

SHAWNEE COUNTY

2037 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DRAFT 09-01-2017



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER 1	
Population and Demographics.....	14
CHAPTER 2	
Natural and Cultural Resources	24
CHAPTER 3	
Transportation, Utilities, and Public Services.....	42
CHAPTER 4	
Land Use and Design.....	80
CHAPTER 5	
Housing and Neighborhoods.....	106
CHAPTER 6	
Economic Development	126
CHAPTER 7	
Implementation	146
APPENDIX	164

PREPARED BY



PREPARED FOR



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

STEERING COMMITTEE

John Boyd
Shelly Buhler
Debbi Childers
Dirk Christian
Bill Fiander
Neil Fisher
Justin Glasgow
Eric Johnson
James Kaup
Onis Lemon
Christi McKenzie
Judy Moler
Tom Moses
Brett Oetting
Steve Porubsky
Kirk Romary
Greg Schwerdt
Nancy Seitz
Jay Simecka
Curtis Sneden
Alan Stahl
Randol Walker

SHAWNEE COUNTY COMMISSION

Bob Archer, Chair
Kevin Cook, Vice Chair
Shelly Buhler

SHAWNEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Patrick Tryon, Chair
Jerome Desch, Vice Chair
Brian Aubert
Brian Jacques
Matt McCurry
Christi McKenzie
Judy Moler

COUNTY STAFF

Barry Beagle, AICP - Planning Director
Joelee Charles - Administrative Assistant
Anna Ortega - Zoning Administrator
Joni Thadani - Assistant County Counselor
Lee Allen - GIS Coordinator

TABLE OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

Figure 0.1: Map of Shawnee County	5
Figure 0.2: What do you believe are Shawnee County's three greatest assets?	10
Figure 0.3: What do you believe are the most important issues facing Shawnee County in the next ten years?	11

CHAPTER 1: POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Figure 1.1: 1960-2010 Historic City Population	16
Figure 1.2: 1960-2010 Historic Township Populations and Topeka (In Order of Size)	16
Figure 1.3: Shawnee County Townships	17
Figure 1.4: Comparative Historic Regional Population, 1960-2010	18
Figure 1.5: Major Kansas Cities as Proportions of their Counties' Populations	18
Figure 1.6: Age Distribution in Shawnee County, 2000 and 2010	19
Figure 1.7: Population Projections for Shawnee County	20
Figure 1.8: Population Projections for Shawnee County	20
Figure 1.9: Population Projections for Townships and Topeka, "Past Trends" Scenario	21
Figure 1.10: Population Projections for Townships and Topeka, "Topeka Growth" Scenario	22

CHAPTER 2: NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Figure 2.1: Questionnaire Responses: Natural Resources	26
Figure 2.2: Natural Resources	27
Figure 2.3: Agricultural Land Class by Acreage	28
Figure 2.4: Elevation	29
Figure 2.5: Farmland Class	30
Figure 2.6: Status of Wildlife within Shawnee County	31
Figure 2.7: Parcels Affected by the Flood Plain	32
Figure 2.8: FEMA Floodways and Floodplains	33
Figure 2.9: Parkland and Trails	35
Figure 2.10: Historic Register Sites	37
Figure 2.11: Environmental Constraint Map Conceptualization	38
Figure 2.12: Environmental Constraints	39

CHAPTER 3: TRANSPORTATION, UTILITIES, AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Figure 3.1: Questionnaire Responses: Transportation and Infrastructure	45
Figure 3.2: Transportation and Infrastructure	45
Figure 3.3: Mileage and Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled by Functional Classification	46
Figure 3.4: Functional Classification	47
Figure 3.5: Bridge Condition by Responsibility	48
Figure 3.6: Bridge Deficiency by Responsibility	48
Figure 3.7: Road Responsibility	49
Figure 3.8: Automobile Safety in Shawnee County (Excluding Topeka)	50
Figure 3.9: Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety in Shawnee County (Excluding Topeka)	50
Figure 3.10: Existing Active Transportation Infrastructure	51
Figure 3.11: TMTA Transit System Coverage	52
Figure 3.12: Commuters Entering or Exiting Shawnee County	53
Figure 3.13: Active Rail Lines	54
Figure 3.14: Airport Operations Surfaces	55
Figure 3.15: Financially Constrained Expenses and Revenues (\$1,000's)	56
Figure 3.16: MPTO Planning Area	57
Figure 3.17: Water Districts and Infrastructure	59
Figure 3.18: Sewer Lines	61
Figure 3.19: Health Care Statistics	62
Figure 3.20: Crime Statistics	62
Figure 3.21: Fire Protection Statistics	63
Figure 3.22: Fire Districts and Stations	64
Figure 3.23: Fire Response Times	65
Figure 3.24: Broadband Availability	66
Figure 3.25: Cellphone Towers	67
Figure 3.26: 2015-2016 Year Public School Statistics	68
Figure 3.27: Higher Education	68
Figure 3.28: School Districts and Buildings	69
Figure 3.29: Topeka Bikeway Master Plan	71
Figure 3.30: Infrastructure Opportunity Map Conceptualization	72
Figure 3.31: Infrastructure Opportunity Map	73
Figure 3.32: Vacant Platted Lots	75

