



Comprehensive Plan Update 2014 - 2030

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

FOR THE CITY OF ATCHISON

2014 - 2030

Prepared by Planning Commissioners, City Staff, and Citizen Volunteers with technical assistance from graduate students at Kansas State University in the Landscape Architecture/Regional and Community Planning Department of Manhattan, Kansas.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION**Document Background**

The Director of Community Development for Atchison, Kansas, acting on a directive from the Atchison Planning Commission/Board of Zoning Appeals, contacted the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional and Community Planning at Kansas State University to request assistance in updating the City of Atchison’s comprehensive plan. The Department accepted this endeavor and assigned the project to graduate students in the course titled “Community Plan Preparation,” a capstone-level course instructed by Professor John Keller.

John Keller, Ph.D., FAICP, is a professor of Regional and Community Planning in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional and Community Planning. In addition to teaching and conducting academic research, Keller works as a practicing planner and consultant specializing in rural and small-town planning. He has provided advice and written a variety of plans for dozens of communities throughout the Great Plains states. Keller used his academic and professional experience to advise his students. The students of Community Plan Preparation were all in their final semester of a graduate program in Regional and Community Planning. The graduate students for this project were, from left to right in Figure 1-A, Ashley Klingler (Lake Orion, Michigan), James Wood (Platte City, Missouri), Christopher Clanahan (Topeka, Kansas), Andy Thomason (Republic, Missouri), and Kathryn Rush (Prairie Village, Kansas).

The course mission was to work with the community and local officials to prepare an update to Atchison’s Comprehensive Plan. This document focuses on projections for Atchison up to and including the year 2030.

Figure 1-A: Kansas State University Team



Legal Basis

The process of creating and implementing a comprehensive plan for an incorporated city such as Atchison is outlined in state law. Specifically, Chapter Twelve, Article Seven of the Kansas Statutes, outlines the regulations pertaining to comprehensive plans (Statute 12-747). According to the state statutes, a jurisdiction's planning commission is authorized to make a comprehensive plan. The commission may adopt and amend this comprehensive plan as a whole or in parts as it deems necessary. Once approved, a copy of the comprehensive plan shall be sent to all other tax-/fee-levying districts within the affected planning area. The approved plan shall constitute the basis for public action to ensure a coordinated and harmonious development which will best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the affected community, as well as promote the wise and efficient expenditure of public funds. At least once each year, the planning commission shall review or reconsider the plan and may propose amendments, extensions or additions. The procedure for the adoption of any such amendment, extension or addition to any plan shall be the same as that required for the adoption of the original plan.

Adopting a Comprehensive Plan

In order for a proposed plan to be approved by the planning commission and the governing body of a jurisdiction, the following steps are required by Kansas Statutes: first, a public hearing must occur, at which the proposed plan must be considered and discussed in the presence of the general public. At least twenty days prior to the date of the hearing, notice of the hearing must be published in the official city/county newspaper. The planning commission must then hold the public hearing in accordance with state statutes regarding such hearings. In order to continue to the next step, the planning commission must adopt the plan by a majority vote of all members. Next, a certified copy of the plan, together with a written summary of the hearing, shall be submitted to the governing body for consideration and approval. No comprehensive plan shall be effective unless approved by the governing body. Under Kansas law, governing bodies must formally approve a comprehensive plan through the adoption of an ordinance to the jurisdiction's code. As with any other municipal ordinance in the State of Kansas, the adopted comprehensive plan, and any amendments to it, becomes effective upon publication of the respective ordinance in the jurisdiction's paper of record.

References

Article VII - Planning and Zoning, Kansas Stat. pg. 12-747 (2012).

Chapter 2

HISTORY

Atchison, Kansas sits on a western bend of the Missouri River, placing it 35 miles west of Kansas City and 20 miles northwest of Leavenworth. The early days of Atchison closely resembled the historical archetype of the Old West: Wood-frame buildings, muddy streets, and a stream of westward travelers and pioneers seeking adventure and fortune on the frontier. The original town plan for Atchison was surveyed to cover 480 acres. Physiographically, the City of Atchison sits in a shallow valley on the bank of the Missouri River. For many years, the hills to the north and south, as well as the River to the east, served as natural boundaries for the community.

Historical Outline

Native peoples of North America are believed to have inhabited this region for thousands of years. In the recorded history of the Plains tribes, it is known that the Kanza people had a large village in the area of Independence Creek, along the current Atchison-Doniphan County line.

European explorers first reached the area in 1724. Captain Etienne Vengard de Bourgmont, military commander of the French Colony of Louisiana, visited the Kanza village along Independence Creek during an expedition to promote peace and develop alliances between French trappers and the native peoples in the region. At the time of Captain Vengard's visit, the village at Independence Creek was considered a major settlement of the Kanza people, and it was identified as a major focus for future trade plans. French explorers of the era called the native settlement "Le Grand Village des Canzes." It is from these impressions of the Kanza people that the State of Kansas derives its name, and the area now known as Atchison County played a role in beginnings of European settlement of the region.

Lewis and Clark visited what would become parts of Atchison County along the Missouri River during their 1804-06 Expedition. They began their expedition on July 4, 1804, just to the south of Atchison County. They stopped at noon on that day near the foot of modern-day Commercial Street, where the men dined on native corn and established camp for the expedition's first night. During that day, the group celebrated Independence Day for the first time in the new American West and named two creeks in honor of the event: The aforementioned Independence Creek, as well as July 4, 1804 Creek, today known as White Clay Creek.

American settlement came to the region in the following decades, beginning with Major Stephen H. Long's Yellowstone Expedition in 1818. That expedition established the first U.S. military post in what is now Kansas on Cow Island ("Isle au Vache") in the Missouri River that winter. The post existed largely as a staging ground for the Yellowstone Expedition and was dismantled the following year. It was officially titled Cantonment Martin, after its commanding officer, Army Captain Wylie Martin.

An 1832 treaty assigned the Kickapoo tribe to a reservation in northeast Kansas that encompassed what is now Atchison County. The Kickapoo people, led by Chieftains Keannakuk the Prophet and Masheena the Elk Horns, settled the territory in 1833 with the main settlement at the town of Kickapoo in Leavenworth County. The Treaty of 1854 reduced the reservation to lands along

the Delaware River in Kansas. Further treaties would reduce the reservation to encompass only what is now Brown County.

Atchison, and the Territory of Kansas as a whole, were both opened for American settlement on May 30, 1854, when the bill organizing the Kansas and Nebraska Territories was signed into law by President Franklin Pierce. According to the account in *Andrea's History of Kansas*, settler J.H. Stringfellow recounted his first impression of the Atchison town site:

“From their elevated position they could look down into this beautiful valley, gradually sloping from the old military road, five miles west as it approached the Missouri River, narrowing there to a width of a few hundred feet. They were charmed not only with the beauty of this vast amphitheater, but also by its natural advantages of the east access and its peculiar facilities for obtaining artificial approaches. Here it was that the great river made a bend from the northeast, throwing this point 20 miles west [sic] of Leavenworth and 35 miles west of Kansas City. This site was nearer to the rich agricultural region, just open for settlement, than any other point on the Missouri River.”

According to Sheffield Ingalls' *History of Atchison County, 1916*, Senator David Rice Atchison and the other original investors in the town dedicated the town's site on July 4, 1854. Thus, the town of Atchison was founded fifty years to the day after Lewis and Clark spent their first night on its soil. Atchison was designated the county seat in 1855 by popular vote. The estimated population of Atchison County at that time was 2,745.

Atchison's original population was derived from an influx of settlers from the American South as well as New England. The town was originally the stronghold of those settlers who supported Kansas' entry into the Union as a slave state, and the area remained a hotbed of pro-Confederate activism throughout the era known as “Bleeding Kansas.”

Despite the town's political division on the issue of slavery and statehood, all residents had a common interest in developing the new town. Atchison was incorporated by the Kansas Territorial Legislature in February of 1858, nearly four years after its founding. The town's first governing council was evenly divided between pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions, and Samuel Pomeroy, a prominent anti-slavery activist, won a coin toss to be selected the town's first mayor. Pomeroy led a progressive push as mayor to grade and improve city streets and to encourage citizens to build a modern city. While the issue of slavery would remain prominent in Kansas for the next decade, Pomeroy's focus on civic improvements helped Atchison to prosper in its early years, and political divisions were soon overshadowed by booming commercial activity.

Atchison quickly became a prominent steamboat stop and supply point for settlers heading West, beginning with the Mormon Migration choosing Atchison as their starting point in 1855. As the westbound trails became crowded with pioneer families, Atchison grew even more. In 1858 alone, 24 California-bound wagon trains consisting of 775 wagons began their journeys in Atchison. Firms based in the city prospered from the easy logistics of Atchison, loading wagons full of merchandise off of riverboats and onto wagon trains heading to far-flung stores in towns as far west as San Francisco. Commercial Street was often inundated with oxen trains hauling all manner of goods and supplies out west.

Atchison became a trade hub, an outfitter for the voyage to the American West, and a supply center for the many towns that would pop up in oasis after oasis on the trail that began at this bend in the Missouri River.

Transportation was central to the city's early days. Riverboats docked one after another, delivering thousands of tons of supplies to outfit the over 250,000 settlers who made Atchison their first stop in the West. Wagon train outfitters set up shop in town, and were soon followed by lumber mills, granaries, storehouses, blacksmiths, hotels, and tailors.

