

48.5

1.75

2.5

PARSONS
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The image shows the title 'PARSONS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN' centered on a blue grid background. The word 'PARSONS' is in a large, light-colored, outlined serif font, while 'COMPREHENSIVE PLAN' is in a smaller, dark-colored, solid serif font. Three dimension lines are overlaid on the text: a horizontal line above 'PARSONS' labeled '48.5', a horizontal line above the last few letters of 'PARSONS' labeled '1.75', and a vertical line to the right of 'PARSONS' labeled '2.5'.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

*THE WHAT AND WHY OF A
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN*

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The City completed its last Comprehensive Plan in 2000. At that time, Parsons had around 11,500 residents. As of 2021, the population has decreased to under 9,500. The impacts of a global pandemic and a rapidly shifting economic landscape are still developing. This is a significant point in Parsons' journey as a community.

Making decisions about development is difficult, especially with an outdated Comprehensive Plan. In 2020, city leaders decided a new plan was needed to better understand the issues facing the community, establish a shared vision and priorities, and create a list of recommended implementation steps.

It is essential that the vision and priorities are based on resident input, resource constraints, and willingness of staff and elected officials to follow through on implementation. These recommendations will shape Parsons' future by guiding decisions on land use, funding, rule making, and maintenance. Adopting this Plan demonstrates a commitment to accountability and efficiency. These pieces are an important part of public service.

NOTE: Throughout this document, the term "City officials" is meant to include the City Commission, all City boards (including the Board of Zoning Appeals/Planning Commission), committees, and the City of Parsons Staff.

Orientation to this Plan

Why a New Plan?

Uncertain times have put pressure on the city's small staff to keep up with a long list of demands. Officials struggle to keep up the condition of infrastructure and amenities. Citizens expect a high quality of life. Current plans are outdated and no longer useful. Daily decisions will impact future generations. Here is how a new plan can help:

- **A new plan can make trends work for Parsons, not against it** - Today's trends do not have to dictate those of tomorrow. Parsons is in the late stages of a downward trend in population. Undeveloped land and areas ripe for revitalization provide options for a change in this trend. Parsons can promote and guide future growth in ways that reflect its character and values. The Plan lays out a framework for the community to move willfully toward a shared vision. It facilitates understanding of how decisions can support that vision. This allows leaders to get comfortable with the compromises and tough decisions that will be necessary.

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- **A new plan can lead to getting more 'bang for the buck'** Today's decisions have long-term financial implications. These implications are not often discussed. Many cities experience financial stress from past decisions, and Parsons is no different. Maximizing the return on investment of the city's resources is necessary. This increases property values and quality of life. Higher values provide a way to reduce long-term debt. Without a shift, Parsons will continue to see neighborhoods fall into disrepair. As that occurs, service obligations will far exceed the capacity to pay for them.

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- **A new plan can make the city more proactive and less reactive** - the absence of coordinated plans has led to increasing demands on staff. A new plan can make the city more proactive and less reactive. The lack of direction makes it impossible to manage and communicate expectations. Both City officials and the community need to see these expressed. This plan puts Parsons in a position to eliminate duplication of efforts. Decisions that lead to savings and better performance of operations will become feasible.
- **A new plan can introduce the consistency, communication and accountability that residents desire** - Managing expectations of citizens during these times can be challenging. Roles and expectations for City officials and residents must be clarified. A new plan can introduce the consistency, communication and accountability that residents desire. Guidance comes in the form of vision, values, principles and priorities. This empowers everyone in the community to contribute. Decisions made based on the Plan promote consistency and transparency. Progress on plan implementation will be measured and shared regularly and openly.

"The cliché 'If it ain't broke don't fix it' may have some truth, but it does more harm than good in modern cities. Where issues are addressed only reactively they are already problems if not crises, and responses are defined by the problems themselves, so we are forced to deal with yesterday's problem not tomorrow's opportunity."

- Charles Landry, *The Creative City*

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Leading a city is a daunting task. There are always more demands than resources. As the name suggests, this plan outlines a comprehensive view of city needs and desires. Then, it outlines the path forward. City officials change over time, so the Plan serves as the constant guide. It lays out the “game plan” for Parsons. It expresses the goals and direction of the community. Clear expectations and responsibilities are outlined so meaningful progress can be made. It serves as Parsons’ official statement on policy and direction.

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Comprehensive plans have two components: a visual component and a text component. The visual component maps out where to place future land uses. It provides informative graphics and illustrations. The text component sets the scene by outlining the existing conditions. From there, it sketches out the future of the city, weaving in analysis and context. The final product ends with an implementation strategy designed to achieve the city’s vision. The Plan provides the framework necessary to move forward. However, success is wholly reliant on City officials and residents.

What is this Plan About?

- **Figuring out current needs and forecasting future needs.** If done well, Parsons can leverage growth. This leads to a stronger community that thinks ahead.
- **Telling the story of Parsons.** Having a clear identity and set of values helps Parsons avoid becoming “Anywhere, USA”.

- **Getting the big stuff right.** Creating priorities for land, infrastructure and economic development decisions is essential. Doing so maximizes return on investment. It also builds a high quality of life today and for years to come.
- **Enabling clear expectations and consistent, predictable decisions.** In this process, elected officials, staff, and other partners will be unified, efficient, and proactive.
- **Creating an informed and engaged citizenry.** Engaged residents support city leadership and bring ideas forward. They actively participate in decisions. They represent their neighborhoods and wishes. Most importantly, they contribute to positive change.

Authority for Comprehensive Planning

Chapter 12, Article 7 of Kansas Statutes outlines the requirements for planning and zoning in Kansas municipalities. Section 12-747 specifically authorizes a city planning commission to adopt a comprehensive plan. It also authorizes them to amend it from time to time. The planning commission for a city with a comprehensive plan is required to review it at least annually for needed updates and amendments.

The Previous Comprehensive Plan

The previous comprehensive plan was adopted for Parsons in 2002. It was written to address the planning period of 2000-2010. A series of amendments were made in 2018. These amendments updated figures related to the economy, population, and housing. The previous plan focused on reporting existing conditions and analyzing figures. It also reported on many facets of the city in separate chapters. It did not, however, update the City vision or path to achieve it.

This plan is focused on in-depth assessment and evaluates how Parsons functions today. It summarizes what residents had to say during the process. It lays out actions necessary for Parsons to evolve and address its current challenges. These challenges were identified by those who live and work there. The Plan is designed to be used daily as the community’s guide. It should function as the centerpiece of decision-making and local culture.

Credit: AJ Fawver



Why Should This Matter to You as a Resident?

It is simple. The future of a city affects everyone within it, from its newest arrivals to lifelong residents. Everyone has a vested interest in making their community the best place it can be to live, work and play.

- 1. You have time, talent, and/or treasure and a heart for Parsons.** There is a place for every community member to step up and contribute to the shared vision. In doing so, they also become a part of the solutions. This input is critical to achieving the vision expressed in this plan.
- 2. You want and expect accountability.** You seek transparency from your decision makers. Your decision makers likewise rely on insights and assistance from you. This plan creates the common language necessary to connect decision makers and residents. With this common language there will be more productive dialogue between groups. This common language makes it simple to measure the success of implementing the plan. These measures can be shared in an open and transparent way.
- 3. You care about the future.** You may have frustrations about the current situation in your community. Yet, you choose to call Parsons home. You may have loved ones who rely on the future of Parsons. Shaping the future of the community is a collective duty and a mutual effort. This plan contains a path to that future.
- 4. You believe in being proactive rather than reactive.** If Parsons embraces this plan, it will be the conduit for proactive action. This action can place the city on a track of growth rather than decline. It can place it on a path of community pride rather than apathy. Lastly, it can place it on a path of connection rather than disconnection.
- 5. You want to understand how decisions are made.** Upon adoption, the City of Parsons should be setting to work implementing the path laid out here. Every discussion and decision reached should have a strong relationship to this plan. By being familiar with its contents, you will have insight into why and how City officials make judgment calls. In addition, you will be well-equipped to participate in those processes.

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

– Margaret J. Wheatley

“The distance between our dreams and reality is called citizen action.”

– Anonymous

Credit: AJ Fawver



How to Use the Plan

For Residents

1. Be familiar with the document and its contents. Make sure any groups or associations you are part of are, too. As they say, knowledge is power.
2. Volunteer to get involved. Coordinate the planning of events with this plan. Set goals that are consistent with this plan. Identify ways to address issues using this plan. Understand who is “assigned” to tasks you have an interest in, and work with them. By joining forces, resource constraints can be overcome.
3. Bring local wealth off the sidelines by rallying together. Pursue collective investment in small businesses. Work as a group to jump start projects that breathe new life into a building or lot. Take rebuilding into your own hands. Do this instead of waiting for big developers from outside Parsons to make that investment. They don’t have the same commitment to Parsons that you do. Create spaces for local businesses to get started.
4. Participate in the City of Parsons’ reviews of the Plan (required annually in Kansas). This is the perfect time to suggest innovative ideas. Offer up solutions that have not yet been discussed. Make city leaders aware of the communities’ shifting needs so that Parsons can adapt.
5. Understand that discussions to call out progress, or the lack thereof, are not just about City officials. They are also about the contributions of residents just like you. Pitch in and celebrate when items are checked off the list. Support open and honest assessment of what isn’t working in a way that doesn’t become government vs residents.

For City Officials

1. Be familiar with the plan’s contents. Align your budget, capital improvements plan, regulations, agendas, and reporting with the Plan. Cities always identify goals, but their day-to-day decisions usually work against those goals.
2. Make it easy for motivated residents and local groups to get involved. Encourage them to join in the work to achieve this vision. There are many local resources that can help the City’s small staff achieve more.
3. Conduct dialogue about city business around the tools contained in this plan. Set an example for locals showing how focused the city leaders are on this path forward. Make it part of meetings, staff reports, and other public venues and resources.
4. Stay true to an annual review of this document, policies, and regulations. Without frequent review, these tools will not adapt as needed. This makes it more difficult over time to execute the vision. Update the Plan regularly. Cross off completed items, and add new actions and goals. Put effort into meeting with neighborhoods and diverse groups of residents.

5. Share this plan with community partners and residents. Make it easy and convenient to access. Demonstrate how issues are analyzed using the plan. Help citizens make the connection between the vision and the ultimate action or decision.
6. Special projects or unique development opportunities will sometimes present themselves. Reference the Plan when considering the impacts of proposals. Make the decisions based on the approved Future Land Use Plan and vision. The vision, values, and guiding principles outlined in this document should guide decisions when the direction is unclear.

“Being creative is a small town’s answer to limited resources.”

– Barry J. Moltz and Becky McCray, *Small Town Rules*

How to Update the Plan

The Plan must be dynamic and adaptable. This is especially true for a rural community like Parsons. The City must maintain an updated plan. Support and assistance from the public is just as important. Recommended strategies and policies often cross organizational boundaries. This requires compromise between City officials and other community agencies. It is imperative that members of all groups are part of the periodic review. This is necessary so that all progress in Parsons - and not just that of City Hall - that relates to these strategies is recorded and shared.

“In a small town, everyone has to help to make projects work, and support in name only is no support at all.”

– Barry J. Moltz and Becky McCray, *Small Town Rules*

Successful long-term planning balances visioning and big ideas with resource constraints. Creativity can reduce the squeeze of constraints. The most effective annual reviews are treated as collaborative problem solving sessions.

Annual Reviews

Successful long-term planning balances visioning and big ideas with resource constraints. Creativity can reduce the squeeze of constraints. The most effective annual reviews are treated as collaborative problem solving sessions. It is important that residents are made aware of and understand the trade-offs that are required in decision making. This happens with regular, honest discussions about what citizens are willing and able to pay for. Reviews should encourage the sharing of ideas and alternative approaches to getting more done with less. Tools that can be used for an effective annual review are outlined in the Appendix of this plan.

Five Year Update

The plan should receive a full update - accompanied by public engagement and updates to the data, strategies and actions - every five years. Otherwise, the plan cannot serve as the guide it is intended to be. Momentum fades and the vision dims. An updating effort can be done more efficiently when conducted regularly.

The Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map should be part of the annual review so that revisions happen as conditions change. At times, City officials will make a zoning decision that is in conflict with the Map. As part of that decision, staff should be directed to update the Map. This public document should be maintained so that it expresses the current community direction and vision. Tools to assist in the updating of this map are provided in the Appendix.

Implementation Strategy

If Parsons executes the implementation strategy, action items will be completed from time to time. Others will be ongoing or may need revision. The Plan should always reflect the city's focus for action in following years. It is, in short, the City's playbook. As such, it cannot be left to collect dust. This portion of the annual review provides a time to celebrate positive progress while addressing how to complete quickly those items which are not yet finished. It should also be a time to look into the future and add items for implementation which are new ideas or larger, long-term projects. A guide for these discussions is included in the Appendix.

Legal Requirements

Kansas state law allows cities to adopt revisions to a comprehensive plan by one or more resolutions. Notice is required to be published in the official city newspaper in advance of the hearing(s). It is recommended that more time be invested in advertising such revisions. Other recommended methods include the use of local radio stations, TV stations, social media, flyers at local businesses, and other strategies intended to maximize public participation. Alternative meeting locations in neighborhoods in advance of the formal hearing make this process truly inclusive and less procedural.

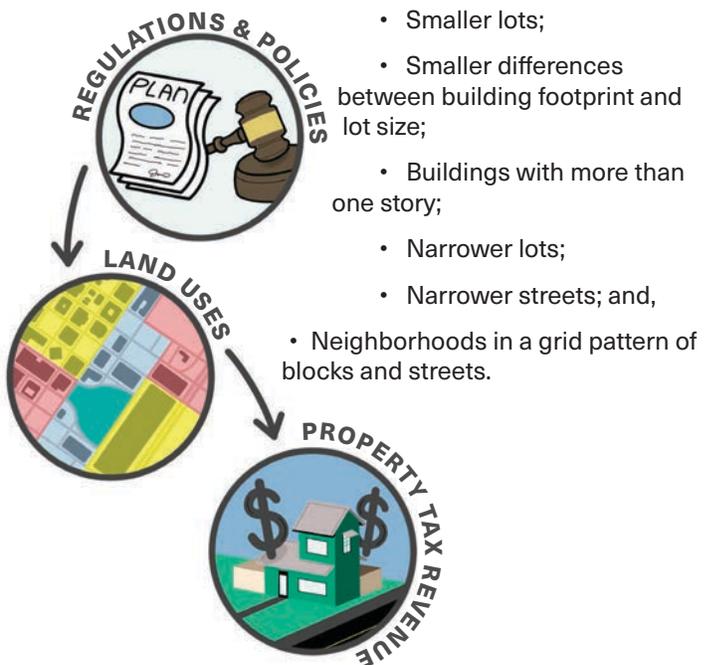
Typically, a city's only discussion about building fiscal health is limited to two things. The first is job creation with large scale business incentives. The second is property values.

Planning that Creates Fiscal Health & Local Wealth

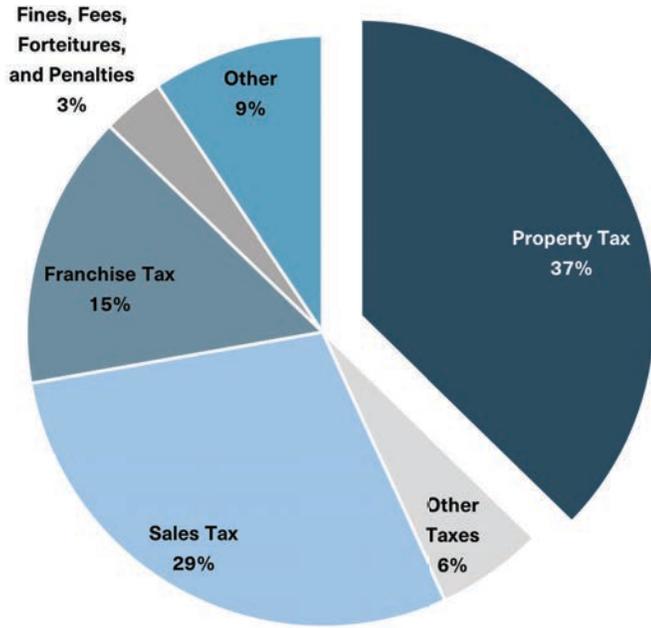
Typical post WWII development pattern does not generate enough revenue to cover its own costs. This is true even with a higher tax rate. The missing piece is the property tax revenue per acre. The land development pattern dictates the property tax revenue. Regulations and policies dictate the land development pattern. We call the gap between resources and costs of maintaining utilities and streets the "resource gap". The gap tends to grow wider without a shift from "business as usual" to measured, incremental growth.

So, how does a city plan in a way that is more fiscally sustainable? There are several factors that have been proven to maximize property tax revenue. This helps over time to close the resource gap.

- Build within the existing city footprint. Use areas where land is already served with streets, utilities, and sidewalks.
- Use a mix of housing density types and products. Pick those that maintain neighborhood character but which allow land to be more productive. Design is a powerful tool.
- Plan for development patterns which generate enough revenue to cover the costs of service. These tend to have one or more of the following features:



PARSONS GENERAL FUND REVENUE



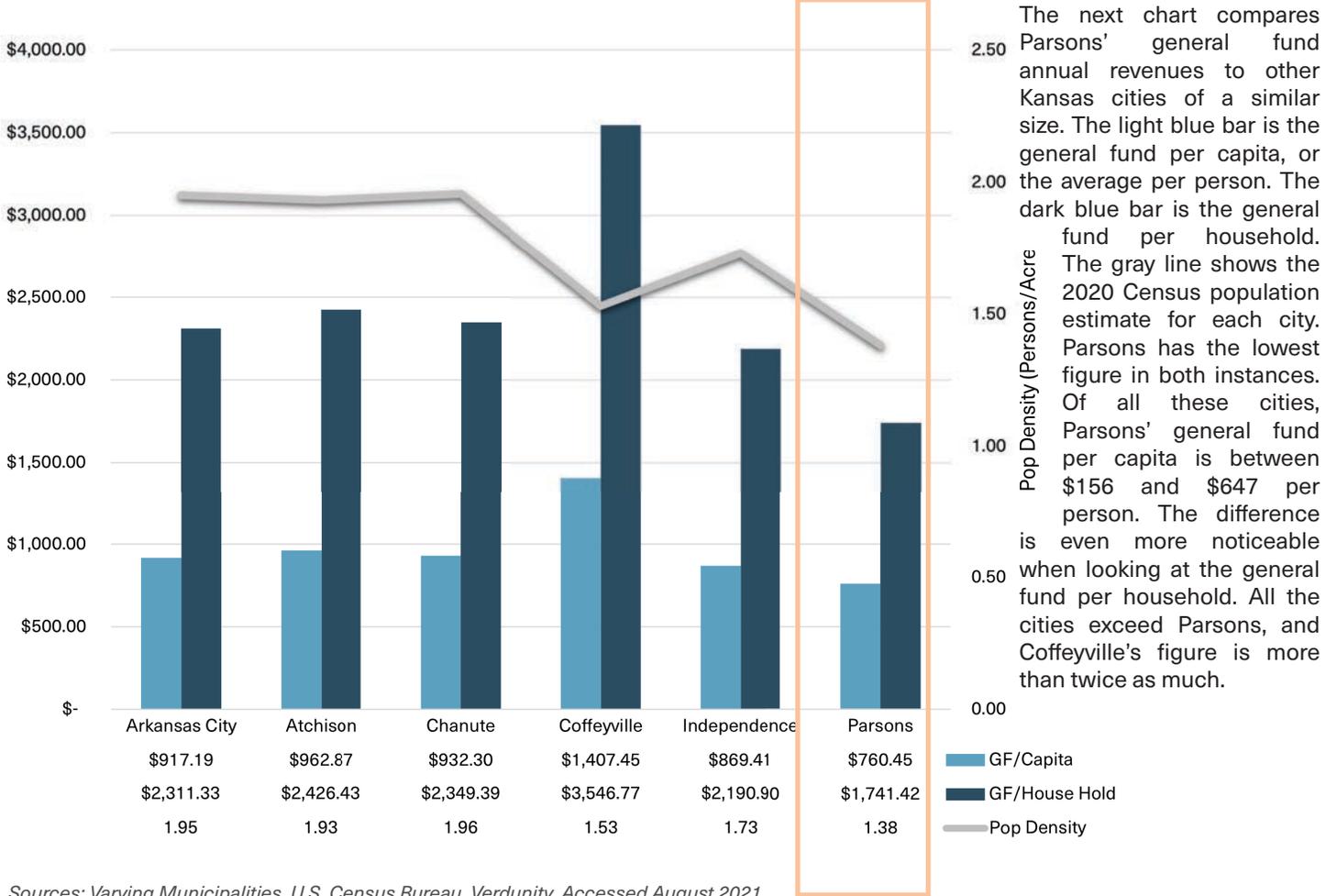
Source: City of Parsons, Accessed August 2021

General Fund Revenues for Parsons

To the left is a graph showing where the dollars within Parsons' general fund come from. In cities, the general fund is crucial because it funds the vast majority of city operations. The largest contributor to Parsons' general fund is property tax, making up 37 percent of the general fund. There are a couple of ways to improve and yield more property tax. The first way - which is not preferred by residents - is by increasing the tax rate. The second way is by limiting development to where infrastructure already exists and creating a development pattern that is fiscally more productive. Continuing to develop in areas where new infrastructure is required to serve that development works against any city that is fiscally constrained. It is simply a principle of using and maximizing what the city has instead of adding more cost burdens.

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GENERAL FUND PER CAPITA & HOUSEHOLD



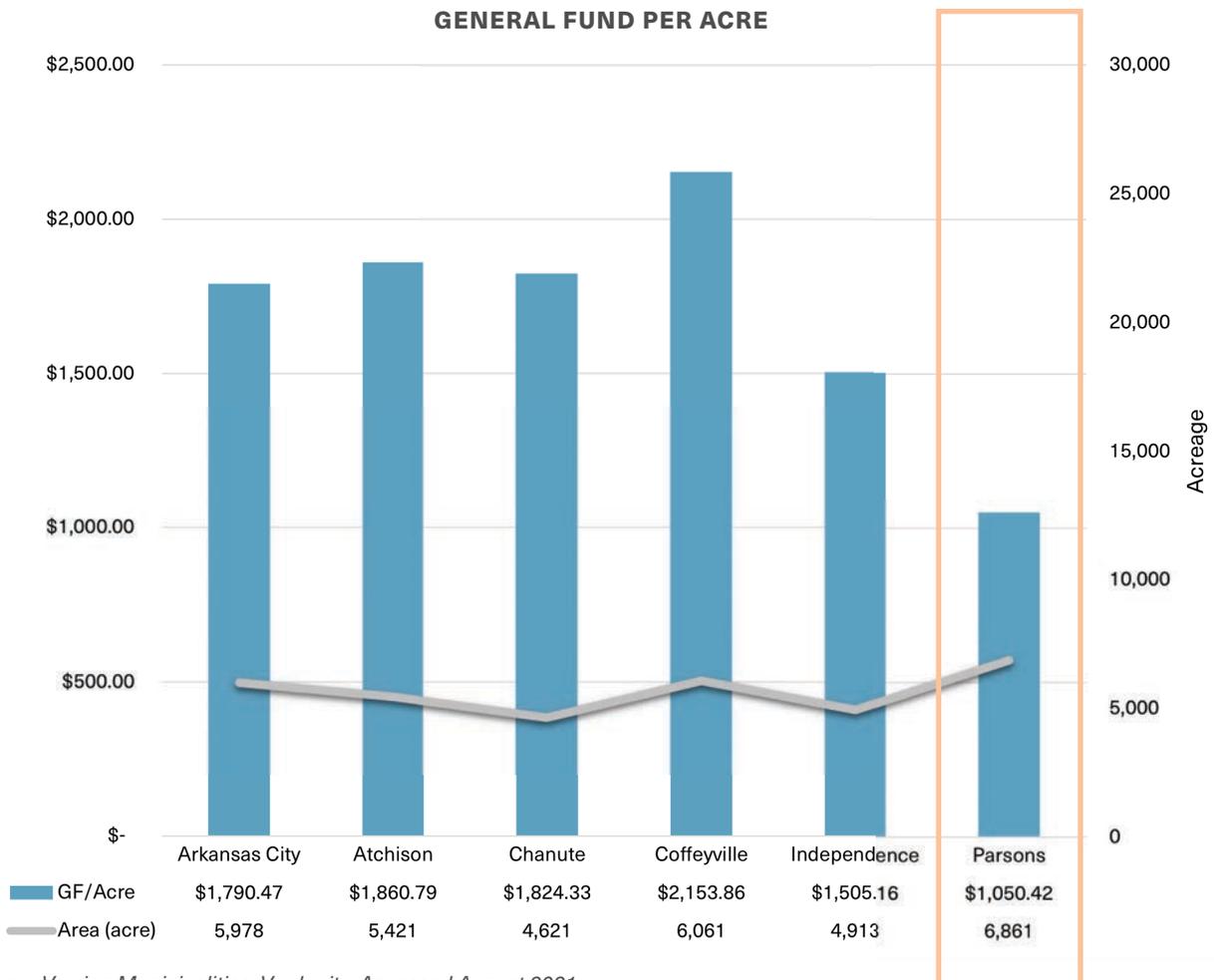
Sources: Varying Municipalities, U.S. Census Bureau, Verdunity, Accessed August 2021

The last chart in this series looks at the general fund per acre, or the general fund revenue divided by the number of acres in the city's footprint. There are two key points made by this graph.