CHAPTER 4: LAND USE AND DESIGN

Figure 4.1: Questionnaire Responses: Land Use	83
Figure 4.2: Land Use and Design	83
Figure 4.3: Rural to Urban Transect	84
Figure 4.4: Development Densities	86
Figure 4.5: Land Uses in Unincorporated Shawnee County, 2016	87
Figure 4.6: Current Land Use	88
Figure 4.7: Parcels and Plats by Year in Unincorporated Shawnee County	89
Figure 4.8: Land Uses in Unincorporated Shawnee County, 2016	89
Figure 4.9: Commercial and Industrial	91
Figure 4.910 Vacant Residential Parcels in Unincorporated Shawnee County	92
Figure 4.11: Vacant Lots	93
Figure 4.12: Topeka ETJ, UGA, and Service Tier Boundaries	95
Figure 4.13: Potential Exurban Area After Plat Exemptions	96
Figure 4.14: Existing Exurban Tracts on SE Berryton Rd	96
Figure 4.15: Sewer Service in Soldier Township	98
Figure 4.16: In-Fill Development Concept Near Seaman High and Middle Schools	99
Figure 4.17: Floodplains and Roadways near Shawnee County's Small Cities	100
Figure 4.18: Future Land Use Map	102

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Figure 5.1: Housing	108
Figure 5.2: Questionnaire Responses: Housing	108
Figure 5.3: Total Housing Units, 1970-2010	109
Figure 5.4: Persons Per Household, 1990-2010	109
Figure 5.5: Townships of Shawnee County	110
Figure 5.6: 1970-2010 Historic Township and Topeka Housing Units in Order of Size	111
Figure 5.7: Building Permits, Census 2010-2015	111
Figure 5.8: All Shawnee County Vacancies by Type, 2010	112
Figure 5.9: Vacancy Rate, 1970-2010	112
Figure 5.10: Occupancy and Tenure Summary	113
Figure 5.11: Percentage of Renter-Occupied Homes, 1970-2010	114
Figure 5.12: Value to Income Ratio and Rent Cost	115
Figure 5.13: Rent and House Value vs. Median Year Built	116
Figure 5.14: Home Age and Value	116
Figure 5.15: Percent Paying More than 30% on Housing Costs	117
Figure 5.16: Affordable Housing Analysis	119
Figure 5.17: Projected Housing Development Demand – All Shawnee County	121
Figure 5.18: Projected Housing Development Demand – All Shawnee County	121

CHAPTER 6: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Figure 6.1: Questionnaire Responses: Economic Development	129
Figure 6.2: Economic Development	129
Figure 6.3: Median Household Income (1990-2015)	130
Figure 6.4: Median Household Incomes	131
Figure 6.5: Unemployment Rate and Labor Force	132
Figure 6.6: Population, Employment, and Labor Force (indexed to 2000)	133
Figure 6.7: 2014 Educational Attainment of Residents 25 Years and Older	133
Figure 6.8: All Shawnee County: Jobs by Industry, 2015	134
Figure 6.9: Change in Jobs by Industry, 2005-2015	135
Figure 6.10: Change in Jobs by Industry, 2005-2015	135
Figure 6.11: Economic Impact of Tourism for Shawnee County	136
Figure 6.12: 2015 Shawnee County Visitor Spending by Sector	136
Figure 6.13: Retail Supply and Demand Analysis	137
Figure 6.14: Change in Industry, 2005-2015	138
Figure 6.15: Map of the Native Stone Scenic Byway	143

CHAPTER 7: IMPLEMENTATION

Figure 7.1: Topeka ETJ, UGA, and Service Tier Boundaries	150
Figure 7.2: Future Land Use Map	152

FORWARD & VISION STATEMENT

Forward

Each of us is connected to the shared history of Shawnee County and the stories we bring to it. We are committed to working together to forge a shared future, aware of our connections to each other and respectful of our differences. We are connected to the five cities and the many unincorporated towns in Shawnee County. We are connected to the rural landscapes and the farms and ranches in Shawnee County. These are the places that help define who we are as Shawnee Countians. We take pride in our schools. Our parks are among the best in Kansas.

We recognize that the future of Shawnee County is connected to the natural resources and systems we depend on and enjoy. We understand the local and regional economic relationships that have developed over time and connect us to each other. We envision a future in which our fiscal and environmental health are in balance and we are wise stewards of the future.

Although this plan consists of multiple chapters, it is a single document, representing a coherent vision for Shawnee County's future. Looking forward, we know that Shawnee County will continue to change, and change will present both opportunities and challenges. We have tried to foresee and account for these changes, knowing that Shawnee County will also face situations we could not predict when this plan was written. To help guide us through the future – both known and uncertain – we have tried to create a plan that calls attention to parallels as well as the potential conflicts and trade-offs in the choices that lie ahead.

