water Neighbor Program provides funding opportunities for nonpoint source pollution prevention planning and implementation projects. Potential projects can include source water protection, nonpoint source pollution management, green-infrastructure, local

environmental protection, and other projects to achieve a reduction in nonpoint source pollution

- Other water quality initiatives include WRAPS and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program
 - The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns

Water Quality: Groundwater and Surface Water

Goal Statement: Provision of clean, usable water suitable for habitat, consumption, and recreation. (“Suitable” means meeting existing standards.)

1. Develop an educational campaign to promote the implementation of best management practices.

Best management practices describe ways to manage land or activities to reduce or prevent pollution of surface and groundwater. Pollutants that can pose a risk to water quality include fertilizers, pesticides, oil and gas products, hazardous waste, animal waste, feedlots, and failing septic tanks. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Promote a No-Till Soil Health Model, including no till, cover crops, living plants, and crop diversity
 - Decreased soil disturbance associated with minimum-tillage systems maintains biological activity and organic matter decomposition near the surface and allows rainfall to infiltrate rapidly

- Leaving residue on the surface, or applying mulches, encourages the development of earthworm populations, maintains soil moisture, moderates temperature extremes, and keeps organic matter and rich topsoil in place
- Create and promote model stream setback ordinances in floodplain areas for use by local governments
- Promote the use of BMPs by residents through media campaigns, non-profit entities, community groups, local governments, and universities and agricultural extensions
 - BMPs to highlight include:
 - Use of pervious surfaces and onsite infiltration, such as using bioswales instead of curb-and-gutter
 - Keeping livestock away from streams to protect water quality
 - Xeriscaping to reduce the need for watering
 - Home landscaping practices to reduce chemical runoff
 - Avoidance of car washing on driveways to reduce chemical runoff
- Provide education and enforcement regarding construction/post construction codes
- Provide educational opportunities for chemical and pesticide applicators and retailers
- Educate the media to help generate grassroots attention and support to secure more funding
- Ensure that the public has local access to natural resources to help build broad support
- Establish a stormwater management advisory committee to address mitigation strategies and include upstream interests. This structure would be similar to wetland programs.

2. Identify funding sources to support the implementation of ground and surface water best management practices.

Declining financial resources pose a major challenge for the implementation of water quality initiatives in the region. Local governments, state entities, and utilities should explore opportunities to secure stable, dedicated and adequate funding for the use of BMPs. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Develop funding mechanisms through taxes or fees
 - Examples may include user fees collected from boater registrations; camping, hunting, and fishing licenses or permits to fund conservation and recreation programs; or surcharges on NPDES permits to fund water quality initiatives
 - Ensure that the abandoned underground tank funds and pesticide/fertilizer taxes continue to go to the state water fund
 - Identify funding sources to collect water quality data to establish baseline conditions, develop mitigation approaches, and measure improvement
 - Coordinate the data collected among regional entities to create a regional understanding of issues
 - Regional water quality data could include issues such as nutrient, sediment, and pollutant loading and/or concentrations in water bodies, surface runoff, and ground water. Additional water quality indicators that could be considered for monitoring include physical indicators (such as water temperature and water transparency or turbidity), chemical indicators (such as pH and dissolved oxygen), and biological indicators (which uses insects as indicators of overall water body health).
- Establish a stormwater utility
 - A stormwater utility is a “stand-alone” service unit within the county government, which generates revenues through fees for service. A stormwater utility is responsible for funding the operation, construction, and maintenance of stormwater management devices, and stormwater system planning, and management. The utility generates its revenue through user fees and the revenues from the stormwater charges go into a separate fund dedicated to stormwater services.
 - Proactive stormwater planning will become essential in the wake of Phase II stormwater permit standards. The Stormwater Phase II Final Rule is the next step in the EPA’s effort to preserve and protect water resources from polluted stormwater runoff. The Phase II program expands the Phase I program by requiring additional operators of small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems in urbanized areas and operators of small construction sites to implement programs and practices to control polluted stormwater runoff. Phase II will continue to bring additional facilities and communities into the program.
- ## 3. Expand development of public/private funding partnerships for development and implementation of ground and surface water best management practices.
- Public-private partnerships look beyond the traditional public funding of projects and seek to engage state, federal, and local governments, non-governmental entities, and private landowners in the implementation of BMPs. Actions to advance this strategy are:
- Develop or expand the use of cost share programs
 - Cost share programs reimburse landowners for a certain percentage of the predetermined average cost for each BMP installed to enhance water quality
 - Create local demonstration projects as teaching tools to implement BMPs, such as reduced watering and chemical use
 - Promote simple management steps that require less funding
 - An example is the Natural Resources Conservation District’s four basic soil health principles to improve soil health and sustainability:
 - Use plant diversity to increase diversity in the soil
 - Manage soils more by disturbing them less
 - Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil
 - Keep the soil covered as much as possible

Solid Waste Management

Goal Statement: “Comprehensive management of solid waste and reduction through recycling.”

Sound waste management practices provide for safe, adequate, efficient, and affordable disposal options, while minimizing adverse impacts to the environment.

1. Encourage recycling, to reduce solid waste management costs.

Along with environmental benefits, recycling can bolster the economy by creating jobs, making trash collection more cost effective, saving energy, and supplying valuable raw materials to industry. Increased recycling also reduces the land needed for disposal sites, including landfills and

NATURAL RESOURCES

the associated costs of operation, maintenance, and facility development. While the reduction in demand for waste disposal can reduce profits associated with landfill operations, local governments can also adopt policies to establish economic incentives and pricing structures that link operator revenue to waste reduction and reuse goals. Action steps to support this strategy include:

- Develop and provide communities with cost analysis of not recycling, including
 - Costs of new landfills
 - Costs associated with illegal dumping
- Encourage people and communities to recycle by:
 - Using the cost analysis information to encourage “reduce, reuse, and recycle” in all communities to increase the life of landfills
 - Creating community composting program models, and encouraging and assisting communities with implementation
 - Developing an improved system of getting information out to the consumer
 - Working to establish a statewide deposit on cans and bottles
 - Seeking state approval to re-use roofing materials for roads
 - Creating model yard waste pickup programs to eliminate the inclusion of excessive yard waste with household trash and assist communities with implementation
 - Creating and provide communities with model ordinance for requiring haulers to offer single-stream recycling
 - Developing ideas on how to pool recycling to create “critical mass”

that has value, as opposed to smaller amounts with no value, and offer to communities

2. Improve management of solid waste.

These strategies focus on enhancing the cost efficiency of existing waste collection operations. Specific actions include:

- Develop ways to streamline fragmented solid waste management systems in the region
- Encourage or require haulers to use trash carts that do not blow over and trucks that prevent trash from blowing out
- To improve regional planning efforts, give communities information to identify the locations of open landfills and recycling facilities

Air Quality

Goal Statement: “To maintain the health of residents and the economic vitality of the area by staying in compliance with ambient air quality standards”

1. Develop, promote and educate individuals, businesses of all sizes, agriculture, and local governments on voluntary practices that can reduce non-point source pollution to support the Ozone Advance Plan.

In 2008, the EPA revised the federal ozone standard to 0.075ppm. In spring of 2013, the Wichita area was in compliance, or in attainment with the federal standard for ozone. The EPA may designate the Wichita MSA as nonattainment if the “design value,” a three-year rolling average, at any one of the ozone monitors exceeds the 0.075ppm limit during ozone season.

South Central Kansas has hot, dry summers, which are conducive for the chemical reaction that forms ozone. In 2011 and 2012, monitoring measured elevated ozone levels, which increased the 3-year averages in which the measurements are a part. Critical values at the monitoring stations at Peck and the Health Department/Sedgwick that push the 3-year average over the 0.075ppm standard in 2014 could trigger a nonattainment designation.

The adoption of voluntary measures by local governments, residents, and businesses can help to avoid stricter mandatory measures that may inhibit economic vitality. Compliance with air quality standards enhances the economic competitiveness of the region: businesses want to locate to areas that are in compliance. Specific recommendations for voluntary actions include:

- Develop indicators to measure the effect of air quality on public health in the region and encourage hospitals and other health care providers to track health outcomes
 - Provide technical guidance and information on market appeal and improved health outcomes to encourage a built environment that features walking/biking paths and sidewalks, thereby lessening reliance on vehicles
- Develop partnerships with local media to broaden the dissemination of Ozone Alerts to increase public awareness
- Develop and promote voluntary practices among individuals, businesses, and local government as part of fully embracing the Ozone Advance Plan
 - The Ozone Advance program offers participating states and local governments

the opportunity to work in partnership with the EPA in a collaborative framework to maintain clean air. While participation in the program does not preclude a future nonattainment designation, involvement can better position the area to comply with the requirements if a nonattainment designation occurs. For example, emission reduction actions undertaken as part of the program could potentially receive “credit” in Implementation Plans in the event an area is eventually designated as nonattainment.

- The City of Wichita designated the Air Quality Improvement Task Force to lead the creation and implementation of the Ozone Advance Path Forward. The document lists strategies and first steps to reduce ozone-forming emissions in the Wichita Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes Butler, Harvey, Sedgwick and Sumner Counties.
- Potential voluntary measures from the Ozone Advance Path Forward include:
 - Increase adoption of ozone best practices by employees through workplace education and incentive programs
 - Promote and support bicycle and pedestrian plans and Complete Streets
 - Implement travel systems management projects to reduce travel delays
 - As an example, traffic signal optimization adjusts signal timing to reduce both idling and the acceleration of vehicles, leading to less fuel being burned and less carbon dioxide emissions

- Expand transit options
- Promote vanpooling, ride sharing and other trip demand management partnerships with employees
- Promote use of hybrid/alternative fuel vehicles
- Increase cooperation and partnerships with top emitters, and voluntary actions by large emitters
- Promote energy efficiency programs
- Use Ozone forecast modeling technologies that allow the Wichita MSA to employ advance notification systems and increase public alert opportunities
- Encourage use of smoke management plan BMPs
- Encourage the development of individual community ozone reduction plans that support regional Ozone Advance Plan goals
- Provide model contract wording for sub-contractors to encourage clean air practices
- Demonstrate economic benefits through return on investment information on strategies related to improved air quality
 - Examples may include changing to more pressurized/targeted sprayers, limiting excess chemicals in the air, and making fleet vehicle changes in favor of increased fuel efficiency/alternative fuel
- Offer businesses promotional ideas/create incentives to discourage drive-thru use and encourage pedestrian and bicycle access to businesses

- Promote the implementation of no-idling policies at businesses and local governments

2. Develop air quality education program.

There is a need to raise public awareness about the steps necessary to achieve compliance with potentially more stringent air quality standards and the benefits that result from improved air quality. All residents of the region share air across political boundaries. Both decision-makers and residents should view air quality issues in the context of “airsheds” (similar to watersheds) and think about air quality on a regional basis. Actions to support a regional air quality program should include:

- Educate communities and the public about non-industrial sources to change behavior. Tailor information for local governments, individuals, agriculture, and businesses of all sizes. Topics to include:
 - Role of autos in contributing up to 50 percent of nitrogen oxides in air
 - Role of households in adopting behavioral changes that reduce the release of particulate matter into the air:
 - Examples may include the best hours to mow or “gas up” and avoiding the use of oil-based paints and solvents
- Educate small businesses about green efforts, including cost information to demonstrate affordability and return on investment
 - Unregulated small businesses (paint and repair shops) are significant contributors to poor air quality
 - Example of green practices can include the use of energy-efficient technology or using sustainable materials and recycled packaging

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- Educating decision makers across the region to support implementation measures and projects
- Partnering with KDHE to conduct workshops on particulate matter in conjunction with Healthy Kansans 2020
- Hold an Air Quality Summit to include regional utilities

Top Priority Strategies

The natural resource strategies focus on varied aspects of the physical environment, including air, water, soil, land use, waste management, and habitat. Since natural systems are so interdependent, many of these strategies overlap and complement one another. While all of the actions contribute to enhancing the health and quality of the region's natural assets, the selection of a prioritized list of key recommendations is critical for organizing the implementation effort.