Horace Greeley, famed journalist and the era's most renowned author on the American West, first experienced the frontier in Atchison, Kansas. After seeing a vast wagon train that stretched from Atchison off into the western horizon, Greeley wrote "I have been longing for the West, and here it is at last..."

By the 1860s, Atchison was the eastern terminus for many of the leading overland freight and mail routes including Butterfield Overland Dispatch. The Post Office officially made Atchison the starting point for mail to the West because the town was eleven miles farther west than the Pony Express terminus at St. Joseph, Missouri. With the postal concession in place, Atchison soon became the starting point for a heavily-used stagecoach route ending in Placerville, California, over 1,900 miles west.

The growth of railroads further transformed Atchison, and shaped it into the form the city still holds today. As trains replaced stagecoaches and steamboats, several sets of track were laid through what is now downtown Atchison, bringing decades of industrial prosperity to the town and redefining Atchison as a railroad town. The tracks also divided the town in half, but this minor inconvenience was more than outweighed by the great prosperity brought by rail-based businesses in Atchison.

The Mo-Kan Free Bridge, constructed over the Missouri River in 1938, ended the era of toll bridges in the region and further brought Atchison into the automobile age. Later renamed the Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge, the bridge allowed Atchison to renew its role as a regional trade hub for surrounding communities and gave Atchison a rejuvenated role in transportation. The bridge would stand for seventy-five years, faithfully serving Atchison through most of the tumultuous changes of the twentieth century.

Alongside the commercial boom taking place in Atchison's rail-based industries, the town became known for its twin Catholic colleges: St. Benedict's College (for males) and Mount St. Scholastica College (for females). The former college was established in 1858, but saw rapid growth with the boom in college enrollments following World War II.

As Kansas City grew in size and stature, and as other cities farther west became more commercially independent, Atchison's role as provider of freight traffic decreased greatly. The Interstate Highway System crossed the region in the late 1950s, and bypassed Atchison by over 20 miles. In what was perhaps the final sign of changing times, the last westbound passenger train to begin in Atchison left the Union Depot in 1958.

That same year, two large flash floods of White Clay Creek caused what could be considered Atchison's most significant event since its founding. The damage to downtown Atchison was massive, and the state and federal response to the crisis reshaped the region and most of downtown.

A significant number of downtown buildings, some of which had been standing since Atchison's boom years nearly a century before, were damaged beyond repair. To rebuild downtown, and to renew local interest in the amenities of the central business district, the community sought federal assistance. This was granted in the form of new flood-control systems on the region's waterways, as well as a substantial Urban Renewal grant to rebuild downtown in a more pedestrian-focused manner. Several blocks of Main Street were converted to a pedestrian mall, and the storefronts covered with a cement canopy to protect pedestrians from rain and snow. The pedestrian mall quickly became an exemplar of Urban Renewal projects of that period, and it was a duplicate of malls in cities as far away Miami, Florida and Kalamazoo, Michigan. The town's swift rebuilding of the downtown area arguably played a part in Atchison's downtown surviving the trend of small towns' main-street businesses relocating to shopping centers on the edge of the city.

The educational environment of Atchison turned a new leaf in 1971, when Mount St. Scholastica College (for female students) merged with St. Benedict's College (for male students) to form the coeducational Benedictine College. The new College grew substantially in the following decades, with tremendous growth in enrollment in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

After seven decades of service as Atchison's primary connection to the Kansas City metropolitan area, the Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge was retired in 2012. In its place was erected a soaring new bridge, with the same honored name and the same cherished duty to link a changing Atchison to the changing world just across the river.

Portions of this history of Atchison were originally presented in the community's Comprehensive Plan, 2004-2015. It has been amended and updated to reflect recent historical changes in the region.

Chapter 3

HISTORIC AND VISUAL RESOURCES

The historic structures and tree-lined neighborhood streets contribute to Atchison's charming small-town feel that so many of its residents cherish. At the same time, disinvestment and a lack of planning to preserve and enhance these elements threatens the city's character and identity, and the overall quality of life of its residents. The protection and continuation of the city's character, identity, and appearance is a process that goes beyond the storefronts of the traditional Main Street. This section aims to:

1. Identify Atchison's unique attributes and identity in the context of the city's historical development;
2. Define the major city design elements that influence the city's appearance and how it functions;
3. Identify Atchison's unique historical assets and the opportunities for continued preservation of those assets; and
4. Make recommendations for conserving and enhancing the City of Atchison's unique sense of place and its visual and historic assets.

Historic Development

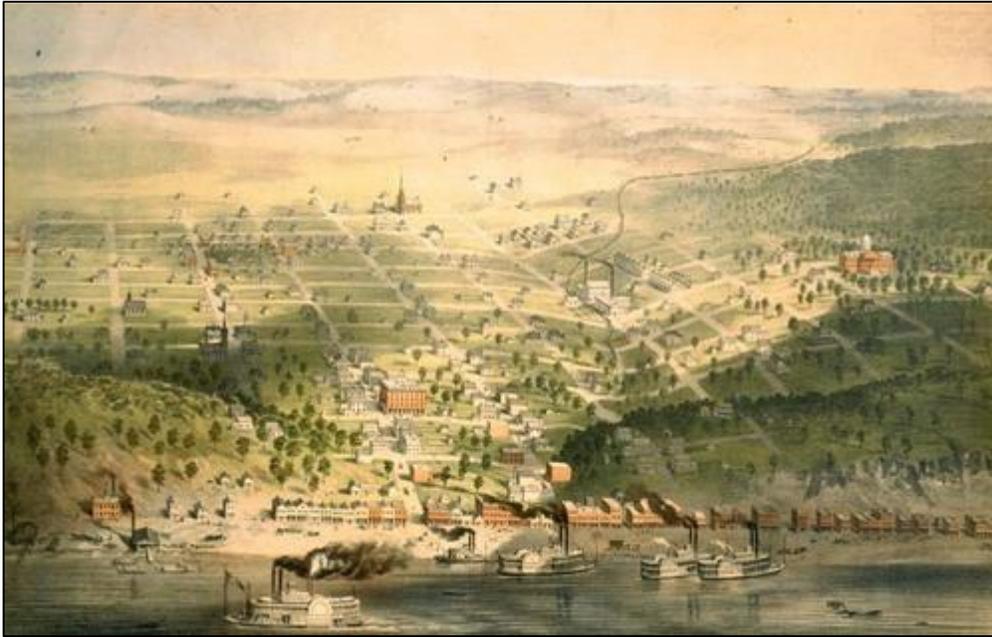
The historic development of Atchison is a unique and important story. It defines the culture of the community and its tangible reminders of the past create a "sense of place" and distinguish it from other cities in the region.

The City of Atchison sits in a natural bowl formed by the valley leading to the Missouri River. Original settlers were charmed by the beauty of this vast amphitheater, but also by its natural advantages of the east access. It is here that the Missouri River makes a great bend from the northeast, throwing this point 12 miles west of any locality above, making it nearer to the rich agricultural region, just open for settlement, than any other point on the Missouri River.

Transportation was a central part of Atchison's early days. Before the Civil War, the steamboat was the dominant carrier of freight and passengers in the region. Riverboats docked one after another, delivering supplies to outfit the over 250,000 people who made Atchison their first stop in the west. Towns such as Atchison that developed during this period had a street system that served the waterfront, with the city's major commercial buildings located just off the river. Choice residential enclaves often occupied higher ground overlooking the river and upwind from the river landing. After the arrival of the railroad, the shape and focus of the city was dramatically altered.

By the 1860s, Atchison was the eastern terminus for many of the leading overland freight and mail routes. The Post Office officially made Atchison the starting point for mail to the west because of the 11-mile savings off the distance from Atchison to Kennekuk (24 miles) versus St. Joseph to Kennekuk (35 miles). This became the most important state route between Atchison and Placerville, California with 153 stops along the 1,913-mile route. The railroad played a significant part in Atchison's development. The city's most famous railroad connection, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, was organized in 1859.

Figure 3-A: Atchison, Kansas prior to the Civil War



Source: Kansas Historical Society.

In 1938, the Mo-Kan Free Bridge, today known as the Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge, brought Atchison into the automobile age. It allowed Atchison to once again strengthen its role as a regional hub for other smaller communities and gave Atchison a rejuvenated role in transportation.

The period after World War II saw a push for new things in Atchison, similar to what was occurring in the rest of the country. It was this time that the old Union Depot built in the 1880s was torn down for a new modern structure, which opened in 1954. The new Union Depot, today Keimig's Body Shop on Main Street, served passenger traffic through 1958 when the last Mo-Pac Eagle passenger train ran.

Two flash floods in July 1958, neither caused by the oft-flooded Missouri River, represent what may be the most significant event in the city since its early boom days. The floods left massive damage, destroying some buildings and undermining others. The city was declared a federal disaster area. The dams came first and then urban renewal. In the business district this would result in a number of new buildings and the demolition of a number of buildings of long standing significance. City leaders decided to close the twice-flooded blocks of Commercial Street to car traffic and create an open-air pedestrian mall.

Visual Resources

The city's visual appearance is a key component of the quality of life of the people who reside and work there. Buildings and public spaces make a place worth caring about. Therefore, the visual quality defines the city's character and shows how the residents think about themselves. Attractiveness can also be an economic asset and a draw for visitors and new businesses.