Vision Statement

A vision statement describes a community's values and aspirations and a shared image of what they want their community to become over the next 10 to 20 years in the future. The statement should address all aspects that make up a community such as the social, cultural and economic fabric. Statements should be forward thinking and written in a positive, affirmative and inspirational style. The vision statement functions like a captain steers a ship to stay the course on its journey as changes occur. The statement for Shawnee County's Comprehensive Plan is as follows:

Vision Statement

The Shawnee County Comprehensive Plan will enhance the quality of life for county residents by:

- Preserving the rural character of the county
- Protecting natural, scenic and historic resources
- Protecting agricultural lands and agricultural operations
- Promoting responsible growth and development
- Promoting economic development and tourism opportunities
- Enhancing cooperation between all levels of government



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Shawnee County, capital county of Kansas, is the third most populous county in the state with a population approaching 178,000. Overall, the county has grown over the past fifty years, driven by the county's strong economic base.

Comprised of 556 square miles, the Shawnee County contains five incorporated communities including Topeka, its largest city and the State Capital, and the four smaller cities of Auburn, Rossville, Silver Lake, and Willard. Beyond those, the county has more than 40 other taxing jurisdictions which provide public services, including 12 townships, school districts, rural water districts, fire districts, drainage districts, and others.

As of 2010, 46,552 residents lived outside the county's five cities, about three and a half times higher than would be expected compared to the Kansas counties that are most similar to Shawnee County including Douglas, Johnson, Riley, and Sedgwick Counties. For context, the tenth largest city in Kansas, Salina, has a population of 47,707. Most of these residents are not actively engaged in agriculture, which creates a potential conflicts between residents and active farming and mining operations near them. These arise from differing expectations regarding the use and maintenance of property and the types, amount, and costs of public services.

The City exercises authority under Kansas Statutes to approve plats and land subdivision within its 3-mile Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), but Shawnee County excercises other development authority, including zoning and building permitting. Topeka's Land Use & Growth Management Plan establishes development tiers outside its city limits to direct future growth, including where city utilities are extended and what areas may be annexed. Shared authority in the ETJ has the potential to create confusion.

Rural Shawnee County's abundant natural resources can also be impacted by continued growth and development in profound and often unanticipated ways. The county is currently considering the value of preserving agricultural lands, how best to permit mineral extraction in the county, and the value of natural landscapes like the Osage Cuestas, Glacial Hills, and Flint Hills and features like the Kansas and Wakarusa Rivers which can be used for tourism and recreation.

It is important to consider how best to support economic development and private property rights, but it is also important to consider how to promote responsible development. Finally, it is important that all of this happen in a manner that makes wise use of tax dollars. The County is currently considering how best to balance these competing desires.

These factors prompted the county to begin its first comprehensive planning process. Communities, like businesses, must analyze their settings and opportunities, choose directions, and use these to their greatest advantage. A plan provides a roadmap intended to guide the continued growth and development of the county over the next 20 years, through 2037. It establishes a compelling vision of what the community of Shawnee County wants to look and feel like in the future, derived from the aspirations of its citizens. To reach that vision, it identifies the necessary steps and recommends priorities and policies. The comprehensive plan can help strike the right balance between many of the issues that Shawnee County is currently experiencing.

As a policy document, the comprehensive plan is intended to guide decisions concerning growth and development in the county. It may recommend changes to land use or division regulations but does not create new regulations. Preparing, adopting, and implementing a comprehensive plan is a chance for the county to discuss its future, identify priorities, and find actions to reach the community's desired vision.

To that end, this comprehensive plan, as the first for unincorporated Shawnee County, will help define the character of the county and recommend policies based on this character and the priorities of its residents over the next 20 years. The document will be produced to be implemented and utilized by the county and its policy makers while managing future demographic, economic, and environmental change.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANS PERFORM THREE CRITICAL FUNCTIONS:

1. **PRACTICAL: ESTABLISHES A LEGAL BASIS FOR REGULATING LAND SUBDIVISION & USE.**
2. **ASPIRATIONAL: CLARIFIES WHAT RESIDENTS AND COUNTY LEADERS WANT FOR THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTY.**
3. **INSPIRATIONAL: DETERMINES HOW LAND USE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES, TRANSPORTATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE DECISIONS WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE THE FUTURE.**