The following strategies are a high priority because they fill gaps in the region's capacity to manage its natural resources or they seek to reverse ongoing trends that can impair the quality of natural resources.

Relationship to Preferred Scenario

As described in Section 7, the scenario process drew from CLT and Work Team feedback, as well as community input and technical analysis to highlight priority strategies within a single framework—Great Communities and Effective Collaboration—that can guide overall resource allocation and inform plan implementation. The Preferred Scenario builds on the theme of prosperity through healthy, quality communities throughout the region but also emphasizes economic development, jobs, and regional coordination strategies.

Top Priority Strategies

- Identify/create a collaborative body to engage in regional natural resources planning
- Provide incentives for infill to address urban sprawl and promote more efficient development patterns
- Expand development of public/private funding partnerships for development and implementation of ground and surface water best management practices
- Encourage recycling, to reduce solid waste management costs
- Develop, promote and educate individuals, businesses of all sizes, agriculture, and local governments on voluntary practices that can reduce non-point source pollution to support the Ozone Advance Plan

Great Communities and Effective Collaboration strategies are:

- Developing a Partnership Approach to Regional Problem-Solving
- Fostering Opportunities for Education and Innovation
- Building Pride of Place and Marketing the Region's Economic Assets
- Promoting Comprehensive Management of Water Resources
- Expanding Mobility Choices

- Supporting Healthy Lifestyles
- Providing Adequate and Efficient Infrastructure
- Redeveloping Existing Areas, Neighborhoods, and Houses

The natural resources section features multiple strategies that align with the priorities of the preferred framework, including an emphasis on:

- Using education and outreach to raise awareness of natural resources issues and voluntary actions to protect the environment;
- Promoting a more coordinated approach to planning for natural resources, including water across jurisdictional boundaries; and
- Encouraging more efficient infrastructure as a means to reduce impacts on natural resources

Relationship with Other Plan Topics

At its most fundamental level, natural systems support the human, animal, and plant communities of the region. Natural resources are essential in sustaining health but also promote economic vitality, growth, and quality of life. Industries and businesses, from the traditional agricultural economy to the emerging energy sector, require access to clean and abundant soil, air, and water. The ability to protect open spaces and the surrounding landscape also provides opportunities for recreation and tourism and helps to enhance the sense of place that distinguishes the region's cities, small towns, and rural communities. Additionally, resilient and intact environmental systems, such as wetlands and riparian buffers perform critical functions, including the cleansing and draining of water, thus reducing the costs associated with physical infrastructure and mitigating the impacts of natural hazards.

Examples of natural resource strategies that overlap with other work team areas include:

- The use of non-automobile transportation choices to reduce impacts on air quality;
- The use of compact, mixed use neighborhood forms that encourage walking and bicycling and guide growth to already built out areas, thus decreasing the amount of land converted to development;
- The incorporation of LID practices to preserve the natural cleansing and filtering functions of the environment and thus supplement the region's physical stormwater infrastructure;
- Enhancing public health outcomes by improving the quality of water and air resources within the region and supporting increased public access to open space;
- Supporting economic development through greater recreational and tourism access to the region's natural resources; and
- Facilitating continued economic growth by ensuring access to quality natural resources for the region's industry and agriculture, promoting more efficient and thus cost-saving practices for businesses, and seeking to reduce potential increases in operating costs resulting from any future compliance with more stringent air quality standards.

Relationship to Prosperity Plan Guiding Principles

The Prosperity Plan will build on the following principles, based on HUD's six Principles of Livability:

- *Provide more transportation choices.* Develop a safe regional transportation system that includes strategic, responsive, and sustainable

transportation options that enhance economic production and the connectivity of people and goods in the region.

- *Promote equitable, affordable housing.* Ensure a wide variety of housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds in urban, suburban, small-town, and rural areas of the region.
- *Enhance economic competitiveness.* Ensure continued prosperity throughout the region by establishing the framework to grow businesses and create jobs in South Central Kansas.
- *Support existing communities.* Enhance and create connected, attractive, and value-added neighborhoods through strategies like mixed-use and infill development to support the revitalization of communities, the increased efficiency of public works investments, and the safeguarding of rural environments.
- *Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection.* Remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth.
- *Value communities and neighborhoods.* Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Natural resource strategies are consistent with all of the livability principles and specific recommendations relate directly to the core themes of supporting existing communities, coordinating policies among jurisdictions, and valuing existing communities and neighborhoods.

VISION AND FOCUS AREAS

Vision

The healthy community design section of the Prosperity Plan focuses on creating environments that promote the well-being and health of all residents throughout the region. The healthy community model serves as an overarching framework to integrate strategies across all plan elements in support of improved social, economic, educational, and physical opportunities.

Healthy community design means providing opportunities to create environments that promote healthy behaviors, including outdoor exercise, healthy eating, and the avoidance of health risks. It serves as a lens through which residents can understand and evaluate the overall makeup and function of their neighborhoods. Our neighborhoods are more than where we live. They are the settings that connect us to jobs, education, health care and other essential services, amenities, and one another.

Healthy community design can contribute to people's well-being by:

- Increasing physical activity;
- Reducing injury;
- Increasing access to healthy food;
- Improving air and water quality;
- Decreasing mental health stresses;
- Strengthening the social fabric of a community; and
- Providing fair access to livelihood, education, and other resources.

Vision: "South Central Kansas is a vibrant and healthy region"

Focus Areas

The six focus areas for healthy community design are:

- Tobacco Use
- Access to Health Services
- Physical Inactivity
- Food Quality and Access
- Education
- Access to Transportation

These areas represent the top issues for the healthy community design element of the Prosperity Plan and organize the individual recommendations in this section.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

The Technical Appendix contains an analysis of the region's health profile, including community health agencies and organizations, the relationship of the built environment and transportation to health, and public health outcomes. The purpose of this profile is to highlight issues, gaps, and opportunities that can form the basis of recommendations in the healthy community design section.

Built Environment

The physical environment around us plays a role in shaping behaviors influencing how we live, learn, work, and play. Central to the concept of healthy communities is incorporating opportunities for active

living. Active living is a growing concept that recognizes the connection between physical activity and our surroundings. It seeks ways to make physical activity safe, convenient, and pleasant by creating communities where people want to walk, bike, and become more physically active. Generally, healthy communities make it easy to include physical activity in everyday life, as well as provide access to healthy foods and the outdoors.

Proximity to places with recreational opportunities correlates with higher physical activity levels, which in turn correlate with lower rates of adverse health outcomes associated with poor diet, sedentary lifestyles, and obesity. While South Central Kansas has many community parks and open spaces, the region's overall average number of recreational facilities per 100,000 residents is less than the state average and the national benchmark. **See Figure 13.1.**

Studies demonstrate a clear link between the availability of transit, sidewalks, parks, and recreational amenities and higher rates of physical activity. Public transportation users, for example, potentially achieve up to 30 minutes of physical activity daily. However, current land use and development patterns heavily favor reliance on automobiles. Data indicate that single occupancy vehicles are the dominant mode of travel for residents in the region. Currently few trips take place on foot or by bike. Along with health implications, the availability of transportation options affects access to health care, as well as employment and educational opportunities.

While some parts of the region, particularly downtowns and their older, adjoining neighborhoods, feature many of the physical elements of healthy communities—walkability, diverse housing types, gathering spaces, easy access to shopping

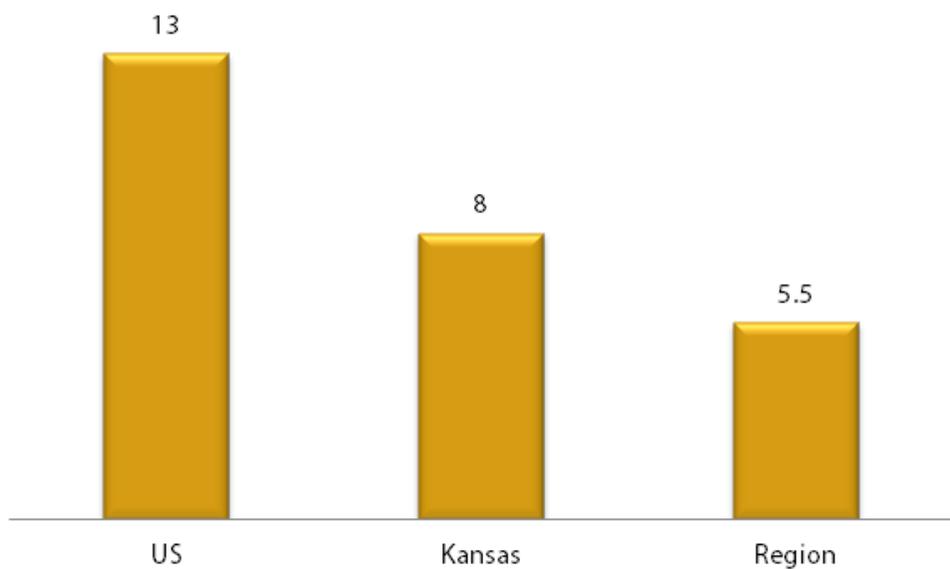


Figure 13.1 Number of Parks per 100,000
Source: 2013 County Health Rankings

and amenities—newer development within the region offers more limited choices in interconnected, mixed use settings.

A review of the built environment in the region suggests opportunities to incorporate more healthy community features in urban, suburban, small town, and rural settings. Elements include:

- Homes, shops, schools, and work that are close together so that people can walk or bike;
- Pedestrian and bicycle-friendly streets and neighborhoods;
- More green spaces, trails, and parks that are easy to access;
- Fresh, healthy food outlets such as grocery stores, community gardens or farmers’ markets; and
- Access to transit.