- Parsons' footprint is larger than all of the other cities. This is true even though two of those cities have a higher population than Parsons.
- Parsons is only generating about \$1,100 per acre in general fund revenue. In contrast, the other cities are generating between \$1,700 and \$2,200 per acre.

Big Ideas for Parsons

- The larger the city footprint, the larger the area requiring service by infrastructure, services, public safety, and utilities; this equates to higher costs.
- Increasing the population in the city footprint means the more that the cost per household or capita can be lowered.
- Parsons must prioritize growing in and up versus growing out in order to maximize property and sales tax revenues while reducing costs and lowering the burden per household or capita.



Source: *Varying Municipalities, Verdunity, Accessed August 2021*

“Cities are not exempted from having to run a profit. Although a city can sometimes run a deficit year-to-year, over the long term, a local government must have revenues that exceed expenses...An insolvent city will linger on, performing its functions poorly, failing to serve – and in some instances, doing harm to – the people that form the community it governs.”

– Charles Marohn, *Strong Towns*

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2. ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

Parsons: Train Town, USA



Credit: Parsons Chamber

1870-71

The beginning of Parsons

- ▶ Passing of the Osage Removal Act in 1870 in reaction to the failed peace aimed for through The Treaty at Medicine Lodge
- ▶ Founded between Labette Creek and Little Labette Creek where two branches of the railroad were to meet between Junction City, KS and Sedalia, MO and named after The Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MKT) railroad President, Levi Parsons



1904

Katy Rail Station

1910

Population grows 62% from 7,682 in 1900 to 12,463

1885



Credit: Parsons Chamber

1900

A business college and a state hospital were founded in Parsons

Many homes from this period still stand and contribute to Parson's beauty



Credit: Parsons Chamber

1920

Population of Parsons reaches all time high of 16,028

1941

Kansas Ordnance Plant located in Parsons to support the war effort



Credit: Parsons Chamber



Credit: PSHTC

1960s

When the need for physicians and medical facilities became apparent:

- Parsons began construction and recruiting program
- brought about more robust and comprehensive medical services

1988

Union Pacific Railroad purchased Katy Industries

Parsons receives \$1M for economic development



Credit: City of Parsons

2006

Parsons wins Great American Main Street Award, honoring downtown redevelopment efforts



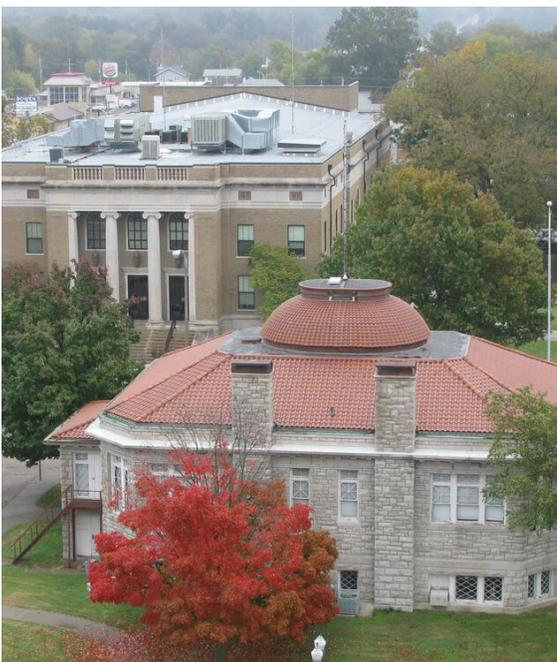
Credit: Gordon Huggins Jr.

2020

Population declines almost 10% from 10,500 in 2010 to 9,477

1970

Urban renewal program was undertaken to benefit the municipal facilities and the business district



Credit: Parsons Chamber

2000

F3 tornado rips through Parsons, causing damage to upwards of 700 homes and 60 businesses



Credit: Storm Tours

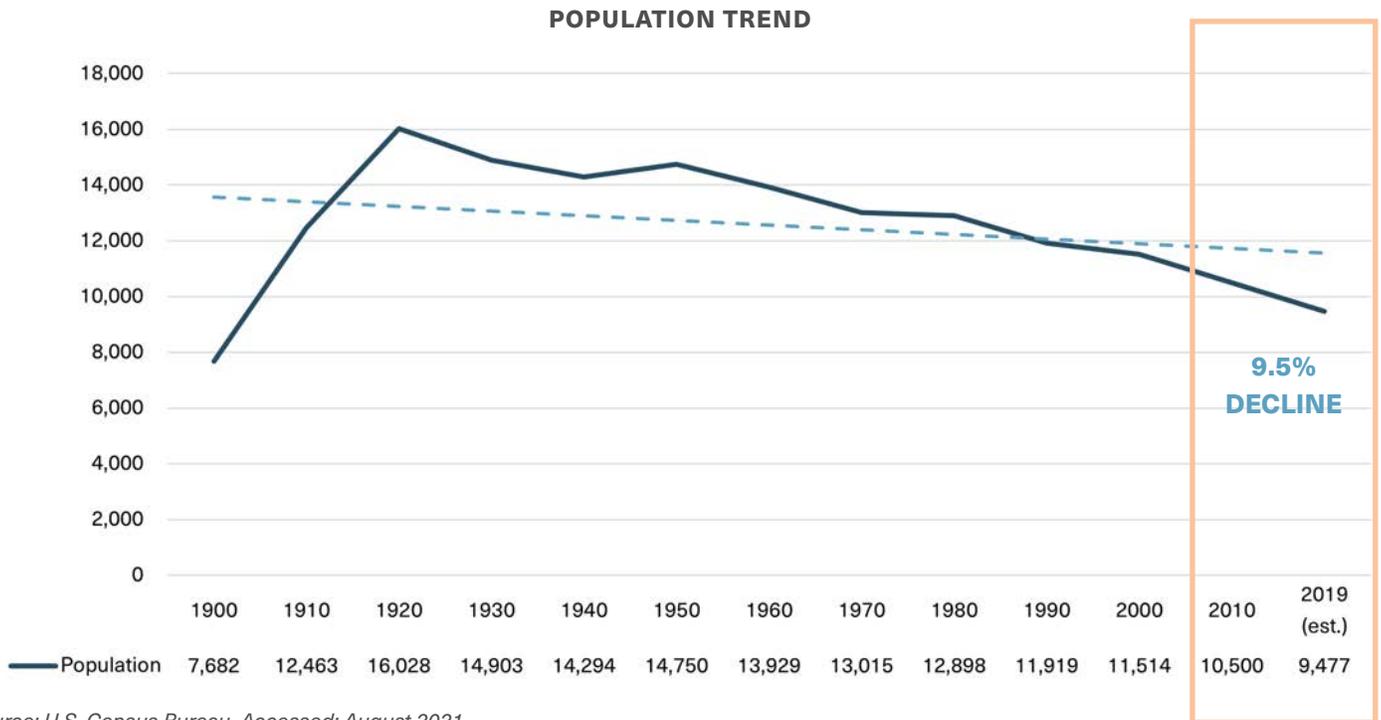
Facts & Figures

Parsons' history begins with a story of rapid expansion. Between 1900 and 1920, the community's population more than doubled. Rapid expansion and civic improvements led to a thriving town. By 1900, a business college and a state hospital were established in Parsons. These developments enabled the community to weather challenges that damaged other towns in the area.

The comprehensive plan completed in 2000 looked at the anticipated population of Parsons in 2020. The State of Kansas Water Office projected a 2020 population of 9,764. Mid-Kansas Engineering Consultants projected a 2020 population of 11,895. These figures underestimated the actual decline in population, which came in at approximately 9,500 in 2020 (US Census).

| Year | Population Projections (2000) | | | Actual Pop. |
|------|-------------------------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| | KSWO | Linear | MKEC | U.S. Census |
| 2000 | 11,103 | 11,160 | 11,422 | 11,514 |
| 2005 | 10,768 | 10,812 | 11,632 | - |
| 2010 | 10,433 | 10,464 | 11,719 | 10,500 |
| 2015 | 10,099 | 10,115 | 11,807 | - |
| 2020 | 9,764 | 9,767 | 11,895 | 9,477 |

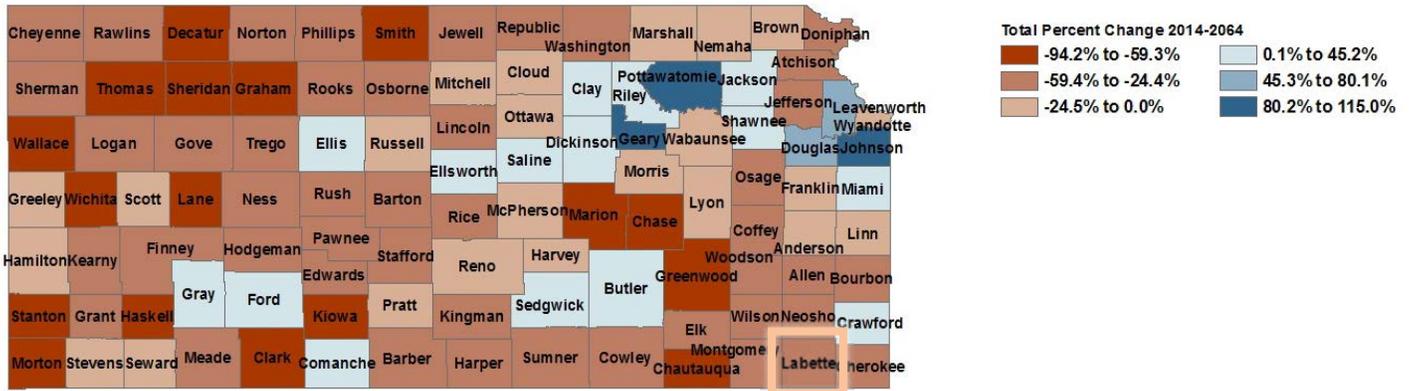
Source: 2000 Parsons Comprehensive Plan, Accessed July 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Accessed: August 2021

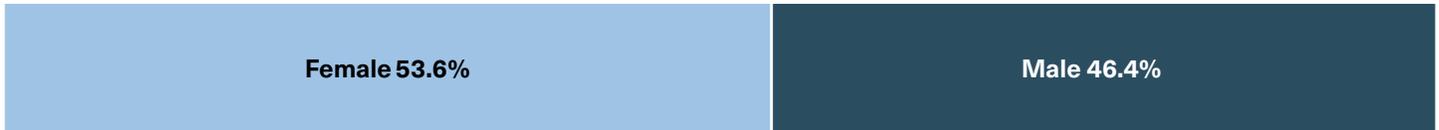
The Center for Economic Development and Business Research at Wichita State University projects a sizable population decline for Labette County in years to come. Specifically, as shown in the graphic below, a 24.4% to 59.4% decline between 2014 and 2064. Reversing this trend will be critical for Parsons' future.

STATE POPULATION FORECAST



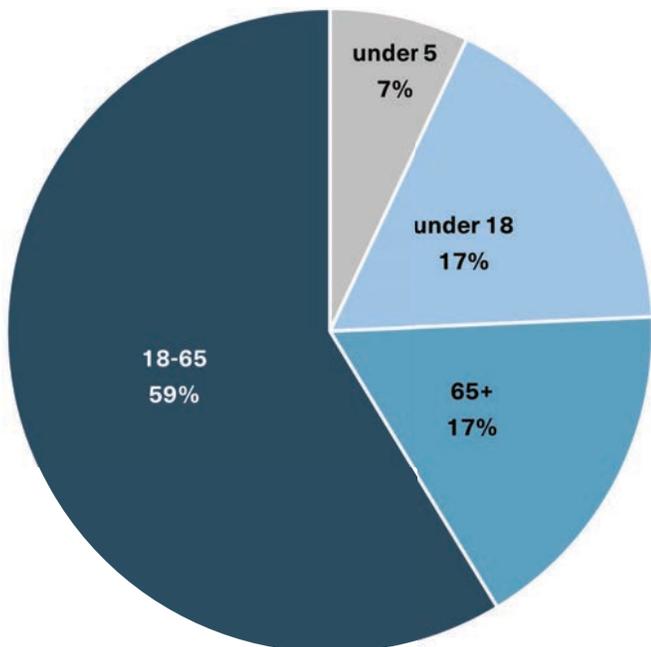
Source: CEDBR Wichita State Univ., Accessed July 2021

GENDER DISTRIBUTION



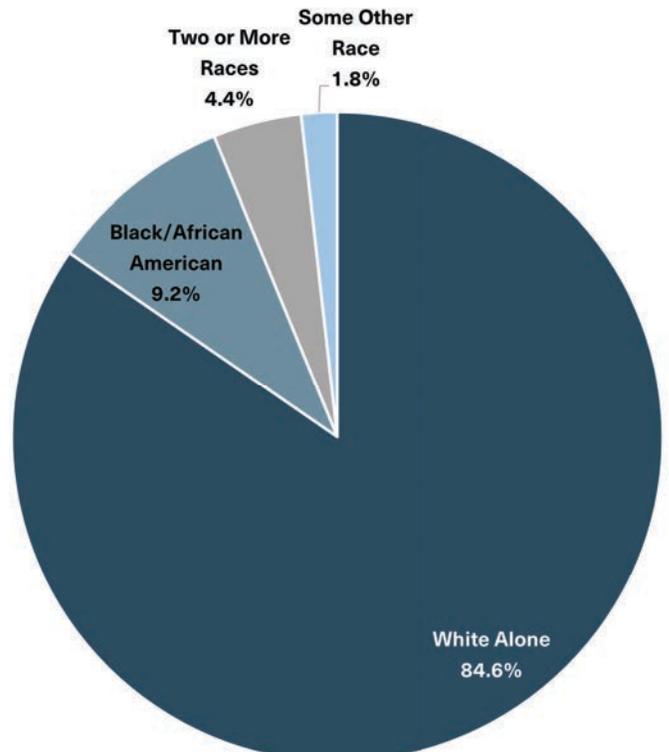
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Accessed August 2021

AGE DISTRIBUTION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Accessed August 2021

RACE DISTRIBUTION

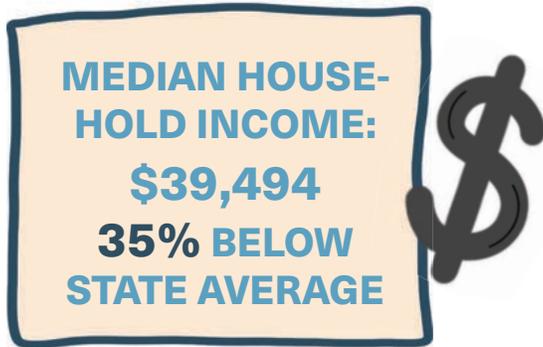


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Accessed August 2021

18.4%

OF PEOPLE IN
LABETTE COUNTY
ARE UNDER THE
POVERTY LINE

Source: US Census Bureau, Accessed August 2021



Source: US Census Bureau, Accessed August 2021

MAJOR INDUSTRIES



HEALTHCARE

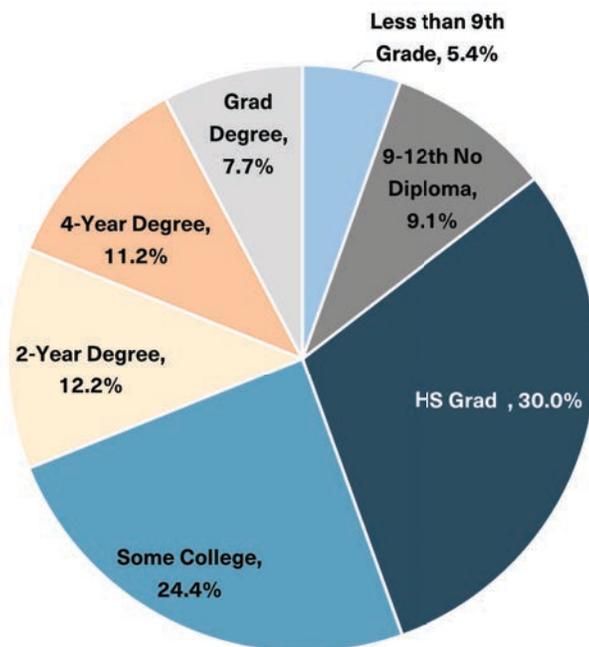


MANUFACTURING



EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Source: 2018 Comp Plan Update, Accessed July 2021

Parsons' average household size of 2.29 persons is below the national average of 2.56 persons. The community has aged as long-term residents remain without a significant increase of young residents to create balance. According to Census data, most residents working have a relatively short commute. This means most people work locally or nearby. The three largest industries are healthcare, manufacturing, and education. The presence of the rail line also contributes to the strong manufacturing sector.

Poverty is a continued concern, not just in southeast Kansas, but in Labette County. According to the Conduent Healthy Communities Institute (and sourced through the American Community Survey), 18.4% of people living in Labette County are living below the poverty line. The largest subgroup is the 18-24 year old group. Over one third of this age group lives below the poverty line. 21% of females in Labette County live below the poverty line, as do 41% of Latino and 27% of mixed race residents. The median household income of \$39,494 is 35% below the state average.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Without intervention, Parsons will continue to face substantial and worsening problems that cause its residents to struggle, and the population will continue to decline. These same issues do not create the reputation and appeal that will make people stay in Parsons. Before growth can occur, the city must first stop losing younger residents and families. While there are examples of excellent jobs in the community - particularly in the manufacturing sector - the statistics show that a large group of Parsons residents need access to higher wages and benefits. The loss of the once-strong railroad activity of the Katy railroad activity is felt even today.

Minority and women-owned businesses have a strong presence. These businesses currently make up almost 36% of the 700+ businesses in Parsons, according to US Census. This extraordinary fact represents an opportunity for Parsons to position itself as a welcoming environment for these businesses.

Education and training will play a large role in creating the kinds of jobs that can change the trajectory of poverty. Creating a unique environment for entrepreneurship will also be key. Labette Community College and major employers in Parsons, like those shown in the graphic below, are crucial partners.

Before growth can occur, the city must first stop losing younger residents and families.

36%

OF BUSINESSES IN PARSONS ARE
**MINORITY OR
WOMAN OWNED**

Source: US Census Bureau, Accessed August 2021

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

| | Labette Health | State Hospital | Old Dominion | Labette CC | Grandview Cabinetry | Parsons USD | Tank Connect. | Ruskin | Power Flame | Ducommun Aero Struct. |
|-----------|----------------|----------------|--------------|------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------|--------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Mar. '20 | 470 | 478 | 252 | 279 | 167 | 279 | 266 | 204 | 162 | 196 |
| June '20 | 470 | 466 | 258 | 262 | 203 | 257 | 252 | 198 | 156 | 150 |
| Sept. '20 | 606 | 450 | 252 | 244 | 163 | 262 | 253 | 198 | 155 | 139 |
| Dec. '20 | 606 | 439 | 290 | 279 | 232 | 269 | 246 | 195 | 153 | 129 |
| Mar. '21 | 474 | 434 | 309 | 269 | 265 | 264 | 249 | 200 | 154 | 127 |

Source: City of Parsons, Accessed August 2021



Credit: Prepler



Credit: Labette Community College



Credit: Labette Community College



Credit: City of Parsons

“Twenty-first century economic development focuses on what a community has, rather than what it doesn’t have. Too many communities spend all their time and money on business recruitment. They build an industrial park out by the airport and then they try like crazy to attract a plant, factory or distribution center to move there. The few communities that are successful at this strategy usually accomplish it by giving away the store.”

– Edward T. McMahon, Chairman, National Main Street Center

Global and Regional Trends

Today's world is one of sizable and swift change. COVID-19 has brought some businesses to a standstill and forced others to innovate in order to sustain themselves. Cities with a high reliance on sales tax saw dips in revenues that were out of their control. Property tax revenues are a steadier and more reliable funding source, which is evident more now than ever.

The Digital Divide

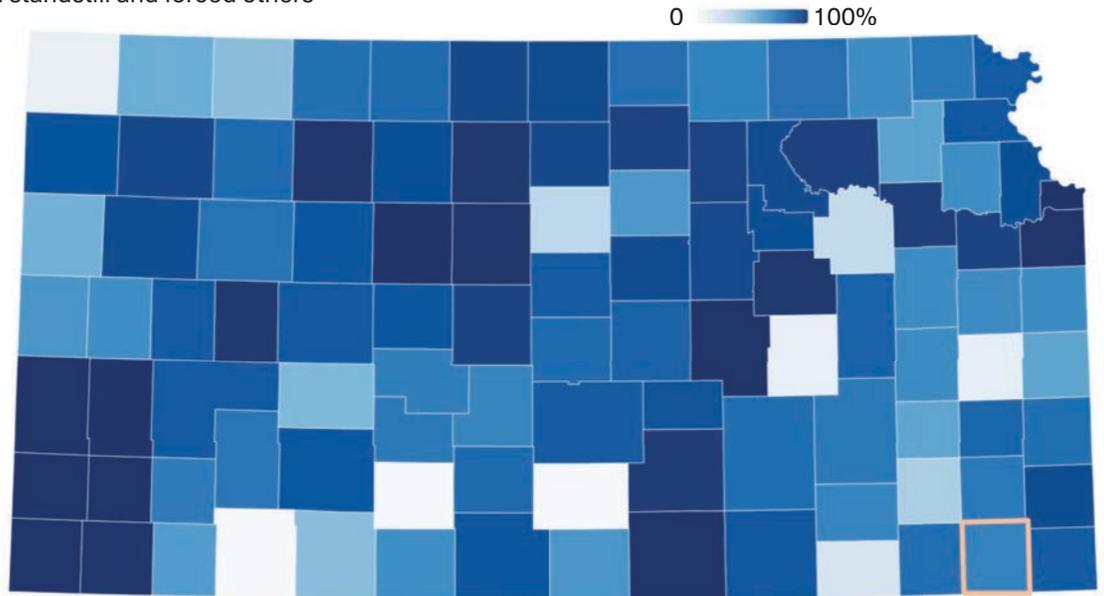
The lack of reliable broadband access is a problem across Kansas. Broadband is defined by the Federal Communications Commission. The minimum speeds are 25 Mbps (Megabits per second) for downloads and 3 Mbps for uploads. The map below shows the percentage of residents in each county with broadband. In Labette County, that number is 68.4%. This means that 31.6% of residents do not have broadband access.