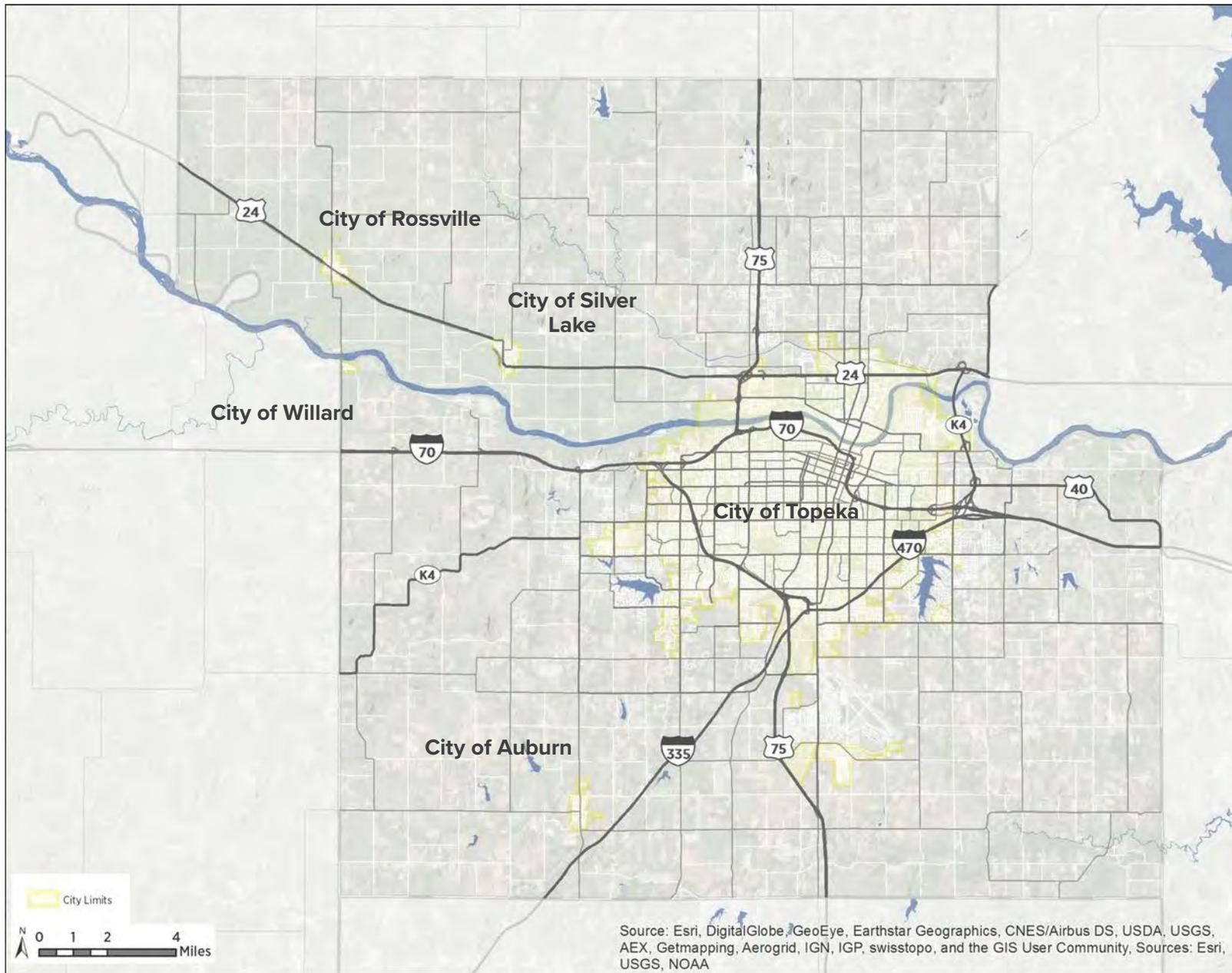


Figure 0.1: Map of Shawnee County

WHY PLAN?

Shawnee County has never before prepared a comprehensive plan, despite being the third most populous county in Kansas and serving as the host county for the State Capitol.

Planning can improve coordination and collaboration between local governments by providing a unified vision, identifying areas where the county expects to grow, and opening the door to further discussion. In places like Douglas, Johnson, Riley, and Sedgwick Counties, comprehensive plans have led to several benefits. Riley County's plan, for example, helped identify policies to protect farmers and ranchers, while providing for growth in areas that made sense for rural taxpayers. Johnson County's planning process brought together residents, businesses, institutions, and special interests to create a vision for the region's future and to help elected officials make decisions.

These illustrate how the comprehensive planning process for Shawnee County provides an opportunity to evaluate its current position, think ahead, and manage development according to a unified and compelling vision derived from the aspirations of its citizens. The plan also defines specific actions that can help fulfill that vision which allows the County to develop by design rather than default. Shawnee County's comprehensive plan will also fulfill three fundamental roles:

Practical

Communities prepare and adopt comprehensive plans for practical legal purposes. Kansas State Statutes give counties the ability to adopt zoning and subdivision regulations to promote the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens. Zoning recognizes that people in a community live cooperatively and have responsibilities to one another. Other land use regulations, such as those for subdivisions, are based on the premise that growth should comply with specific standards and occur in an economically efficient, coordinated manner. These ordinances help determine how to develop land.

However, land use decisions need to follow an accepted and reasonable idea of how the county should grow. Therefore, Kansas state law authorizes the adoption of a comprehensive plan to establish the foundation for implementing these regulations.