Food Deserts

Food deserts are areas that lack access to affordable fruits, vegetables, and other foods that make up a nutritious diet. Various factors, such as proximity to stores and restaurants, food prices, the availability

of food and nutrition assistance programs, and other community characteristics interact to shape food choices and overall diet quality. The percentage of the population who are low-income and do not live close to a grocery store is highest in Reno and Sedgwick Counties, slightly exceeding the state average. **See Table 13.1.**

A lack of proximity to fresh food sources is particularly challenging for zero-vehicle households. The Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization conducted a survey of 3,376 households to determine vehicle availability for general and underserved populations, including seniors, people with disabilities and racial and ethnic minorities. Nearly three-fourths of individuals in these groups did not have any vehicles in their

household. In Reno and Sumner Counties, about 2.5 percent of all households do not live near a grocery store and do not have an automobile.

The prevalence of fast-food restaurants also influences diet-related risk factors, such as rates of obesity. In all counties, more than 50 percent of the restaurants are fast food establishments, compared to the national average of 27 percent.

Food insecurity is a strong economic and social indicator of the overall health of a community. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods or uncertain resources to purchase such foods. Poverty and unemployment are common predictors of food insecurity. The food insecurity rate is highest in Sedgwick County at 15.4 percent in comparison to a state rate of 14.8 percent. **See Figure 13.2.**

Analysis of the food environment indicates there are opportunities to increase access to local health food sources and to raise awareness of healthy food choices.

Public Health Outcomes

Public health is among the most closely measured aspects of community life in South Central Kansas. The breadth of indicators reflects the healthy communities’ philosophy that health is not merely the absence of physical disease but results from access to education, economic, social interaction, and active lifestyle opportunities in an individual’s surrounding environment.

Butler County	Harvey County	Reno County	Sedgwick County	Sumner County	State of Kansas
6%	7%	9%	9%	8%	8%

Table 13.1 Percentage of Residents with Limited Access to Healthy Foods
Source: Kansas Health Matters

HEALTHY COMMUNITY DESIGN

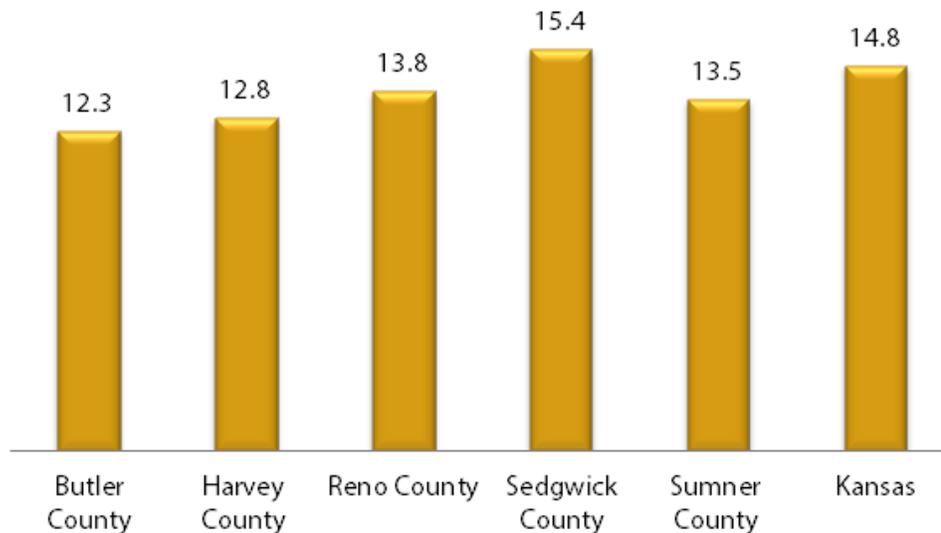


Figure 13.2 Percent of Residents Experiencing Food Insecurity
Source: Kansas Health Matters

The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program is a partnership between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. The rankings examine various measures that affect health, such as high school graduation rates, unemployment, limited access to healthy foods, air and water quality, income, and rates of smoking, obesity, and teen births. The overall health outcomes reflect rates of premature death prior to the age of 75; the percent of adults reporting fair or poor health; the average number of physically unhealthy days reported in past 30 days; the average number of mentally unhealthy days reported in past 30 days; and the percent of live births with low birth weight. The five counties ranked from a somewhat strong position in the top third (Harvey County) to a poor level of health in the lowest third

(Sedgwick and Sumner Counties) among the state’s counties. **See Table 13.2.**

An analysis of health indicators highlights that rates of adult smoking, adult obesity, and physical inactivity are generally at or above the state and national benchmarks in South Central Kansas. The data provide consistent evidence of health-related risk factors across all counties, including higher rates of diabetes and hypertension, a high number of fast food restaurants, and average to low high school graduation levels. Sedgwick, Reno, and Sumner Counties in particular show greater vulnerability to socio-economic challenges, including low graduation rates, households without a vehicle, and seniors living alone. Factors such as education, economic stability, transportation options, and the

availability of social support can strongly influence physical and emotional health outcomes for residents.

Health outcomes for the region suggest opportunities to promote higher levels of physical fitness and better access to healthy foods and initiatives that encourage residents to reduce exposure to health risks, such as tobacco use or poor diets.

Recommendations

The recommendations identified in the healthy community design section are the result of technical analysis and stakeholder and community input gathered throughout the planning process. The recommendations address key challenges that affect the health of residents and the region overall. Strategies build on highlighted opportunities to reduce tobacco use, encourage healthier lifestyles, and improve access to health care and educational opportunities. The Technical Appendix contains a list of links and informational resources to support the recommendations.

Reduce Tobacco Use

Goal Statement: “Reduce morbidity and mortality related to tobacco use, through programs, policies, health system modifications, social and environmental changes, and education campaigns.”

Decades of research provide a clear link between tobacco use and adverse health conditions. Each year, nearly 3,900 adult Kansans die from smoking-related conditions and an additional 380 non-smokers die from exposure to secondhand smoke. Nearly 2,900 children in the state become smokers every year. Studies identify cigarette smoking as a cause of various cancers, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory conditions, as well as low birth weight and other poor health outcomes. Exposure to secondhand smoke from burning tobacco products can also cause

Butler	Harvey	Reno	Sedgwick	Sumner
42/102	25/102	54/102	69/102	71/102

Table 13.2 Overall Health Outcome Ranking by County, 2014
Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

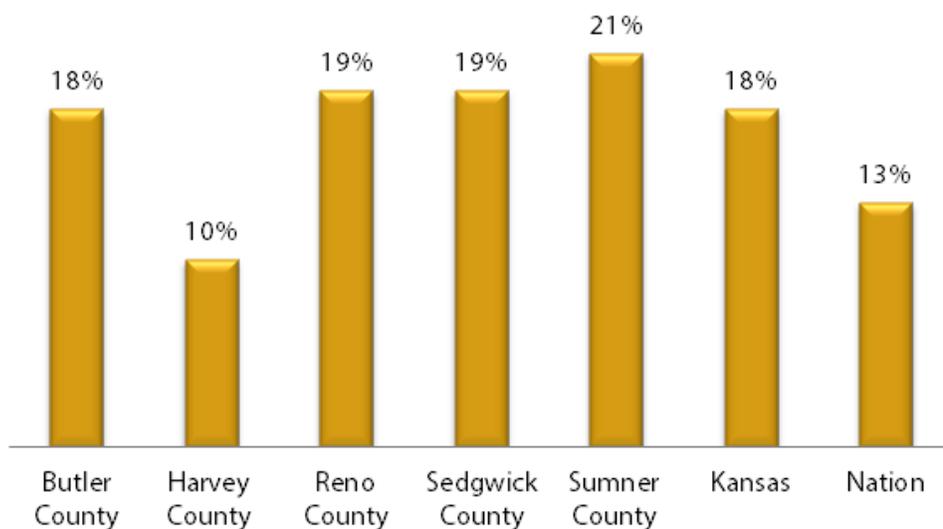


Figure 13.3 Rates of Adult Smoking
Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

disease and premature death. The rates of adult smoking in four of the five counties exceed both the state and national rate.

The Prosperity Plan recommends development of a comprehensive initiative to reduce tobacco use in the region, including educational programs designed to discourage individual tobacco use and policies to promote smoke free environments. The strategies emphasize evidence-based intervention, such as Kansas Department of Health and Environment’s (KDHE) MAPPS strategies (Media, Access, Point of Decision Information, Price, and Social Support/ Services) to encourage smoking cessation. When combined, these strategies can improve health behaviors by altering the broader community environment.

1. Increase the number of businesses, government entities, university/ colleges to implement tobacco free designations on their sites.

Tobacco-free policies are public-sector regulations and private-sector rules that

prohibit smoking in indoor spaces and designated public areas. Government ordinances establish tobacco-free standards for indoor workplaces, indoor spaces, and outdoor public places. Private-sector smoke-free policies may ban all tobacco use on private property or restrict tobacco use to designated outdoor locations. Tobacco-free policies can reduce both secondhand smoke exposure, as well as tobacco use. The action to support this strategy is:

- Encourage businesses, government entities, and university/colleges to avoid the designation of smoking areas. Evidence indicates that tobacco free policies are effective in:
 - Reducing exposure to secondhand smoke
 - Reducing the prevalence of tobacco use
 - Increasing the number of tobacco users who quit
 - Reducing the initiation of tobacco use among young people
 - Reducing tobacco-related

morbidity and mortality, including acute cardiovascular events

2. Create disincentives to use tobacco.

Financial incentives can influence individual choices. Increased costs, including higher insurance premiums or taxes on tobacco products can discourage unhealthy behavior. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Increase local sales tax on tobacco products to further education and prevention initiatives
- Increase insurance premiums for tobacco users
- Implement non-hiring policies for tobacco users

3. Promote/Implement evidence-based adult/youth education programs in combination with community interventions.

Communication and education can be powerful tools for preventing the initiation of tobacco use, supporting cessation, and shaping social norms related to tobacco use. The following actions support this strategy:

- Identify funding opportunities for further education and prevention
 - KDHE’s Chronic Disease Risk Reduction Grant provides funding and technical assistance to communities to reduce chronic disease risk through strategies that affect tobacco use, physical activity, and nutrition
- Promote and implement evidence-based education programs
 - Examples include CDC’s Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs —2014. This guide helps states plan and establish effective tobacco control programs to prevent and reduce tobacco use.

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- Conduct education campaigns including integration of KDHE's ACE programs in school districts
 - The ACE Kansas Youth Tobacco Cessation Program focuses on helping students who are using tobacco to quit. ACE advocates for:
 - Adoption of a model ACE policy amendment in school systems that gives students the option of deferring disciplinary measures pending participation in the ACE program
 - Adoption of a model Tobacco-Free School Grounds Policy
 - A series of support strategies coordinated through an ACE Champion, including cessation coaching services and school educational and promotional activities
- Integrate physical activity, consumption of fruit/vegetables, and tobacco use into vital signs information of health care providers and partners
- Promote existing resources such as KDHE's 24-hour, toll-free Kansas Tobacco Quitline
- Develop, implement, and enforce stronger local laws to restrict retail sales of tobacco products to minors and require retailer education
- Increase education and resources available to low income pre-post-natal clients/patients
 - Develop "quit kit" resources specifically for pregnant women and provide incentives for cessation
 - Incorporate smoking related education with breastfeeding classes/follow-up

Improve Access to Health Care

Goal Statement: "Promote the health and safety of all residents in South Central

Kansas by improving access to receive quality, coordinated, reliable, affordable healthcare services that meets individuals needs and eliminates health disparities among all demographics and geographic locations."

