

Chapter One: Introduction

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1.1 PURPOSE

The overall community goal for planning is to provide for the optimum in public health, safety and welfare for all residents of Arkansas City, and to simultaneously recognize and safeguard individual rights and vested property interests.

A comprehensive plan expresses a community's desires about the future. The plan provides a foundation and framework for future decisions and actions which affect the growth and development of property within the city's jurisdiction.

Planning is a basic function and power of city governments in Kansas. Planning commissions and governing bodies prepare plans in order to preserve the public health, safety and welfare. Effective planning helps make possible the orderly development of land within the planning jurisdiction of the city.

Cities plan for a variety of reasons:

- **To protect the public and preserve quality of life**

Planning can provide a wide number of benefits to a community. Effective planning can reduce problems such as incompatible land uses and can facilitate efficiency and economy by encouraging development to occur in areas with existing or planned public infrastructure.

- **To develop community vision and achieve goals**

The creation and adoption of a comprehensive plan provides the blueprint a community needs to realize its shared vision for the future. An effective planning process engages the public and builds on the strengths of the community. The comprehensive plan is more than just a list of goals and values, however. It is also a roadmap that allows the community to work to achieve these goals through specific land use policies and actions.

- **To protect private property rights**

Too often, planning is seen as infringing on, rather than enhancing, private property rights. While city land use regulations like zoning may place limits on the types of uses an individual landowner can make of his or her land, those regulations are, at their core, intended to *protect* the property rights of *all* landowners within the community. Striking the balance between individual liberties and the public good is critical to every land use planning effort.

- **To encourage economic development**

Orderly planning can have an important and direct positive impact upon a community's economic development. It provides the kind of certainty and predictability that developers, lending institutions and business owners seek. Planning can help outline the future capital improvements and infrastructure a community needs in order to grow and can help identify the means to finance these infrastructure needs. Good planning can also ensure that sufficient land is available for employee housing and new business development.

- **To facilitate decision-making on land use**

Land use decision-making by local governments is made in accordance with comprehensive plans, zoning and other land use regulations. Good land use planning is proactive in nature and helps prevent accusations that land use decisions have been made in an arbitrary or capricious manner. In the absence of planning, land use decisions can appear to be haphazard, even unfair. Good planning furthers sound decision-making.

The Kansas statute which sets out the requirements for a city comprehensive plan offers a concise statement of the purpose which a plan is to serve: The comprehensive plan

"...shall constitute the basis or guide for public action to insure a coordinated and harmonious development or redevelopment which will best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare as well as wise and efficient expenditure of public funds." K.S.A. 12-747(c)

This comprehensive plan has a number of characteristics which are common to comprehensive plans of other communities. First, it is a *physical plan*. Although a reflection of social and economic values, the plan is fundamentally a guide to the physical development of the community. It translates values into a scheme that describes how, why, when, and where to build, rebuild or preserve the community.

A second characteristic of this plan that is common to other plans is that it is *long range*, covering a time period greater than one year. This plan expresses current policies that are meant to help shape the future of Arkansas City. A good plan challenges and inspires a community, and its citizens, with a vision of what might be, possibly a bit idealistic with hopes and dreams.

A third characteristic of this plan is that it is *comprehensive*. It not only covers the entire city geographically, it also encompasses all the functions that makes Arkansas City work, such as transportation, housing, land use, utility systems, and recreation. Moreover, the plan considers the interrelationships of those functions.

Fourth, the plan is a statement of policy, covering such community desires as quantity, character, location, and rate of growth (be it no growth, slow growth, rapid growth, or decline) and indicating how these desires can be achieved.

Finally, the plan is a guide to decision making by the Planning Commission, the Governing Body and city staff.

1.2 GOALS AND ACTIONS

Most of the chapters in this Plan have a heading, "Goals and Actions" recommended to be adopted and undertaken by the City. Each term, "goal," and "action", has a distinct meaning and purpose, described as follows:

Goals articulate long-range aspirations of Arkansas City. They are ends to be sought and achieved.

Actions set out specific steps to be taken in furtherance of achieving the Plan's goals. Actions are usually discrete, measurable steps which can be undertaken as part of the implementation of the Plan.