In 2020, \$728,000 was awarded to address internet connectivity issues in Parsons and Labette County. The Connectivity Emergency Response Grant Program (CERGP) is the source of these funds. The expansion projects are expected to be completed by the end of 2021.

Food Insecurity & Hunger

The issue of poverty is one that is well-known in Parsons. Citizen comments and interviews conducted proved that to be true. Food insecurity is one result of poverty that is getting attention nationwide. According to Feeding America, in 2019 the overall food insecurity rate of Labette County was 15%-19%. The map below shows 2018 data specifically for children across Kansas. That rate was 25%-29%, one of the nine highest county rates in the state.

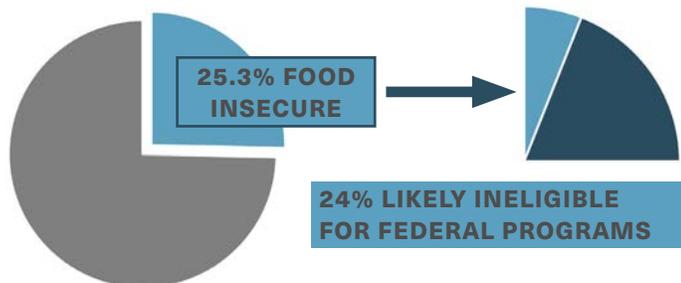
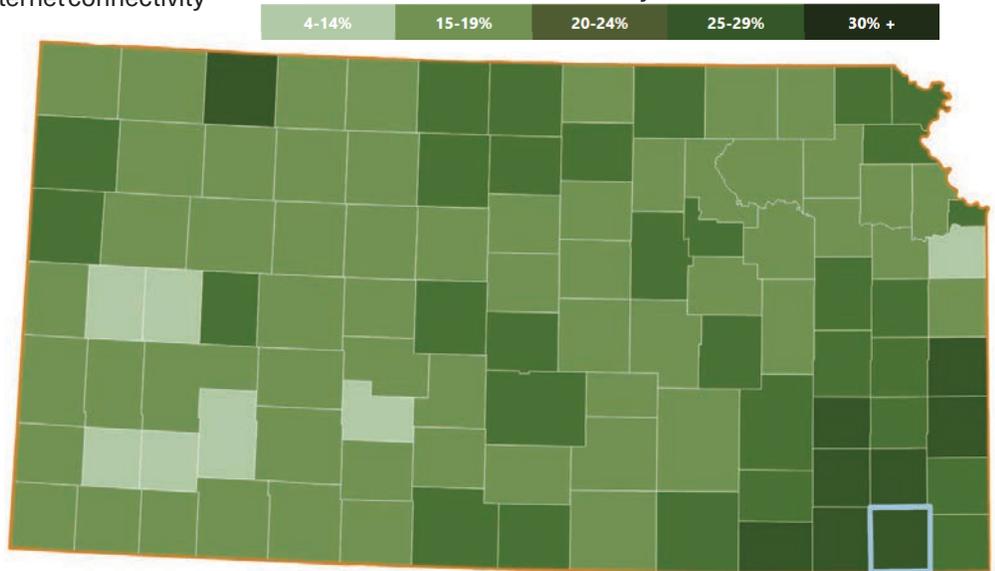
STATE BROADBAND ACCESS



Source: Broadband Now, Accessed August 2021

STATE FOOD INSECURITY

Food Insecurity Rates



76% INCOME ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL PROGRAMS

\$1,666,000 ADDITIONAL MONEY NEEDED TO MEET FOOD NEEDS

AVERAGE MEAL COST
LABETTE COUNTY: \$3.08
STATE OF KANSAS: \$2.91
UNITED STATES: \$3.09

Source: Feeding America, Accessed August 2021

Rethinking Big Box Retail

During the pandemic, Bloomberg reports that three-quarters of consumers who tried a different shopping method or brand intend to stick with it. Big box retailers pivoted by building curbside pickup systems. They reconfigured store space to drastically reduce displays and make room for order fulfillment. Such stores are also realizing that Millennials and Gen Xers prefer shopping in more unique environments. Many big box retailers are beginning to explore different - and smaller footprint - stores that better fit rural areas.



Credit: Bloomberg

Housing Diversity

Housing diversity is a mix of housing types. One area where rural communities suffer is availability of this mix. A key to retention is the ability for multiple generations to find appropriate housing in the same community. The variety simply has not kept up with the changing needs of households. In fact, household sizes have decreased. People want to be able to age in a home that is the right size for them. Offering different types and sizes of housing makes more affordable choices available. They allow mixing of socioeconomic groups within the same neighborhood, which is appealing to Gen Xers and Millennials. Offering other types of housing also makes maintenance easier and less expensive.

“Americans are longing for a sense of community that is missing from their lives. Missing Middle Housing helps to create community through the integration of shared spaces within the building type or simply from being located within a vibrant neighborhood with a strong social fabric, diversity, and places to eat, drink, and socialize.”

– Daniel Parolek, *Missing Middle Housing*



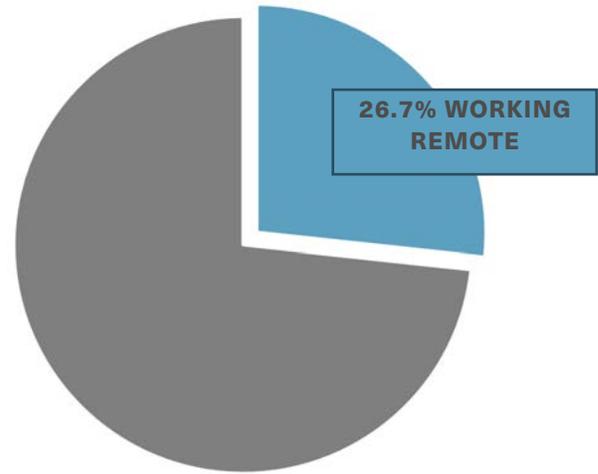
The Search for Authenticity and Place

Place is of great importance to Millennials, Gen Xers, and younger age groups. In particular, the “third place”, a term coined by Ray Oldenburg. The third places are places for gathering. Coffee shops, bars, bookstores, pubs, cafes, and other places where people can interact are third places. Connectedness is a priority for these groups. Walkable neighborhoods are greatly valued by these groups. They seek the celebration of differences in people, cultures, and neighborhoods. Authenticity is a high priority. Many cities do not offer this, and rural areas, even less so.



Working Remotely

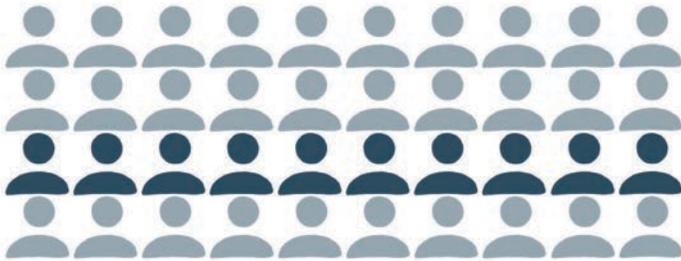
One long lasting effect of COVID-19 is working remotely. Whether it is working from a home in the same city, or working from across the country, working remotely is here to stay. According to a survey by Upwork, about 26.7% of Americans will be working from home during 2021. According to CNBC, a quarter of the nearly four million remote workers in the U.S. make over \$100,000 a year. This creates opportunities for working and living in rural areas. Some studies show interest in rural areas has increased since the pandemic began.



Source: Upwork, Accessed August 2021

“There is no reasonable justification for the ongoing legally mandated separation of home and work – especially the type of work that most of us conduct today, when so much can be done via telecommuting.”

– Sonia A. Hirt, *Zoned in the USA*



OF THE 4M PEOPLE WORKING REMOTELY, NEARLY 25% EARN OVER \$100,000

Source: CNBC, Accessed August 2021



Rural Tourism

As people continue to seek time “unplugged” from electronic devices, rural and sustainable tourism is becoming more visible. This type of tourism can focus on agriculture (an emphasis on farming), eco-tourism (an emphasis on natural resources) and/or heritage skill building (gardening, canning, fishing, etc.). 2020 saw a shift to rural areas for vacationing, and this will likely continue as the pandemic does. Road trips have become popular again as city dwellers look outward for a change in pace. The trick is having enough not only to lure people, but to get them to stay for 1-2 days.

“Make your town an experience town, not an errand town.”

– Kindra Gordon

eCommerce and Social Selling

eCommerce tools have taken local retailers to a new level. These tools help customers make online payments. They provide online storefronts. They can search inventory. They greatly expand the reach of small businesses. Email marketing and promotional tools are other eCommerce tools. Social selling is simply the selling of products and services online. These options allow small businesses to operate from anywhere, especially areas with lower costs of living.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Some of the trends outlined represent areas where Parsons can focus efforts on quality of life offerings. Others offer a chance to innovate and retain residents. To put a stop to the loss of younger residents to other cities, Parsons must adapt to what they are looking for. Staying aware of these trends and working them into this planning effort will be important for the community. Fortunately, several of these can work in favor of rural locales.



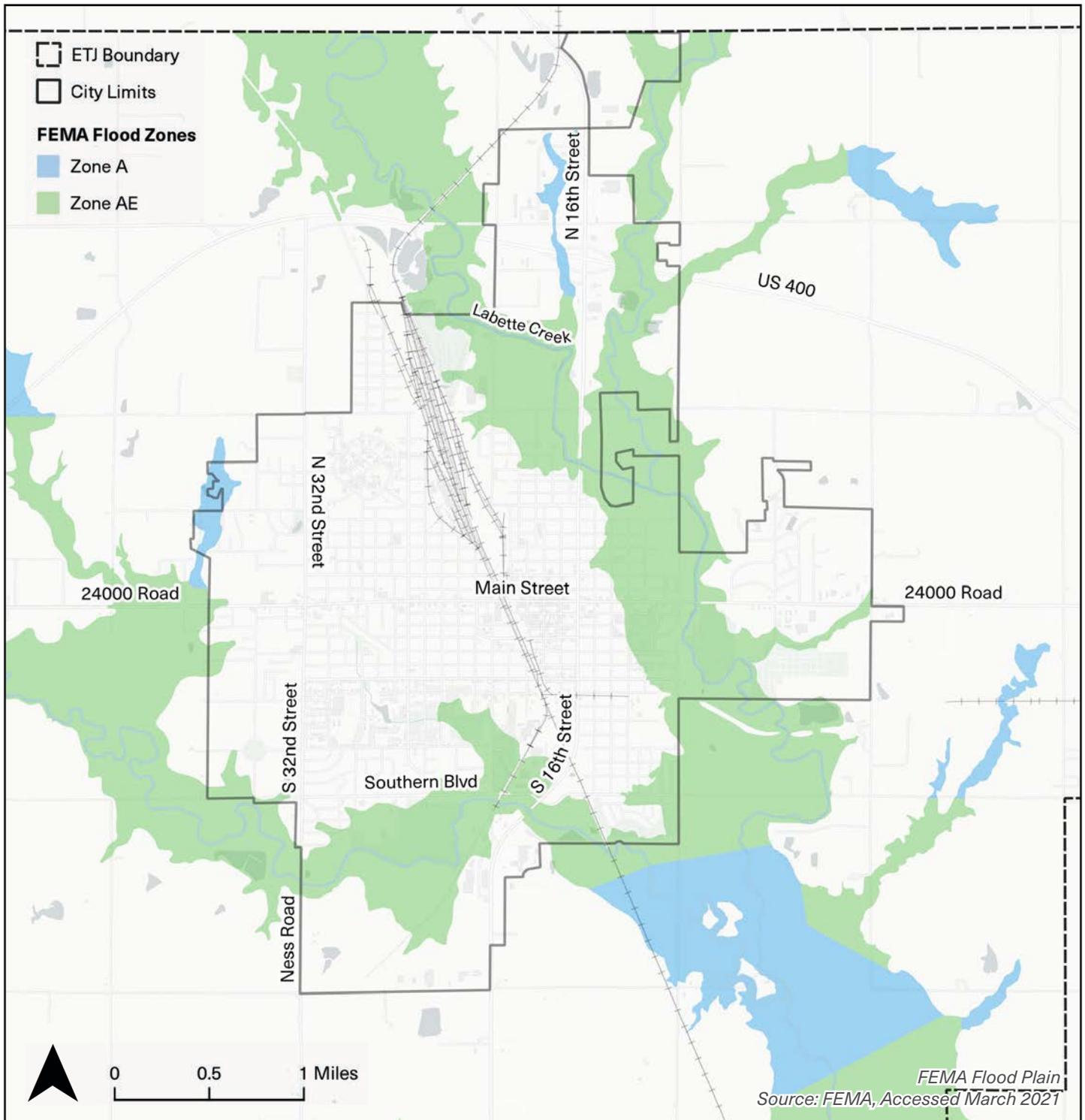
Credit: City of Parsons



Parks and Open Space

Flood Plain

A significant percentage of Parson's city limits fall within flood hazard areas designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These areas, called SFHAs (Special Flood Hazard Areas) are predicted to flood during a 100 year storm event. These events have a 1% chance of occurring in any given year. They may also flood in smaller storms. These areas may not be able to be developed under today's standards. This can complicate redevelopment of the areas where buildings were placed years ago. The parts of Parson's which fall within these SFHAs are shown in the map below.

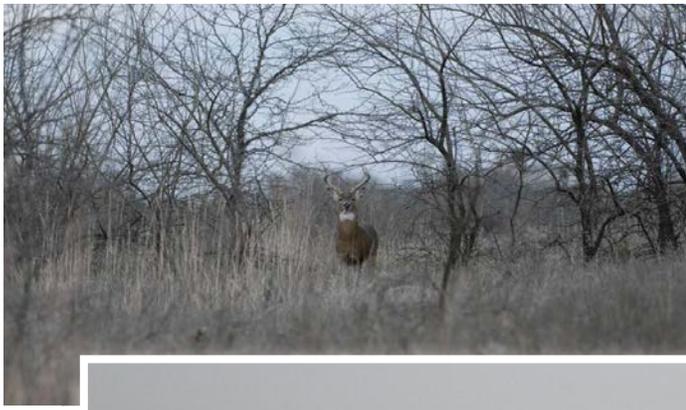


Regional Attractions

The community has one nine hole golf course, the Katy Golf Club. The disc golf courses present opportunities to lure visitors for tournaments. The City of Parsons has already begun exploring this route, hosting a Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA) tournament in March of this year. Parsons was named a “Top 10 Whitetail Town” in Outdoor Life Magazine. The Grand Osage Wildlife Area (GOWA), 3,000 acres just north of Parsons, has also received attention for its deer and turkey hunting after opening to the public in 2010. Lake Parsons and Big Hill Lake (known as the “Deep Clear Lake” of Kansas) are just minutes away and host regional tournaments. Camping facilities are available there as well.



Credit: Katy Golf Club



City Parks

The Parsons’ parks inventory meets industry benchmarks for parks per capita. However, they are concentrated in the southern half of the city. The park facilities address passive and active needs. More ADA accessibility is necessary, as only one park boasts this kind of access. Parks in Parsons tend to be in the southern half of town.

These city facilities and parks hold many community events throughout the year. These include, but are not limited to:

- Katy Days Festival (Forest Park)
- Music in the Park (Seaton Family Pavilion)
- Chamber Fireworks Show (Marvel Park)
- Christmas at the Old Stone House (Tolen Creek Park)

On the next page is a table summarizing the city parks and features within them.



Credit: City of Parsons

◀ Credit: Max Good



Credit: City of Parsons

CITY PARK FEATURES

| | Ball Fields | Basketball Courts | Campsites | Disc Golf | Dog Areas | Fishing Pond | Horseshoe Pits | Open Space | Pavilion | Picnic Areas | Playground | Restrooms | Sand Volleyball | Shelter House | Tennis Court | Trails | Water | Wetlands |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|----------------|------------|----------|--------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|--------|-------|----------|
| Circle Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Clark Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dog Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Forest Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Glenwood Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lopez Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Marvel Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| McElhaney Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prairie West Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Railroad Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tolen Creek Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Watson Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Winway Park | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Source: City of Parsons, Accessed August 2021



Credit: City of Parsons



Credit: Kari West



Credit: Max Good



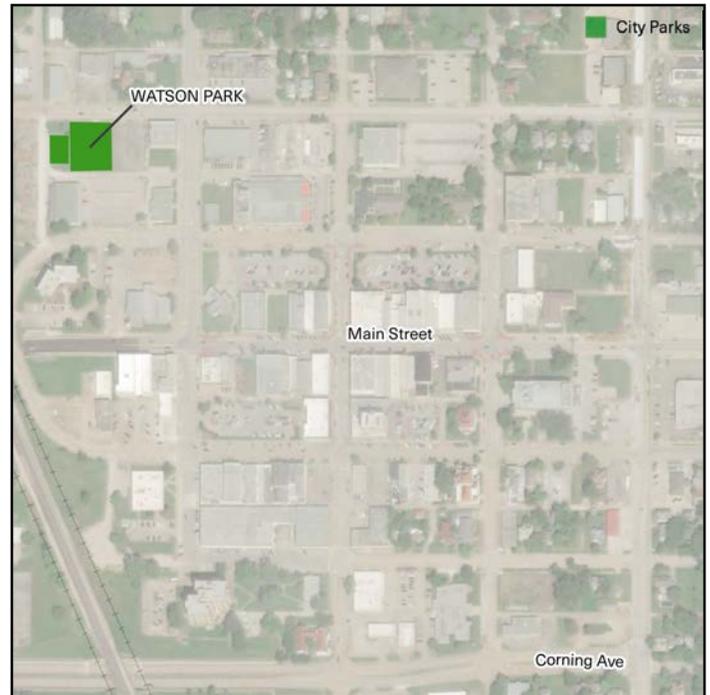
Credit: Cristen Cornell

Opportunities for Expansion & Connection

The connectivity from parks to neighborhoods needs improvement. One example is Watson Park. It is located at 20th and Crawford. This park is only a block north of downtown. However, there is no connection between the two places. Winway Park is an example of one that feels more integrated into the surrounding area. This absence of sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails that allow children and adults to safely access parks is felt throughout the community. Older neighborhoods, in particular, are missing these features.

Some of the parks also don't feel like official parkland. Watson is one example, as is Circle Park. People may be hesitant to visit these without evidence of this. Features like signage and sitting areas signal to those on foot and driving that an area is "open" for them. Other welcoming features include sidewalk connections.

While they are currently sufficient, the existing ball fields and tennis courts do not offer the kind of regional draw that brings families to other communities. This would be a sizable capital improvement, but should be considered as a mid- to long-term investment if it can be proven that the need is present.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Parsons has some beautiful park areas and a wealth of natural amenities. The number and sizing of parks is excellent. That said, the amenities and physical connection to them is lacking in parts of the city. A great chance for both city branding and clear identification of areas exists. The creeks and mature trees throughout these areas provide natural beauty as a foundation. These areas are intended to serve children and adults, so such improvements should be strongly considered. Preservation of available greenspace along creeks and open areas is encouraged. These could be great homes for linear parks and trail corridors. Simple features for comfort and safety, such as lighting and covered benches, would make a significant impact.

“Great cities that want to attract and retain families must maintain that spiritual nourishment that comes from contact with nature.”

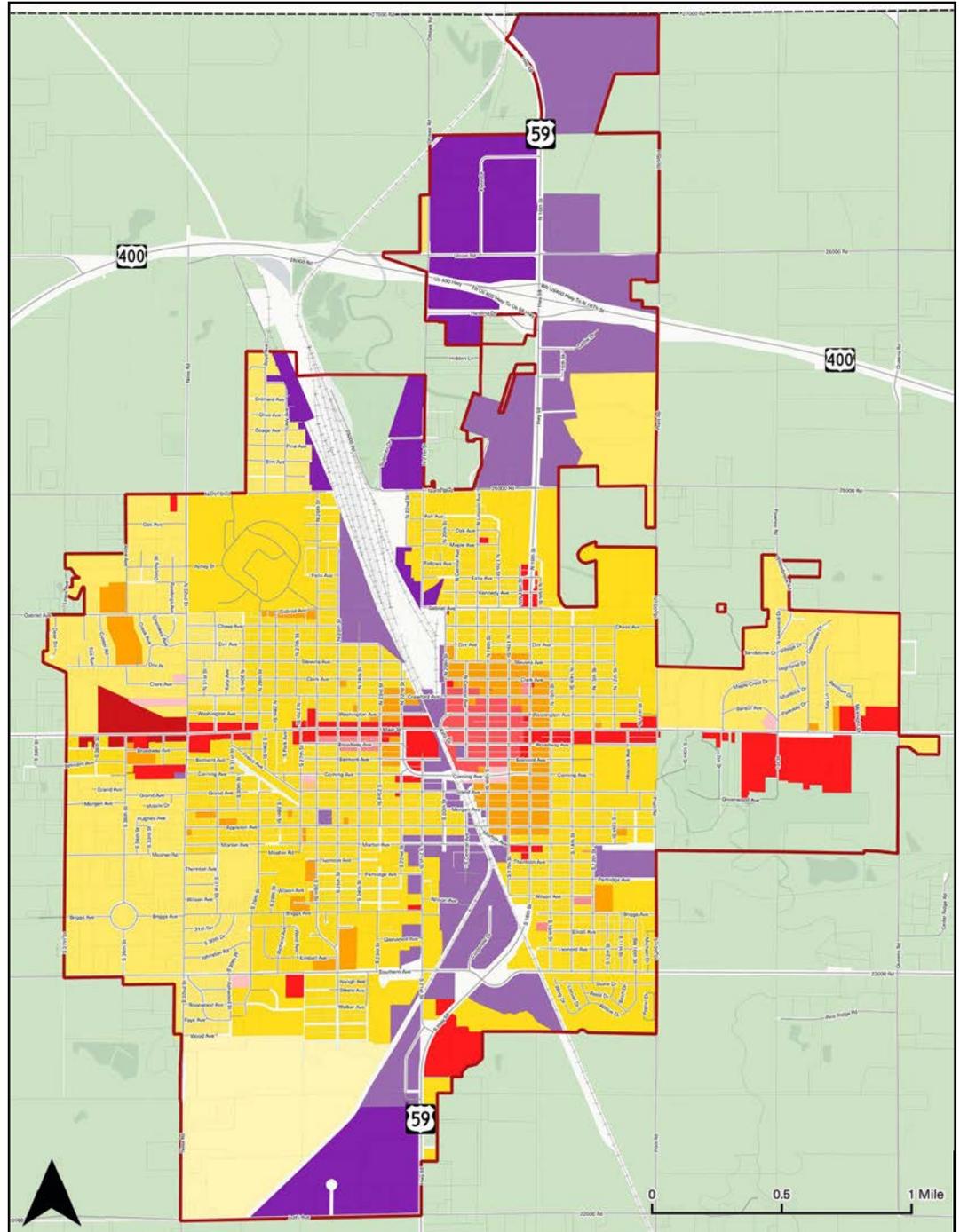
– Joel Kotkin, *The Human City*

Zoning and Land Use

Zoning Patterns

The extraterritorial jurisdiction (or ETJ, the unincorporated area that is contiguous to, or touches, the city limits) is almost entirely zoned for agricultural uses. This is typical and it aligns with the uses of most of this area. The areas zoned for industrial uses flow from north to south. The locations zoned industrial generally follow the rail line and encompass the various industrial parks around the city. While it generally is not advisable to lay out industrial tracts that abut residential areas, this type of zoning pattern is reminiscent of early 1900's zoning when industrial employment was at its peak and people generally lived close to where they were employed. The natural environment in Parsons of waterways, trees, and changes in elevation help in some part to create transitions and buffers.