Health disparities occur when there are differences in health outcomes, quality of health care or access to health care services across groups of people. Underserved populations, including ethnic and racial minorities, the elderly and children, individuals with low incomes, people with disabilities or residents in rural areas can all experience diminished access to health care and as a result poorer health outcomes. The plan identifies a series of strategies to narrow this gap by improving the ability of residents to access care and to increase the supply and availability of both health care providers and critical services across the region.

1. Improve transportation access to health care providers.

The South Central Kansas region is heavily automobile dependent and has limited transit options. This lack of transportation alternatives contributes to ongoing health disparities that can affect vulnerable populations. The continued aging of the population places an even greater emphasis on connecting households without vehicles to care. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Collaborate with facilities offering a continuum of care and clinics to coordinate their transportation services
 - The Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plan for Butler, Harvey, and Sedgwick Counties serves as the framework to deliver transportation services for the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and underserved

job seekers. The plan should be used as a vehicle to coordinate and promote improved access to health care services and facilities.

- Provide inter-county transportation options to enable other counties in the region to access resources available in more urbanized areas
- Offer travel or bus vouchers for health-related trips
- Improve the ability of the existing transit network in Wichita to connect residents with health care resources
 - The Kansas Health Institute, University of Kansas School of Medicine – Wichita, and Wichita State University collaborated to conduct a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of potential changes to the City of Wichita's transit system. The HIA explores how proposed public transit concepts could influence health through improved quality, exposure to injury, and access to employment, health care, food sources and educational and recreational resources. The HIA identified the following health care related recommendations:
 - Locate bus stops near health care offices and specialty clinics, especially those that serve children
 - Encourage health care organizations to inform and link their patients to available transit services

2. Improve access to health care services.

While the prior actions seek to link residents to existing services, this strategy focuses on expanding health care delivery as a means to increase overall access. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Implement safety net services, with expanded and flexible hours, into emergency rooms, school-based health clinics, and other clinic services
- Bring specialists to citizens without access to care
- Enhance rural access to care
 - Rural areas face challenges related to fewer local health care facilities, less access to preventive and primary care services, and greater travel distances to specialty

care services. Opportunities to enhance rural health care include:

- Collaborate with the Kansas Office of Rural Health to leverage federal, state, and non-governmental programs that support rural health
- Explore mobile health care services options
- Partner among county Health Departments, schools, non-profit groups and faith-based institutions to conduct

regular health fairs and health screenings in communities and neighborhoods throughout the region

- Explore the use of Health Information Technology and Telehealth
 - Telehealth is the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support long-distance clinical health care
 - Technologies include videoconferencing, the



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internet, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media, and wireless communications

- Implement a “Project Access” model throughout the region
 - Project Access coordinates donated health care for lower-income, uninsured residents
 - Central Plains Health Care Partnership, Inc., a nonprofit affiliate of the Medical Society of Sedgwick County, implements Project Access in the region

3. Improve the affordability of care.

Greater affordability will increase the ability of all residents to access care, including preventative services that can reduce future costs associated with untreated illnesses. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Advocate for Medicaid expansion
- Implement health co-ops for insurance
- Develop and implement income based interventions
 - An example is the Horizons or Comcare sliding scale
- Implement standardized procedures for federally funded and supported community health providers around payment options
- Provide “navigators” that will assist patients/clients with resources, services, access, and payment options

4. Enhance access to mental health care.

Mental health care is an essential part of maintaining the overall well-being of residents. Untreated behavioral issues can significantly erode quality of life for individuals and families and can have broader, adverse impacts on communities. Actions related to this strategy include:

	Butler	Harvey	Reno	Sedgwick	Sumner	Kansas	National Benchmark
Adult Obesity	33%	29%	33%	30%	34%	30%	25%
Physical Activity	24%	25%	23%	23%	29%	24%	21%

Table 13.3 Rates of Adult Obesity and Physical Inactivity by County
 Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

- Develop/Implement a cross-training program for mental health and substance abuse professionals to enhance capacity
- Implement the Sedgwick County Offender Assessment Program (SCOAP) model throughout the region
 - SCOAP works with the courts to connect individuals with mental illnesses to needed services and medication as an alternative to incarceration. The program provides mental health assessment, intensive case management, crisis intervention, and medication management.
- Collaborate and develop partnerships among non-profits, churches, etc., to implement out-patient mental health services
- Implement in-patient mental health care services
- Improve rehab and intervention resources in rural communities
- Develop a re-entry program for correctional facilities beyond halfway houses (skills development, mental health support, long-term case management, drop-in assistance, workshops and workforce development)

5. Improve the supply of health care professionals.

The federal Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designation identifies medically underserved areas eligible for federal programs and assistance. According to KDHE, Sedgwick County and Reno County are HPSAs for primary care for those residents at or below the 200 percent poverty level. KDHE has also designated Butler and Sumner Counties as HPSAs for mental health care. The following action focuses on developing, recruiting, and retaining an adequate supply of health care professionals throughout the region:

- Partner with the Kansas Recruitment and Retention Center to explore incentives, such as loan-repayment options for health care professionals practicing in low-income and rural areas.

Increase Physical Activity

Goal Statement: “Increase the proportion of individuals who participate in regular physical activity through multi-disciplinary community partnerships, policy, environment and system changes that improve access to and availability of resources.”

Participating in regular physical activity reduces the risks of chronic disease conditions like Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure,

and some cancers. Heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, and cardiovascular disease (stroke) are the leading causes of premature death in the region. Rates of adult obesity and physical inactivity in the five counties are generally either at or above the state and national benchmarks for healthy communities. **See Table 13.3.**

Although there are many factors that contribute to community health in South Central Kansas, the physical environment can have a major impact on lifestyle and health choices. Creating opportunities to support physical activity helps the entire community—from children who need safe routes for walking and biking to school, to active seniors who would choose to walk if they had safe pathways to local destinations. The Prosperity Plan identifies a series of strategies to design healthier communities and promote physical activity throughout the region.

1. Create environments that promote physical activity.

Generally, healthy communities make it easy to include physical activity in everyday life. A growing body of literature recognizes the role of the built environment in influencing individual behaviors. The presence of sidewalks, trails, bike paths, parks, walkable neighborhoods, and playgrounds encourages physical activity and promotes greater social interaction and vibrant neighborhoods. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Build and expand bike/walk paths and require them in new development projects
- Prepare joint use agreements between school districts and local governments to share facilities for community use, including recreational/physical activities

- Collaborate with residents, neighborhood groups, and other local stakeholders to conduct ‘walkability’ audits to prioritize pedestrian safety improvements
 - Use the AARP’s Sidewalks and Street Survey Checklist to assist with evaluation of the built environment
- Conduct a pilot Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for an economically challenged neighborhood.
 - An HIA is a tool that can be used to evaluate projects or policy choices to increase positive health outcomes and minimize adverse health outcomes and health inequities
- Use a Healthy Community Design Checklist to evaluate the comprehensiveness of new neighborhood development or revitalization efforts and integrate health outcomes with land use, transportation, and infrastructure decisions.
 - The checklist is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Healthy Community Design Initiative. The checklist includes elements that:
 - Support more physical activity
 - Increase healthier and more affordable food choices
 - Expand walking and bicycling options
 - Improve community safety
 - Include attractive gathering spaces
 - Accommodate people of all ages, abilities, or incomes
 - Support a clean environment
 - Emphasize healthy neighborhood design criteria as a means to accommodate people with disabilities and support aging in place

2. Promote active lifestyle choices.

Adults and children spend much of their day at work or in school. The ability to get a portion of recommended daily physical activity in these settings can help to solidify patterns of active behavior and promote positive health outcomes. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Incentivize workplace physical activity
- Increase flexible and appropriate physical activity school curriculum options for various levels of ability
- Develop partnerships among schools, YMCAs, gyms, and recreation centers to offer physical activity access for school age children and their parents at little or no cost

Improve Food Quality and Access

Goal Statement: “Increase access to fresh, nutritious, high quality, affordable food for South Central Kansas residents through partnerships, education, policies and programs to improve health outcomes.”

Attracting healthy food sources and enhancing the quality of available food in low-income underserved communities can play a role in improving health outcomes for residents, as well as anchoring more economic activity in an area.

1. Establish a Food Council that can formally address issues and strategies around fresh food access/options.

Food councils are part of a community-based food systems approach to enhance access to fresh food options. The action to support this strategy is:

- Form food councils that focus on the following:
 - Advocate for policy change to improve food access
 - Develop programs that address gaps in food access

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- Research and analyze the existing conditions of a community's food system
- Communicate information about food to residents
- Build partnerships among diverse stakeholders of a local food system, including the public, community-based organizations and coalitions, institutions such as schools, churches, hospitals, nonprofits, public agencies, and the private sector, such as stores, restaurants, and producers

2. Increase local access to fresh, quality food.

Expanding access to fresh food sources can play a significant role in encouraging better dietary choices and promoting the long-term health of residents. Easy access to fresh foods can also lower the transportation and affordability barriers to healthy eating that disproportionately affect lower-income households, senior citizens, and others who may not drive. Actions to implement this strategy include:

- Increase the number of grocery and convenience stores offering fresh food options
- Pursue potential funding opportunities through the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative, which supports various healthy food projects, including the construction of new and renovated grocery stores, farmers' markets, corner stores, food hubs, and urban farms
- Explore the use of community development financial institution funds and U.S. Department of Agriculture programs to finance healthy food access projects such as regional food hub development

- Leverage the resources of the Kansas State University Rural Grocery Initiative to sustain retail sources of food in rural areas
- Incentivize retail partners to provide fresh food options
- Provide subsidies for the production of local fresh foods
- Implement policies to allow for the sale of local fresh produce within and across county boundaries
- Establish local nutrition education programs and partner with educational institutions and non-profit groups to provide information for establishing home and community gardens
 - Leverage available informational resources such as kansascommunitygardens.org
- Develop policies and incentives that support farmer's markets, produce stands, and community gardens
 - Focus on strategies to increase the number of farmers markets in underserved communities
 - Establish and support a farmers' market collaborative
 - Ensure markets accept government nutrition program benefits, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Women, Infants, and Children, and the Farmers Market Nutrition Programs to assist low-income mothers, seniors, and families in purchasing fresh and healthy foods
- Develop and promote exercise and fresh food intake through physician prescriptions with health insurance reimbursement
- Develop policies that encourage community agriculture programs

3. Address the high concentration of fast food restaurants in the region.

The prevalence of fast-food restaurants influences diet-related risk factors, such

as rates of obesity. In all counties, more than 50 percent of the restaurants are fast food establishments, compared to the national average of only 27 percent. The following actions seek to balance food choices:

- Change zoning related to fast food placement and signage
- Implement policies that provide separation between new development and fast food restaurants
- Communities throughout the US have enacted zoning to limit the density of fast food outlets. Examples include local ordinances that:
 - Prohibit fast food outlets and/or drive-through service
 - Prohibit chain or "formula" restaurants
 - Prohibit fast food restaurants from certain commercial districts
 - Regulate the number of fast food outlets through quotas
 - Regulate the spacing of fast food restaurants on public streets
 - Regulate distances from specific land uses, such as schools, churches, and hospitals

Improve Education Outcomes

Goal Statement: "Increase graduation rates and access to college to enhance the health and well-being of South Central Kansas residents through coordinated efforts that emphasize the link between educational attainment and health outcomes."