Aspirational

A land use plan that provides a basis for zoning and subdivision regulations and addresses capital facility needs helps communities develop efficiently and responsibly. Yet, the greatest value of a comprehensive plan is for Shawnee County to create a vision for the community's future, based on the participation of residents in the planning process. This concept addresses both demographic and economic changes and opportunities. This gives residents a voice in the future of their community while providing more certainty to property-owners about how land can be used and what public services are likely to be provided or required. However, the plan remains a working document that changes according to current situations to ensure Shawnee County can realize its full potential.

Inspirational

In addition to its practical and aspirational roles, the plan serves an inspirational role to guide County staff, the Planning Commission, the County Commission, and other County boards and commissions as they set policy and make land use decisions. The plan contains useful background information to consider for the county's future and assists county officials with policy discussions with non-county groups.

The plan also guides other taxing jurisdictions such as townships, school districts and rural water districts in making public investments in facilities like county roads, school buildings, and water lines and can lay the foundation for decisions about the types of services that the residents of rural Shawnee County want. Doing so helps other jurisdictions also make wise public investments by informing them of where growth is anticipated and development may occur. This can reduce the cost of public service and limited availability of desired public services.

AUTHORITY TO PLAN

The Kansas Legislature grants counties the authority to prepare comprehensive plans to guide their future growth and development. The Shawnee County Comprehensive Plan was prepared and adopted pursuant to K.S.A. 19-2958.

As with counties, the Kansas Legislature has granted cities the authority to prepare comprehensive plans to guide their future growth and development. Consistent with that authority, the City of Topeka has created an extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) that extends 3-miles beyond the current Topeka city limits. In 2015, Topeka adopted a Land Use and Growth Management Plan that makes specific recommendations for both how land may be divided inside the ETJ and the circumstances under which the city will allow new development inside the ETJ to connect to city water and city wastewater systems.

Planning and Private Property Rights

The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution generally states that private property must not be taken for public use without just compensation. A taking occurs when a public agency either condemns property to build public projects (also referred to as eminent domain) or physically occupies or damages property. A government regulatory action (such as zoning), can also result in a “regulatory taking” which occurs when a regulation interferes with the use of private property to such an extent that it has the same effect as a physical taking.

In most cases, the test of whether an action is a taking is whether the regulation denies an owner all economically viable use of the property. It is important to note that the courts have been very clear on this last issue; a taking does not occur simply because a regulation impose limits on the use of property. The

Takings Clause is often misconstrued as a prohibition against any regulation that either decreases property value or prohibits individuals from doing what they want with their land. A loss of perceived or potential market value is not enough to trigger a takings claim.

Issues of County-Wide Concern

Some issues cannot be addressed by individual property owners. In preparation of this plan, Shawnee County identified and carefully considered several issues of county-wide concern that can only be addressed by the community as a whole through its locally elected units of government, including:

- **Loss of Agricultural Lands.** The loss of nearly 30,000 acres (45.7 square miles) of agricultural lands to very low-density residential development since 1960 has undoubtedly reduced the economic output of this important industry in Shawnee County. There is a community interest in protecting the remaining agricultural lands for future generations. Roughly 8% of the total land area of Shawnee County has been converted from productive agricultural lands to low-density residential tracts. This exurban development costs county taxpayers more to provide public services than this development generates in tax revenues needed to provide the public services.
- **Disruption of Agricultural Operations.** As more families that are not engaged in agriculture continue to move into unincorporated areas in Shawnee County, the potential for conflicts between agricultural operations and the new residential property-owners increase. This includes the introduction of commuter traffic onto roads designed for agricultural land uses. It also includes a noticeable increase in noxious weeds as homeowners not familiar with rural property maintenance standards move into the area.
- **Unrealistic Expectations for Public Services.** As families move from the cities into the unincorporated areas in Shawnee County, they bring with them an unrealistic set of expectations about the types of services and the service levels Shawnee County should provide for their new

homes. Counties are not cities, and just are not equipped to provide the same types of public services at the same service standards as cities. As more residential development occurs in unincorporated Shawnee County, public agency budgets are strained.

- **Responsible Development.** Rural lifestyles are attractive to many people. Because of this, more families will move in to unincorporated areas of Shawnee County. Steps need to be taken to ensure that new residential development occurs in a responsible manner. This means that development not occur in environmentally fragile areas (i.e., floodplains, wetlands and steep slopes) or on the most productive agricultural lands. Finally, it means that appropriate public services at appropriate service levels be in place before development occurs.

Future Policy Discussions

The City of Topeka currently regulates the division of land while Shawnee County retains zoning and building permit authority inside the Topeka ETJ. The Comprehensive Plan provides Shawnee County officials with a reasonable basis to conduct policy level discussions with Topeka officials regarding how best to manage land use and development inside the Topeka ETJ. To achieve the future goals of the comprehensive plan, it will be necessary for Shawnee County to work cooperatively with Topeka.