-  ETJ Boundary
-  City Limits
- Zoning**
-  Agricultural (A-1)
-  Single-Family Suburban (RS-1)
-  Single-Family (R)
-  Single-Family (R-1)
-  Two-Family (R-2)
-  Multiple-Family (R-3)
-  Office & Professional (OP-1)
-  Neighborhood Business (C-1)
-  Central Business (C-2)
-  Service Commercial (C-3)
-  Heavy Commercial (C-4)
-  Light Industrial (I-1)
-  Heavy Industrial (I-2)



The residential zoning in Parsons therefore appears in four quadrants, each of which are separated by either a commercial or industrial corridor. Approximately 62% of the land area in Parsons is zoned for residential use, providing a great deal of opportunity to pursue infill development and the subtle addition of living units that spread the cost more evenly for streets and utilities. There are a couple of observations that suggest a need for further examination.

- Only 84 acres of land, roughly 1.4 percent, of the city allows two-family residential living. By two-family, the ordinance means the placement of two dwelling units per residential lot. A large portion of the land zoned this way is already developed with single-family detached homes, and all of that zoning district falls within the center of the city. There are no areas spread throughout Parsons.
- Only 118 acres of land, roughly 2 percent, of the city allows for multi-family residential living. This includes multiple living units, with products such as condos and apartments of varying intensity.

The east-to-west stretch of Main Street alone accounts for the majority of commercial zoning in Parsons, with the downtown area zoned as Central Business, or C-2. There is very little Neighborhood Business zoning, and a city of this size could benefit from more of this local-level type of commercial activity at the edges of neighborhoods throughout Parsons. More integrated neighborhood-level services promote walkable neighborhoods where people can easily access their day-to-day needs on foot or by bike. They provide a convenience factor that fits the “small town feel” that Parsons’ residents have expressed as an element of Parsons they would like to see preserved.

“All but a few towns we visited had lost the natural connections that once defined them – eroded by decades, perhaps even a century, of decisions to foster the automobile and big-box sprawl.”

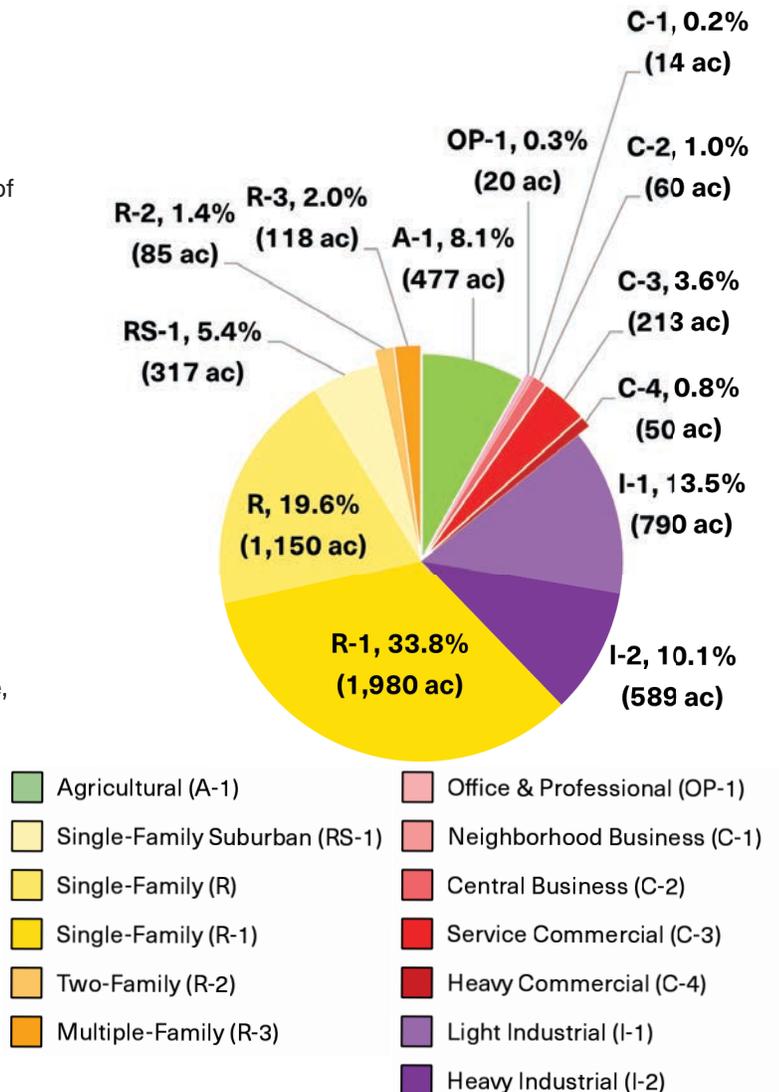
– Social Life Project

The US400 interchange includes the existing commercial uses within its industrial zoning. The current zoning ordinance was written in a cumulative zoning approach, where each zoning district steps up in intensity. For example, the Service Commercial zoning district allows everything that is allowed in the Central Business zoning district - and adds another layer of intensity to it. This type of zoning is problematic for many reasons:

- It creates sprawl, which in turn leads to fiscal strain for cities.
- It generates traffic by forcing all cars onto main arteries rather than an interconnected web of less intense streets.
- It promotes economic segregation of housing and drives up housing costs.

- It makes the mixing of uses difficult, if not impossible.
- It tends to focus on regulation of uses, but without any focus on building and site design.
- It makes revitalization of neighborhoods extremely challenging.
- It does not take into account the size of projects and is difficult to tailor or make flexible.
- It encourages the widespread use of manufacturing zoning districts, which allow almost anything by right without review. While today that intention may be to create a commercial use, in the future it could be converted to heavy industry with little or no oversight.

The chart below shows the percentage of Parsons’ city limits that are dedicated to each of the zoning districts. The total percentage of land in Parsons dedicated to commercial activity is quite low, at 6 percent. Generally, this is a much higher percentage in cities of all sizes - even smaller than Parsons. Areas identified within the Future Land Use Map as high-visibility gateways should be considered for placement of strategic commercial zoning, as well as at key nodes along the edges of neighborhoods. This should be done with the careful incorporation of design standards.



Land Use Patterns

The land use patterns of Parsons are largely consistent with the zoning district designations, with the exception of two areas. The first is one that is zoned industrially but is being used as retail along US 400. The second is south of Southern Boulevard and west of the rail line. It is zoned for industrial use but is largely open space with some residential, just west of the Winway neighborhood.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The current zoning scheme makes it unlawful to build anything other than a single family detached home on 59% of the city footprint (almost 3,500 acres). Only about 6% of the city's footprint is earmarked for commercial zoning types, and of that, only .6% for neighborhood scale commercial. In order to create the kind of place that has long, sustaining value and appeal, the regulatory tools must create a framework that authorizes these uses by right. This means that lengthy approval processes are not required that can pit residents against small developers.

INDUSTRIAL

Credit: Harvir Singh



COMMERCIAL



PUBLIC / QUASI PUBLIC



TOWN CENTER



PARKS AND RECREATION



RESIDENTIAL



AGRICULTURAL / OPEN SPACE



Patterns of Development and Annexation

Area and Population Density

Parsons' total size is approximately 8.93 square miles, or 5,718 acres. Based on 2020 Census population estimates, this equates to 1,061 people per square mile or 1.66 people per acre. The table below shows how Parsons compares to other cities in size and density.

| City Name | Size (Sq. Mi.) | People/Sq. Mi. | Size (Acres) | People/Acre |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| Arkansas City | 9.34 | 1,249 | 5,978 | 1.95 |
| Atchison | 7.22 | 1,451 | 4,621 | 2.27 |
| Chanute | 7.22 | 1,252 | 4,621 | 1.96 |
| Coffeyville | 9.47 | 979 | 6,061 | 1.53 |
| Independence | 7.68 | 1,113 | 4,915 | 1.74 |
| Parsons | 8.93 | 1,061 | 5,718 | 1.66 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, Accessed August 2021

In this group of cities, Parsons is the least dense, with the exception of Coffeyville. This helps demonstrate how intensively land is being used in each of these communities. Often, the higher the number of people per square mile or acre, the more fiscally productive the land is. Additional study would be required to understand exactly what parcels in Parsons are and are not generating a surplus of tax revenue, however.

Development Pattern

Early residential development was concentrated in a compact, traditional grid. Lots averaged less than 0.2 acres around downtown and Main Street, where the first businesses were established. These areas tend to produce higher property tax revenues because more properties are served by utilities in a small area due to the lot sizes. Therefore, more lots are producing and contributing tax revenue. Elements of this compact grid development style include human scale streets and sidewalks. They tend to feature streets lined with trees and driving is not necessary, as it is comfortable and safe to be on foot. Areas like this can be found in each quadrant of the city. These include:

- The area south of Stevens Avenue and north of Clark Avenue, between North 25th and North 24th Streets (northwest quadrant);
- The area south of Corning Avenue and north of Grand Avenue, between North 25th and North 24th Streets (southwest quadrant);
- The area south of Dirr Avenue and north of Stevens Avenue, between North 18th and North 17th Streets (northeast quadrant); and,
- The area south of Morgan Avenue and north of Appleton Street, between South 17th and South 16th Streets (southeast quadrant).





Source: Google Earth, Accessed August 2021

The historic downtown was recognized as a National Great American Main Street Award Winner in 2006. This was significant considering that a tornado wiped out much of the original downtown only six years prior. The newer buildings in downtown demonstrate that, with design guidance, new construction can fit in nicely with historic buildings. The recent streetscape (street design and features) is accommodating to people walking and the traffic is slower because of on-street parking. It feels like a safe and welcoming environment.

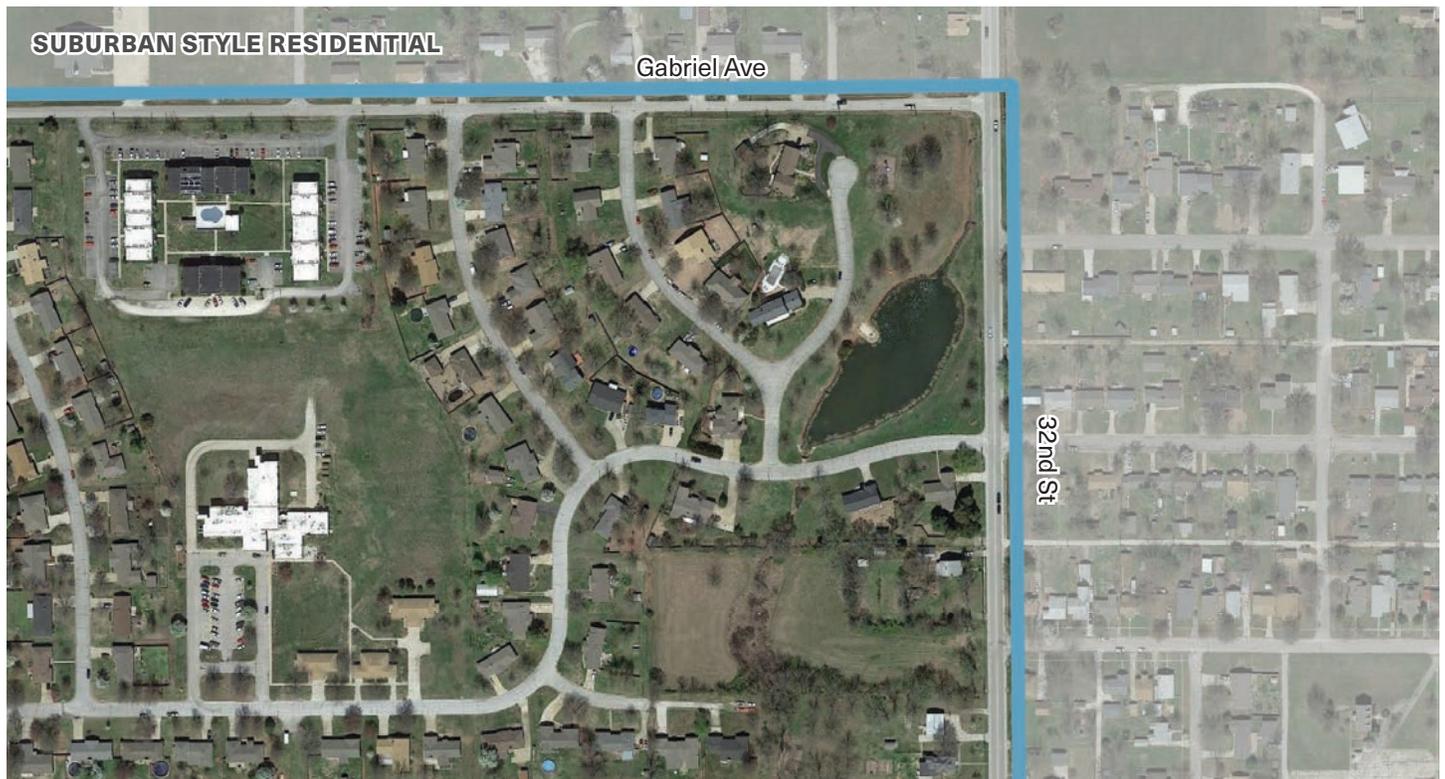


Credit: Gordon Huggins Jr.

Suburban-style residential developments have been built more recently. Elements of suburban-style development generally include long blocks and curving streets. They may also feature extra large blocks and large lots. This type of development does not perform as well in terms of tax revenue generation. The reason is that the development is spread out. Spreading it out means it costs more to provide services to these areas because of the distance those services must travel. That cost is split among fewer lots and tax accounts. It also encourages sprawl and necessitates driving. Clusters of housing with fewer route options are generally in these types of places. Areas like this can be found in most quadrants of the city. These include:

- The area southwest of the intersection of Gabriel Avenue and North 32nd Street, extending to Creek Avenue (northwest quadrant);
- The area south of Briggs Avenue and north of Southern Boulevard, between South 32nd and South 29th Streets (southwest quadrant); and,
- The area northwest of the intersection of 1st and Main Streets, extending to Maple Crest Drive (northeast quadrant).

Parsons can maximize its tax revenue generation by choosing to build in areas where roads and utilities are already available. This includes areas where homes have been identified as being dilapidated and in need of demolition. This also helps to save resources that can go towards maintenance of existing streets and utilities instead of building new ones. Building new ones increases the maintenance burden significantly. Once new streets and utilities are built, the City is responsible for maintaining them forever. If that is difficult now, it will only become more so.



Source: Google Earth, Accessed August 2021



Housing Stock & Diversity

Parsons is unique from many communities of its size because it has some great examples of slightly dense housing. Creating more of this kind of housing variety speaks to what multiple generations seek. It also creates a spectrum of affordability that is attractive to both renters and buyers. These products work well on smaller-than-conventional sites, so they will also support the building of fiscal health. The following pages show some of the local housing products on the left. On the right, they show some ideas for designs that could fit into Parsons and its existing neighborhoods nicely. This can be accomplished through some standards for design that ensure new housing is of the architectural quality Parsons desires.

Updating existing structures should also be encouraged and the process should be as simple as possible. Incentives and programs offer many ways to reignite the interest and ability for residents to invest in their existing properties. Parsons has an abundance of older, detached single-family housing, the median value of which is around \$65,000. The majority of homes are appraised at below \$150,000 in value.

This page shows a spectrum of local buildings, both used and unused, that represent these ideas at work. The following page provides some options that would augment the existing offerings.



QUADPLEX (APPLETON & S 31ST)



STACKED DUPLEX (N 18TH & CRAWFORD)



LIVE/WORK BUILDING (S 18TH & MAIN)



SIDE BY SIDE DUPLEX (WINWAY)



BUNGALOW COURT

Credit: Opticos Design



COTTAGE APARTMENTS

Credit: The Cottage Apartments



COURTYARD APARTMENTS

Credit: The New Haven Preservation Trust



DETACHED ADU

Credit: Companion Unit Handbook



GARAGE ADU

Credit: City of Kirkland Washington



LIVE-WORK HOUSING

Credit: Turner Baston



MULTIPLEX

Credit: Opticos Design



STACKED DUPLEX

Credit: AARP

Commercial Stock & Diversity

Parsons is known as a city of industry. With five industrial parks and a nationally centralized location, manufacturing opportunities are plentiful. However, for Parsons to retain residents it must also create diversity in commercial offerings. To build a strong local business community, it must provide more support to existing businesses and foster the creation of new ones. This includes mentorship and coaching. A variety of buildings for small business will be critical. Existing commercial buildings can be creatively split to result in smaller leasing spaces. New buildings of a smaller footprint will be more affordable. Structures like tents, trailers, and trucks lend themselves to pop-ups. Smaller footprint commercial buildings can also enhance a neighborhood and provide offerings within an easy walk from home. Entrepreneurship thrives when adaptable and incremental growth is provided for and encouraged. This page shows a spectrum of local buildings and structures that show these ideas at work. The following page provides some options that would augment the existing offerings.



MICRO RETAIL BUILDING



FOOD TRAILER



NEIGHBORHOOD LIVE/WORK



SMALL RETAIL SPACES



POD RETAIL

Credit: The Black Box



MICRO RETAIL

Credit: Tionesta Market Village & Rowan Rose



SMALL RETAIL

Credit: National Retail Federation



BOUTIQUE TRAILER

Credit: The Frosted Cowgirl



RETAIL TRUCK

Credit: Urban Izzy



FOOD TENTS

Credit: City of Waterloo NY



STARTUP INCUBATOR

Credit: Spellbrand



RETAIL INCUBATOR

Credit: UNC



MICRO RETAIL

Credit: Boston Real Estate Times

Neighborhoods

Some of Parsons' neighborhoods include architectural interest. Some include a great boulevard or green space. Some feature the traditional grid street layout. Some boast mature trees. Unfortunately, some neighborhoods in Parsons may only have one of these elements, and other neighborhoods lack them altogether. These are the types of features that all generations see value in and find attractive, especially the types of residents Parsons is seeking to retain and attract.

Neighborhoods in Parsons are also missing a clear identity. Identity in neighborhoods is an important element of a city where people love to live. Periodic neighborhood gatherings or block parties, a well-known name and boundary, and the sense of pride and community that is cultivated among residents is a key piece to having a unique city that people want to live in. Identity can be invested in at any stage of a neighborhood's life cycle, so Parsons has an opportunity to make this part of its future.

Walkable neighborhoods nationwide are not only becoming more popular, they are seeing values continue to increase. This is particularly true for the Millennial and Gen X generations, but it is also important for older generations for which walkable areas provide a sense of independence and comfort. The presence of sidewalks isn't enough, however; the walk must also be one that is inviting. Features like shade, distance from the street traffic, street furniture, and condition of sidewalks is paramount. Factor in small spaces for community gathering, shopping, and entertainment, and suddenly neighborhoods become destinations themselves.

Annexation

As evidenced by the city comparisons earlier in this section, Parsons is spread out and there are very few pockets of a medium density. In late 1998, the annexation of 930 acres took place that expanded Parsons' boundaries substantially. Since that time, the boundaries have remained substantially the same. It is recommended that the City not consider taking on additional land area, which will only exacerbate the financial strain of the city, and should be avoided, absent a compelling and strong reason. Current development patterns do not generate enough tax revenue to cover the extension of additional streets and utilities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

People can live anywhere in the nation and rely on their car for 100% of their needs - autocratic development looks the same everywhere. However, places where people can meet many of their needs within a short walk or bike ride makes a community special and attractive. A diversity of housing offerings creates a place where everyone can afford to live. Early residential development provides an excellent model for components of successful neighborhoods, but the vast majority of Parsons only offers single family detached homes. Additional flexibility is critical to Parsons' future of retaining and attracting new residents who expect a higher quality of life in a complete and connected neighborhood. High quality design and site layout, paired with the natural elements in Parsons, creates great potential for standing out from other southeast Kansas cities. Neighborhood identity should be fostered in order to help residents - old and new - feel connected and have pride of place.



Source: Google Earth, Accessed August 2021

Mobility

Mobility for Everyone

Transportation and land use go hand-in-hand in determining the character, safety, and resilience of a community. When neighborhoods are designed around auto-oriented development, a city will take on a more spread-out form with separated residential, shopping, and employment uses, which requires more infrastructure and generates more traffic. When a city prioritizes walkable neighborhoods, then more uses are integrated together in a compact form, resulting in fewer driving trips, healthier and safer residents, and less infrastructure to maintain. The most effective and resilient mobility systems are designed to move vehicles efficiently on roadways, while making pedestrian safety and walkability the top priority in areas where people live, work, shop and socialize. Instead of thinking in terms of “everything is accessible by car in 15 minutes,” the goal is to make most needs accessible within a 15-minute walk.



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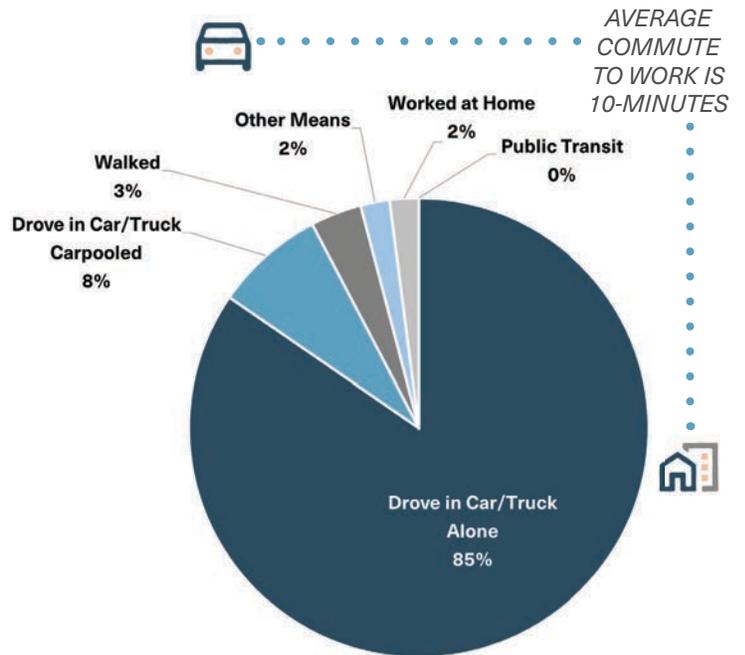
Getting Around: Car is King, but Doesn't Have to be

The majority of Parsons was built in the traditional development pattern, with a grid network of local streets and collectors expanding outward from the intersection of Main and 16th, and a few larger arterials that are managed by KDOT. A Union Pacific Railroad line runs north/south through the core of town, creating a barrier that makes it difficult to cross from the east to west sides of town except for two tunnels and a few surface crossings. Recent development has taken on a more auto-centric approach, with the widening of 16th street, construction of the 59/400 interchange, and recruitment of new commercial and industrial businesses around the 59/400 interchange.

“The biggest obstacle to vital community life are auto-dominated streets and passive public places...”