Evidence links maternal education with the health of her offspring. The level of parental education affects children's health directly through resources available to provide care, and indirectly through the quality of schools that the children attend.

Further, education levels also positively influence a variety of social and

psychological factors. For example, increased education improves an individual's self-perception of personal control and social standing, which predict higher levels of self-reported health status.

1. Extend the school day to reach wellness goals and expand education initiatives that focus on increasing graduation rates, reducing dropout rates, and increasing focus on college and technical training opportunities.

Numerous studies point to the relationship between health outcomes and level of education. People who are better educated have lower death rates from the most common diseases, including heart conditions, stroke, hypertension, high cholesterol, emphysema, and diabetes. This correlation is due in part to the fact that education level determines employment and financial or socioeconomic status. Education also provides knowledge and life skills that allow people to access information and resources that promote health. Actions to bolster educational attainment and thus health outcomes include:

- Increase school involvement in the "Communities in Schools" program
 - "Communities in Schools" is a dropout prevention model that places site coordinators inside schools to assess students' needs and provide resources, such as food, school supplies, health care, counseling, tutoring or mentoring to support academic success
- Develop Co-Op and internship collaborations between local community colleges and local business
- Develop job skills opportunities for young people to work and earn money while in school
- Expand the school lunch program to include families (weekend food program)

2. Incorporate healthy lifestyles into curricula and other education programs.

Emphasizing healthy choices as part of school curricula can assist in establishing life-long patterns of healthier behavior. Actions to support this strategy include:

- Offer health/nutrition classes to teach children to make better choices
- Implement 5-2-1-0 strategies in schools, head start and after school programs
 - The 5-2-1-0 Let's Go! Program promotes four daily behaviors associated with healthy weight:
 - Eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables
 - Have 2 hours or less of screen time (television, computer, tablet, and video game)
 - Have at least 1 hour of physical activity
 - Consume 0 sugary drinks
- Develop activities-based programs for after-school detention (i.e. Wii Fit, etc.)
- Support self-esteem and life skills programs and incorporate into after school activities
 - An example is Girls on the Run, a physical activity based positive youth development program for girls in 3rd-8th grade that teaches life skills through interactive lessons and running games

Improve Access to Transportation

Goal Statement: "Increase access to transportation through a transportation and public health partnership to achieve positive health outcomes."

Adequate mobility options are essential to ensure that residents can access critical services and participate fully in the social and economic life of their communities.

1. Develop multimodal transportation options and infrastructure (Complete Streets) to provide access to services and amenities and encourage healthy behavior changes.

Expanding transportation choices, including automobile, transit, walking, and biking enables older citizens, people with disabilities, children, lower income households and others who do not have access to personal vehicles to navigate safely through their neighborhoods and access jobs, schools, services and amenities. Actions related to this strategy include:

- Develop guidance on Complete Streets design for various neighborhood and community settings and sizes
 - A Complete Streets policy promotes a balanced roadway system that encourages walking, bicycling, and transit use. Complete Streets elements emphasize design features that contribute to a safe, convenient, and comfortable travel experience for all users, including sidewalks; shared use paths; bicycle lanes; street trees and landscaping; crosswalks; bicycle parking facilities; public transportation stops and facilities; and dedicated transit lanes.
 - Include special considerations to create environments that are user-friendly for all residents, such as places to rest, easily readable street signs, adequate stoplight timing to facilitate safe street crossings, and bus stop availability and amenities
- Conduct demonstration projects to assist in making public policy and investment decisions that support health
 - The "Better Block" project is a demonstration tool to rebuild

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an area into a walkable, safe, active neighborhood. The process encourages residents to participate in assessing their community along the following dimensions:

- Safety
- Shared car and pedestrian access
- Amenities and a sense of place that encourage people to visit and linger
- Amenities that create invitations for children, seniors, and dog owners on a block—all indicators of a vibrant, friendly neighborhood scene
- The Streets Alive concept temporarily closes streets to motor vehicles to accommodate walking, biking, skating, or any other human powered means of transportation. The closure usually occurs in conjunction with other activities to promote fitness and highlight neighborhood amenities.
- Implement Safe Routes to School to allow more students to walk and bike to school
 - Establish a Safe Routes to School Program that emphasizes adequate sidewalks, bicycle paths, traffic calming, and other measures to help children travel safely to and from school
 - Create a Safe Routes to School team comprised of staff members from schools and cities, as well as members of the community, including parents and students
 - Document safety problems around the schools and parental concerns
 - Make needed short-term safety improvements
 - Map “safer walking routes” or create “walking school buses”

- Hold pedestrian and bicycle safety education workshops
- Increase traffic safety enforcement

Top Priority Strategies

- Increase the number of businesses, government entities, university/colleges to implement tobacco free designations on their sites
- Implement safety net services, with expanded/flexible hours, into emergency rooms, school based health clinics, and other clinic services
- Build and expand bike/walk paths and require them in new development projects
- Establish a Food Council that can formally address issues and strategies around fresh food access/options
- Extend the school day to reach wellness goals and expand education initiatives that focus on increasing graduation rates, reducing dropout rates, and increasing focus on college and technical training opportunities
- Develop multimodal transportation options and infrastructure (Complete Streets) to provide access to services and amenities and encourage healthy behavior changes

- Build excitement through promotional contests and activities
- Apply for funding for longer-term, more costly improvements
- Address gaps for those aging in place
- Develop and promote park and ride, shared vehicles, and bicycle share programs in the region

Top Priority Strategies

The healthy community design strategies focus on aspects of the physical environment, as well as opportunities to enhance health care service and program delivery in the region and improve residents’ access to educational and informational resources that promote healthy lifestyles. While all of the actions contribute to strengthening the health of the region, the selection of a prioritized list of key recommendations is critical for organizing the implementation effort.

The following strategies are a high priority because they fill key gaps in the region’s overall health profile or they seek to reverse ongoing trends that affect the well-being of residents.

Relationship to Preferred Scenario

As described in Section 7, the scenario process drew from CLT and Work Team feedback, as well as community input and technical analysis to highlight priority strategies within a single framework—Great Communities and Effective Collaboration—that can guide overall resource allocation and inform plan implementation. The Preferred Scenario builds on the theme of prosperity through healthy, quality communities throughout the region but also emphasizes economic development, jobs, and regional coordination strategies.



Great Communities and Effective Collaboration strategies are:

- Developing a Partnership Approach to Regional Problem-Solving
- Fostering Opportunities for Education and Innovation
- Building Pride of Place and Marketing the Region's Economic Assets
- Promoting Comprehensive Management of Water Resources
- Expanding Mobility Choices
- Supporting Healthy Lifestyles
- Providing Adequate and Efficient Infrastructure
- Redeveloping Existing Areas, Neighborhoods, and Houses

Since it acts as an overarching framework, the healthy community design section

features strategies that touch on virtually all of the priorities of the preferred framework, including an emphasis on:

- Encouraging healthier lifestyles through physical activity and healthier eating;
- Increasing educational attainment as a way to improve health outcomes; and
- Encouraging transportation choices and redevelopment of existing areas to encourage active lifestyles

Relationship with Other Plan Topics

Healthy community design is the broadest and most inclusive of the Prosperity Plan topics. It specifically links the

traditional concepts of planning (land use, transportation, community facilities, parks, and open space) to health-related themes (physical activity, public safety, healthy food access, mental health, and air and water quality). For example, the ways in which communities organize open spaces, parks, and transportation can support more active lifestyle choices that reduce the risk of disease. Healthy communities also create more interconnected places that spark social interaction, link people to educational and economic opportunities, give access to critical services, offer safe, quality housing, and support a higher quality of life for residents. Healthier and more engaged residents are also essential in sustaining a more productive and economically competitive workforce.

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As such, healthy community design recommends strategies that relate to all aspects of the social, economic, natural and built environment of the region—from the design of individual neighborhoods and larger systems of infrastructure to the quality and accessibility of schools, housing, and health care.

Examples of healthy community design strategies that overlap with other work team areas include measures to:

- Improve air quality through reductions in secondhand smoke and ozone levels, thus lessening the risks of respiratory illnesses and other health conditions;
 - Design of communities that balance and mix land uses to support active lifestyles, better access to educational, cultural, recreational and health care opportunities, and affordable housing choices;
 - Promote more compact and walkable neighborhoods in appropriate areas, thus achieving greater efficiency in public service delivery and infrastructure maintenance and reducing impacts on the natural environment;
 - Design and plan transportation systems using complete street design concepts to accommodate walking, bicycling, transit, and automobiles;
 - Integrate transportation, transit, and land use to make it easier for residents to get to critical services, including health care;
 - Connect parks, plazas, and neighborhood gathering spots to create dynamic spaces for community activity, social interaction, and economic exchange;
 - Create a community-wide network of trails and greenways, that support active lifestyles, and provide secondary benefits related to wildlife habitat, storm water management, and flood mitigation;
- Promote improved physical health and better educational outcomes for students and the region's adult workforce, thus enhancing both individual well-being and overall productivity;
 - Build on the region's health care economy by developing, attracting, and retaining more health care providers;
 - Reduce the economic and social impacts of poor preventative health care and untreated mental illness; and
 - Support the agricultural economy by better linking the region's farm products with local food systems.

Relationship to Prosperity Plan Guiding Principles

The Prosperity Plan will build on the following principles, based on HUD's six Principles of Livability:

- *Provide more transportation choices.* Develop a safe regional transportation system that includes strategic, responsive, and sustainable transportation options that enhance economic production and the connectivity of people and goods in the region.
- *Promote equitable, affordable housing.* Ensure a wide variety of housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds in urban, suburban, small-town, and rural areas of the region.
- *Enhance economic competitiveness.* Ensure continued prosperity throughout the region by establishing the framework to grow businesses and create jobs in South Central Kansas.
- *Support existing communities.* Enhance and create connected, attractive, and value-added neighborhoods through

strategies like mixed-use and infill development to support the revitalization of communities, the increased efficiency of public works investments, and the safeguarding of rural environments.

- *Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection.* Remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth.
- *Value communities and neighborhoods.* Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Healthy community design strategies are consistent with all of the livability principles and specific recommendations relate directly to the core themes of expanding transportation choices as a means to promote active lifestyles and to increase accessibility; supporting existing communities; and valuing existing communities and neighborhoods. Improved public health outcomes also contribute to the region's overall economic competitiveness by enhancing workforce productivity.