Shawnee County does not provide all public services needed to support development within the unincorporated area. Townships, Rural Water Districts, Rural Fire Districts, and others provide many of the public services that support development. For some public services, cities are providing public services outside their corporate boundaries. The Comprehensive Plan provides Shawnee County officials with a reasonable basis to conduct policy level discussions with officials from these other units of local government regarding how best to provide public services in the unincorporated area.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The planning process was conducted by the Shawnee County Planning Department and RDG Planning & Design, in collaboration with CSF Engineers. In June 2016, county commissioners identified economic development, land use, natural resources, transportation & infrastructure, and intergovernmental coordination as key priorities for the plan. However, public participation was a critical element in engaging citizens and stakeholders to inform decisions and ensure that the plan outcomes are meaningful, appropriate, and achievable. Keeping officials, agencies, local governments, the public, and interested parties informed of the planning effort further promoted opportunities for input into the plan. The public was engaged through the following steps:

Steering Committee

A 22-member Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, representing a broad spectrum of community interests was convened to offer primary guidance to the plan. Committee members met monthly to assist in identifying emerging issues, refining vision statements and objectives, and prioritizing the community's goals. As the plan developed, they also reviewed it through the development process.

Community Questionnaire

To begin the planning process, a community questionnaire was made available to all interested residents and stakeholders. The questionnaire focused on the relative importance of various community services and facilities. Over 320 responses were received. These responses helped frame the important issues and goals as seen through the eyes of the community and were used to set the agenda for focus group meetings and the visioning process undertaken by the Steering Committee.

Stakeholder Groups

Targeted stakeholder group meetings were held over two days in September 2016. In total, 62 residents, business and property owners, employers, and public officials participated in round-table discussions on several issues. These discussions provided a forum for community members and representatives to expand and refine the information from the questionnaire and to have in-depth discussion of their broader opinions of the community and its future. Additional meetings were held with representatives from the Cities of Auburn, Silver Lake, Rossville, and Willard and the Citizen Band of the Pottawatomie Tribe in October and November.

Public Open Houses

Two public open houses were held the evenings of October 27, 2016 and November 1, 2016 at Seaman and Washburn Rural High Schools. The general community was invited to share their ideas for Shawnee County and work alongside the planning team to help create the comprehensive plan. The format began with a brief presentation introducing attendees to the planning process, followed by an open house. Attendees investigated boards with information collected thus far and shared their ideas, issues, and concerns with the planning team for incorporation into the development of the plan document. 36 people participated in these events with 9 at the first meeting and 27 at the second, excluding the planning team.



Public Design Workshops

Two public design workshops were held the evenings of February 1, 2017 and February 2, 2017 at Washburn Rural High School and Northern Hills Elementary School. Using projections of residential, commercial, and industrial growth through 2040 and accounting for residents' goals and objectives, the team shared future scenarios. About 30 members of the public attended and helped fine-tune these ideas, in addition to sharing their own. It also provided an opportunity for the public to think critically about how Shawnee County may look in the future and add their voices to the plan. The future land use map was especially shaped by these workshops, in addition to area concepts.

Big Ideas Series

To actively involve the public in the process of developing the Plan, the team produced a series of ten "Big Ideas" summaries to cover the plan's major topics in partnership with the Topeka Capital Journal. Each introduced a topic and explained relevant considerations, plan goals, and recommendations. This provided another opportunity to engage and inform as much of the public as possible and provided an opportunity for the public to understand the plan's recommendations in order to shape them.

Final Public Open House

The final public open house was held June 15 at the Big Gage Shelter House at Gage Park. This provided a public forum for attendees to come and voice their comments, questions, and concerns of the plan's goals and recommendations. In total, 22 participants attended.