Kevin Lynch, arguably the most influential planner and urban theorist of the twentieth century, identified five design elements that represent the building blocks of a city and work together to give it physical form: district, path, node, landmark, and edge. How these components interact with one another, and with the people who experience them, greatly influences the city's appearance and how it functions.

Districts

The tree-lined streets of Atchison's older residential neighborhoods, the commercial-focused Main Street, and other districts have their own distinct identities, which are created by their purpose, location, and type of buildings.

- **The downtown commercial area:** Downtown Atchison, also known as the Downtown/Riverfront district or the Central Business District, is located in the center of the city, adjacent to the Missouri River and parallel to the railroad. The commercial part of town depends on an attractive pedestrian setting, good automobile access, and public activities to draw people there. The downtown is also the traditional center of social interaction. It serves as the backdrop for festivals and farmer's markets as well as a place where friends and neighbors meet.
- **The industrial district:** In Atchison, the industrial district is located to the south and west of downtown, extending south along the Missouri River and following the railroad and U.S. 59 to the west/southwest. The railroad and industrial district effectively divide the city into North Atchison and South Atchison. Many of the old buildings on the eastern side have been torn down and replaced by modern low-story buildings.
- **The commercial strip:** The commercial strip is found along U.S. 59 leading into and out of the city. It caters almost exclusively to the automobile. In general, parking lots dominate the side of the road, and signs and oddly sited buildings detract from visual harmony.
- **The residential neighborhoods:** The residential neighborhoods present the most diverse visual environment, with homes that express the style of the time in which they were built and the personality of the owner. Atchison's large residential districts are located to the north and south of downtown and the industrial district. Large, historic homes are mixed in with old farm or row houses, with the occasional infill of new houses which become more common to the northeast.
- **Benedictine College North Campus:** Another prominent district is the north campus of Benedictine College, located near the northeast corner of the city. This district houses approximately 75% of the college's student population and contains all of the college's academic and athletic facilities.

Paths

The circulation system of streets and sidewalks is the basic framework of the community and links together the different districts. People experience the city from its paths. Like most small towns, Atchison's street pattern consists of a grid of straight streets at right angles to each other. U.S. 59 serves as the major road running east to west through the city, and is the only connection across the Missouri River. Other important roads running east to west include Kansas, Commercial, and Main Streets.

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U.S. 73 is the major road from U.S. 59 to the southern boundary of the city. North of Downtown, the grid street system of the residential neighborhoods disperses traffic, with no evident hierarchy of streets. Roads spanning the railroad and connecting north and south Atchison are Fourth Street, Fifth Street, Sixth Street, Tenth Street, and Service Road.

Nodes

Nodes are gathering places, and are often located at the intersection of two or more paths. They are an essential part of building a sense of community and place. Some of these places are formal, such as the City Hall or County Courthouse, while others are informal places where people are likely to run into each other, such as a local diner or coffee shop. Nodes of activity located at the intersection of two paths include:

- Eighth Street and Commercial Street
- Seventh Street and Commercial Street
- Fourth Street and Commercial Street
- Third Street and Commercial Street

According to these requirements for classifying a node, the Commercial Street pedestrian mall prevents two major intersections of retail activity in downtown Atchison from being classified as nodes.

Landmarks

Residents should be able to point to something that helps give the city its unique identity. A landmark can be a prominent building or a site that is easy to find and provides a preference. Some landmarks may be outside the city's limits but within view, such as a prominent hill or water tower. It can be a place that everybody knows. The places that are part of everyday life are just as important as the War Memorial.

Atchison's major landmarks include, but are not limited to:

- Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge
- The Riverfront
- The Downtown (Commercial Street) Mall
- Amelia Earhart's Birthplace
- St. Benedict's Parish and Abbey
- The historic campus of Mount St. Scholastica College
- The Post Office
- Atchison County Courthouse
- Santa Fe Railroad Depot
- The Blair Feeds Elevator
- The Blish-Mize & Silliman Hardware Co. Building

Edges

Edges are the real or perceived boundaries that help to separate one neighborhood or district from another, and organize the city into distinct areas. Perhaps the most important edge in defining a small city is the transition from the built-up city to the surrounding countryside. The city entrances establish the first, and often lasting, impression of the community. In cities across the country this important visual edge has often been broken up in recent years by strip development on the roads leading into town or new residential development locating just outside the city. These land use patterns can make it difficult for residents and visitors alike to determine where the country begins and the city ends, and detracts from a feeling of place.

The entrance into the city from the east is on U.S. 59, crossing the Missouri River on the Amelia Earhart Bridge. It connects Atchison to St. Joseph, MO, Westin, MO, and Kansas City International Memorial Airport. From the south, U.S. 73 connects Atchison to Leavenworth and is the dominating regional link to the southeast Kansas City metro area. A new hospital and Wal-Mart at this entrance are visually pleasing; however, the dispersed nature of development at this end of the city makes the transition from the countryside to the built-up city unclear.

U.S. 59/Highway 4, entering the city from the southwest, connects Atchison to Lawrence, Topeka, and other cities located southwest of Atchison. This entrance is currently defined by big box and strip retail, and an expansive parking lot. Strip commercial and industrial dominates this route for most of its length in the city.

U.S. 73 is the regional connection for those living in or traveling to cities and counties west of Atchison. Along this route there is a road sign indicating Atchison city limits, followed by industrial warehouses. Kansas Highway 7 is the entrance from the north. It is characterized by a road sign indicating Atchison city limits, and very low density residential. There is a “Welcome to Atchison” wooden sign further inside city limits along this route.

Historical and Cultural Properties

“The spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage and [...] the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life.”

-National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

Cultural resources most clearly reflect a community’s evolution, history, diversity, and differentiation from other areas. Atchison’s cultural resources are a reflection of the economic eras, styles of fashion, architectural traditions, and ways of life that have defined the city during its transition from a steamboat community to a modern city. Historic preservation is a deliberate effort to maintain, restore and protect buildings and districts, while ensuring that new construction is in keeping with the special character of the neighborhood and community. This recognition of historic assets can instill local pride, bring new investment to old neighborhoods, promote economic development, and spur heritage tourism. Furthermore, commitment to preservation may be one of the most effective acts of fiscal responsibility governmental entities can undertake. Older neighborhoods and commercial centers represent a considerable taxpayer investment in infrastructure and building stock.

3-6

Conservation of buildings, neighborhoods, and sites of historic and aesthetic values is one of the best tools for recovering the worth of past investments while fueling new economic activity.

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation’s official list of buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts worthy of preservation for their local, statewide, or national significance in American history, architecture, archeology, and culture. It is administered by the National Park Service, and in Kansas is managed by the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO). To qualify for the National Register, a property must be considered historic (generally at least 50 years old), still look much the way it did in the past, and have some significance (i.e., with the lives of people who were important in the past, architectural history or engineering achievement, or an association with events that were important in the past. Within the City of Atchison there are 36 properties and two districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and 31 properties identified by the National Register as contributing historic properties. Of Kansas cities, Atchison has the fourth greatest number of nationally designated historic places after Wichita, Topeka, and Lawrence, but over five times the number of historic places per square mile than any of those cities. Table 3-A lists properties and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Figure 3-B identifies the location of those properties and a selection of additional properties that, with additional information provided by county records or property owners, could be considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

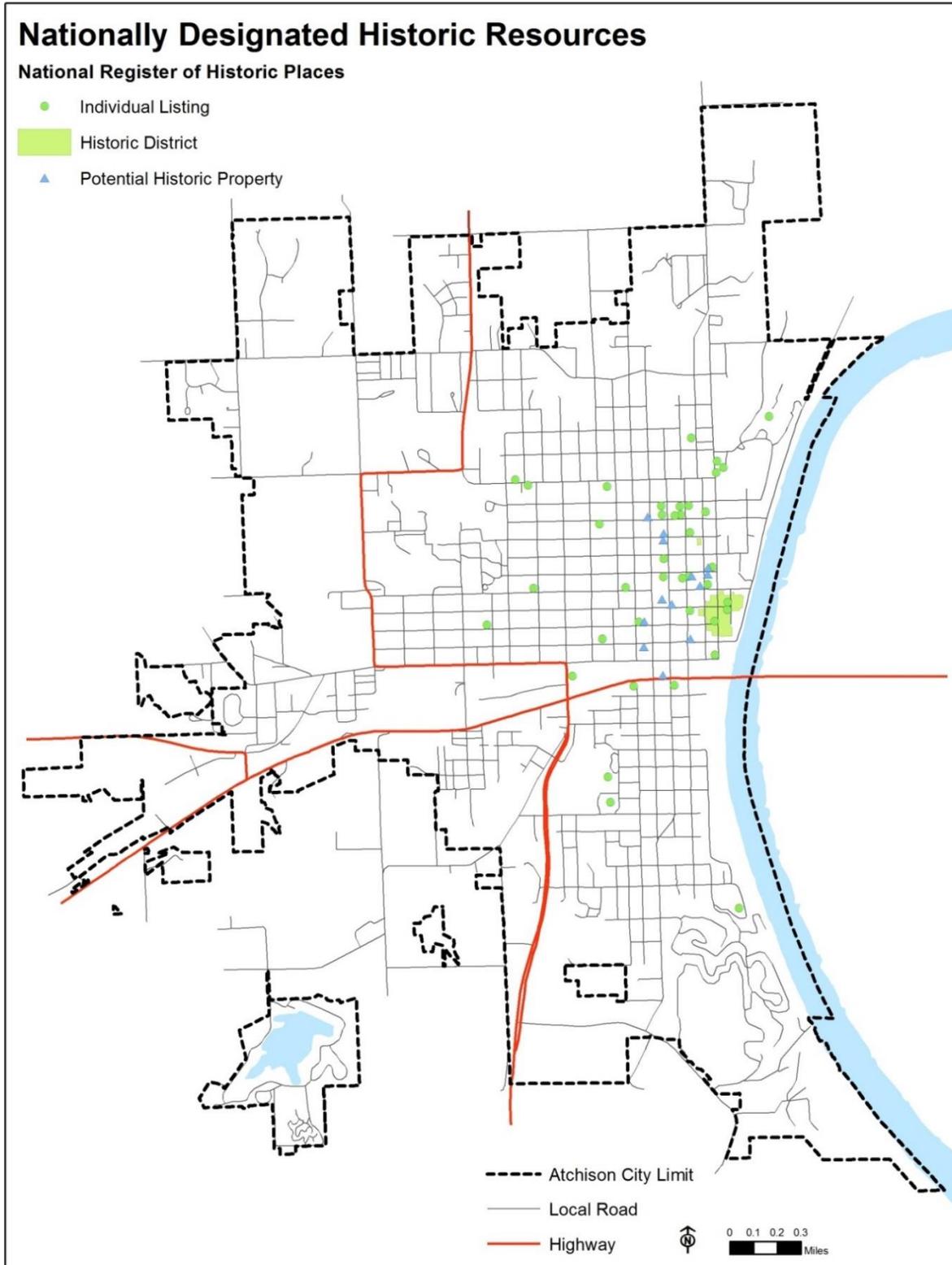
Table 3-A: Properties and Districts on the National Register of Historic Places