– Social Life Project

Despite the fairly compact development footprint and an established street grid connecting many neighborhoods to the downtown, Parsons residents rely almost entirely on driving to get around. Survey data shows the average commute is 10 minutes, which indicates that most residents work in the



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Accessed August 2021

community or nearby. Traffic congestion in Parsons is relatively minimal, with the exception of some rush hour delays on State Highway 59 along downtown and the occasional backup on Main Street. The primary issue with Parsons' roadways is that the majority are much wider than they need to be, which results in speeding and unsafe conditions for pedestrians.

The community's WalkScore indicates that the framework is in place for Parsons to be much more walkable than it is. However, to fulfill this potential, improvements must be made to the streets and additional local businesses need to be integrated into the neighborhoods. With these improvements, more residents could choose to drive less than they do now - a choice that market studies are showing is increasingly important to people of all ages, but especially for seniors and young professionals.



Credit: Walk Score

Walk Score measures the walkability of any address using a patented system. For each address, Walk Score analyzes hundreds of walking routes to nearby amenities. Points are awarded based on the distance to amenities in each category. Amenities within a 5 minute walk (.25 miles) are given maximum points. Scores can range from 0 to 100 and are broken down into five categories from 0-24 'Car Dependent' to 90-100 'Walker's Paradise'. (www.walkscore.com)

“Sidewalks are key to making our streets lively places that promote connection, commerce, and conviviality.”

– Social Life Project

Public Transportation

Public transportation is a challenge in small communities like Parsons. Access to taxis and ride-sharing services is limited and local healthcare non-profit CLASS offers rides within the city limits during limited service hours, but there are no regional transportation options. CLASS rides are not a reliable option for people with changing daily transportation needs or needs outside of their operating hours. While there is a major rail line that runs through the heart of the city, it currently provides no passenger service. Expansion of public transportation options is not likely, so in order to accommodate the needs of residents who do not want or are not able to drive, Parsons should prioritize making existing neighborhoods and commercial areas more accessible via cycling and walking.

Pedestrian and Bike Facilities

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities, ranging from sidewalks to bike lanes and the more comfortable shared-use paths, are also limited in Parsons. Residents interviewed and responding to surveys indicated getting around town by bike or on foot can be difficult, uncomfortable, and often dangerous. Sidewalks are inconsistent in placement and condition; some neighborhoods have internal sidewalks, but there is minimal connectivity between neighborhoods and other activity nodes. As indicated previously, many of the city's roadways are extremely wide. In the near-term, the city could improve connectivity by restriping the pavement to narrow travel lanes and add buffered bike lanes. As funds become available in the future, streets can be rebuilt to include more bike and pedestrian pathways and off-street paths can continue to be expanded to connect neighborhoods, parks, and downtown together.

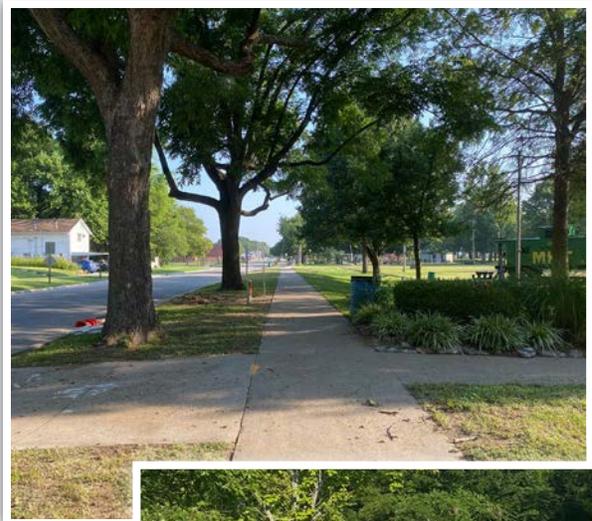


Credit: Walk Score

▶ Bike Score measures whether an area is good for biking. For a given location, a Bike Score is calculated by measuring bike infrastructure (lanes, trails, etc.), hills, destinations and road connectivity, and the number of bike commuters. Scores are based on data from the USGS, Open Street Map, and the U.S. Census. Scores can range from 0 to 100 and are broken down into five categories from 0-49 'Somewhat Bikeable' to 90-100 'Biker's Paradise'. (www.walkscore.com)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The core of the city has an established grid that provides a strong foundation for a safe, accessible, and efficient mobility network, but the wide streets are unsafe and expensive to maintain and pedestrian facilities are not sufficient to encourage people to get out of their cars. Reconfiguring the public right-of-way to reduce the width of street pavement and expand sidewalks and bike facilities would diversify mobility options while also creating the type of walkable neighborhoods that people of all ages are looking to live and move to. When walking and biking is more convenient for residents, they are far more likely to make these healthy activities a part of their daily lives.



Ideas for Catalyst Project Areas

While there are several pockets of new activity that are happening along the outskirts of Parsons in the north interchange area and industrial parks to the south, they are outside of the core city. In order to create a synergy of activity in Parsons that is necessary for new residential and commercial development interest, more centralized areas must be re-examined for opportunities to spark new ideas in established areas.

Catalyst Area 1: Neighborhood north of Main Street, between 13th & 16th Street

This neighborhood has a fiscally productive residential pattern and is ripe for infill development. This traditional neighborhood is close in proximity to Forest Park and Labette Community College, but is very disconnected from it due to a lack of adequate sidewalks and safe crossing areas along Main Street. The addition of neighborhood-scale commercial and a clear pedestrian corridor to and across Main would create a great neighborhood that displays some of the features that are proving to create property value and attracting the Millennial and Gen X age demographic.

Catalyst Area 2: Former Washington School site, 2631 Stevens Avenue

This one-block area is a prime example of an opportunity to add additional types of housing units to an established neighborhood that add diversity in housing access and type, which adds interest and uniqueness. Due to the amount of land there, it also presents an opportunity to augment the existing neighborhood with some small-scale business spaces and attractive landscaping that makes it feel like a center and anchor for this part of the city.

Catalyst Area 3: Commercial Area west of Downtown and east of 23rd Street

Being centrally located, the large expanses of surface parking and vacant buildings in this area are highly visible. The stark contrast between it and the Downtown area are very noticeable to motorists traveling down Main. This would be a great area - due to the largely unused surface parking - to experiment with incremental, temporary uses. Large, vacant big box buildings such as the one here may not be able to be filled with single tenants. However, there may be opportunities for partnerships, an incubator-style setup or maker space. It also feels very disconnected from downtown. When driving down Main heading west, once crossing under the railroad, it feels like a wholly different place. It shouldn't mimic downtown, but should present a gradual change in character that compliments it.



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3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

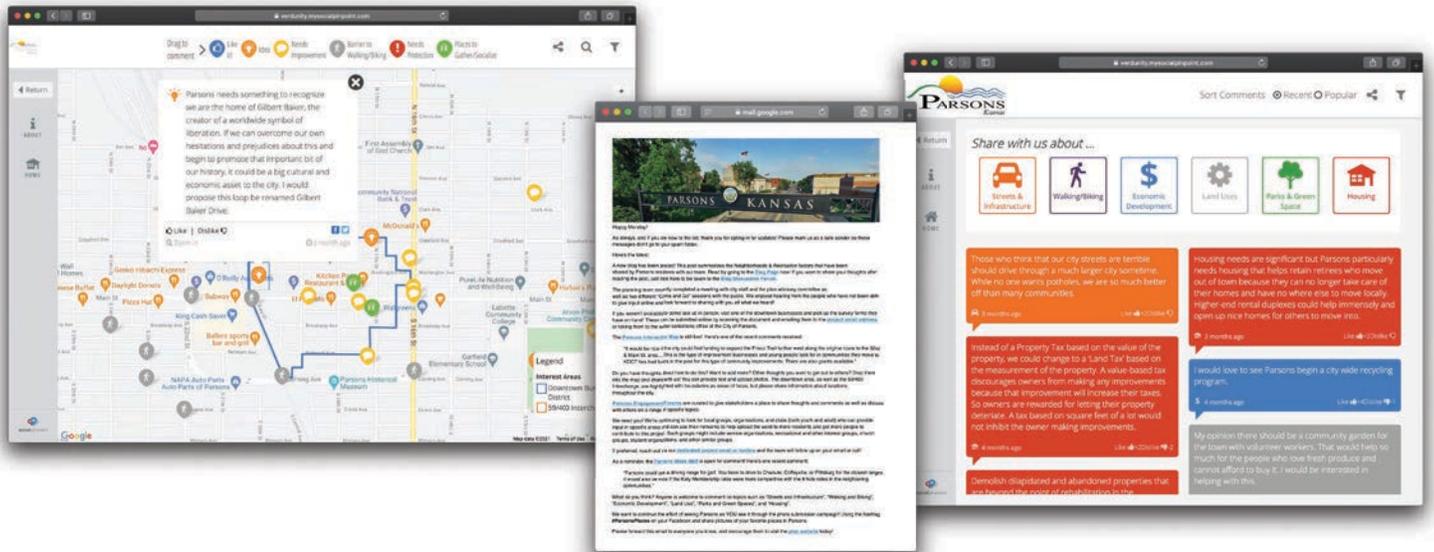
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Community Engagement Efforts

Throughout the project, residents were asked for their input using a variety of tools designed to maximize convenience in responding and sharing information. Every comment was saved and catalogued, then sorted according to subject matter. The vision, values, and major themes emerged from this effort and were funneled through the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC).

Summary of Engagement Efforts

| | Digital Survey #1 | Digital Survey #2 | Instagram | Opt-In Digital Survey | Paper Survey | Ideas Wall | Project Hotline | Project Email | Interactive Map | Blog Series | Blog Discussion Feed | Engagement Forum | Facebook | CPAC Meetings | City Commission Meetings | Come & Go In-Person Events | Local Media (Radio/Newspaper) | Interviews | Newsletters | |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------------|------------------|----------|---------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|-------------|--|
| Jan 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Feb 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| March 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| April 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| May 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| June 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| July 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Aug 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sept 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Oct 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nov 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dec 2021 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |



Results of Engagement Efforts

Summary of Engagement Efforts

A community vision is necessary to make it possible for the City of Parsons to represent its residents in the best way possible, by understanding what matters to them. It expresses what Parsons wants to become, which is the destination for which this plan creates a path.

The community vision statement finalized by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) is shown below.

A city with a storied past and a viable future, Parsons is actively working to restore and expand housing, neighborhoods, infrastructure and livability. By doing so, we plan to build a better, stronger community that is a desirable place to live, work, and retire.

Community Values

When residents are asked questions about what makes their city a great place to live, they often offer up reasons that are based on values important to them. By understanding the values of the community as a whole, decisions can be made by local leaders in a way that best fits the local culture. These are the “non negotiables”, the litmus test for policy making. In Parsons, there are four values which rose to the top.

1. Safety and Security

Parsons' desire for safety and security in part comes from the expectations of living in a “small town”. Individuals and families alike have expressed concerns about the perceived uptick in crime. Feeling safe in public spaces is critical to activity levels that make a place feel active and well-used. Once someone feels uncertain about their own or their loved ones' safety, it becomes very easy to disengage from the community as a whole. The dedication to safety can be observed with the many new initiatives that the Parsons Police Department has started in the last couple of years, which focus on arming citizens with information and data. The high level of interest that residents have expressed in safety demonstrates opportunities for a unified approach to reporting and preventing crime.

2. Citizen-Focused Service

The importance of every citizen to Parsons is recognized throughout the community. Long-term residents recognize that citizen apathy is a very real problem the community faces.

Distrust and disagreements with past actions has caused citizens to feel left out of local governance. The City's desire to create this Comprehensive Plan is one indicator that there is a will to become more inclusive in decision making. Citizen-focused government is built for the members of the community, adapting as the community changes and new needs emerge. The citizen experience can create higher levels of satisfaction, easier access, and efficiency that benefits government and citizens alike.

“Don't be afraid to be very engaged and active on social media. This is a big part of branding your community....Social media allows citizens to be heard, to share their likes, dislikes, and ideas, and to connect with leaders in a real, authentic way.”

– Quint Studer, *Building a Vibrant Community*

3. Integrity and Trust

People who call Parsons home want to have more confidence in city government. When local government openly lets the public be part of governance and provides information on how decisions are made, trust is built. Decisions that are made in a way that adhere to principles adopted by the community are more likely to be supported and defended. More frequent and direct interactions between citizens and representatives is needed and desired. For Parsons, this means having leadership that is visible, connected, and demonstrates integrity in all conduct. The results matter far less for citizens if the actions leading to those results are not trusted. Creating integrity means building a culture of open communication and information sharing.

4. Accountability

Parsons residents have seen a number of planning efforts over the past few decades. The general feelings expressed about these efforts have one central theme: a lack of accountability and a lot of inaction. The success of this planning effort

“Rural communities are in the midst of so many transitions. If we don't have the opportunity to learn each others' stories, to connect as humans, it is hard to imagine and create a future that works for all of us.”

– Michele Anderson, *Springboard for the Arts*

- and other important projects - is dependent on monitoring and reporting of progress. When progress isn't happening, explanations and alternative approaches should be the topic of discussion. Citizens tend to demand accountability from

public officials in response to frustrations they experience based on the status quo, as well as the growing belief that citizen collaboration must be done in spite of local government to solve problems. Responsiveness is another tenet of accountability. The digital age continues to fuel a swell in expectations for government accountability. For residents to feel comfortable in being held accountable themselves (a necessary part of governance) they need to see that mirrored in all elements of public service.

Community Concerns

When asked, residents expressed concerns that the pace of change in Parsons is far too slow, where Parsons is getting left behind. Many worry that being slow to adapt is holding the community back and making it harder to contend with the declines that are occurring. Changes that some feel need to move more quickly include amenities for families and teens, along with being more selective in monetary investments related to economic development. The disconnect between the level of taxes residents pay and the outcomes they see is problematic. Overall, respondents felt the speed of change needs to accelerate and be proactive in nature.

When quizzed about the biggest obstacles and frustrations, there was a multitude of responses that were grouped into nine different categories. These categories are ranked from the highest number of responses (1) to the lowest (9).

- 1 CRIME
- 2 NEED FOR NEW BUSINESSES
- 3 LACK OF ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS
- 4 NOT ENOUGH JOBS THAT PAY HIGHER WAGES
- 5 RESISTANCE TO CHANGE, EXCLUSIONARY NATURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
- 6 POOR CONDITION OF HOUSING AND PROPERTIES
- 7 POVERTY AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY
- 8 HIGH TAXES
- 9 INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEED OF MAINTENANCE/ REPAIR

When residents were asked to share what characteristics are unique to Parsons, the most popular answers were:

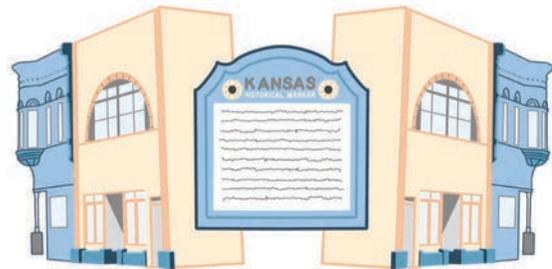
THE SMALL TOWN FEEL/CLOSE KNIT COMMUNITY



THE ABUNDANCE OF PARKS, TRAILS, AND NATURE



ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS AND RICH HISTORY



EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS



HIGH LEVEL OF HEALTHCARE AVAILABLE



Improving Community Relations

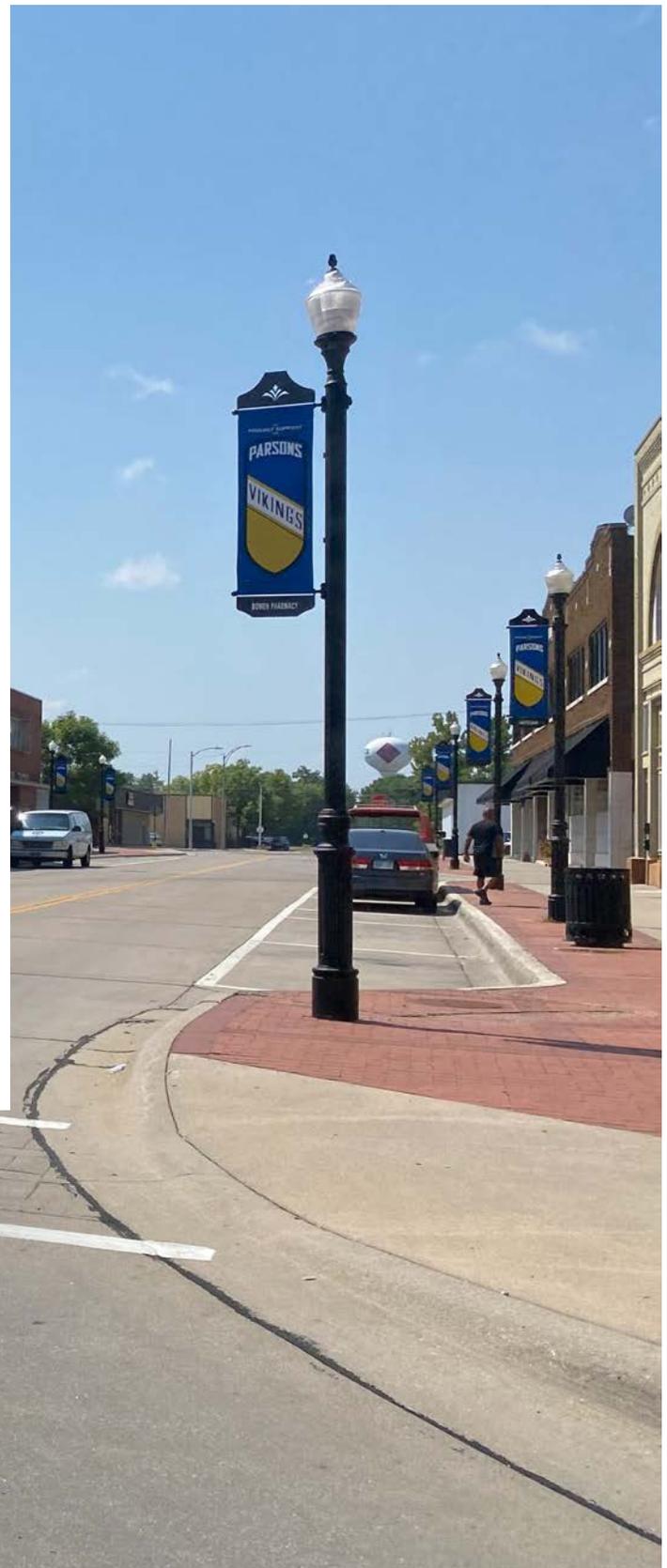
There is an undercurrent of disengagement that seems to have formed over many years. The reflection of that disengagement was observed during this comprehensive planning effort in the following ways:

1. A lack of local agency cooperation and data sharing;
2. A lack of engagement and participation within the organization;
3. A lack of interest in public engagement and participation; and,
4. A lack of belief that this effort could result in positive community change.

Citizen engagement and education about ongoing and upcoming efforts, projects, and expenditures must be a continuous process in order to cultivate a culture of trust and collaboration. A key priority of every community should include the investments necessary to bring about an informed public who is routinely engaged in local conversations. In order for this plan to be implemented (and ultimately successful) this partnership with residents is critical.

“Today, people and businesses can choose to live or work anywhere. Communities that cannot differentiate themselves will simply have no competitive advantage. This means that quality of life is more important than ever. Successful communities set themselves apart.”

– Edward T. McMahon, Chairman, National Main Street Center



4. MAJOR THEMES

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Related Documents

The City of Parsons has several plans and reports which it provided for review as part of this plan's preparation. Below is a summary of the key takeaways from each.

Comprehensive Plan, City of Parsons, 2000

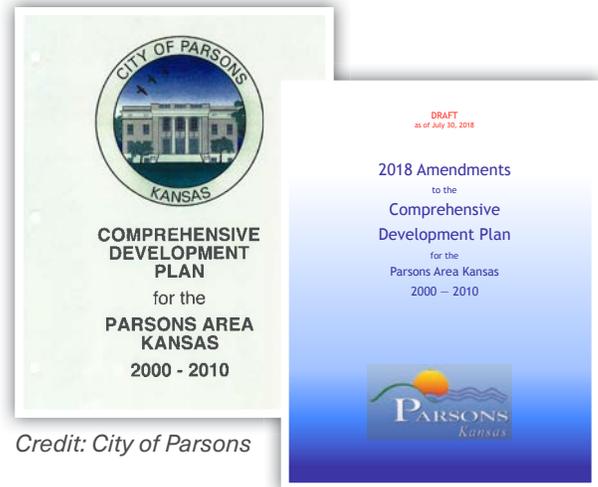
- The population trend has shown a steady decrease over time. Methods of attracting new residents and stabilizing the population is important.
- The downtown core needs strengthening.
- Pursue a diversified local economy.
- Encouraging the construction of housing for all sectors of the population.
- Protecting the community through visual aesthetics, natural features, and a high quality of residential areas.
- Coordinate with regional and state entities on street and highway updates.
- Continue expanding the water and sewer systems as development demands.
- Encourage citizen participation in decision making.
- Create a formalized Capital Improvement Program.

Housing Needs Assessment, City of Parsons, 2018

- The presence of Labette Community College leverages a significantly higher percentage of younger residents in Parsons than other parts of the state.
- There is a shortage of housing in all price ranges below \$300,000.
- The average annual demand from 2018 to 2020 was 21 units.

Current Themes

Public feedback is highly personalized and specific, but by grouping like responses, themes begin to emerge. These themes are described here. Together with the vision, these themes form the foundation for Parsons' direction over the next twenty years. These themes will serve as the basis for the Implementation Strategy and Action Plan outlined in Chapter 6. Themes provide insights into the community's top priorities and concerns at this point in time. Identifying strategies and actions that address these themes is key to keeping the community focused.



Credit: City of Parsons

Taking Control of the Narrative

For most of its history, Parsons has been known as a rail town. Since the sale of Katy Industries to Union Pacific and the decline in railroad jobs, the identity of Parsons has been somewhat unclear, according to residents. The community has demonstrated its commitment to maintaining and documenting its history throughout 2021, as it celebrates its 150th birthday. Unfortunately, the level of engagement and allocation of resources put promoting and participating in the comprehensive planning process paled in comparison. Many pieces of input received from the public shared the assertion that it is time for something new that sets Parsons apart from other rural Kansas cities. A general feeling that Parsons is slowly dying and that prospects aren't good in changing that trajectory was expressed.



Credit: City of Parsons

Address Population Decline

The data outlined in Chapter 2 confirms a lasting decline in population that continues to be an issue on which Parsons must be focused. Engagement responses from residents highlight a lack of professional or executive level jobs as one driving force, along with the constraints of housing availability and affordability. The perceived lack of entertainment and social limitations is also a factor. While it is natural to want to focus on creating growth, this cannot happen until Parsons can stop the rural flight taking place. Many residents feel that will be a difficult trend to stop or reverse.

“A thriving nighttime economy is critical for fostering a vibrant city.”

– Jeffrey Spivak

Demonstrate Ethical Stewardship

One of the most prevalent themes emerging from responses to surveys, interviews, and online tools is a sense of profound apathy. Residents strongly desire a spirit of “leading by example” in local government. The process of decision making, communicating how those decisions are made, and consideration of resources is one that has the power to erode - or build - public trust. Given the current spread of apathy into all levels of government across the nation, the effort of establishing more clarity and inclusion from City Hall outward could greatly set Parsons apart from other cities.