Project Website

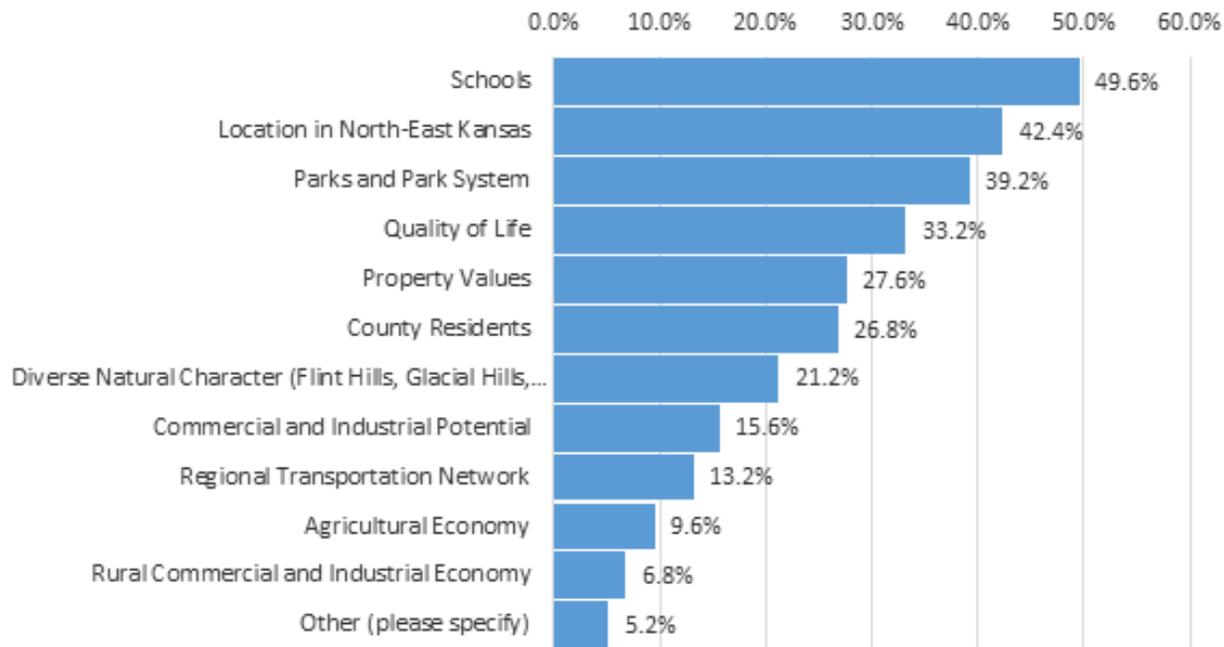
A project website was created and routinely updated with new information on the project as it evolved. This served as a resource through which interested citizens could stay involved and engaged with the project. Documents, including the Big Ideas summaries, were also posted to the website in addition to the completed plan.

Commission Involvement

The planning and county commissions were especially involved in the planning process. The planning commission attended the final steering committee meetings in order to voice their ideas about the plan's goals and recommendations and also provided comments about the completed chapters. The county commission stayed active as the plan was adopted, with a workshop on June 12, a public hearing with the planning commission on August 14, and a final adoption hearing held _____.



Figure 0.2: What do you believe are Shawnee County's three greatest assets?



Source: RDG Community Questionnaire

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

During the initial stages of the planning process, the county commission, steering committee, stakeholder groups, public questionnaire, and public open houses allowed residents of Shawnee County to express their thoughts about the county's services, facilities, strengths, weaknesses, and future direction. Responses helped measure public perceptions of the county and suggested potential future priorities and general actions.

Questionnaire Responses

Questionnaire respondents identified the following as the primary perceived strengths of Shawnee County:

- Schools
- Location in northeast Kansas
- Park system
- Quality of life
- Property values

Questionnaire respondents identified the following as important issues facing the county:

- Ability to retain young people
- Attracting new industries and businesses
- Public finances and taxes
- Recruiting higher paying industries
- Having a vision for the future

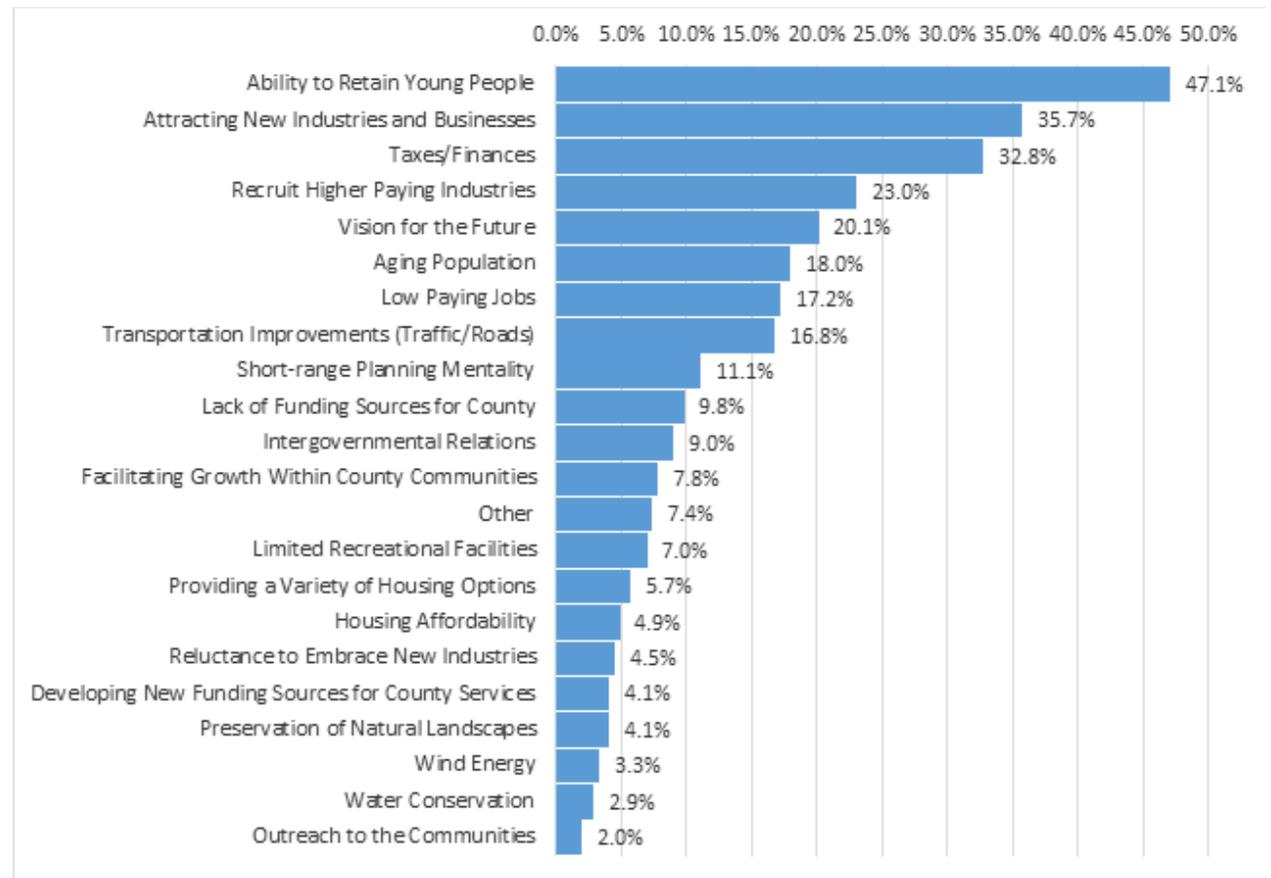
These opportunities and threats reappear throughout the plan. Other survey results are included at the beginning of relevant sections, informing many of the policies and discussions.