Name	Location
Historic Properties	
Amelia Earhart Birthplace	223 N. Terrace Street
Atchison County Courthouse	423 N. 5 th Street
Atchison County Memorial Hall	819 Commercial Street
Atchison Post Office	621 Kansas Avenue
Atchison Santa Fe Freight Depot	200 S. 10 th Street
Baker, Francis and Harriet, House	823 N. 5 th Street
Benedictine College North Campus Historic Complex - Bishop Fink Hall - Old Priory/Lemke Hall - St. Benedict’s Abbey Monastery/Freshman Hall - St. Benedict’s Parish Church	1020 N. 2 nd Street
Bolman, George T. and Minnie Searles, House	418 N. 4 th Street
Braun, Henry, House	1307 Division Street
Brown, J. P., House	805 N. 4 th Street
Campbell Chapel AME Church	715 Atchison Street
Edminston, James M., House	311 S. 7 th Street
Ebenezer Baptist Church	826 Riley Street
Glancy/Pennell House	519 N. 5 th Street
Glick-Orr House	503 N. 2 nd Street
Harwi, A. J., House	1103 Atchison Street
Hausner House	400 N. 3 rd Street

Hetherington, W. W., House	805 N. 5 th Street
Horan, Michael J. and Mattie, House	822 N. 4 th Street
Howard, Frank House	305 N. Terrace Street
Howe, Edgar W., House	1117 N. 3 rd Street
Jansen House	806 N. 3 rd Street
Lanphear-Mitchell House	417 N. 4 th Street
Lincoln School	621 Kansas Avenue
McInteer Villa	1301 Kansas Street
Mount Saint Scholastica Convent	801 S. 8 th Street
Muchnic, H. E., House	704 N. 4 th Street
Pease, Robert L., House	203 2 nd Street
Price Villa	801 S. 8 th Street
Ramsay, Ronald and Dorcas, House	1415 Riverview Drive
St. Martin's Bed & Breakfast	324 Santa Fe Street
Schmitt House	1110 W. Division Street
Stein, Frederick W., House	324 Santa Fe Street
Trinity Episcopal Church	300 S. 5 th Street
Waggener, B. P., House	819 N. 4 th Street
Waggener, Balie P., House	415 W. Riley Street
Wherrett-Mize Drug Company Building	201 Main Street
Historic Districts	
Amelia Earhart Historic District	115-324 N. 2 nd ; 124-300 N. 3 rd ; 103-224 Santa Fe; and 127-130 N. Terrace Streets
Burnes Rental Houses Historic District	615, 617, and 621 N. 3 rd Street

Source: National Register of Historic Places.

Figure 3-B. Sites and Districts Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, with Potential Sites for Future Preservation



Source: National Register of Historic Places.

State Preservation Law

The Kansas Preservation Act of 1977 declared historic preservation the policy of the state and required the activities of governmental entities which encroached on national or State register properties to be reviewed by the SHPO. In 1981, lawmakers widened the law to require review of all projects involving national and state register properties and their environs which needed local building permits. In 2013, lawmakers reversed the 1981 amendment resulting in the elimination of environs reviews. In this case, “environs” refers to the historic property’s associated surroundings and the elements or conditions that serve to characterize a specific place, neighborhood, district, or area, which takes into account all relevant factors, including the following:

1. The use of the area;
2. The significance of the historical property;
3. The scope of the project;
4. Surrounding buildings, structure, and foliage; and
5. The topography of the surrounding area.

A property need not be adjacent to a historic property for it to be in the historic property’s environs. While the State no longer reviews the environs of historic properties, the lack of transitions around historic resources can sometimes lead to jarring juxtapositions of scale and proximity that detract from the character of the historic resource’s setting

Funding Sources

Tax Credits: Over the years, various federal and state incentives have been introduced to assist private preservation initiatives, such as the rehabilitation tax credit. The federal program provides an income-tax credit equal to 20% of qualified rehabilitation expenditures on income-producing properties. The Kansas (state) Historic Tax Credit (KHTC), implemented in 2002 provides a state income tax credit equal to 25% (30% for non-profits) on qualified rehabilitation expenditures for income or non-income producing purposes. The KHTC may be used in combination with the federal Historic Tax Credit, thus providing a combined credit of 45%. These tax credits provide a key tool for the rehabilitation of historic properties.

Heritage Trust Fund: The Heritage Trust Fund (HTF) is a state program that provides matching funds for the preservation of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places or the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

Historic Preservation Fund: The SHPO administers the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) to finance local preservation activities that will contribute to planning for the preservation of the built environment and archeological resources. Up to 60% of the cost of eligible activities can be funded through this program.

Additional Sources: Additional sources of preservation funding, including Preserve America Community grants, the Kansas Department of Transportation and Kansas Housing Resources Corporation, can be found on the website of the Kansas Historical Society or by contacting the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Recommendations

Atchison will continue to change, and change provides the opportunity to strengthen and enrich the city's visual character and to enhance the quality of life already appreciated by many residents and visitors. The following recommendations are intended to guide the city in enhancing its visual appearance and preserving its unique historical resources.

Visual Resources

1. Edges
 - The city should take care to clearly identify city entries and protect them from clutter.
 - Develop design guidelines for the improvement of city entrances.
 - Whenever possible, the city should ensure that the construction of commercial strip developments along the routes leading into and out of the city blends with the character of the city. Limiting the number of curb cuts (driveways) and required landscaped setbacks from the highway can improve the flow of traffic and the appearance of the commercial strip.

Historic Resources

1. Promote the city's cultural and historic identity as an economic asset.
 - Work with the Atchison Chamber of Commerce and the Atchison County Historic Society to market the city's historic resources and promote the coordination of those efforts.
 - Include historic resources in the city's way finding signage.
 - Consider seeking designation of the city as a federal "Preserve America Community" to promote the city's historic identity and for the opportunity to apply for Preserve America Community to receive grants supporting heritage tourism.
2. Maintain an updated list of properties and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
 - Amend the city's development code to include an environs review, ensuring that development proposals adjacent to or including historic sites identify and minimize or mitigate any negative development impacts on those sites. Use the existing architectural and historical character within an area as a guide for new construction.
3. Encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of significant or contributing existing structures, favoring retention over replacement, especially in areas where other historic resources are present.
4. Support the nomination of eligible historic resources for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Chapter 4

DOWNTOWN

The Central Business District of Atchison, also known as the Downtown/Riverfront area, is defined by the physical constraints of the Missouri River to the east and the railroad tracks to the south, and by the politically-defined boundaries of Tenth Street to the west and Kansas Avenue to the north. The Downtown area represents the veritable heart of the community, both geographically and socially. It is the traditional gathering place and center of business for the city. Downtown Atchison is unique within northeast Kansas and the larger Kansas City Metro Area because of its riverside location and historic buildings.

Atchison's downtown has survived a near-catastrophic flooding event, as well as increased commercial and retail developments along peripheral highways. These changes are not without civic consequences. Disinvestment and disinterest in Downtown however threatens the city's future vitality and economic development potential. In the following chapter, Downtown Atchison will be defined and analyzed, and its future discussed.