1.3 ARKANSAS CITY HISTORY

1601 - Spanish conquistador Juan de Oñate led 70 soldiers from New Mexico to Kansas seeking gold in the fabled land of Quivira. He was the last of the conquistadors and hoped for better luck than his predecessor, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, who had visited Quivira settlements 60 years earlier and found no gold. Oñate and his men did not find gold either. But they encountered a sprawling town of ancestral Wichita people on the lower banks of the Walnut River near its confluence with the Arkansas River, at what is now Arkansas City. A Quivira native taken captive by the Spanish soldiers identified the town as Etzanoa. The explorers called it "the great settlement" and "this heavenly land." They estimated the town's population at 20,000, making it one of the largest pre-Columbian settlements in

North America. Etzanoa was located south of a string of other, smaller Wichita settlements in central Kansas that Coronado had visited in 1541. Oñate and his soldiers did not visit those settlements. Their visit to Etzanoa was cut short when an enemy tribe attacked. After a battle with many casualties, the Spanish decided to return to New Mexico after only three days.

1872-1890s - Arkansas City was founded in 1870 and incorporated as a city in Cowley County, Kansas, in 1872. According to Cutler's History of the State of Kansas, the population of the City in 1870 was 214 and in 1880 it was 1,799. Tribal land from the Osage was opened for settlement in July 1870. The first building in the settlement was a log house and the first store was a general store that came from Emporia. In August 1870, C.M. Scott published the first newspaper, the Traveler. He noted that there already were 12 houses and 38 business buildings on the new townsite. To get ready for the arrival of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe on December 31, 1879, a water sawmill and flour mill were constructed. By 1881, the town had its own waterworks, with spring water pumped to a reservoir in the southern portion of the City. Arkansas City improved its downtown commercial district rapidly in the 1880s, building several handsome brick and stone buildings on South Summit Street between Adams and Fifth Avenues. Business growth also occurred along Fifth and Central Avenues.



Photos by William S. Prettyman, noted frontier photographer based in Arkansas City.

Land Runs - Arkansas City was the largest departure point for the Cherokee Strip land rush of 1893. More than 100,000 people made the run south from the Kansas border to the Cherokee outlet or "strip," roughly 58 by 150 miles. According to the Cherokee Strip Land Rush Museum, between 75,000 and 100,000 had registered in Ark City alone to make the run. The town's population had increased to between 50,000 and 100,000 people in the days before the run. Several years earlier, in 1889, Arkansas City also was a principal departure point for the land rush into the "Unassigned Lands" of Oklahoma.

The following was originally published in the 1964 Arkansas City Comprehensive Plan, prepared by Harland Bartholomew and Associates. This is only an excerpt from that original document which was reprinted in its entirety in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan.

1910-1920s - Between 1910 and 1930, the town continued to boom with the discovery of oil in Cowley County. The first refinery was constructed in 1917 and another in 1923. The economy of the town grew on the bounties of the land. The land provided wheat, so the flour mills grew; the land provided oil, so the oil industry grew; and the land grew fertile feed for cattle, so that the meat package industry grew. Location near the rivers produced water for the people and its industries, but the great flood of 1923 severely damaged the low-lying sections and brought about a continuing awareness of the need for protection in the river valleys. A considerable amount of land was platted in very small lots during the oil boom of the 20's. Much of this has never been developed....The flood of 1923 also resulted in low, flat areas of town being "marked" as bad investments. It was during the 1920's that public and private interest constructed the initial levee to prevent flooding.

1930-1950s - The oil boom, which reached its peak in 1925, tapered off in the late 20's and 30's, but the population remained relatively stable through World War II, being supported by

trade and other industries. Immediately prior to World War II, the cities of Winfield and Arkansas City arranged for the purchase of land for construction of an airport (Strother Field). During the War, the U.S. Air Force leased the land and developed the field as a training base. It was returned to the cities a short time later. The discovery of oil on one of these in 1954 has provided money for the upkeep of airport facilities and development of land adjacent to the field for industrial purposes.

1960-1990s – Between 1960 and 1990, Arkansas City experienced a gradual loss of population, a high of 14,262 in 1960 to 13,201 persons in 1980...The town experienced the improvement and widening of Highway 77, which contributed to Summit Street being developed as a retail corridor. In addition to the traditional highway-oriented business activities, corporate franchise served, and retail business lined both sides of the highway. Downtown Arkansas City also experienced changes...retail activities were displaced by the retail conversion of Summit Street. However, the downtown remained the primary location for finance and specialty retail shops. A primary concern of community leaders was the renovation of older downtown buildings. The downtown went through a revitalization project to increase parking and beautify the public space by improving the sidewalks and planting trees. Residential development on large lots occurred on the east side of the Walnut River beyond the flood plain, north and south of Highway 166. The scattering of residential development on the outskirts of Arkansas City was a growing trend within the urban area. The most visible area of this activity was south of the Arkansas River in the Bolton community area...substantial activity east of town in the Crestwood subdivision...[and] individual home sites were developed along county roads surrounding the city. The Goff Industrial Park, located on the north edge of town, was platted and initially developed in 1982. Community leaders recognized the need to attract new industry to town and broaden the economic base.