**“Let’s start by looking at what doesn’t work. Have you ever been to a city council meeting?”
“It’s a very pretty picture of how democracy works. It’s also easily stacked against ordinary citizens.”**

– Gavin Newsom, *Citizenville*

Establish and Invest in Quality Places

A sense of place is critical to identity in cities. There are some barriers to overcome in Parsons as it relates to the patronizing of local businesses, providing mobility within neighborhoods, and building a rich local flavor that appeals to residents and visitors alike. The talents, interests, geographic influences, and history of Parsons provides a broad foundation on which quality places can be created. Quality places and a 24/7 downtown environment are imperative to reversing the population trend; recruiting industry to the periphery of town is not going to accomplish this.

“Leadership needs to be treated as a renewable, developable resource. The process starts with the recognition that boundaries are blurred, admitting we do not know everything even in our specialist fields. A culture that sees this as a strength has far more resilience, honesty and need not operate on bluff. Partnership is thus essential.”

– Charles Landry, *The Creative City*

Improve Organizational Partnerships

Interviews and responses indicated mixed reviews as it relates to the partnership between the City of Parsons and other local organizations. These relationships require diligent and ongoing efforts. Without a commitment to open communication and working together, efforts in Parsons quickly become isolated and separate, working on altogether different paths. An advantage to a smaller community is that it is much easier to shift towards an integrated model of partnering.

Involve and Engage Residents

One clear take away from discussions with people who live and work in Parsons is clear: residents feel disconnected. They have a strong desire for more information and knowledge about what is happening in the community and why. The traditional City Commission meeting format is not meeting the needs of community members, and there is cynicism about whether this plan will be implemented and when. This level of disconnect has formed over time, and therefore will not be remedied immediately, but will necessitate a consistent and ongoing effort.

Tackle Housing and Property Issues

Issues related to property upkeep and housing (affordability, condition, and availability) are at the forefront of residents’ minds. These issues detract from the attractiveness of Parsons, and ultimately lead people to choose to live outside the community - even many who work in Parsons. These challenges have been present for many years, and the lack of tradespeople who can take on remodels and new construction presents a significant hurdle to overcome.

Preserve What’s Good

From hidden gems around Parsons to an active downtown, there is a lot of good in Parsons. When things work, they are examples of all that is possible and can be duplicated in new and different ways. Community pride is still present, and there is a universal recognition that the people and businesses are committed to this city they call home. Fresh eyes can provide observations of elements that may be taken for granted, and recognizing excellence is an exercise that rarely gets the attention it deserves.

“Where local governments focus on the residents of the community, it is most often in the context of considering them customers whose needs and expectations are to be satisfied in a cheerful manner, instead of collaborators in a joint project known as the city.”

– Charles Marohn, *Strong Towns*



5. FUTURE DECISIONS AND LAND USE

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Policy Decisions

Principles to Apply

During the process of public engagement, residents of Parsons were asked to identify the principles they felt most important in making decisions for the community. Four principles were selected as highest priority, and should be discussed when making decisions about city policy, spending, and governance.

| Principles Identified by Respondents | Related Community Values (Ch. 3) | Examples |
|--|---|--|
| Livability (the factors that add up to a community's quality of life) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety & Security Citizen-Focused Service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding decisions for improvements or maintenance Adopting, amending, creating, or reducing regulations and enforcement Short and long term planning decisions |
| Local Economy (promoting economic diversity, maintaining a business-friendly environment) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen-Focused Service Integrity & Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding decisions for economic development incentives Administering programs or partnering with other agencies on programs Managing of City staff Maintaining, applying, and updating regulations for development |
| Efficiency (delivering services in a cost effective and resource conscious manner) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety & Security Citizen-Focused Service Integrity & Trust Accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlining of processes through additional City staff or technology Considering changes in policy of service delivery Putting together the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget |
| Transparency (open information sharing that fosters accountability and honesty while inviting anyone to participate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen-Focused Service Integrity & Trust Accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting the annual budgeting process Short and long term planning decisions Adopting, amending, creating, or reducing regulations and enforcement |

Key Questions for Decision Making

- Does funding this item enhance Parsons' level of livability/the local economy/level of efficiency/level of transparency?
- How would the proposed policy contribute to livability/the local economy/efficiency/ transparency in Parsons?
- By regulating _____, can we improve the livability/ local economy/efficiency/ transparency in Parsons?
- How would the proposed plan contribute to livability/the local economy/efficiency/ transparency?
- Is there an alternate approach that would provide more benefits for livability/the local economy/efficiency/ transparency?
- Does this request improve livability/the local economy/ efficiency/ transparency for the overall community? If not, is there a way to accomplish this?

“Collaboration is not just another tactic for addressing public concerns. It is a means for building social capital, sustaining a democratic society and transforming a civic culture.”

– David Chrislip

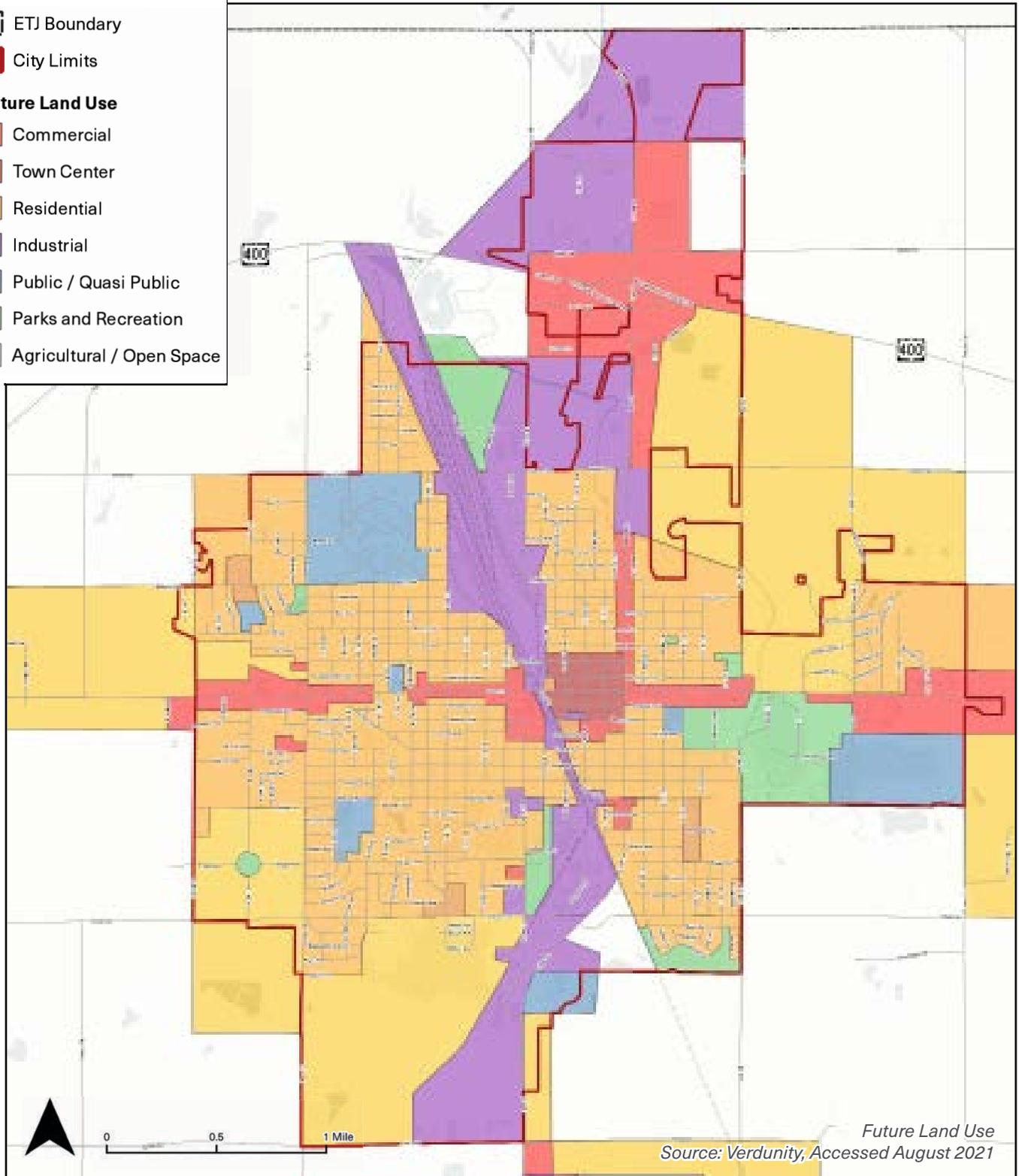
“Inclusivity means creating a strong participatory culture, with the active involvement of all members in planning and decision making.”

– Quint Studer, *Building a Vibrant Community*

Future Land Use Map (FLUM)

The Future Land Use Map, or FLUM for short, is an important part of this plan. Zoning and land use decisions are to be made in a manner that is consistent with this plan now and in the future. In order to create a tool that will provide options for the community as needs and proposals change, this map includes land use categories that are more flexible than the 2000 Comprehensive Plan's map.

-  ETJ Boundary
-  City Limits
- Future Land Use**
-  Commercial
-  Town Center
-  Residential
-  Industrial
-  Public / Quasi Public
-  Parks and Recreation
-  Agricultural / Open Space



Future Land Use
Source: Verdunity, Accessed August 2021

How to Use This Map

Each piece of property within the city limits of Parsons and within its extraterritorial jurisdiction (property within a three mile radius of the city limits which is not part of another city) has a designated land use category. In land use decisions, there should be a six step process for evaluation of the requests that leads to a staff recommendation. This recommendation be forwarded, along with the application or request, to the board(s) who will be considering it.

1. Consult the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) to see what category or categories the property is labeled.
2. Review the land use category description(s) and determine if the request or proposal is consistent.
3. Review the request in the context of the Land Use Guiding Principles.
4. Staff prepares a written recommendation that identifies the best fit, given this review.
5. The information is presented to the appropriate board(s).

Future Land Use Categories

Category Descriptions

COMMERCIAL

The commercial land use category includes a wide variety of office and retail uses. The intensity of such uses should be predicated on the types of Land Use Context Clues that are present in the location. High intensity office uses would generally be multi-story. High intensity retail uses would often be big box retail or retail uses intended to occupy over half an acre. Other types of high intensity commercial uses would include sites over half an acre with warehousing, service-oriented, mechanical, distribution and outside storage.

TOWN CENTER

The town center use category is intended for a mixture of non-residential and residential land uses. In this area, vertical mixed use incorporates multiple uses on different floors of a single building. The traditional example is ground floor retail or dining with residential and office on the higher floors.

RESIDENTIAL

The residential land use category includes many components. One is a low density approach to residential, where single-family detached residences are placed in areas that include both the traditional subdivision as well as key areas of infill in older subdivisions where vacant lots exist. Other types of residential products include single-family attached units like townhomes, patio homes, duplexes and accessory dwelling units are appropriate here, based on the

Land Use Context clues. In key locations where the context indicates, courtyard style apartments, and multi-family units of various sizes may also be located effectively.

INDUSTRIAL

The industrial land use type is generally characterized by the manufacturing or assembly of products. This intensity level makes placement important, as they are reliant on access to freight and rail.

PUBLIC / QUASI PUBLIC

This land use category includes facilities for public, governmental, educational, institutional, and/or religious purposes. It is anticipated that, as these entities continue to grow and desire expansion for their facilities, the Future Land Use Map will need to be updated to accommodate them.

PARKS AND RECREATION

This land use designation includes public and private parks, sports fields, and other types of recreational facilities. New and planned facilities should be added through an amendment to the Future Land Use Map when they are identified.

Category Descriptions Continued

AGRICULTURAL / OPEN SPACE

This land use designation includes areas which exist in their original state as well as farmland and conservation land which exists around the outskirts of the community or in the county. If at some point development begins to occur in these areas, the Future Land Use Map should be re-examined and potentially updated to accommodate those changes in the decades to come.

GATEWAY

The gateway land use designation is used along key entrances into Parsons that bring vehicular traffic along the highway access points of 24000 Road/Main Street from the east and west, Highway 59 from the north and south, and Highway 400 from the north. Visitors from these directions will form a first impression based on the appearance of the highway corridor in these locations. In these areas, appearance and site planning is just as important as use. These gateways are appropriate for commercial and retail uses with buildings that sit closer to the street with parking behind the rear of the buildings. Where industry is considered, outside storage should be screened and placed at the rear of the building, along with the parking. Welcome signage, landscaping that includes trees or buffers, ornamental lighting, and sidewalks or trails all give a gateway its own identity and feel. Design standards would be appropriate for these locations to create a cohesive look and obtain higher-quality-than-average architectural features and facades than what retailers typically propose. Improving the quality of these gateways will help to avoid the types of rapid aging that other corridors within the city have witnessed.

“Businesses want to invest in cities with a young workforce....Creating a great place to live will attract young people to a city and keep them there.”

– Quint Studer, *Building a Vibrant Community*

Land Use Guiding Principles

During hearings on land use requests (such as rezoning), each body involved in the decision making process should discuss how the principles listed below apply to what is being requested. These provide a higher level of consideration and when applied will preserve the vision for Parsons now and in the future.

- Determine that the decision will not create an arbitrary development pattern.
- Plan for an adequate and diverse supply of housing for all income levels.
- Diversify the types of commercial activity.
- Consider public safety as it relates to future developments.
- Protect and promote areas of historical and cultural significance.
- Avoid creating undesirable precedents.
- Keep infrastructure in mind when making land use decisions.
- Promote redevelopment and infill that meets community needs and is complementary to the neighborhood.
- Reinforce neighborhood identity and investment where possible.
- Maintain a safe and efficient street network while increasing bicycle and pedestrian connections to key destinations within and around neighborhoods.

6. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

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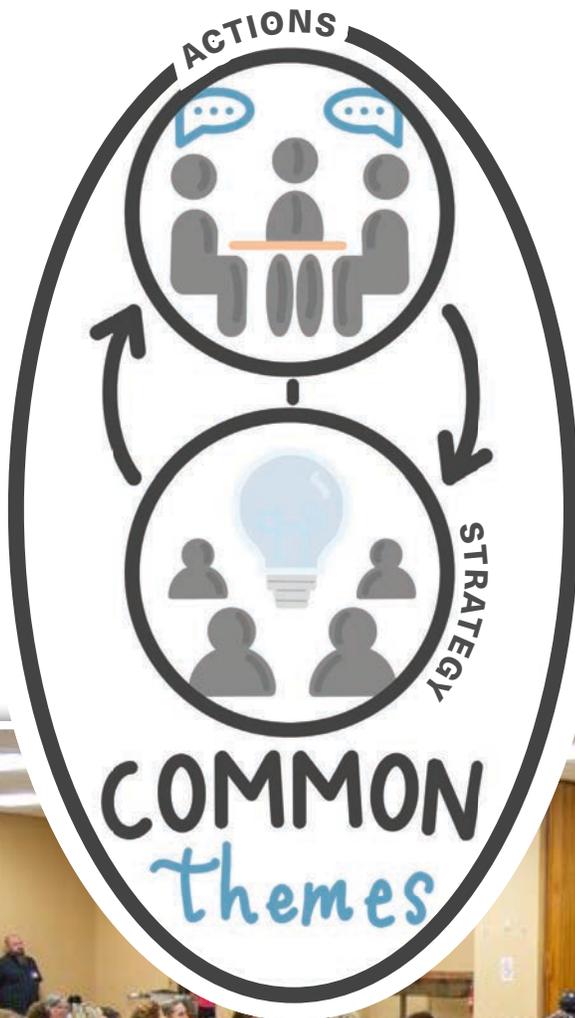
Using the Implementation Strategy & Action Plan

Annual Reporting & Updates

The annual update of this plan will be critical to maintaining an updated Implementation Strategy & Action Plan - this is the time to cross off completed items and add new ones that tie to the themes identified by the community. An annual reporting structure is recommended that shows the status of each action (not started, in progress, or completed) and summarizes the latest update. This is the opportunity to discuss modifications or resources that may be needed as well as any challenges or need for direction from the City Commission.

“Those who initiate change will have a better opportunity to manage the change that is inevitable.”

– William Pollard



Credit: Parsons Chamber



Where to Start: Five Things to Do Right Away

1. Put together a formalized Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for a five year period, updating each year as part of the budgeting process. An accompanying annual process needs to include identification of projects, creation of project sheets, prioritization of projects, and funding. Examples of the types of improvements to be included in this plan are listed below. The highest priority capital projects should be those that address aging infrastructure needs while stabilizing or enhancing property values in the vicinity. This approach maximizes the return on investments.

- Drainage projects
- Utility infrastructure projects
- Parks and trails
- Sidewalk projects
- City buildings (construction, renovation, and maintenance)
- Land, easement and right-of-way acquisition
- Major equipment and vehicle purchases
- Planning and design studies
- Aesthetic enhancements (gateway treatments, streetscaping upgrades, wayfinding signage)
- Major technology purchases

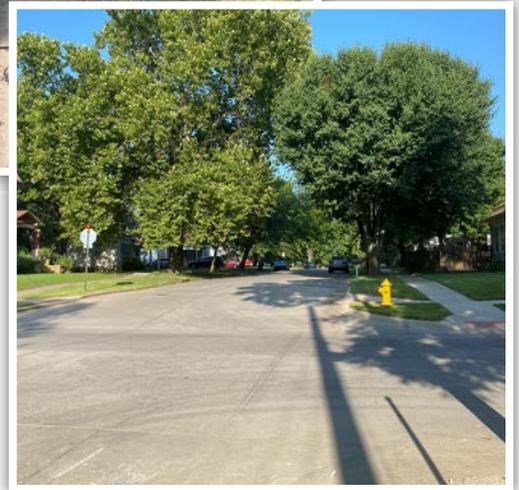
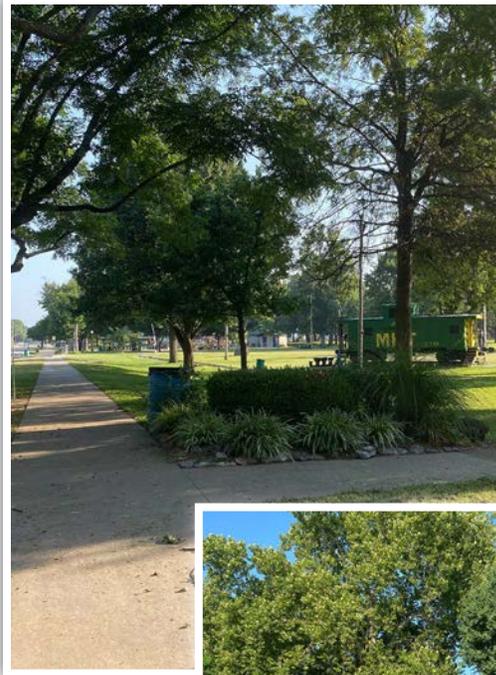
2. Pursue an update of zoning and sign regulations to make them compliant with state and federal case law and regulations, the Comprehensive Plan, and the dire need for housing.

3. Assemble a Cultivators' Cabinet, a coalition of local leaders and organizations to implement the comprehensive plan, empower the community, avoid duplication of efforts, and make the community more efficient and effective.

- This group should act as the central group working to implement the Comprehensive Plan from the moment of adoption. Guidelines for the Cultivators' Cabinet are in A.8.

4. Diversify the city's economic development strategy to move away from an economy solely reliant on a few large industries or employers.

5. Adopt a Property Maintenance Code and integrate it with a property maintenance assistance program for residents with physical limitations.



“Building community isn’t about being on the balcony and broadcasting a message to a mass of listeners below. Building community is about getting out into the crowd, talking to individuals, and making connections.”

– Barry J. Moltz and Becky McCray, *Small Town Rules*

“People need to see short-term wins to believe that bigger things are possible...You will build momentum every time you take action and implement something, just like exercising a muscle.”

– Ilana Preuss, *Recast Your City*

Implementation Strategy & Action Plan

The table beginning on the next page outlines a series of strategies which align with the themes identified in the analysis and engagement processes. Each strategy is broken down into specific actions. Some are actions for which the City will be responsible for leading. Others require collaboration between the City and residents.

Actions are broken down into Year 1 through Year 5. Year 1 is the first 12 months following adoption of this comprehensive plan. Year 2 is 12-24 months following adoption, and so on. Some are ongoing actions that necessitate efforts on an annual basis.