Historical Context

Throughout Atchison's history, there have been two periods of rapid growth and construction for the downtown area. One was at the turn of the twentieth century, when Atchison was experiencing its fastest period of industrial and population growth, and the other occurred immediately after the floods of 1958. As a riverside town founded prior to the era of transcontinental railroad travel, Atchison's original downtown was oriented toward and immediately adjacent to the Missouri River. Following the arrival of viable rail travel after the Civil War, downtown Atchison began to be rebuilt along the railroad lines that ran perpendicular to the river, much in the same location they are today. The relocation was accelerated in the first few decades of the twentieth century, when Atchison's economy boomed. This reorientation of Atchison's downtown away from the river and toward the rail lines not only created a physical change for the district, but it also ultimately resulted in the decay of the riverfront as businesses and residents moved to newer structures.

The extensive damage caused by the flash floods of 1958 prompted Atchison to be declared a federal disaster zone, and federal Urban Renewal funds were steered to the area and focused on rebuilding the business district and building a pedestrian mall in the heart of the downtown district. The Commercial Street pedestrian mall, completed in 1964, was modeled after other successful projects in Miami, Florida and Kalamazoo, Michigan.

1996 Comprehensive Strategic Plan

In the 1990s, concerned with community image and economic vitality in Atchison, city officials decided to rejuvenate the outdated comprehensive plan with new directives and policies designed for downtown revitalization. In 1996 the Comprehensive Strategic Plan was completed, and the downtown/riverfront district was declared by that document to be the number one priority for redevelopment in the city. The development of a Downtown/Riverfront Master Plan was led by the Atchison Riverfront Development Council (Riverfront Task Force). One of the primary recommendations of the Master Plan was to establish guidelines to encourage new development and

restoration in downtown, and for new construction that was sensitive to the historical context of the district. The task force compiled these guidelines in a follow-up document to the 1996 Plan. Published in 2000, the Downtown/Riverfront Façade & Signage Design Guidelines were intended to further historic preservation, rehabilitation and maintenance of properties within the targeted district, and create a consistent architectural character that would become a recognizable theme for the designated area. As a part of this restoration, the Riverfront Plaza was completed in 2004, just in time for the Lewis and Clark bicentennial celebrations that year.

2004 Comprehensive Plan

The 2004 Comprehensive Plan identified the Central Business District (CBD) as the primary commercial location for the City of Atchison, with the Commercial Street pedestrian mall serving as the hub of the CBD. The city continues to support this designation, and development discussions have centered on ways to promote the CBD and to provide for additional commercial growth.

At the time of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan's creation, the downtown mall was showing signs of age and was in need of repairs to sidewalks and architectural features, as well as landscaping renovations. The city had recently been awarded a Transportation Enhancement grant from the Federal Highway Administration FHA for improvements to the mall, so the Plan recommended a discussion of the long term future for the mall.

For that period at least, the decision was made to retain the mall and improve it with the FHA grant. In 2007, the four blocks of the Commercial Street mall and parkway were renovated. Everything except the original concrete pillar canopies and the trees were completely excavated, with new underground utility systems installed, new concrete sidewalks and brick paver sidewalks, seating areas, stone planters and benches, architectural lighting, and a new fountain in the courtyard between Fourth and Fifth Streets.

Design Elements

The major design elements that affect the appearance and function of an area or a city are the districts, paths, nodes, landmarks, and edges. They are discussed and defined in more detail in Chapter 3. A selection of those design elements are discussed here, as they relate to the appearance and function of downtown Atchison.

Districts

Districts are defined by their purpose, location, and types of buildings, which distinguish them from other districts in a city. A primary method of identifying districts is through zoning and land-use patterns within an area. The zoning of downtown Atchison is shown in Figure 4-A. Most of downtown is zoned B-4, or General Business District, with the two blocks of the mall zoned B-3 (Central Business District), the location of the Atchison Housing Authority at West Seventh Street between Commercial and Main Streets zoned PD (Planned Development), and the southwest quadrant of downtown zoned I-1 (Limited Industrial). An in-field review was conducted of all properties and land uses within the general boundaries of the downtown area in the spring of 2014. The existing land uses within downtown are shown in Figure 4-B.

Figure 4-A: Zoning Map of Downtown Atchison

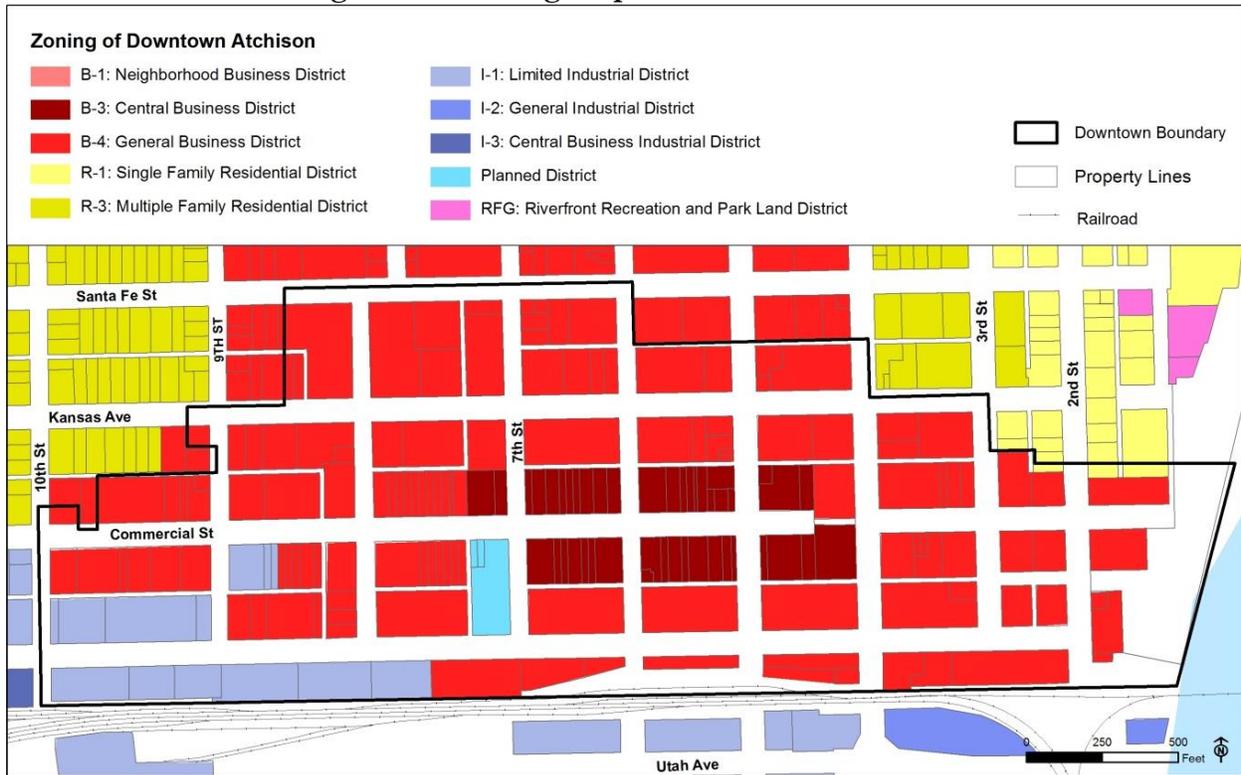


Figure 4-B: Existing Land Uses of Downtown Atchison



- Retail uses are primarily located on Commercial Street between Fourth and Sixth Streets, and on North Commercial Street between Sixth and Eighth Streets. There is also a significant level of service-related uses complementing the retail in the downtown core (Commercial Street between Seventh and Fifth Streets, and on Seventh Street between Kansas Avenue and Main Street).
- There are a large number of light industrial and industrial uses found within the defined boundaries of downtown Atchison. While only the blocks of South Main Street between Seventh and Tenth Streets, North Main Street between Ninth and Tenth Streets and the southeast corner of the intersection of Ninth Street and Commercial Street are zoned for light industrial activity, industrial uses were found throughout much of the westernmost blocks of downtown. Additional industrial uses were noted on peripheral locations on the eastern end of downtown. As mentioned in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan, there is not a clear physical delineation between light industrial and traditional industrial areas.
- Governmental/Educational uses are primarily found along North Kansas Avenue, with a few scattered in the blocks west of Seventh Street.
- Offices are found throughout downtown. However, many are concentrated along the Commercial Street Mall, between Fifth and Seventh Streets.
- Only two buildings that were observed to be mixed use were classified as such. However, some of the older buildings along Commercial Street may contain a second use in their upper floors that is not designated on the city's zoning map.
- Single-family residential uses are largely confined to the northern and western periphery of downtown. There is one high-density residential property within the Downtown core, a public housing facility. Several other properties contain residential units on their upper floors. The sparsely clustered distribution of these higher-density and mixed-use residential buildings, when combined with the single-family residential units located along the periphery of downtown, reveals a residential pattern that de-emphasizes a "neighborhood" character. The scarce presence of residential units located downtown reduces pedestrian traffic during evening and weekend hours for stores and restaurants. However, this deficiency in residential population downtown is somewhat offset by the residential character of adjacent neighborhoods located to the north, south, and west of downtown.
- Many of the buildings used for warehousing appear to be vacant, and many of the buildings that are declared to be vacant are still being used for storage, making it unclear how many buildings within the downtown area are technically vacant. Regardless, the decaying and empty condition of many of these buildings and lots detracts from the overall character of the downtown area.
- The vacant buildings on Commercial Street between Fifth and Seventh Streets appear to be those with the smallest property and building footprints.