Recurring Themes

Several themes emerged during discussion with groups, including:

- **Natural Resources.** Shawnee County contains a variety of environmental resources and features that should be recognized and preserved and the land’s carrying capacity should not be exceeded.
- **Transportation & Infrastructure.** The county will strive to provide services in an efficient and cost-effective manner by encouraging careful development and expansion, accounting for future needs and desires, and coordinating with related groups and agencies.
- **Land Use & Development.** Land use policy should direct urban development to minimize conflicts between land uses, take advantage of existing infrastructure, protect the character of the county, and clarify expectations for development.
- **Economic Development.** Planning efforts should promote job creation and opportunities for entrepreneurship, recognize the importance of agriculture, mineral extraction, and homebased businesses to the vitality of the county’s economy, and provide easy access to commercial areas.
- **Housing.** Shawnee County should have a variety of housing types. Existing housing in historic development areas should be preserved and improved, and new housing should be provided in a manner consistent with its surroundings.
- **Intergovernmental Cooperation.** The county and its townships, utility providers, and other taxing jurisdictions should actively communicate and involve each other and the area’s residents and businesses to decrease costs and maintain orderly development.
- **Quality of Life.** Planning should enhance the county’s quality of life through well-maintained infrastructure, numerous recreational activities and facilities, and safety, in addition to increasing residents pride in the county and its small and unincorporated towns.
- **Avoid Burdensome Regulation.** Planning should not create regulation that would decrease land values, provide an undue burden, or does not enhance the public’s health, safety, or welfare.

Figure 0.3: What do you believe are the most important issues facing Shawnee County in the next ten years?



Source: RDG Community Questionnaire

APPROACH AND FORMAT

The Shawnee County 2037 Comprehensive Plan is organized into several chapters. Each typically explores the existing conditions, findings, goals, and recommendations. The final chapter synthesizes this information to implement the plan and identifies ways to accomplish these recommendations. The chapters are organized as follows:

1. Demographics

Presents a demographic snapshot of the county, analyzing its historic population, comparing it to comparable communities, reviewing demographic considerations, and projecting its potential future growth.

2. Natural Resources

Explores Shawnee County's natural resources, including environmental resources and features that should be recognized, preserved, or used such as floodplains, wetlands, landscapes, farmlands, and cultural or historic resources like the Oregon Trail and Native Stone Scenic Byway, among others.

3. Transportation & Infrastructure

Discusses the development and support of an efficient county road network to serve future circulation and access needs, in addition to the provision of other services to residents such as utilities and services like cell phone coverage, schools, internet, and rural water and sewer.

4. Land Use

Identifies land use policies for future growth and development, including the direction of urban and suburban development, current policies for land use, and how existing infrastructure and natural resources affect it. It also explores the interaction of land use with agriculture, and rural lifestyles.

5. Housing

Discusses historical housing development in the county, including the affordability of housing in unincorporated areas, homes for families engaged in agriculture, homes on suburban estates, and other housing options such as manufactured homes or small apartments.

6. Economic Development

Explains Shawnee County's current economy and workforce, anticipated industry growth and change, changes in the nation's economy, and other considerations for economic development in the county including home occupations, agri- and historic tourism, and the effects of quality of life.

7. Implementation

Synthesizes information from the previous chapters and presents how the county can accomplish these recommendations on a reasonable time schedule given the county's fiscal capacity, current policy, and need to work with other jurisdictions and its residents.