Strategies & Actions

| | Themes | | | | | | | Target Implementation | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Taking Control of the Narrative | Stop Population Decline | Demonstrate Ethical Stewardship | Establish and Invest in Quality Places | Improve Organizational Partnerships | Involve and Engage Residents | Tackle Housing and Property Issues | Preserve The Good | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| Strategy: Tell a Unified Story | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify and designate one central position or office tasked with telling Parsons' story and sharing it to a local, regional, and state level. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Launch an annual campaign to solicit stories from local residents and businesses. Create a package of short video interviews that feature these stories, including why people choose to make Parsons home, and what their hopes for Parsons' future is. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Share video content widely, coordinating with all local partners and agencies, regional, and state. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a marketing campaign for Parsons targeting small business that includes information about available space for lease or sale, incentives available, and why Parsons is the right place to foster entrepreneurship. Work with organizational partners who can offer virtual and in-person training on various elements of small business knowledge and operations. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Ground the Story with Data and Facts | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Utilize the current crime reports put out by the police department, and host regular podcasts, in-person town halls or virtual sessions where the statistics are discussed. Control the urge for more information to be interpreted by readers as evidence of higher crime. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Help Parsons residents understand what economic development efforts are happening by creating a regular report that is shared by the City, written in a way that is approachable and offers lots of information, similar to what the police department is doing. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| As each year's annual budget is complete, share information with the public that is easy to understand and explains how dollars are allocated, clearing up confusion about how certain funds can be spent, and tying these budgeting decisions to the values and themes of this plan. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Create a City Brand | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Build an experience-based rural place brand for the community. Experience-based branding includes outdoor activities (ecotourism), highlighting rural skills and trades, and focuses on offering 1-2 days of unique experiences for visitors. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Perform a content review and update on the City's main page and across all subpages, as well as the Grow Parsons website. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Update the relocation guide to better feature local services, businesses, and contacts. Include ways for new residents to get involved in the community and with the City. Add information about elements unique to Kansas that out-of-state arrivals may not know. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Build on Parsons' natural beauty and outdoor amenities by augmenting them and better promoting Parsons as a place for people to "get outside". | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify a marketing slogan for Parsons. Reiterate this slogan on banners throughout the downtown and gateways into Parsons. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Stop Out Migration | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a job placement program for graduates from area high schools, including all sectors of the local economy. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Partner with the County to create a scholarship program to Labette Community College, focused on keeping young talent in the community. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Integrate college students into the community through city-wide semester kickoff events and a local "adopt a student" program that matches local families with college students. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Put together an "exit interview" type questionnaire for high school and junior college students and distribute prior to the end of each school year. Include queries about their future plans, their thoughts on Parsons, and suggestions to make the community a place they would want to stay. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Attract New Residents | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Conduct low-cost market research using social media targeting young families, entrepreneurs, singles, and working professionals in small- to mid-size cities around the area. Learn what they are looking for in a place in terms of place, housing, employment, and quality of life. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Put out a Request for Qualifications for builders and tradespeople in the area as a first step to assembling a team capable of building residential products in the area. Survey area banks and make a call for investors to identify interest while reducing individual risk by spreading it across the group. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | Themes | | | | | | | Target Implementation | | | | | |
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| Offer relocation stipend for new residents. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Provide tuition reimbursement to students in exchange for staying in Parsons for a prescribed period of time. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Advertise Parsons in increasingly unaffordable states where people may consider relocation to more affordable areas, like southeast Kansas. Feature the stories of people who chose Parsons, as well as those who may have left and later returned. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify a location to pursue placement of a small-scale senior housing project. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Become a Destination | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Build on the work already happening in downtown to make it a center for activity, meaning people have at least 8-10 things they can accomplish with one visit. For example – picking up a gift, viewing art, meeting a friend, listening to music, walking their dog, experience history, eating lunch, and many other possibilities. Promote all the things people can accomplish with one visit to this downtown. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Begin a campaign to highlight locals and local businesses making unique and handcrafted products. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pursue and incentivize unique food & drink destinations of all sizes, from the food cart to brick & mortar. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create picture-worthy areas around Parsons that present opportunities for social media posts on platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Capitalize on Current Trends | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Utilize the expected upgrades to Labette County broadband access to promote Parsons as a low-cost and interesting place to relocate for people engaged in remote work. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Explore options for a partnership to create a coworking space in downtown. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ensure that regulations allow & encourage small footprint retail, food carts/trucks/trailers, microunits, and temporary vendors. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Utilize a marketing strategy to tell the unique stories behind Parsons' local businesses. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Use a pop-up approach to create nightlife – host dances, outdoor movies, food festivals, games, wine tasting, classes, music, etc. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Work to attract and invest in businesses open during evening hours, to create a more active nightlife. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Commit to Inclusive Decision Making | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Embed on City website a location for residents to sign up for news. This news should include a City newsletter (monthly or quarterly) and calls for volunteers. The list should get notified when agendas, minutes, and videos of meetings are posted. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hold an annual budget Q&A session for the public in a casual local location (like a local business). | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Update the annual budget format to one that is explanatory and easy to follow. Nearby examples include Atchison and Arkansas City. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a “people’s agenda” for each commission meeting that clearly outlines for each agenda item what the decision being made, the amount being considered, or the question being asked is. Put the agendas out at least a week in advance and post it on social media channels as well as around the community in official – and unofficial – places where people gather. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design a survey to go out after each community event to get feedback on the event from residents’ perspectives. Poll business owners to see how their businesses were impacted by the event. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Adopt a policy for recruitment of board and commission members, including a commitment to diversity and representation in appointment of members. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Encourage Open Dialogue | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Provide a quarterly update from each City department at a Commission meeting that is recorded and shared on website and social media for people to watch on demand. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a monthly city newsletter that highlights project updates, money being secured and how it will be used, and shows how monthly efforts fit into the adopted values and vision of Parsons. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish a public relations and engagement City position. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | Themes | | | | | | | Target Implementation | | | | | |
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| Organize a work session with all community partners to discuss the tension between additional training for job candidates and the willingness of local businesses to pay those candidates more. All involved groups must understand the implications of their choices and have a clear path forward. Brainstorm mitigation measures to help supplement those gaps. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Put together an annual legislative and advocacy agenda identifying the top issues needing attention at the state and federal levels of government and creating a plan for how Parsons city leaders will proactively reach out to elected officials to represent Parsons' needs. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Provide annual evaluations of the City's services to ensure they meet the needs of the community. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Look into creating an app for residents to stay informed about emergency preparedness, ongoing events, and utility outages. Allow users to report problems and access recordings of City meetings. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Expand and build on the "Walk Your Neighborhood" program. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Interact with twenty-somethings and younger by creating a City Instagram or Snapchat, as Facebook is inadequate for communicating with all age groups of residents. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Proactively facilitate dialogue on City-managed social media pages. Correct misinformation when it happens, be responsive to questions, and let other users know they are being heard. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Utilize the USPS "Every Door" program to distribute clear, simple educational pieces and promotion. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Create a Culture of Ownership | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Clearly advertise and spell out a clear and simple path for residents who want to be involved. Identify a point of contact at the City to organize volunteers and involve them in plan implementation. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hold periodic contests (blogs, videos, photography, volunteer project ideas) that capture and magnify the voices of Parsons' youth and demonstrate a commitment to a town that will be shaped by these age groups. Winning submissions should become part of the marketing campaigns that highlight and promote Parsons. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Work with neighborhood associations, interest groups, and local partners to coordinate neighborhood cleanups and free bulk trash drop off. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Utilize volunteers to collect research and help write simple grant and loan applications. For more complex applications, utilize Parsons' membership in the Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish performance measures as part of annual budgeting that clarify roles of city departments and set expectations for each year. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hold at least one commission meeting per month for discussion and dialogue in a neighborhood location. Record the meetings. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement a continuous monitoring system that documents development decisions and tracks growth to complete a yearly assessment by the City Commission on how/if the City is pursuing the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. This prevents the "plan on a shelf" phenomenon that is common in cities. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create an Adopt-a-Spot program to support park and property clean up and improvements and the sponsorship of public properties. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Be Prudent About Assets and Resources | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify green spaces which are passive, meaning that it isn't utilized at all or by multiple age groups. Brainstorm ideas for making these active areas which multiple age groups can interact with. Make these ideas part of the five year Capital Improvements Plan. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lead a collaboration between the Labette Community College and the local school districts to identify a plan for improving their college prep ratings. Identify where additional resources could be leveraged to assist. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Convert portions of unnecessarily wide asphalt streets to linear green space. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a strategic plan by neighborhood that looks at specific properties and choreographs when demolition and improvements occurs. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stop building new infrastructure. Focus on maintenance of existing infrastructure and redeveloping within that framework. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Consider the Long-term Consequences | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Carefully prioritize expansion of City staff positions, as those decisions often limit what forward progress the City can accomplish. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish development standards that will result in a pattern that is fiscally productive, ahead of that type of development occurring. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | Themes | | | | | | | Target Implementation | | | | | |
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| Shift the primary economic development strategy from recruiting industry along the outskirts to growing and supporting the downtown and local business base. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish a vacant property and building registration requirement. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Include in discussions of policy and spending the indirect consequences that may be part of the decisions. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Enhance & Preserve Character of the Community | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a matching grant program for façade improvement, sign updates, and maintenance/upkeep of facades and signage. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Set up a community crosswalk program, where neighborhoods can apply for the award of supplies paint colorful crosswalks to enhance safety and bring uniqueness to their corner of Parsons. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify accessibility measures that can be added to local parks and make part of the Capital Improvements Plan. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Take measures to protect and add to the urban tree canopy throughout Parsons. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strengthen screening and landscaping requirements to utilize landscaping and existing natural vegetation to better integrate land uses while protecting and preserving quality of life. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Become a Haven for Local Entrepreneurship | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Promote and encourage Parsons residents to use the University of Kansas' Redtire service, which matches business owners ready to retire and sell their existing business with young entrepreneurs interested in owning and running a business. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Approach local high schools and junior college to create a series of sessions and resources to encourage entrepreneurship in youth. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a retail incubator and coworking space. The City can use ED funds and encourage local investors and banks to be part of funding it. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Offer rent-free business space as part of a "Shark Tank" contest for start-up businesses. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Make free membership in a coworking space and housing discounts available to entrepreneurs. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Assemble a group of pro bono or discounted services to offer assistance to start up businesses, including legal, administrative, accounting, marketing, e-commerce, mentorship, and financial. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tap into the large senior population, a group shown to be successful in entrepreneurship and mentorship, and who may have an interest in local investment. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Infuse Places with Local Flavor | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Begin a mural program honoring the area's heritage and featuring local talent for blank walls of commercial buildings. This is a way to inspire community engagement by including residents in the selection process. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Relocate the farmers market downtown to create a center of activity by scheduling outside normal M-F business hours. Coordinate with downtown businesses and proactively recruit vendors, farmers, and products. Provide outdoor temporary seating and entertainment. Advertise widely in the region. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Recruit local talent to share that talent with the community through concerts, classes, and other types of events that demonstrate the variety of Parsons residents. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Activate Forgotten Spaces | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Turn the area under the bridge on Main (between Central and 22nd) into a unique lighting display or art space. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bring activity and interest to vacant lots downtown on a temporary basis with outdoor seating, music, string lights and outdoor movie nights. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create an art and maker space by offering a centrally-located vacant building for no or low rent as an incubator for creative arts. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design & administer a funding program that contributes to and incentivizes 2nd and 3rd floors downtown to add more housing within the current footprint. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Map vacant properties and buildings throughout the city limits of Parsons, identify property ownership, and proactively reach out to owners once a property maintenance code has been adopted. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | Themes | | | | | | | Target Implementation | | | | | |
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| Determine the situations where voluntary relinquishment of vacant properties and buildings may be possible (in exchange for forgiveness of liens or fines) or purchase. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Create, Restore, and Maintain Partnerships | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Assemble a simple two page guide on establishing a neighborhood association and share widely. Designate a City staff member to function as the point of contact for coordination and information sharing with the organizations. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hold an annual or biannual joint workshop with the County to keep communications open and identify common challenges where collaboration is most helpful. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Invite key partners to provide periodic reports at City Commission meetings or workshops, such as: Labette Health, USD 503 & USD 506, Labette Community College, Parsons State Hospital, etc. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Form a Youth Advisory Committee to act as advisors to the City Commission and provide a perspective not currently present in decision making, while grooming future leaders. Include junior high, high school, and junior college students. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a frequent, interactive, and supportive dialogue between the Chamber, downtown businesses, and other local businesses. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Partner with Boys & Girls Club of Labette County to hold events for youth in Parsons. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reach out to the Habitat for Humanity closest in proximity (Pittsburg) to inquire about possibilities for a Habitat in Parsons. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Work with local banks to create a financial education program (in person or online course) for first-time home buyers. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Approach and collaborate with local banks and corporate employers to create buyers assistance programs that provide gap financing to purchase homes in neighborhoods with declining values. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Look Outward | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Obtain Kansas Certified Sites designation for Parsons' many industrial parks. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reach out to area communities in bordering counties and create a system for cross-promoting their events in Parsons while they promote Parsons events in their communities. Most of these are within an easy drive for people who live in this area. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Discuss viability of investing in existing baseball/softball or tennis facilities and expanding to attract youth tournaments. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Utilize the wide range of resources outlined in A.1, A.2, and A.3 to fund and/or partner on projects of all sizes. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Use Opportunity Zones to incentivize capital investment into new housing. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pursue the establishment of a housing cooperative. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Set up meetings with residential builders in nearby regions to assess their willingness to consider Parsons for building, and under what conditions they would consider it. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Advertise state and federal home ownership programs and provide information about available resources for first-time home buyers, down payment assistance, loan programs, and other types of programs. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Update & Streamline Regulations | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organize and offer on website a simple one page application and an accelerated approval process for street closures to encourage neighborhood activities and block parties. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Eliminate regulatory barriers to home occupations. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a "code team" for making redevelopment of properties quick and efficient. This is a group of City decisionmakers well-versed in the codes for building, fire, zoning, and trades. Make them available to meet on-site or virtually with those interested in developing in Parsons. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Adopt the 2018 International Existing Building Code to make renovation of existing buildings more straightforward. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Revamp regulations to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lower minimum lot sizes. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Eliminate minimum parking standards. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | Themes | | | | | | | | Target Implementation | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Taking Control of the Narrative | Stop Population Decline | Demonstrate Ethical Stewardship | Establish and Invest in Quality Places | Improve Organizational Partnerships | Involve and Engage Residents | Tackle Housing and Property Issues | Preserve The Good | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| Allow the next level of density in all residential districts (for ex, two family units in single family zoning). | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Conduct an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan and update the plan every 5 years to keep the vision and plan fresh and up-to-date. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Assess existing zoning districts for their ability to accommodate trends in housing. Amend or develop zoning districts where gaps exist. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Enhance Safety | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Add lighting to trails. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Revamp and enforce regulations for visibility at intersections and other areas where plant growth restricts the view of motorists. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ensure that centralized parking lots in the downtown area and other shopping locations are adequately lighted. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Put together a Citizens Police Academy to help staff security for events and participate in neighborhood watches and maximize police funds. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Seek Out Talent | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design an easy, 1-2 hour orientation and onboarding process for board and commission members prior to their first official meetings. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organize a biannual recruitment session for the public to learn about the various boards and commissions on which they could serve for the community. Cover the subject matter and purpose for each, the term length and expectations of members. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Complete a pay equity and salary assessment for City employees. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Make a commitment to identify adequate resources to hire experienced talent and leadership for City positions. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design a five year plan to incrementally bring pay for FD and PD employees up to a competitive level. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Build pride in City organization. Recognize excellent work, reward/celebrate as well as create a culture of discipline and service. Offer perks that other cities don't to help with low salaries until they can be increased. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Make the Right Choices Easy | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Promote periodic purging and property maintenance by hosting an annual citywide garage sale, donating unsold items to charity and offering free haul-off. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Put together a local shopping guide which includes a directory of local businesses and the kind of products and gifts they offer. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design a series of infographic-style graphics about what Parsons has to offer that people can easily like and share on social media platforms. Create a community hashtag for people to use when posting about the community. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Make new projects easier by waiving fees and helping to assemble individual lots into parcels that can be easily redeveloped. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Create and Enforce Minimum Standards | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement a Complete Streets policy for neighborhoods demonstrating the City's intent and commitment to streets which provide walking and biking options throughout Parsons. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a rental registration program to identify and remedy health, safety and welfare code violations through inspections to protect residents who are dependent on the ability to rent property in Parsons. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Utilize the issuance of citations and prosecution of repeat offenders for dangerous conditions of properties and structures. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a city housing board to oversee property standards and hear landlord complaints. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Put together and implement requirements for building materials and design standards to ensure façade work, screening, signage, and new construction maintains and fits into the character of the community. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Hang Onto that "Small Town Feel" | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Help address food access issues by identifying a City-owned or tax sale lot located in the central part of a large low-income neighborhood and establish a community garden with volunteer oversight. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create bicycle/pedestrian connectivity for safe crossings at highways that current break up the city into quadrants. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a biannual "Meal on Main" event. Close the street and host a family-style, long-table meal for residents to connect and socialize. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | Themes | | | | | | | Target Implementation | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Taking Control of the Narrative | Stop Population Decline | Demonstrate Ethical Stewardship | Establish and Invest in Quality Places | Improve Organizational Partnerships | Involve and Engage Residents | Tackle Housing and Property Issues | Preserve The Good | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| Discuss the viability of a public restroom facility downtown to be used during events or by visitors. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create an expectation of City leaders being visible and engaged in the community. Accessibility and availability to residents is necessary to build trust. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Put together a community volunteer program to help local senior citizens with errands, shopping, rides, and home/property upkeep, along with periodic phone calls to check in. This would work well in conjunction with community service requirements for students. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Shine Light on Local Gems | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organize an annual event to recognize and welcome the new businesses for that year – brick and mortar, online but housed locally, and home businesses. Celebrate and recognize those investing in the community by giving awards to winners selected by the public for categories such as “best places to work”, “best adaptive reuse of an existing building”, “best landscaping”, “civic leadership”, etc. Create a process for locals to nominate their favorites and draw attention those doing more for the community. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Support local businesses by organizing shop local campaigns that feature giveaways. There are many examples such as bingo cards, “passports”, seasonal events, and shopping blitzes. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Evaluate local buildings for significance and eligibility on historic registers. Share resources for appropriate repairs and maintenance that preserve the importance of these buildings. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activate empty store windows and have artists in the area sketch up ideas of what those buildings could look like inside. Display the sketches in those windows and alongside online listings for buildings to generate interest. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Write a mini-grant program where neighborhoods can apply for small (up to \$5,000) grants for outdoor neighborhood projects. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Get Creative | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish a citywide plan identifying locations for painted bike lanes as a low-cost and incremental step. Once identified, use paint to create these and promote widely. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Add free public wi-fi at City parks and recreational areas. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Turn utility boxes into civic canvases for art or words of inspiration. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify visible locations for placement of outdoor public art. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Extend sidewalks in residential neighborhoods for temporary parklets offering seating and landscaping. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Expand on recreation program to offer other types of youth activities centered around gaming, technology, music, trivia, talents & interests. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy: Inspire Street Activity | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create low-cost signage (see A.3) to highlight walking times to local businesses and attractions. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Place attractive seating along pedestrian routes throughout the community. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dedicate space for bike parking in commercial areas using bike corrals for on-street parking. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Address sidewalk gaps along major streets within neighborhoods. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Make intersections ADA accessible where gaps in ADA ramp placement exist. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Adopt safe routes to school principles and focus on expanding and increasing safety for children walking and biking around schools. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Utilize junior high and high school students to create a community walk and bike audit to gather feedback from those who are most likely to use those modes of travel. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Put together a strategy that will result in citywide striped bike lanes and on-street parking that calms traffic and better allocates the space along wide roadways. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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7. APPENDIX

A.1 - Low Cost Ways to Test Concepts & Create Interest

A.2 - Funding Sources

A.3 - Resources

A.4 - Action Plan Template for Annual Review Process

A.5 - Cultivators' Cabinet

A.6 - Ideas for Community Events

A.7 - Responses to Interactive Ideas Wall

A.8 - Responses to Interactive Map

A

B

D

E

F

G

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A.1 - Low Cost Ways to Test Ideas & Create Interest

Materials

- Paint (corn starch, tempera, or permanent)
- Stencils
- PVC pipe
- Neon
- Lighting and projectors
- Garden hoses
- Lawn chairs
- Bollards
- Astroturf
- Duct Tape
- Wooden Crates
- Wooden Pallets
- Planter Boxes or Pots
- Benches
- Hay Bales
- Spray Chalk
- Reflective Traffic Tape
- Traffic Cones
- Straw Wattles
- Tires
- Cardboard cylinder
- Traffic Control Barricades
- Plastic Barriers
- Galvanized Steel tubs
- Self-watering planters
- Concrete buttons
- Parking stops
- Epoxy gravel
- Thermoplastic
- Milk crates
- Outdoor furniture
- Picnic tables
- Umbrellas
- Tarps
- Easels

Concepts

- Wayfinding Signage
- Curb Extensions/Bulb Outs
- Bike Corrals or Bike Parking
- Parklets
- Plazas
- Bike Lanes
- Crosswalks
- Murals
- Public Art
- Outdoor Games
- Interactive Art Installations
- Outdoor Classes (fitness, crafts, music)
- Lighting Displays
- Pop-Up Businesses
- Community Projects

Locations

- Intersections
- On-street Parking Spaces
- Outer Lanes of Wide Streets
- Vacant Lots
- Street Corners
- Alleys
- Parks
- Parking Lots
- Temporarily Closed Streets

A.2 - Grant Funding Sources

| Funding | Organization | Type of Funding |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| Leadership Transformation Grant | Kansas Leadership Center | Grant |
| CDBG Commercial Rehabilitation Grant | Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission | Grant |
| SEKRPC Revolving Loan Fund | Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission | Loan |
| Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program | USDA Rural Development | Loan/Grant |
| Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program | USDA Rural Development | Loan/Grant |
| Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant Program | USDA Rural Development | Loan/Grant |
| Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program | USDA Rural Development | Loan/Grant |
| OneRD Guarantee Loan Initiative | USDA Rural Development | Loan/Grant |
| Single Family Housing Direct Home Loans | USDA Rural Development | Loan/Grant |
| Single Family Housing Repair Loans & Grants | USDA Rural Development | Loan/Grant |
| Industrial Revenue Bonds | Kansas Department of Commerce | Bond |
| Kansas Angel Investor Tax Credit Program | Kansas Department of Commerce | Tax Credit/ Grant/Loan |
| Private Activity Bonds | Kansas Department of Commerce | Bond |
| Sales Tax and Revenue (STAR) Bonds | Kansas Department of Commerce | Bond |
| Kansas Downtown Redevelopment Tax Rebate | Kansas Department of Commerce | Rebate |
| Rural Business Development Grants | USDA Rural Development | Grant |
| Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grant Program | USDA Rural Development | Grant |
| ARPA Economic Adjustment Assistance | US Economic Development Admin (EDA) | Grant |
| ARPA Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation | US Economic Development Admin (EDA) | Grant |
| ARPA Build Back Better Regional Challenge | US Economic Development Admin (EDA) | Grant |
| ARPA Statewide Planning, Research, and Networks | US Economic Development Admin (EDA) | Grant |
| ARPA Good Jobs Challenge | US Economic Development Admin (EDA) | Grant |
| National Trust Preservation Funds | National Trust for Historic Preservation | Grant |
| African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund | National Trust for Historic Preservation | Grant |
| The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors | National Trust for Historic Preservation | Grant |
| Emergency/Intervention Funding for Historic Structures | National Trust for Historic Preservation | Grant |
| Hart Family Fund for Small Towns | National Trust for Historic Preservation | Grant |
| Hometown Grant Program | T-Mobile | Grant |
| Dylan Meier Get Busy Livin' Foundation Youth Volunteerism Grants | Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas | Grant |
| Elm Acres Foundation Grants | Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas | Grant |
| Rita J. Bicknell Women's Health Endowed Fund | Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas | Grant |
| Future Fund Giving Circle Grant | Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas | Grant |
| Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge | USDA Rural Development | Grant |

| Funding | Organization | Type of Funding |
|--|---|-----------------|
| Kansas Capital Multiplier Loan Fund | Kansas Department of Commerce | Loan |
| Kansas Capital Multiplier Venture Fund | Kansas Department of Commerce | Matching Funds |
| Community Keepers Grant | Kansas Health Foundation | Grant |
| Leadership Transformation Grants | Kansas Leadership Center | Grant |
| Community-Built Playspaces Grant | Kaboom! | Grant |
| Creative Play | Kaboom! | Grant |
| Shade Structure Grants | American Academy of Dermatology Association | Grant |
| Skatepark Project Grant Program | Tony Hawk Foundation | Grant |

A.3 - Resources

| Program | Organization |
|---|--|
| Connecting Local Leadership Program | Project 17 |
| Youth Leadership | Project 17 |
| Anti-Poverty Program | Project 17 |
| Civic Leadership Training | Project 17 |
| Small Business Skills Webinars | Kansas Small Business Development Center |
| Kansas Certified Sites: Ready for Investment | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Available Sites & Buildings for Business | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, Minority Business Enterprise, or Women Business Enterprise Program | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Individual Development Account and Tax Credit Program | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Incumbent Worker Training | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Kansas Health Profession Opportunity Project | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| On-the-Job Training Programs | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Registered Apprentice Program | KANSASWORKS |
| Kansas Innovation & Technology Enterprise | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Neighborhood Stabilization Program | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Rural Housing Incentive District | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Reimagined Spaces | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Strategic Investment Program for the Arts | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Arts Integration Program | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| Intermediary Relending Program | USDA Rural Development |
| High Performance Incentive Program | Kansas Department of Commerce |
| - | Rebuilding Together |
| - | Habitat for Humanity, Crawford County |

A.4 - Action Plan Template

Plan Implementation Report



Strategy:

Action:

Related Themes:

| | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking Control of the Narrative | <input type="checkbox"/> Stop Population Decline |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate Ethical Stewardship | <input type="checkbox"/> Establish/Invest in Quality Places |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improve Organizational Partnerships | <input type="checkbox"/> Involve & Engage Residents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tackle Housing & Property Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Preserve the Good |

Status: Not Started In Progress Completed

% Complete: _____

Progress to Report:

Barriers to Overcome:

Resources or Direction Needed:

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____

It is highly recommended that each annual review of the plan by the City Commission be conducted in a workshop setting and include reports from the Cultivators' Cabinet. Promotion and advertising should be done well in advance of the annual review and be as inclusive and open to the public as possible.