The zoning of downtown Atchison, combined with the findings of the land-use study, would indicate that downtown could be classified in terms of two districts: an industrial district in the southwest section of downtown, and the rest of downtown, being the commercial and traditional business core of the city.

Paths and Edges

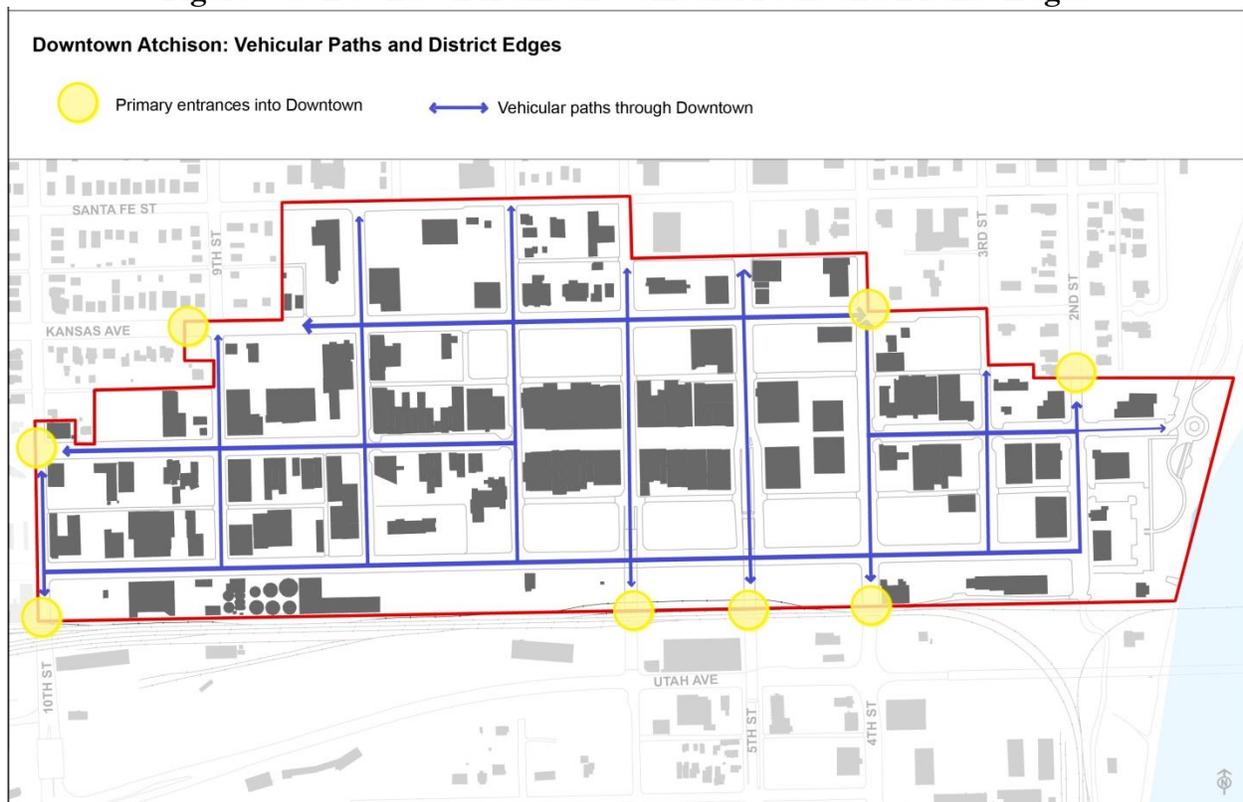
All vehicular paths through downtown Atchison are shown in Figure 4-C. The only east-west vehicular paths through downtown are Kansas Avenue, Commercial Street, and Main Street.

The primary north-south vehicular paths through downtown include:

- Second Street, the most direct connection from downtown to Benedictine College
- Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Tenth Streets, which are the only streets that span the railroad tracks, connecting south Atchison with downtown and the rest of northern Atchison
- Seventh Street, which runs perpendicular to the western entrance to the Commercial Street pedestrian mall, therefore providing the most direct vehicular access to businesses at that end of the mall

Based on these primary vehicular paths through downtown, major entrances into downtown have been determined. Those entrances are indicated by the circular symbols in Figure 4-C.

Figure 4-C: Downtown Atchison: Vehicular Paths and District Edges



Parking

Essential to the continued success and further growth of downtown Atchison is the availability of safe and convenient parking. At the same time, too much underutilized parking can detract from the appearance of a downtown and the small-town character so beloved by Atchison residents. An observational and GIS-based survey of downtown parking was conducted to determine the adequacy of parking in the area. The total number of parking spaces, traditional and handicapped-accessible, was counted in-person. The location and number of parking spaces were then mapped in GIS, along with property owner data, to determine whether the spaces were private or public.

In total, there were 862 observed parking spaces in public lots throughout downtown — 304 north of Commercial Street, 482 south of Commercial Street, and 76 located in parking lots parallel to the riverfront. Altogether, these spaces amounted to a total of 358,551 square feet of land. In addition, there were over 550 on-street parking spaces observed throughout downtown. Combined, there are more than 1,400 public parking spaces in downtown Atchison, most of which are located west of Ninth Street.

To determine the ratio of parking to building footprints, as is required in the Atchison zoning ordinance to determine the appropriate amount of parking, updated information on building size throughout the downtown area would need to be gathered for further study.

Commercial Street Mall

Completed in 1964, the Commercial Street Pedestrian Mall is the pedestrian-only access area of Commercial Street between Fourth Street and Seventh Street. Responding to the fall 2013 community survey question asking “What is one of Atchison’s assets you hope will not change,” nine residents mentioned the mall positively. At the same time, 30 residents also mentioned the Mall in a negative context when asked “What is a threat to the area’s future or something you would like to change?” Finally, when asked “What do you hope Atchison will be like in 20 years,” 15 survey respondents said they hoped the mall would be removed.

Figure 4-D: Commercial Street Mall



At the time of the 2003 survey, 47% of survey respondents felt the mall should be saved, 21% felt repairs should be made, and 23% felt it should be removed. While the questions posed in the most recent community survey did not concern the mall specifically, the contrast in the favorability of the mall between the two surveys may be due to a statement made in the 2004 Plan: “Given the mall has been in place for 40 years, there would be a tendency for longtime residents to desire to keep it.” Therefore, discussion by city officials, business leaders, and the community at large of the longer term future is once again recommended in this update. To assist in that discussion, three possible scenarios for the future of the mall are included below.

Scenario One: No Change

The first scenario, shown in Figure 4-E, keeps the Commercial Street mall as it currently exists. The landscaping, canopies, and amenities in place would be retained as-is.

Figure 4-E: Commercial Street Mall, No Change



Scenario Two: Concrete Canopies Removed

In the second scenario, shown in Figure 4-F, the concrete canopies attached to the buildings between Seventh and Fifth Streets are removed. The existing canopies can be seen in Figure 4-D. Similar to metal façades being put on buildings in older downtowns, concrete canopies were also a

trend in the 1960s when the rise of the suburban shopping malls brought the urge to modernize and weatherize Main Street shopping districts in North American towns.

The national main-street preservation movement was in many ways initiated by these obtrusive canopies being built over historic storefronts. Designed to provide shade, the canopies also obstruct a significant amount of natural light and make it difficult for passersby to see merchandise inside a storefront. Removing the canopies would not only make it easier for pedestrians walking along the mall to see what each store has to offer, but would also improve sightlines for drivers in vehicles passing through on the north-south roads near the mall.

East Broadway in Columbia, Missouri is an excellent example of the power of removing these concrete canopies. In 2004, two store owners tore down the portions in front of their buildings, allowing one owner to spruce up his building with less obtrusive canvas awnings and another to list his property on the National Register of Historic Places and begin the historic tax credit process. Not long after, the Special Business District of Downtown Columbia voted to pay for the removal of the entire canopy, which stretched for several blocks along downtown Columbia's main east-west thoroughfare. By 2006, the Downtown Columbia Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, with 81 contributing buildings. Property owners then began restoring façades and renovating unused second stories. As a result of these simple changes, Columbia's unofficial main street was reborn.

Figure 4-F: Commercial Street Mall, Concrete Canopies Removed



Scenario Three: Concrete Canopies and Pedestrian Mall Removed

For the third and most drastic scenario, shown in Figure 4-G, the concrete canopies and raised pedestrian mall are removed for the two blocks of Commercial Street between Fifth and Seventh Streets. Additionally, the trees and bricks have been moved closer to the buildings for streetscaping and intersection improvements, and on-street parking has been added in front of buildings. Due to the narrow width between the two buildings at the east end of the mall (between Fourth and Fifth Streets), that block of Commercial Street would remain a courtyard — a place for the annual Christmas tree lighting and a visual focal point for Commercial Street. On-street parking would encourage customers to use the front entrances of buildings, and businesses to invest in the appearance of their front entrances and façades, thereby improving the overall appearance of downtown. A common theme in downtown areas is that consistent and visible activity tends to attract more people. On-street parking would increase activity in front of businesses on Commercial Street, and make the street a more active and inviting place for passersby and customers alike.

Figure 4-G: Commercial Street Canopies and Pedestrian Mall Removed



Recommendations

Atchison's downtown is unique among smaller Kansas cities and cities in the region. The area's rich history offers a unique sense of heritage, and the older buildings promote a sense of reassurance and permanence not found in modern building practices. The riverfront location helps to encourage tourism, while downtown's centrality to the rest of the community supports the small-town atmosphere that so many larger cities are forever attempting to create. The following recommendations are intended to guide the long-term future of downtown, ensuring the district's sustainability and the city's vitality while enhancing all of the best attributes and encouraging a sense of community pride and investment in the area.