The 1990s and early 2000s did present serious economic losses to the community. Morrell Meats and the Total Petroleum refinery closed. Large businesses elsewhere in the County also left, including Binney & Smith and Winfield State Hospital.

While the number of jobs lost was large, and their payrolls important to the local economy, new businesses have moved in, and others have expanded. Creekstone Farms Premium Beef LLC employing over 700 people, is the largest example of this renewed growth.

Among other 2000-era events in Arkansas City were the ongoing renovation of the Burford Theatre, new investment in the downtown streetscape, and the construction of the South-Central Kansas Regional Medical Center, which opened in 2011.



1.4 POPULATION: TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

Since the 1960s the population of Arkansas City has stagnated, although it is encouraging to see slight growth in some years. National, state and regional economic downturns have each contributed to the population counts. Locally the loss of several prominent businesses having good-paying jobs in the past 20 years has been detrimental to growth. However, new and expanded businesses in the past 10 or so years have taken some of the sting out of those losses. Still the public's awareness of those losses is reflected in the many comments on the 2013 community survey which addressed the need for more, and better paying, jobs to enable citizens to stay in the community, and to attract new people to Arkansas City. Arkansas City has continued to experience growth through 2020 in jobs primarily due to Creekstone Farms and Kan-Pak but lack of housing has deterred some potential new residents from moving to the City.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The most recent population projections for the Arkansas City-Winfield Micropolitan Statistical Area (essentially Cowley County) as conducted by the Wichita State University Center for Economic Development and Business Research show that the area will see population growth of 1.398% through 2020, 0.871% from 2021-2025, and 0.196% 2026-2030. The projection then shows declines starting in the next five years and steady declines of approximately 2% for each 5-year period through 2070. No population projections specific to Arkansas City were available.

POPULATION - U.S. CENSUS: 1960-2020		
1960	14,262	+10.5%
1970	13,216	-7.3%
1980	13,201	-0.1%
1990	12,762	-3.3%
2000	11,963	-6.3%
2010	12,415	+3.8%
2020	11,974	-3.55%

Several of the following chapters provide data obtained from the 2020 U.S. Census relating to specific topics, such as housing and employment. Arkansas City has decreased in population from 12,415 in 2010 to 11,974 in 2020. It is largely believed that due to the COVID-19 pandemic and some political factors that there was an undercount in this Census, but to what degree is difficult to ascertain. Arkansas City will look ahead to the 2030 Census by continuing to focus on economic development and increasing the supply of housing. Also due to the delays in the 2020 Census, some of the data was not released in time for this plan. In those cases, data from the American Community Survey was used instead.

1.5 OVERVIEW TO RECENT PLANS, REPORTS AND SURVEYS USED IN THE 2022 PLAN

The 2022 Comprehensive Plan for Arkansas City was built on a foundation of three sources of information:

First this Plan enjoys the benefit of being the successor to several earlier-adopted comprehensive plans. The findings and recommendations of the last complete plan (2013) as well as some from earlier plans were noted and considered in the making of this Plan. There are many valuable aspects of the earlier plans, and this Plan endeavors to keep those aspects alive by referencing them in the text of the following chapters and by providing excerpts in an appendix. All too often comprehensive plans have a short utilization period, followed by a long shelf life. The citizens and city officials involved in the making of the 2022 Plan resolved not to let valuable information, and adopted goals and actions, be lost to history. Almost all of the goals and appropriate actions are measurable so that we can see how we are progressing. The Planning Commission will regularly review the goals to check progress and adjust accordingly.

Second, the Plan also benefitted from a number of well-done and recent community surveys and studies. Those surveys and studies are also cited throughout this Plan and are too numerous to list here but will be cited throughout the document and used as appendices to this plan.

Third, is a series of community surveys through a platform called FlashVote. FlashVote is an online survey program that allows users to opt in and get results within 48 hours of the survey closing. The results of the surveys were central to the recommendations for goals and actions found in this Plan. An earnest attempt was made to maintain consistency and compatibility between the survey results and those goals and actions. This is a community plan and is based more than anything else on what the community said throughout the process.

This plan also includes a new section in each Chapter summarizing the accomplishments since the 2013 Plan and celebrates its successes. The Planning Commission wished to show the successes to demonstrate how far the community has come since the last update.

The information from all three resources was assimilated and analyzed by citizens in the form of the various city boards, including the Beautification and Tree Advisory Board, the Equal Opportunity and Accessibility Advisory Board, the Historic Preservation Board, the Traffic Safety Committee and the Planning Commission and then finally the City Commission. Their collective efforts -- to study data, consider opinions and apply their own experiences and knowledge of the community -- resulted in the following chapters.