A.5 - Cultivators' Cabinet

Memberships

Membership should include community partners, volunteers, local organizations, and residents with resources and a desire to help implement the plan. Resources include: time, talent, expertise, access to budgetary tools, motivation and forward thinking. Important contributions may range from the provision of a location for meetings to sponsorships of events. A connection to local capital, natural leadership ability, or expertise in fundraising would be valuable. In short, the Cultivators' Cabinet should represent a community-led approach to plan implementation, of which the City of Parsons is the leader.

Ideally, the members might consist of:

- The City of Parsons;
- Decision makers from large employers, educational institutions, and governmental agencies;
- Leaders from local nonprofits, grassroots organizations, and neighborhood organizations;
- Leaders of interest groups (such as places of worship, youth groups, or service organizations);
- Local business leaders; and,
- Citizens who want to be more involved in crafting their city's future.

Regarding “co-creators”, or “citizens who, often unofficially, are making their communities better and more interesting”: “If you are a mayor, city manager, council member or some other type of community leader, you should be asking yourself: How do I work with these co-creators? How do I enlist their help in making a better community?”

– Peter Kageyama, *Love Where You Live*

Frequency of Meetings

One or two organizational meetings to establish a structure for the Cultivators' Cabinet are advised. Thereafter, quarterly meetings would be ideal, though additional opportunities to plan for a specific event or action will likely be needed frequently for the cultivators who are together tackling a certain action from the plan.

“Creativity is a natural resource in every community, but citizens need an infrastructure to tap into their own people power. Success is when people become attached to the community and act as stewards of their place.”

– Michele Anderson, *Springboard for the Arts*

A.6 - Ideas for Community Events

Events centered on games and activities:

- Pokemon Go
- Carnival
- Car shows
- Community block parties
- Bingo night
- Game show themes
- Scavenger hunts
- Field days
- Singles meet & greets
- Tournaments - corn hole, horseshoes, board games
- Poker nights

Events centered on hobbies and recreation:

- "Great American Race" type game to find clues related to the history of Parsons
- Murder Mystery/Clue
- Cook-offs
- Revamped versions of TV competition shows
- Arts and craft competitions
- Food truck competition
- RC competitions
- Events centered on recreation:
- Martial arts training
- Yoga/Tai Chi
- Fun runs/5Ks
- Marathons
- Community softball games
- Obstacle courses
- Kite days

Events centered on culture, history, or holidays:

- Easter/July 4th/Thanksgiving
- Christmas tree lighting
- Fall festival
- Heritage of ethnic groups
- Celebrations of a religious or spiritual nature
- Sports enthusiast culture
- Themes that celebrate diversity
- Seasonal cultural themes (such as Oktoberfest or Mardi Gras)
- Homemade ice cream suppers
- Old-fashioned Sunday nights downtown
- Street dances and fairs

"Economic development is important but endowed with issues and challenges. Development of culture needs to happen first."

– Carlton Turner, *Sipp Culture*

Events centered on children and families:

- Back to school/end of school bash
- Community-wide play day
- Pop-up discovery zone
- Events in coordination with the library
- Plays and talent shows
- Periodic community/neighborhood cleanups
- Bounce house evenings

Events centered on the arts:

- Food court/community potluck
- Art walk
- Concerts
- Community theater
- Movie night
- Pancake breakfasts

Events centered on commerce:

- Evening sale/stroll night
- Farmers markets
- Flea market
- Pop-up night markets
- Classes/lessons (such as cooking classes, knitting, painting, etc.)
- Instruction (such as yoga or martial arts)
- Wine/beer festivals
- Local coupon book in coordination with drawing for prizes
- Community-wide yard sale

A.7 - Responses to Interactive Ideas Wall

| Type | Comment | Up Votes (Others Voted in Support) | Down Votes (Others Voted in Disagreement) |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Housing | The abandoned houses in town need to be addressed. Not full responsibility of City of Parsons to address the issues. City could help coordinate services, but put responsibility in the hands of someone that is willing to invest into the neighborhoods. Several could be nice houses, but neighborhood after neighborhood has deteriorated. | 16 | 1 |
| Housing | There are so many awful and unsafe looking houses in Parsons. If you're a renter, they may be affordable, but they are far from quality. | 14 | 2 |
| Housing | The city needs to tear down all the empty and trashy houses in town. Every road you drive down. Has at least one house that makes the entire neighborhood look terrible. | 14 | 2 |
| Housing | Instead of income adjusted apartments, we need affordable options for homeownership. Someone who owns a piece of property in the community will be more invested long-term in the betterment of Parsons. It would reduce drug activity if empty lots had houses with families in them. We need someone in the community knowledgeable about lower income loan options that can help people transition into their own home. Drawing families and stability to our neighborhoods would make things so much better. | 14 | 0 |
| Housing | Not everyone can afford to purchase a house, and community newcomers may need a moment to determine where they want to put down roots. So, habitable rentals are important. This community has some really trashy rental properties that are gouging renters who have few options. Develop and enforce codes for rental properties and/or create more rental housing. The community has little to offer and what's out there is mostly disgusting. | 12 | 1 |
| Housing | Incentives for a better real estate market in Parsons! There are way too many red tagged homes falling apart here. Some of these tagged homes look like they could be fixed unless there is an underlying issue. Most these tagged homes sit for several years until they begin to fall apart.. If the home is unliveable, tear it down and attempt to divide or sell as a whole to the neighboring home. Tax incentives to current homeowners for exterior improvement would be a good start to stopping this issue | 11 | 0 |
| Streets & Infrastructure | Walking in Parsons doesn't feel safe, particularly along high-speed streets. | 10 | 0 |
| Economic Development | Don't forget about small businesses - we matter too! We often feel we have to fend for ourselves and work together in order to be heard. | 10 | 0 |
| Parks & Green Space | The parks in Parsons are beautiful and well-maintained. The trails are something I don't think get enough attention. They could easily be connected to create a larger network! | 10 | 0 |
| Housing | Once you are out walking the neighborhoods, start noticing the horrible condition of the housing. You need only go a few blocks in most neighborhoods to notice the crumbling and deterioration of the houses. Also take note of the abandoned houses. The numbers are staggering and not easy to comprehend from the comfort of your vehicle. These numbers dont even include the empty buildings, which total 39 on Main Street alone at the time of this writing. Addressing this issue must be a huge priority. | 10 | 1 |

| Type | Comment | Up Votes (Others Voted in Support) | Down Votes (Others Voted in Disagreement) |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Walking/Biking | If you would like to get a true picture of what our town looks like, get out of your cars and start waking the neighborhoods. You will find that in the majority of the places you will not be able to walk on the sidewalks due to the fact that they are either non-existant, or falling apart. Also, many people park right over them so you can't get by. Because of these issues you will be forced to walk in the street where you will have to maneuver through the deplorable condition of our city streets. | 10 | 0 |
| Streets & Infrastructure | Those of us who are helping to pay for storm water removal who do not have storm water drains but rely on ditches,could benefit from a program to ensure these ditches are kept clear. | 8 | 0 |
| Walking/Biking | Too many areas where there are no sidewalks. 32nd street is prime example. Many times i have encountered pedestrians walking on 32nd particularly in twilight hours or after dark. Just an accident waiting to happen. Improving the trail system might help but i suspect many of these persons are just walking to get to a store or to get home. | 8 | 0 |
| Land Uses | Parsons could use a driving range for golf. You have to drive to chanute, Coffeyville, or Pittsburg for the closest ranges. It would also be nice if the Katy Membership rates were more competitive with the 9 hole rates in the neighboring communities. | 8 | 0 |
| Walking/Biking | Regularly and thoroughly remove mud from the Corning underpass. All four sidewalks frequently become deeply buried in sticky mud. Citizens end up ruining their shoes, clothes, strollers, wheelchairs, and bicycles with thick mud that never washes out. This mud also gets tracked into local businesses. Often the only way to avoid the mud in the Corning underpass is to go out into the street, and it is very difficult to get back onto the sidewalk if you are using a stroller or wheelchair. | 8 | 0 |
| Streets & Infrastructure | The streets and sidewalks are in very poor conditions. It makes it hard to take a walk. The streets and alleys can knock the oil pan off the bottom of your car because they have so many pot holes in them. | 7 | 1 |
| Housing | There are so many houses falling down that could be saved. The City has access to grants that could be used to fix up neighborhoods but would rather give that money to manufacture companies or the hospital or restaurant's that don't stay but a month or two. They use USDA or HUD or Community Development Block Grants for anything but Community Development. The community is the citizens and without good and livable housing you have no where for the citizens to live. So you lose workers needed in to | 6 | 0 |
| Land Uses | This area needs a golf driving range! When we have to travel out of town to practice guess where we are going to play? | 6 | 0 |
| Parks & Green Space | This town is so trashy. I mean that in a literal sense. People just throw their trash right out of their car windows into the street. There need to be more strict littering laws and they need to be enforced. This litter goes into our water systems. It makes the town look unkept, unsafe and just plain dirty. The "broken window effect" explains why this is such a problem. Look it up, not enough characters to explain. ALSO, we need a REAL recycling program. There's so much waste here. Hurts my soul | 6 | 0 |

| Type | Comment | Up Votes (Others Voted in Support) | Down Votes (Others Voted in Disagreement) |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|
| Streets & Infrastructure | Honestly, why are the citizens of Parsons still paying the \$15 EPA fee on our water bills. This EPA expense has been in place forever it feels like. I heard about it from parents as a teen and now ive been paying it for a few years as an adult. Can this eliminated or even reduced? Also, why is my sewer amount always higher than my water usage? I know, at max, 90% of my water/other acceptable fluids are going into my sewer. I'd just like an explanation to these charges. | 5 | 0 |
| Economic Development | Encourage local businesses (such as the library, the medical/mental health clinics, and churches) to be more welcoming. While their caution during a pandemic is understandable, some citizens feel pushed away. Quality of life is important, and Parsons has very little to offer these days. Homeless people, people who cannot keep their homes climate-controlled, and lonely people just need a place to be. | 5 | 0 |
| Walking/Biking | The walking trails are nice and well maintained. We have wonderful parks, but sometimes I worry about the folks with addiction issues that are frequently gathered in the parks. The lighting on the southeast side of Forest Park could be improved, that sidewalk area is unlevel and dark. I think the addition of a splash pad would be awesome. I know there is a private group raising money for one, but maybe this is something the city could consider providing the funding for. | 4 | 1 |
| Land Uses | Community garden | 4 | 3 |
| Economic Development | I would love to see Parsons begin a city wide recycling program. | 4 | 1 |
| Housing | Demolish dilapidated and abandoned properties that are beyond the point of rehabilitation in the neighborhoods around Forest Park, downtown and LCC. Many of these properties have been overgrown and abandoned for decades. Some of the lots would be too small to rebuild on, so offering right of first refusal to adjacent property owners to acquire the lots once vacant would provide immediate and long term improvement opportunities. | 4 | 0 |
| Economic Development | "We need to get an Aldi and other retailers. Also, would love to see a city wide recycling program. I am also sick of all the run down houses. And also dogs running loose. Especially big dogs that always went to be rubbing near my house. I also think we have the worst roads in this town. We have lived at our current house for 9 years and I have never had the city street sweep or remove snow from our road. Or work on the road structure. It is horribly cracked and isn't even level anymore." | 4 | 0 |
| Land Uses | My opinion there should be a community garden for the town with volunteer workers. That would help so much for the people who love fresh produce and cannot afford to buy it. I would be interested in helping with this. | 3 | 0 |
| Economic Development | There is a need for large manufacturing to get some of the people living here off welfare and into a job. Too many people don't have the knowledge to do trade jobs. In return this will slow down the drug trafficking that has plagued the city. Also there is unsafe housing that should be torn down, it makes the city look trashy. | 3 | 1 |
| Economic Development | Raise the minimum wage so that anyone can make a good life here in Parsons Kansas. | 3 | 9 |

| Type | Comment | Up Votes (Others Voted in Support) | Down Votes (Others Voted in Disagreement) |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|
| Economic Development | Please get rid of this mask mandate. We only have 3 cases in the whole county. Please leave it up to individuals and stores to determine if they want to wear a mask. | 3 | 4 |
| Economic Development | Economic development is not a help when they leave citizens to live in trash housing or out of town because there is no where decent to live in Parsons. They give a business 10 years of free taxes on improvements but a person only gets 5 years for improvement of their homes. And this is a big secret to most who live in Parsons. They charge \$500 for mowing a yard one time and if someone wants to take over improvement on an abandoned piece of property they have to pay all the trumpet up charges. | 2 | 0 |
| Parks & Green Space | It makes no sense that the Parsons Rec Center is not under the city. Their money is through the school mill leavy and USD 503 doesn't like it either. The Rec Center would rather be under the city but is concerned about being so because the city has no city plan in place and has not had one for 10 years. And the plan that was done 20 years ago, the commissioners chose not to use it. After \$106,000.00 I do hope this group will vote to use this plan. And then maybe we can start have our organizatio | 2 | 0 |
| Housing | Instead of a Property Tax based on the value of the property, we could change to a 'Land Tax' based on the measurement of the property. A value-based tax discourages owners from making any improvements because that improvement will increase their taxes. So owners are rewarded for letting their property deteriorate. A tax based on square feet of a lot would not inhibit the owner making improvements. | 2 | 2 |
| Housing | Housing needs are significant but Parsons particularly needs housing that helps retain retirees who move out of town because they can no longer take care of their homes and have no where else to move locally. Higher-end rental duplexes could help immensely and open up nice homes for others to move into. | 2 | 0 |
| Streets & Infrastructure | Those who think that our city streets are terrible should drive through a much larger city sometime. While no one wants potholes, we are so much better off than many communities. | 2 | 0 |
| Economic Development | The comissioners decided years ago to put boards in place to help them govern the two dozen or so groups that fall under them. They appoint the board members but most of the boards never report back to the commissioners. I have seen times when a board has reached out for help to be brushed off by them. The board over the Chamber of Commerce will not go by their bylaws. 3 years and out so someone new can step in but again the city Commissioners don't seem to care. They should still be monitoring. | 1 | 1 |
| Streets & Infrastructure | I would like to see a revamped snow removal plan that includes the residential streets not as a priority but when is snows 4-6 " it is inline after business , school and emergency access roads. As it currently stands the residents of Parsons get no attention to the roads we live on. Snow removal would happen 2,3 times a year. The fact that nothing gets done should bother everyone. "We've always done it this way " is an awful way to go approach anything. Let's finally see what can get done. | 1 | 0 |

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A.8 - Responses to Interactive Map

| Type | Comment | Location | Up Votes (Others Voted in Support) | Down Votes (Others Voted in Disagreement) |
|----------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|---|
| Idea | Glenwood is a nice park, and it even has bathrooms during half the year! But a bridge connecting the playground to the arboretum would be pretty sweet, wouldn't it? | Glenwood Park east of S 21st St between S Central Ave and Southern Blvd | 12 | 0 |
| Needs Improvement | Is the city putting in left turning lane lights? Y'all put in new extension poles in. Looks like it would hold another light. Created left turn lanes that do no good without an delayed light | S 16th and Main Street | 6 | 1 |
| Needs Improvement | Tolen Creek Park is a cute park with walking trails that has potential to be a nice meeting/picnicking/walking spot - unfortunately it is practically unusable because there are no bathrooms. | Tolen Creek Park east of Holiday Inn Express on US 59 | 6 | 0 |
| Idea | Area needs street lights. It is very hard to see the on ramp. | Northern intersection of US 59 and US 400 | 5 | 0 |
| Needs Improvement | Tennis courts are in horrible condition, quit overlaying the depleted base with a cheap surface that lasts a max of 3 years. | Forest Park at S 13th St between Grand Avenue and Broadway | 5 | 1 |
| Needs Improvement | Nice playground - NEEDS A BATHROOM. | Circle Park along Briggs Ave | 4 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | 32nd street - high speed limit, no shoulder and no sidewalk. | 32nd St south of Mosher Rd | 4 | 1 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | Deep, STICKY mud usually renders these sidewalks unusable. The mud is rarely cleaned off, and sometimes even when it is cleaned off, it is not cleaned out from above the sidewalk, so the sidewalk stays usable only until the next time it rains. | Corning Avenue between S 21st and S 18th St | 3 | 0 |
| Needs Improvement | The library has suffered immensely since early 2020. No longer a place for people with nowhere to hang out - the library now only allows patrons inside for short periods, does not welcome them to use restrooms, offers no drinking water, and provides nowhere for patrons to sit and use their WiFi. They have also gotten rid of half of their modest-to-begin-with collection of books. I can't see why we're even paying for this place anymore? | S 17th and Belmont Avenue | 3 | 2 |
| Needs Improvement | A "pocket park" called "The Gathering Place" was placed here, but it's unclear what kind of gathering this "park" would support. There are no bathrooms, no trash cans, no picnic tables, no water fountains, no wifi. And nevermind that if you hear someone in Parsons say "The Gathering Place" they are almost certainly referring to an actually-cool park in Tulsa, OK. | Main Street and N Central Avenue | 3 | 1 |
| Needs Improvement | Nice picnic area, but NEEDS A BATHROOM (there are bathrooms under the football bleachers, but they're always locked). | Parsons Football Field at Marvel Park on S 10th St | 2 | 0 |
| Places to Gather/Socialize | I would say The Remnant is currently our best (only?) indoor "hanging out" spot in Parsons. | Remnant Café, Main Street | 2 | 2 |
| Idea | give parsons a mall with stores EVERYONE would enjoy. | SW of Leawood Dr and Main St | 2 | 0 |
| Needs Improvement | New small businesses struggle with attracting and maintaining customers, especially downtown. They are lacking in curb appeal. Our downtown could be so cute if we could provide small businesses with assistance with building facades, window dressing and signage. Have we considered pairing them with PHS, LCC, even PSU, to give students experience and the business an economical business solution. Some examples: hashtag#, Iron Press, McCarty's, Pure Life, Millie's. I'm sure there are more. | Block between Broadway and Main, S 18th and S 17th | 2 | 0 |
| Needs Improvement | What good do the turn lanes do if there aren't any turn signals such as the one at 16th and Corning? North and S bound traffic need to turn left before the other lanes turn green. | S 16th and Corning | 2 | 1 |
| Idea | "It would be nice if the city could find funding to expand the Frisco Trail further west along the original route to the 32nd & Main St. area. I grew up in Parsons in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. It would enhance the aesthetics of the area and maybe eliminate some of the blight along the route. This is the type of improvements businesses and young people look for in communities they move to. KDOT has had funds in the past for this type of community improvements. There are also grants available" | Appleton St between S Central Avenue and S 17th St | 1 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | If you are a pedestrian on the north side of Corning, using the east-west crosswalk, it will tell you it is safe to walk at the same time that it tells vehicles on east-bound Corning that it is safe to turn north. (The crosswalk on the S side of Corning is fine, since there are no cars approaching from the east.) | Corning Avenue at S 16th St | 1 | 0 |
| Needs Improvement | (I can't find Clark Park on this map, which is another thing that needs improvement, but it's somewhere around here, right?) Nice place - BUT NEEDS A BATHROOM. | Clark Park | 1 | 0 |
| Idea | Please loosen regulations on volunteer work and let the local churches know how we can serve the community! What kind of service do you needs volunteers for? | Church of the Nazarene near SW corner of Main St and Leawood Dr | 1 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | Crossing the highway to get to/from the hospital can be scary for pedestrians, especially those with children or mobility issues. A bridge would be amazing, but even a crosswalk like the one on the Frisco trail could make a big difference. | US 59 near S 21st St | 1 | 0 |
| Idea | It's nice that we are getting our town back. Getting a splash pad, opening the theater again, possibly a laser tag place. We used to have a skating rink. It was always popular when I was younger. I'm sure everyone would love having one again. It would be something for young teens and older teens, even families to do. | N 10th Street | 1 | 0 |

| Type | Comment | Location | Up Votes (Others Voted in Support) | Down Votes (Others Voted in Disagreement) |
|---------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|---|
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | Poor drainage - during rain, this intersection will flood, forcing pedestrians to wade through it. (Allowing residents to de-clog drains without a permit would be a good start.) | S 24th St and Appleton | 0 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | Poor drainage - during rain, this intersection will flood, forcing pedestrians to wade through it. | S 23rd St and Belmont | 0 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | Poor drainage - during rain, this intersection will flood, forcing pedestrians to wade through it. | S 23rd St and Corning | 0 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | Poor drainage - during rain, this intersection will flood, forcing pedestrians to wade through it. | S 22nd St and Grand | 0 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | During rain (and for a while afterwards), a large puddle will form on the east end of the south underpass, forcing pedestrians to wade through it. | Katy Drive and rail line just S of Main Street | 0 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | Need side walks or striping for walk/bicycle lane on east or west side of 32nd. | 32nd St near Briggs | 0 | 0 |
| Idea | "The Antietam Circles #1 & #2 in Oakwood Cemetery need some sort of major improvement. Putting multiple layers of paint on the monument structures only results in the paint fading, cracking, and peeling in a short period of time. From pictures I found the last update painting of the structures was in 2011. It is a unique historical location. Some type of national grant needs to be applied to in order to fix/replace the concrete work and the headstones with modern day headstones." | Oakwood Cemetery on S 1st St | 0 | 0 |
| Needs Improvement | The rec center has a habit of canceling things without notifying customers. They do not offer refunds or apologies, and they delete comments on their facebook page that point this out, and pretend it never happened. They just need a better system of notifying people of cancellations. (Note that simply attaching a note to the door would be better than their current system of no notification.) | Arvon Phillips Community Center at Broadway Avenue and Heacock Avenue | 0 | 0 |
| Idea | See if the landowners would be open to the idea of connecting Tolen Creek trails to the Frisco Trail by Marvel Park. | Tolen Creek Park | 0 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | The sidewalk around here on the north side of Main Street is, last I checked, completely overrun with thorns. I took my kids in a jogging stroller along this route and ended up stranded with flat tires. | N 10th Street and Main along northern side of Main | 0 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | Imagine you're waiting at the at the traffic light for your turn to cross Main to the north. Finally, the "walk" signal comes on, and you walk into the intersection - only to get run over by cars who just got the green arrow to turn across the crosswalk. Oh no! | Intersection of Main Street and S 22nd Street | 0 | 0 |
| Barrier to Walking/Biking | The current big dog park is too small. I regularly see 3-4 groups of people in Oakwood cemetery running their dogs. There is a perfect location bordered by 10th, Chess, 12th and Crawford streets that would be a perfect spot for an off-leash Big Dog Park with a walking path for owners. People want to walk with their dogs. There is already space for parking. It is a natural connection to the Frisco Trail. It just needs a path and fencing. The current park can be expanded for small dogs. | N 10th Street and Chess Street through N 12th and Crawford Streets | 0 | 0 |
| Idea | Parsons needs something to recognize we are the home of Gilbert Baker, the creator of a worldwide symbol of liberation. If we can overcome our own hesitations and prejudices about this and begin to promote that important bit of our history, it could be a big cultural and economic asset to the city. I would propose this loop be renamed Gilbert Baker Drive. | Katy Drive north of Main, turning into Washington Avenue heading east | 0 | 0 |
| Needs Improvement | "Not sure what it means to be part of the downtown business district, but wondering why these two business are not included in it. As an owner of one of the buildings, I have an obvious interest here, but if the SW Bell building is IN, but two buildings actually serving local customers are OUT, it doesn't make much sense." | N 16th Street and Washington Avenue | 0 | 0 |
| Idea | Could we make more use of the Theatre parking lot by adding some permanent awnings and using it as permanent location for the Farmer's Market? It worked well to have the market there before, except that it was too hot. With shade from awnings, it could be a better location, maybe help the Theatre and downtown, and make more use of this large space. | Parsons Theater at Crawford Avenue and N 17th Street | 0 | 0 |