1. Land Use

- A. Redefine the boundaries of downtown to those blocks promoting the commercial character of a traditional downtown, or redefine the Downtown/Riverfront area as a district within the larger Central Business District.
- B. Assist businesses and property owners in effectively utilizing the smaller buildings along Commercial Street.
- C. Amend the zoning code to allow a higher percentage of build-able area and reduced setback requirements in the Central Business District (B-3), reflective of the density allowances in the General Business District (B-4).

2. Paths and Edges

- A. Target future design improvements specific to the downtown area to those entrances and major pathways identified here, thereby clearly indicating the transition into or out of the downtown area.
- B. Extend the design improvements such as the flags and streetscaping completed in the blocks near the riverfront to the west side of downtown.
- C. To better connect the Atchison community to the downtown, promote attractive and comfortable paths to the district for pedestrians as well as vehicles.

3. Parking

- A. Using building area data, evaluate the adequacy of parking in the downtown area. If there proves to be an overabundance under zoning standards, consider the conversion of one of the public lots into buildable area.

4. Commercial Street Mall

- A. Seek broader and more comprehensive business and community input on the future direction of the Commercial Street mall.
- B. Assist businesses desiring to improve the mall, such as through the formation of a Special Business District.

Chapter 5

POPULATION

Population Analysis

Population characteristics of the people living in a planning area tell a significant story. Analysis of those characteristics is essential to the preparation of a meaningful comprehensive plan because they assist in forecasting an area's future land use and public facility needs.

The main source of population data in this document is obtained from the Bureau of the Census of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Kansas Division of the Budget, jointly with the Bureau of the Census, prepares annual estimates for counties and cities. To update local data, cities are asked to inform the Division of any annexations. Annexation data is important because unless otherwise informed, the Division assigns growth to the unincorporated area of a particular county. In time, such assignments can affect revenue allocations from both federal and state sources that use population in their funding formulae. Therefore, it is very important to Atchison that the state be informed of such annexations.

Trends in Population

Examination of census data over the last 30 years reveal a steady population decline in Atchison by three percent. Table 5-A depicts the population history for the City of Atchison, Atchison County, and the State of Kansas. Both the city and county have experienced steady decline in population over the last 30 years. However, the population increase for the City of Atchison in 2010 has alleviated the extent of this decline and placed Atchison's population change greater than the county's. The population in the City of Atchison now constitutes 3% more of the total county's population than it did in 1980. Atchison's population comprised of 62% of the county population in 1980 compared to 65% in 2010. Although it does not account for the increase in population in 2010, it is significant that the average household size has increased from 2.39 in 2000 to 2.45 in 2010. The latter is less than both Kansas (2.49) and the U.S. (2.58) for 2010.

Table 5-A. Population Trends: 1980-2010

<u>Year</u>	<u>Atchison City</u>	<u>Atchison County</u>	<u>State of Kansas</u>
1980	11,407	18,397	2,363,679
1990	10,656	16,932	2,477,574
2000	10,232	16,774	2,688,418
2010	11,021	16,924	2,853,118
Percent change from 1980 to 2010	-3.4%	-8.0%	20.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1980-2010.

Table 5-B depicts the population trends for the same years, 1980 to 2010, for other cities in Atchison County. When compared to the other cities, Atchison falls in the middle between Mascotah and Effingham in terms of population change. Table 5-C also depicts the population trends for 1980

to 2010, however, compares adjacent counties. When compared to the counties, Atchison falls in the middle between Jackson and Atchison County.

Table 5-B. Population History in Other Cities in Atchison County: 1980-2010

<u>City</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change 1980 to 2010</u>
Lancaster	274	299	291	298	8.8%
Muscotah	248	194	200	176	-0.3%
Effingham	634	540	588	546	-13.9%
Huron	107	75	87	54	-49.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1980-2010.

Table 5-C. Population History in Adjacent Counties: 1980-2010

<u>County</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% 1980 to 2010</u>
Leavenworth	54,809	64,371	68,691	76,227	39.1%
Jefferson	15,207	15,905	18,426	19,126	25.8%
Jackson	11,644	11,525	12,657	13,462	15.6%
Atchison	18,397	16,932	16,774	16,924	-8.0%
Doniphan	9,268	8,134	8,249	7,945	-14.3%
Brown	11,955	11,128	10,724	9,984	-16.5%

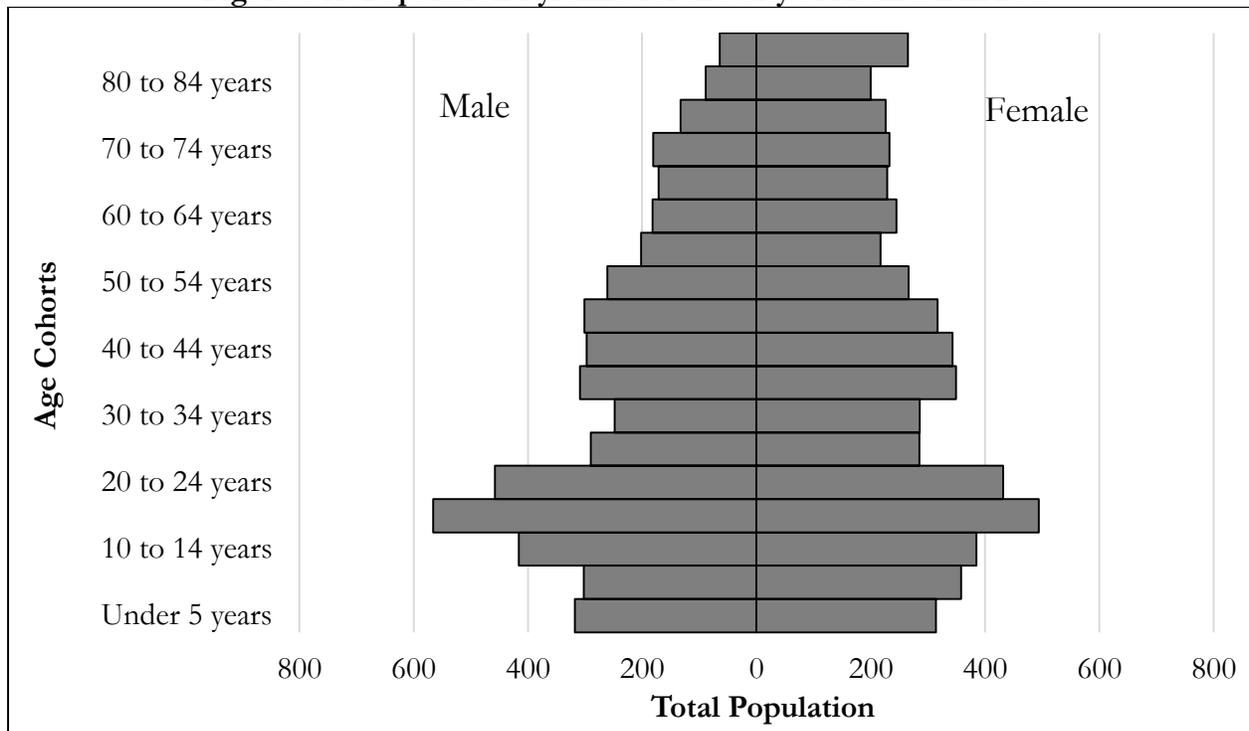
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1980-2010.

Population Pyramids 2000 and 2010

Figures 5-A and 5-B illustrate the population pyramids for Atchison in 2000 and 2010. A population pyramid consists of two back-to-back bar graphs, with the population plotted on the horizontal or X-axis and the age cohorts on the vertical or Y-axis. The left side of the graphs represent the number of males and the right side number of females in each of the five-year age groups (also called cohorts). Population pyramids are viewed as the most effective way to graphically show the age and sex distribution of a population, due to the clear image these pyramids present.