OVERVIEW

Sections 8 through 13 identified nearly 300 individual recommendations to enhance quality of life and strengthen economic competitiveness in South Central Kansas. The recommendations include short and long-term actions, as well as broad strategies that build a foundation for continued collaboration, along with steps to implement specific policies and programs. Many of these actions are complementary and some overlap, reinforcing the interdependency of the six plan topics and the complexity of the challenges facing the region.

Effective implementation of the Prosperity Plan requires two critical elements. First is establishing a sense of priority among the many strategies. Prioritization assists in determining what actions regional stakeholders should take first given limited resources and capabilities.

The second critical element of organizing the implementation effort is to develop the underlying structure for ongoing cooperation. The most prevalent theme throughout the Prosperity Plan is a desire for coordinated, strategic decision-making across jurisdictions and organizations, including public, private, and non-profit stakeholders. Many recommendations encourage the use of education and the sharing of information, best practices, and resources to promote regional problem solving among cities, counties, businesses, community groups, educational institutions, and residents. The next step in the process is to build the tools, community awareness, and organizational structure to support the collaborative partnerships that are at the core of the Prosperity Plan.

Strategy Prioritization

To prioritize plan recommendations, the project team led CLT and Work Team

members through a two-step selection process. First, participants choose the top strategies in the six topic areas. Across all plan areas, the teams identified the 34 priority strategies shown below. These actions reflect both an emphasis on early steps to achieve positive momentum and longer-term foundational strategies to address significant challenges in the region. These strategies correspond with the top priority items identified in Sections 8 through 13.

Workforce and Business Development

1. Develop a regional image for economic development purposes that understands global connection and utilizes asset map information
2. Support, promote, and utilize strategies from the export plan to assist regional business around export and trade
3. Establish a sector based system that brings businesses together to discuss and solve issues occurring in their fields across the region
4. Develop collaborative partnerships around economic development efforts through agreements, protocols, and a cooperative lead system that is supported by an asset map and regional image
5. Support and partner around the innovation and tech transfer efforts of Wichita State University and connect this effort to the Prosperity Plan

Built Environment

1. Provide communities with pedestrian-friendly "Complete Streets" design to increase community appeal, safety, and provide access to all users
2. Identify housing needs around job centers to support communities in attracting and retaining workers and identify workforce housing programs so workers can live near jobs

3. Target and apply finance incentives and dedicated funding for infill development that creates opportunities to lower construction costs and assists communities in addressing the gap between rehabilitation costs and market value
4. Address blight and safety in neighborhoods by developing vacant lots and buildings
5. Develop rehabilitation-oriented building codes and land use/suite design standards to address neighborhood/community rehabilitation needs

Transportation

1. Encourage government bodies to adopt transportation plans that promote the connectivity of hike/bike/trails, pedestrian needs, and transit routes across the region
2. Expand purchase of alternative fuel fleet vehicles in the region
3. Develop a viable regional transit system
4. Develop and adopt policies that commit financial support devoted to the maintenance and replacement of existing assets and future transportation system projects and programs
5. Develop a regional forum to enhance and coordinate regional transportation issues and projects
6. Update policies and procedures for asset management, maintenance, and infrastructure life-cycle analysis to reflect a more regional approach

Water

1. Determine possible need for alternative water supply in the region
2. Develop a regional plan to address drought response (include drought triggers and water use priorities)
3. Develop a regional forum for advocacy around water policies/issues

4. Develop and implement effective conservation education programs with models of successful incentives/disincentives/programs categorized by user types
5. Develop water rate models and best management practices
2. Provide incentives for infill to address urban sprawl
3. Expand development of public/private (federal, state, local, landowner, NGOs) funding partnerships for development and implementation of ground and

of walk-bike paths for pedestrian movement and reducing car dependence

Healthy Community Design

1. Increase the number of businesses, government entities, university/colleges to implement tobacco free designations on their sites
2. Implement safety net services, with expanded/flexible hours, into emergency rooms, school based health clinics, and other clinic services
3. Build and expand bike/walk paths and require them in new development projects
4. Establish a Food Council that can formally address issues and strategies around fresh food access/options
5. Extend the school day to reach wellness goals and expand education initiatives that focus on increasing graduation rates, reducing dropout rates, and increasing focus on college and technical training opportunities
6. Develop multimodal transportation options and infrastructure (Complete Streets) to provide access to services and amenities and encourages healthy behavior changes



tailored to individual needs that promote revenue sustainability with conservation and drought condition strategies, including phased-in conservation

6. Develop asset inventory model that includes age/condition to understand repair/replacement costs
7. Develop best practice information on benefits of “full-cost pricing” and examples of use and success with other utilities

Natural Resources

1. Identify/create a collaborative body to engage in regional planning to carry the Prosperity Plan forward

surface water best management practices, utilizing local demonstration projects as teaching tools.

4. Encourage recycling, to reduce solid waste management costs, by developing and providing communities with a cost analysis of NOT recycling
5. Develop/promote and educate individuals, businesses of all sizes, agriculture, and local governments on voluntary practices that can reduce non-point source pollution to support the Ozone Advance Plan, such as development and utilization

In September 2014, study partners took part in a joint planning session to further prioritize strategies. Participants formed small break out groups and then identified their top five actions by topic. Groups typically consisted of a mix of members from multiple areas of expertise. Since there was overlap across break out groups among the selected strategies, an aggregate list of 15 highlighted recommendations emerged:

- Develop a regional image for economic development purposes that understands global connection and utilizes asset map information

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- Develop collaborative partnerships around economic development efforts through cooperative agreements, protocols, and lead distribution system that is supported by an asset map and regional image
- Support and partner around the innovation and tech transfer efforts of Wichita State University and connect this effort to the Prosperity Plan
- Identify housing needs around job centers to support communities in attracting and retaining workers and identify workforce housing programs so workers can live near jobs
- Target incentives and dedicated funding for infill development that lowers construction costs and assists communities in addressing the gap between rehabilitation costs and market value
- Develop rehabilitation-oriented building codes and land use/suite design standards to address neighborhood/community rehabilitation needs
- Encourage government bodies to adopt transportation plans that promote the connectivity of hike/bike/trails, pedestrian needs, and transit routes across the region
- Develop and adopt policies that commit financial support to the maintenance and replacement of existing assets and future transportation system projects and programs
- Update policies and procedures for asset management, maintenance, and infrastructure life-cycle analysis to reflect a more regional approach
- Determine possible need for alternative water supply in the region
- Develop a regional plan to address drought response (include drought triggers and water use priorities)
- Develop a regional forum for advocacy around water policies/issues
- Develop water rate models and best management practices that promote revenue sustainability with conservation and drought condition strategies, including phased-in conservation
- Identify/create a collaborative body to engage in regional planning to carry the Prosperity Plan forward
- Develop/promote and educate individuals, businesses of all sizes, agriculture, and local governments on voluntary practices to support the Ozone Advance Plan
- 5. Develop, promote, and educate individuals, businesses of all sizes, agriculture, and local governments on voluntary practices to support the Ozone Advance Plan
- 6. Identify/create a collaborative body to engage in regional planning to carry the Prosperity Plan forward
- 7. Develop and adopt policies that commit financial support to the maintenance and replacement of existing assets and future transportation system projects and programs

Attendees then participated in a wireless audience response exercise to reduce the list of strategies in half. Participants either choose “yes” to retain a strategy in the shorter priority list or “no” to eliminate it. The following strategies received the highest level of support as key action items to carry forward first:

1. Develop collaborative partnerships around economic development efforts through cooperative agreements, protocols, and lead distribution system that is supported by an asset map and regional image
2. Support and partner around the innovation and tech transfer efforts of Wichita State University and connect this effort to the Prosperity Plan
3. Develop a regional image for economic development purposes that understands global connection and utilizes asset map information
4. Target incentives and dedicated funding for infill development that lowers construction costs and assists communities in addressing the gap between rehabilitation costs and market value

These seven strategies represent the critical “short list” of actions that should be the early focus of implementation efforts. The strategies selected reinforce common themes, opportunities, and challenges throughout the Prosperity Plan, including an emphasis on coordinated decision-making, job creation and innovation, revitalization of existing areas, and adequate and stable resources to address infrastructure needs.



One of the primary goals of the Prosperity Plan is to move beyond planning to encourage actions that create meaningful change across the region. Successful implementation requires new approaches to decision-making that recognize the interdependence of communities and the challenges facing the region. Issues tend to become increasingly complex and intractable, reinforcing the importance of early action. Stakeholders can improve some of the issues facing South Central Kansas in the immediate future, while other challenges will require intensive long-term discussion and planning. We should not wait for future generations to confront today's issues. The Prosperity Plan provides a variety of strategies that, if implemented, can positively shape the region's future. The strategies are not a one-size-fits-all approach. Communities have the option to modify tools or create new strategies to meet their needs, but if local leaders, stakeholders, partners, and citizens come together to act, then South Central Kansas can meet today's needs without compromising the needs of future generations.

The Consortium Leadership Team and Implementation Focus Group developed strategies focused around four key components:

- Regular and ongoing communication
- Common vision with individual opportunities to contribute
- Evaluation to measure progress
- Partnerships of regional stakeholders/champions

This section provides action steps to build on these core components and create an enduring platform to move the Prosperity Plan and the region forward.

Championing the Plan

Though there are vehicles for regional planning in South Central Kansas, including entities and initiatives such as REAP, the South Central Kansas Economic Development District, the Wichita Regional Export Planning Initiative, and the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy programs, no single organization consistently coordinates action across all of the resource areas and jurisdictions in the Prosperity Plan. As highlighted throughout the effort, stakeholders embraced collaborative tools and organizational platforms, ranging from informational forums and inter-jurisdictional agreements to public-private partnerships and the joint marketing of the region's assets. Pooling resources and knowledge is one of the most effective strategies for addressing implementation challenges, such as declining revenue and the relatively small size and limited capacity of many plan partners.

Implementation can ultimately take many forms but a significant first step is to leverage the ability of REAP to be the nexus among the region's diverse interests. REAP can fulfill this role by convening leaders, stakeholders, and partners and establishing a process for continued engagement around the strategies developed in the Prosperity Plan. Actions to support REAP's value as an information gatherer and convener of stakeholders include:

- Organize focus groups or standing working groups around key topics, such as water, transportation, and workforce and business development to delve more fully into implementation specifics; or organize groups geographically to focus on the particular implementation issues that face the region's distinctive contexts: urban areas, fast-growing suburbs or smaller, rural communities. To facilitate these sessions REAP would be responsible for:

- Defining invitation lists
- Developing meeting structure
- Identifying group chairs
- Providing meeting and follow up support with REAP staff or contract assistance through Wichita State University
- Create and maintain a regional web based issues forum that promotes inter-jurisdictional decision-making and serves as a "one-stop" repository for information and data. Features could include:
 - Downloadable data, such as demographic information and regional mapping layers
 - Highlighted planning tools or grants that could assist local communities in implementation
 - Chat feature for specific issues
 - Highlighted technical assistance, including programs available through educational institutions, and state and federal agencies
 - Information repository that includes community and regional studies and plans, as well as guidance materials, models, and best practices referenced in the Prosperity Plan
- Connect regional stakeholders with resources and information to support implementation:
 - Conduct training or leadership sessions for stakeholders geared around implementation topics of interest
 - Conduct regional summits on critical topics such as water, transportation, housing or workforce training
 - Prepare a resource guide that compiles data sources, available technical programs, and potential implementation partners by topic area
 - Hire a person, either part-time or full-time, to advance the plan with an emphasis on compiling and

distributing information to the region's stakeholders

- Promote partnerships and connect technical assistance to and between regional stakeholders and partners
- Consider forming partnerships with educational institutions, particularly high schools, technical schools, community colleges and universities to incorporate regional planning concepts into the curricula and identify student projects that align with plan topics and strategies
- Update key planning documents annually, including the Asset Map and the Best Practices report around additional strategies
- Conduct stakeholder interviews to understand issues facing the region. Feedback received will help establish key strategies to advance in the annual REAP Work Plan and determine priority needs for the region. The purpose of these sessions would be to:
 - Understand priorities and concerns from a regional perspective
 - Understand priorities at the community level
 - Understand barriers around issues
 - Identify additional or emerging themes that align with the plan

Building Partnerships

No single entity has the authority or resources to implement all of the strategies identified in the Prosperity Plan. Implementation will require coordinated action across governments, organizations, and individuals, including the public, private and non-profit sectors. To expand its organizational capacity and reach, REAP should form partnerships through taskforces, alliances, coalitions, work groups, and/or any other formal structures that can bring together key stakeholders around priority issues. This

multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder framework will help to establish a shift away from traditional planning within narrowly focused silos toward a comprehensive approach that recognizes the relationships among different focus areas. Actions include:

- Establish partnerships around priority strategies and/or user group types such as city managers, mayors, or utilities
- Determine interest in developing a partnership structure for technical staff in the region, such as community and transportation planners, economic developers, public works staff, housing providers, social service providers and other practice professionals
- Develop topic information, including trends, best practices and known implementation barriers around the priority areas identified by the partnerships
- Identify priority strategies for the partnerships to address over a determined period of time
 - Partnerships should address near-term (1-3 years), mid-term (3 -5 years), and long-term (5 years and beyond) strategies and how to address each moving forward
- Partnerships should meet monthly, or as needed, to review strategies and implementation progress
- Consider continued use of the Consortium Leadership Team as a taskforce to take on implementation of core strategies
- Review information, data, and plans to assist in the implementation of identified strategies

Building a Shared Vision

Successful implementation also requires stakeholders to see the value produced by the Prosperity Plan process. Though not all strategies are appropriate for all community

types or organizational settings, all stakeholders should be able to look at the plan and find at least a few strategies that address their particular concerns, priorities, and needs. To build such an understanding of the plan's role as a menu for change, the implementation process should actively engage local elected and appointed officials and business and non-profit leaders. Greater familiarity with the plan's vision and themes will also encourage community leaders to consider strategies and tools when making resource allocation, planning, and investment decisions. The outreach approach should focus on the following key elements:

- Provide initial training on the plan and its use as a toolkit
- Establish a REAP briefing team to make presentations to the governing bodies of the supporting counties that participated in the plan. The presentation to the counties would outline the basic program for implementing the plan.
 - Identify REAP members to act as plan delegates with each delegate responsible for contacting at least five other entities for the purpose of receiving a plan presentation and learning about opportunities to participate in implementation
- Provide information to officials and leaders about partnership opportunities and ask for their ongoing participation, such as:
 - Direct involvement in a taskforce or focus group
 - Inviting others to participate in a taskforce or focus group
 - Posting planning documents on organizational websites or making information available through other media platforms, such as newsletters and public television channels
- Leverage existing taskforces and initiatives that are already advancing plan topics:

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- Blueprint for Regional Economic Growth (BREG)
- Wichita Regional Export Planning Initiative
- Regional leadership groups
- Identify methods for distributing plan documents and information to REAP members and other stakeholders in the region:
 - Identify who needs information from the plan documents and the appropriate format (printed, electronic)
 - Develop a marketing plan for the planning documents and tools
 - Distribute plan information to champions in the region to work with elected officials and staff, private entities, non-profit groups, and citizens
- Develop an overall messaging campaign to promote the value of the plan:
 - Develop a message around the balance between strategies tailored to individual communities and the importance of broader, regional discussions
 - Develop a concise, overarching speech or regional narrative for presentations
 - Create fact sheets around topics for targeted groups such as Homeowner Associations; economic development entities; local government; businesses; chambers of commerce; non-profit groups; and citizens
 - Consider creating an endorsement campaign that asks organizations and residents to indicate support for the plan's overall vision by adding their names to a web site
 - Develop an abbreviated executive summary brochure
 - Develop messaging around the connectivity of the topics and how the region in general is connected
- Develop a news, public television, and/or public radio series around plan topics
- Messaging should highlight that:
 - Prosperity, as defined by local communities, is a desired outcome of the plan and coordinated action is a strategy to achieve many of the region's priorities, such as quality of life and good jobs
 - An economic region knows no boundaries
 - South Central Kansas competes economically against other metropolitan areas that engage in regional, coordinated planning
 - No one community or organization can effectively address the most complex issues facing the region
 - The plan is not mandated by any entity, but is a toolkit to offer solutions to regional problems with actions available to local governments, businesses, community groups and individuals
 - Coordinated action and investment can make resources available that improve opportunities for residents and strengthen businesses
 - Without action, certain trends, such as population loss in some communities or a lack of resources to maintain physical infrastructure will erode existing quality of life in the future

Measuring Success

An effective implementation process should also include tools that enable the tracking of progress toward desired outcomes. Indicators are data that express an existing condition or trend and show

current performance relative to a baseline condition. They should be clear, based on available data, quantifiable, and tell a compelling story about how the region and its residents are doing. The Prosperity Plan and its supporting documents contain an array of potential indicators for each of the six plan topics.

Communities and organizations should choose those indicators that are most relevant for capturing their local concerns and priorities. However, stakeholders should also develop a consistent set of indicators to reflect common regional issues that cross boundaries, such as infrastructure conditions or the health of natural resource systems. Stakeholders can use feedback generated by indicators to communicate the plan's impact and adjust strategies to achieve better results. Approaches to measuring success should consider the following elements:

- Prepare an annual state of the region report that updates key indicators cited in the Prosperity Plan as a way to measure progress and showcase pilot projects or case studies in local communities
- Make results available to the public to promote transparency in implementation and encourage interest in ongoing actions
- Highlight best practices currently being taking place in the region
- Create a web site feedback feature that allows residents to share examples of success stories in their neighborhoods and communities
- Use regional forums to recognize those communities and organizations that make significant progress on achieving results
- Align indicator outcomes with the goal setting efforts of REAP and other partnerships

All of these actions work in concert to add momentum behind the partnerships that have emerged through the Prosperity Plan process. The most basic implementation step is to continue this dialogue and identify forward-looking, collaborative solutions that enhance quality of life for all residents and make South Central Kansas healthy, competitive, and prosperous for years to come.

Condition/Trend Measured	Description
Workforce and Business Development	
Workforce Participation	Unemployment rate
Workforce Participation	Labor force participation
Economic Diversification	Economic output by industry type
Economic Diversification	Percent of employment by industry
Economic Diversification	Percent of wages by industry
Economic Growth	Population change/loss
Economic Growth	Projected employment growth
Economic Growth	Patent activity
Economic Growth	Percent entrepreneurship
Economic Growth	Per capita GDP
Income	Median income
Income	Percentage of workers earning a living wage
Income	Average hourly earnings
Income	Poverty rate
Workforce Preparation	Educational attainment
Exports	Total exports
Exports	Exports per capita
Exports	Location quotients
Construction and Real Estate	Construction permits issued
Fiscal Health	Municipal bond rating
Built Environment/Housing	
Housing choice	Housing mix
Housing Availability	Total Housing Units
Housing Availability	Single family permits
Housing Availability	Multifamily permits

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Community Resilience	Population growth by community
Community Resilience	Demographic composition of population
Recreation Access	Average number of recreational facilities per 100,000 residents
Housing Affordability	Percentage of households that are cost burdened (housing costs totaling 30% or more of total household income)
Housing Affordability	Percentage of units affordable to households earning 30, 50, 80, & 100% of area median family income
Housing Condition	Percentage of housing stock built prior to 1980
Housing Condition	Median home value
Transportation	
Transit Use	Daily shuttle/ transit ridership
Freight	Percent of short-line miles that can accommodate 286,000 pound rail cars
Freight	Amount of cargo that passes through region annually
Automobile Use	Total vehicle miles traveled per day
Automobile Use	Total vehicle hours per day
Automobile Use	Average trips per day
Alternative Transportation	Percent of trips undertaken in single-occupancy vehicle
Alternative Transportation	Modal split, which is the percentage of travelers using a particular type of transportation
Alternative Transportation	Amount of cargo that passes through region annually
Alternative Transportation Use	Miles of existing bike paths or trails
Roadway Capacity	Average time to complete trip
Roadway Capacity	Level of the Service
Roadway Capacity	Roadway Congestion Index, which measures the density of traffic across an urban area in relation to the overall capacity
Roadway Condition	Pavement Condition Index, which is a numerical index between 0 and 100 that indicates the general condition of a roadway
Bridge Health Index	Bridge Health Index, which assigns a score for each major structural component including the deck, superstructure and sub-structure
Affordability	Housing-Transportation Affordability Index, which is a measure of transportation and housing affordability that takes into account the cost of housing, as well as the cost of transportation resulting from the location of the home
Transit Capacity	Per capita transit investment
Transit Access	Transit coverage, which measures the share of working-age residents near a transit stop

Water	
Water Demand and System Efficiency	Gallons per capita per day (GPCD)
Water Demand	Projected population growth and related water demand
Surface Water Supply	Conservation pool storage capacity
Groundwater Supply	Groundwater levels
Water Quality	Number of impaired water bodies from 303(d) list
Water Quality	Water quality of effluence of % of total treatment considered 'advanced'
System Efficiency	Rate comparison by local municipality
System Efficiency	Water operations ratio (revenue: expenditure)
System Efficiency	Wastewater operations ratio (revenue: expenditure)
System Condition	Nonrevenue water
System Condition	Number of sanitary overflows and/or volume of I/I
Conservation and Education	Changes in gallons per capita per day
Drought Resilience	Number of drought plans/drought triggers
Natural Resources	
Solid Waste Reduction	Tons of MSW per Person
Sold Waste Reduction	Tons of Recyclable Materials
Solid Waste Management Capacity	Lifespan of Landfills
Air Quality	AQI Data
Surface Water Quality	Number of Impaired Water Bodies
Surface Water Quality	Total Maximum Daily Loads
Surface Water Quality	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit Compliance
Groundwater Quality	Groundwater Quality Sampling Data
Floodplain Management	Value of Property Damage Sustained under Disaster Declarations
Floodplain Management	Community Rating System
Habitat Conservation	Number of Acres Enrolled in Easement or Protection Programs
Healthy Community Design	
Access to Health Services	Ration of Population to Primary Care Physicians
Access to Health Services	Percentage of adults with no personal doctor or health care provider
Disease Incidence	Percentage of Adults with Diagnosed Diabetes
Disease Incidence	Percentage of Adults with Hypertension
Health Risks	Percentage of Adults Who are Obese

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Health Risks	Percent of adults that report smoking \geq 100 cigarettes and currently smoking
Health Risks	Percent of adults aged 20 and over reporting no leisure time physical activity
Overall Health	Percent of adults reporting fair or poor health (age-adjusted)
Overall Health	Average number of physically unhealthy days reported in past 30 days
Overall Health	Average number of mentally unhealthy days reported in past 30 days
Alternative Transportation	Daily Wichita Transit ridership
Alternative Transportation	Percent of trips undertaken in Single-Occupancy Vehicle
Alternative Transportation	Modal split, which is the percentage of travelers using a particular type of transportation
Access to Healthy Foods	Percent of population who are low-income and do not live close to a grocery store
Access to Healthy Foods	Percent of all restaurants that are fast-food establishments
Education	High School graduation rate
Education	People 25+ with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Economic Stability	Median Household Income
Economic Stability	Percentage of population living below the national poverty line
Access to Recreational Facilities	Number of fitness and recreation centers per 1,000 population

Table 15.1 Potential Indicators by Prosperity Plan Topic

Taken together, these indicators form an overall picture of the health of South Central Kansas and its communities and residents. The ultimate goal of the Prosperity Plan is to enhance quality of life by tracking progress, finding opportunities for improvement, and strengthening performance in each of these interrelated areas.



SOUTH CENTRAL KANSAS Prosperity Plan

The following are separate documents that support and provide additional technical detail and analysis for the South Central Kansas Prosperity Plan:

Glossary of Terms

Technical Appendix

Fair Housing Equity Assessment and Map Book

Asset Map

Existing Conditions Report

County Profiles

SOUTH CENTRAL KANSAS Prosperity Plan

Glossary



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SOUTH CENTRAL KANSAS Prosperity Plan

The following is a list of major terms used in the South Central Kansas Prosperity Plan documents.

Active Living: A way of life where people have to the ability to choose to be physically active every day in their community; whether they are at school, at work, at home, or at play. Active Living is based on the belief that regular physical activity has many lifelong benefits. It means something different for everyone.

Adaptive Reuse: The process of reusing an old site or building for a purpose other than which it was built or designed for. Along with brownfield reclamation, adaptive reuse is seen by many as a key factor in land conservation and the reduction of urban sprawl.

Affordable Housing: In general, housing for which the occupant(s) is/are paying no more than 30 percent of income for gross housing costs, including utilities.

Aging In Place: The ability of residents regardless of age, income, or ability level to live safely, independently, and comfortably in their own homes and communities.

Areas of Concentrated Poverty: Neighborhoods of extreme poverty, such as census tracts in which 40 percent or more of the individuals live at or below the poverty line.

Areas of High Opportunity: Neighborhoods that score well on access to key dimensions of overall opportunity, including proximity to high-performing schools, larger employment centers, public transit and clean environments.

Average Living Wage: The hourly wage that an individual must earn to support a family, if that individual is the sole provider and is working full-time (2080 hours per year).

Built Environment: The built environment includes the main physical components around which communities organize, including land, infrastructure (roads, bridges, water and wastewater), transportation links, open spaces and public amenities, such as parks and recreational facilities.

Complete Streets: Streets designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work.

Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) periodically receives "custom tabulations" of Census data from the U.S. Census Bureau that are largely not available through standard Census products. These data, known as the "CHAS" data (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy), demonstrate the extent of housing problems and housing needs, particularly for low income households.

Cost Burden: Monthly housing costs (including utilities) exceed 30% of monthly income. Severe cost burden occurs when monthly housing costs (including utilities) exceed 50% of monthly income.

Disproportionate Need: HUD defines disproportionate need as the difference between the percentage of households overall which have a housing problem (i.e., cost burden, overcrowding and lack of complete plumbing/kitchen) and the percentage of households in each group which have a housing problem. When the

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difference is 10 percentage points or higher for a certain income or racial/ethnic group than that group is defined as having a disproportionate need.

Entrepreneurship: The process of starting a business or other organization. The entrepreneur develops a business model, acquires the human and other required resources, and is fully responsible for its success or failure.

Equity: Fairness and whether all people have similar rights, opportunities and access to all forms of community capital (e.g. housing, education, healthy food).

Housing Rehabilitation: Generally major physical improvements designed to extend the useful life of the existing structure and provide quality, energy efficient housing for the occupant(s).

Infill Development: Infill is the use of land within a built-up area for further construction, especially as part of a community redevelopment or growth management program.

Living Wage: A wage that is high enough to maintain a normal standard of living.

Median Housing Value: The median house price is the midway point of all the houses/units sold at market price (or sold amount) over a set period. The median price of homes listed in the Wichita metropolitan area as of May of 2014 was \$127,500.

Mixed Use: Any urban, suburban or rural development, or even a single building, that blends a combination of residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or industrial uses, where those functions are physically and functionally integrated, and that provides pedestrian connections.

Mobility Choices: The condition of making multiple safe, convenient, and affordable transportation options available to residents to connect them to desired destinations. Choices typically balance options related to walking, biking, transit, and driving an automobile.

Overcrowding: The condition of having more than one person per room in a residence. Severe overcrowding is more than 1.5 persons per room.

Ozone: A colorless unstable toxic gas with a pungent odor and powerful oxidizing properties, formed from oxygen by electrical discharges or ultraviolet light.

Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty: Areas of racially concentrated poverty are defined as census tracts where more than 50 percent of the residents are people of color and more than 40 percent of the residents have incomes less than or equal to 185 percent of the federal poverty line. Census tract values are from the U.S. Census 2010 Decennial Census.

Resilience: Community resilience is the sustained ability of a community to utilize available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations.

Segregation: HUD assesses segregation through an Index of Dissimilarity, which is based on the number of people in any two groups living in different neighborhoods within the city or metropolitan area. There is less segregation when in a neighborhood when it has a mix of the two groups that is similar to the city or

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metropolitan area as a whole. Higher levels of segregation occur when there is more of one group represented in a neighborhood than in the city or metropolitan area as a whole.

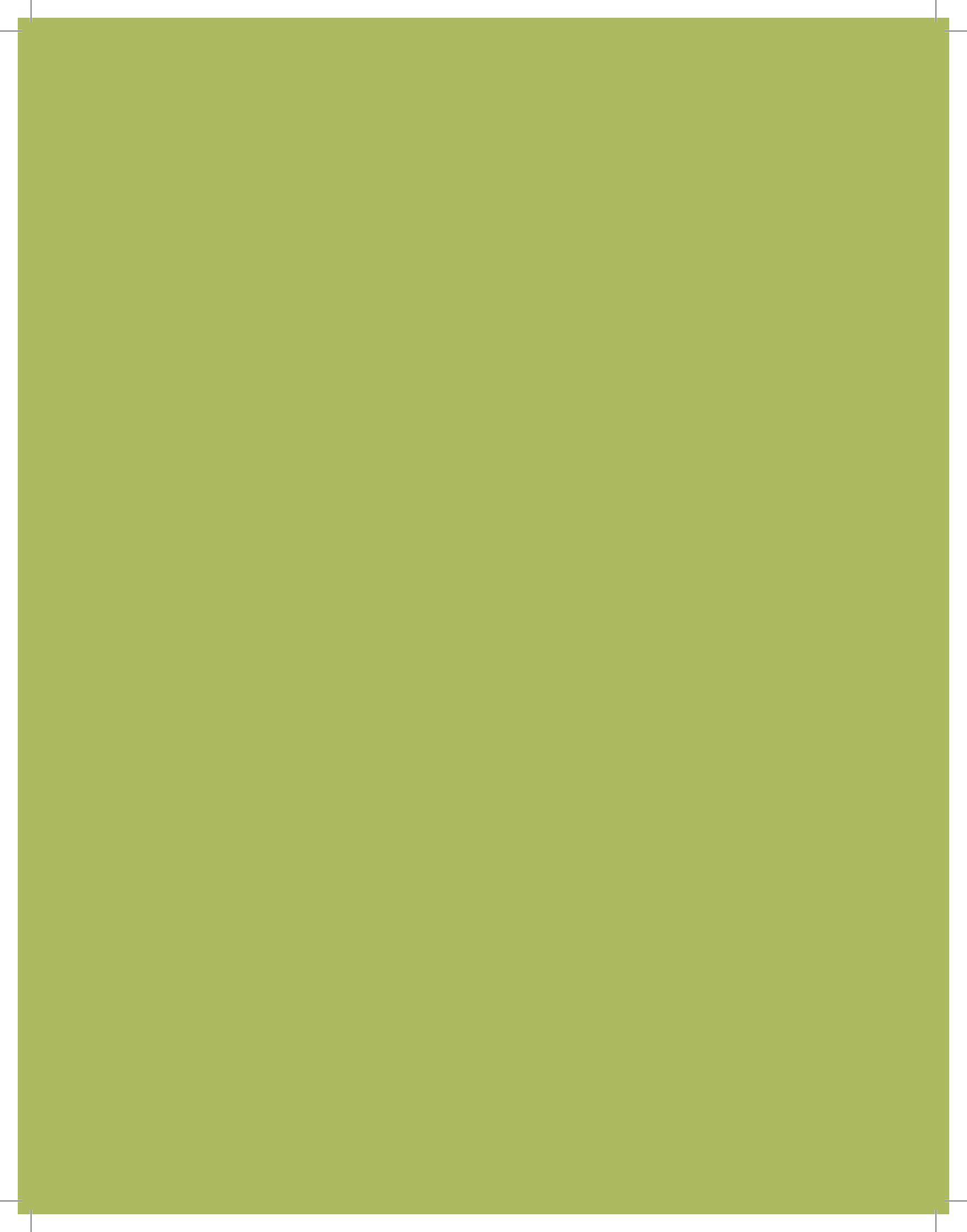
Tenure: Housing tenure refers to the financial arrangements under which someone has the right to live in a house or apartment. The most frequent forms are renter occupancy (rent is paid to a landlord) and owner occupancy.

Walkability: A measure of how friendly and safe an area is for walking.

Watershed: An area or ridge of land that separates waters flowing to different rivers or basins.

Wetlands: Land or areas (as marshes or swamps) that are covered often intermittently with shallow water or have soil saturated with moisture.

Workforce Housing: Any housing, for-sale or rental, that is affordable to people ranging from a household with one member working full time for minimum wage to tenants earning up to 120% of Area Median Income. Workforce housing is often emphasized in proximity to employment centers so that workers can afford to rent or buy housing near their jobs.





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