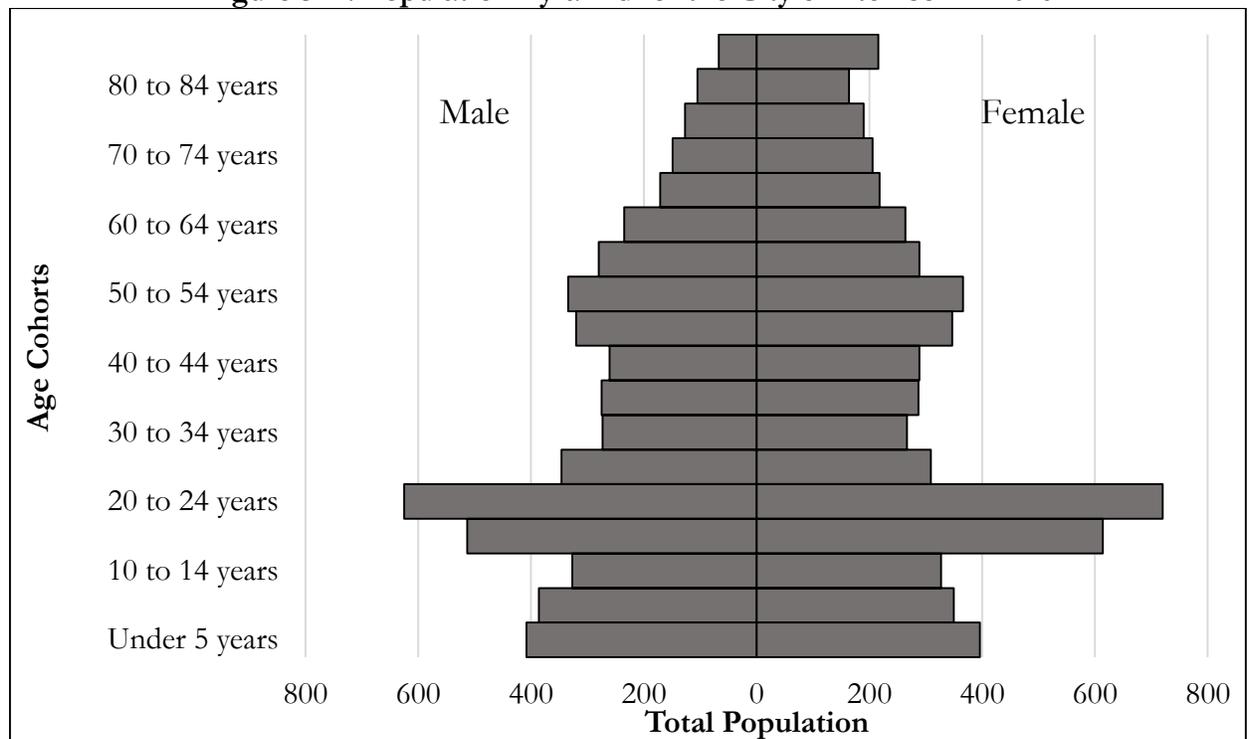
Another benefit of population pyramids is comparing current and past pyramids. By comparing the 2000 and 2010 population pyramids of Atchison, evidence of changes in each age cohort are apparent. The first notable change is the increase in the under 5 years and 5 to 9 years age cohorts, suggesting more children are being born and raised in Atchison at an early age. The second most notable change occurred in the largest bulge of the pyramid including the age cohorts 15 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years. As the conventional high school and college age groups, these groups experienced the largest increase between 2000 and 2010. The third notable change occurred in the second largest bulge of the pyramid between the ages of 35 and 64. In 2000, this bulge ranged from ages 35 to 49 and then in 2010 the bulge range changed to ages 45 to 59. This change suggests that these age cohorts are staying in Atchison and may continue to stay into their senior years. A final characteristic evident in the population pyramids is the higher number of females in the 75 and older age cohorts compared to males. This disparity is typical, as females generally have a greater life expectancy than males.

Figure 5-A: Population Pyramid for the City of Atchison in 2000



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1980-2010.

Figure 5-B: Population Pyramid for the City of Atchison in 2010



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1980-2010.

Characteristics of Population

Selected characteristics of interests for the City of Atchison are summarized from the 2010 Census. All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

- Of the total population of 11,021, there were 3,933 households, 2,447 (62%) of which were occupied by families. Of the latter figure, 43% were married-couple families.
- Of persons 15 and over, 38% were married, 38% never married, and 24% are no longer married.
- Of the 11,021 residents, 5,202 are males (47%) and 5,819 were females (53%).
- 805 persons (7%) were under five years of age and considered to be in the preschool age group. This compares to both the county and U.S. at 7%.
- 2,512 persons (23%) were between five and 19 years of age in the school group. This compares to the 23% for the county population and is higher than the U.S. (20%).
- 6,084 persons (55%) were between the ages of 20 and 64 otherwise known as the working group. This compares to the 55% for the county population but is lower than the U.S. (60%).
- 1,620 persons (15%) were 65 years of age and over in the retiree category. This compares to the 15% for the county population and is higher than the U.S. (13%).
- The City's median age of 32 is lower than the county's median age of 36 due to the growing population in the 15 to 24 age cohort.
- The median age for males in the city is 30, while the median age for females is 34.
- The primary ancestries are German (33%), Irish (20%), and English (10%).
- The number of persons per household is 2.45, including both owner-occupied and renter households.
- Three percent of the population over five years of age speak a language other than English at home.
- The minority population was 12% of the total population or 1,323 people.
- 1,375 or eight percent of the population in Atchison live in group quarters, the majority of whom are college housing (74%).
- The percentage of the population 25 years and older with a high school degree or higher was 89%; the percentage of those with a bachelor's degree or higher was 24%.

Population Forecast 2030

A population forecast is a judgmental statement of what the population is likely to be in the future. Effective planning needs to be based on reasonable expectations of future population. By properly anticipating the future population, there is a greater likelihood that services and facilities will be available at the time and in the places they are most needed. To determine the best forecast, numerous models were tested using the observed population of the past. As seen in Table 5-D, there were six different models or curves tested including: linear, geometric, parabolic, modified exponential, gompertz, and logistic. From these models, there is a clear consistency among four of the six curves suggesting that the 2030 population for Atchison will be roughly 10,500.

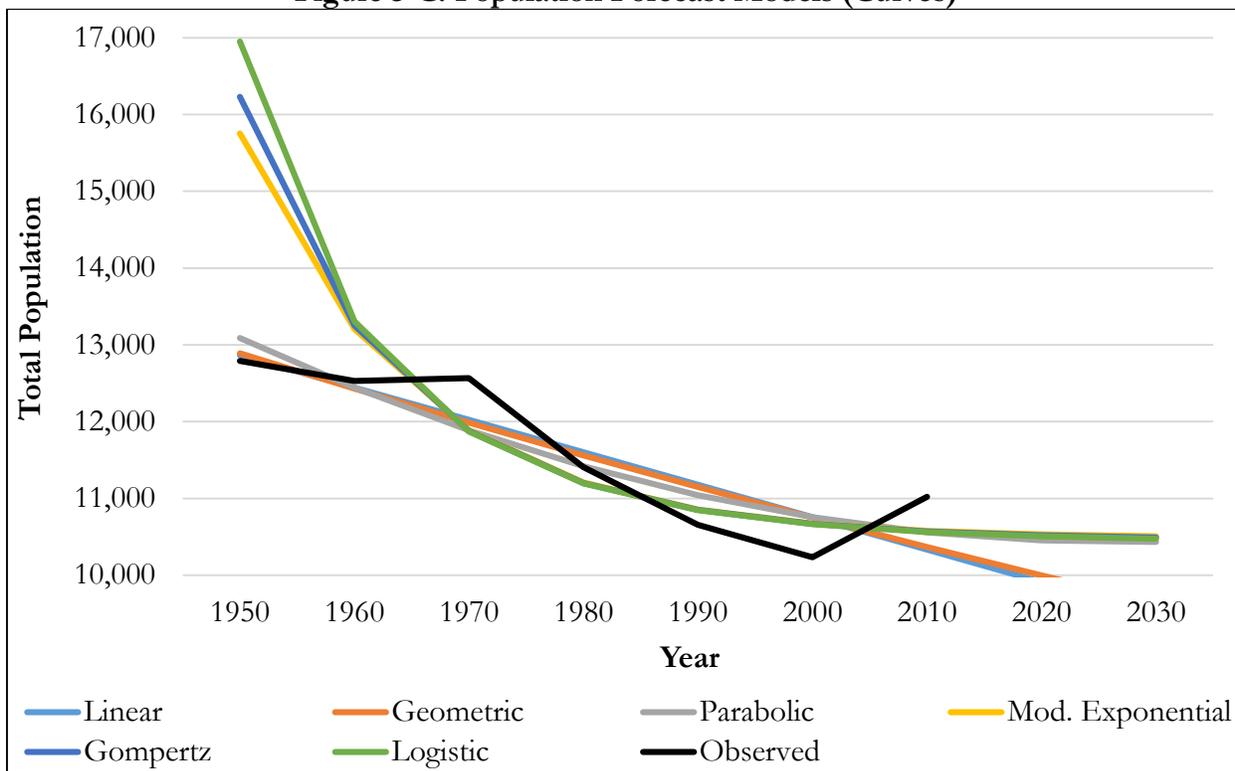
Table 5-D: Population Forecast Models

Year	Observed	Linear	Geometric	Parabolic	Mod. Exponential	Gompertz	Logistic
		$y = a + bx$	$y = ab^x$	$y = a + bx + cx^2$	$y = c + ab^x$	$y = ca^{(b^x)}$	$y = 1 / (c + ab^x)$
		11600.					-
		a 3	11561.0	11420.6	2726.8	1.3	0.000021
		b -422.0	0.964	-422.0	0.5	0.5	0.6
		c --	--	44.9	10478.8	10457.6	0.000096
1950	12,792	12,866	12,892	13,091	15,754	16,231	16,951
1960	12,529	12,444	12,432	12,444	13,206	13,251	13,304
1970	12,565	12,022	11,989	11,888	11,888	11,880	11,871
1980	11,407	11,600	11,561	11,421	11,207	11,201	11,195
1990	10,656	11,178	11,149	11,044	10,856	10,852	10,848
2000	10,232	10,756	10,751	10,756	10,674	10,668	10,663
2010	11,021	10,334	10,368	10,559	10,579	10,570	10,561
2030	--	9,490	9,641	10,434	10,506	10,490	10,474

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1980-2010. Bold denotes forecasts.

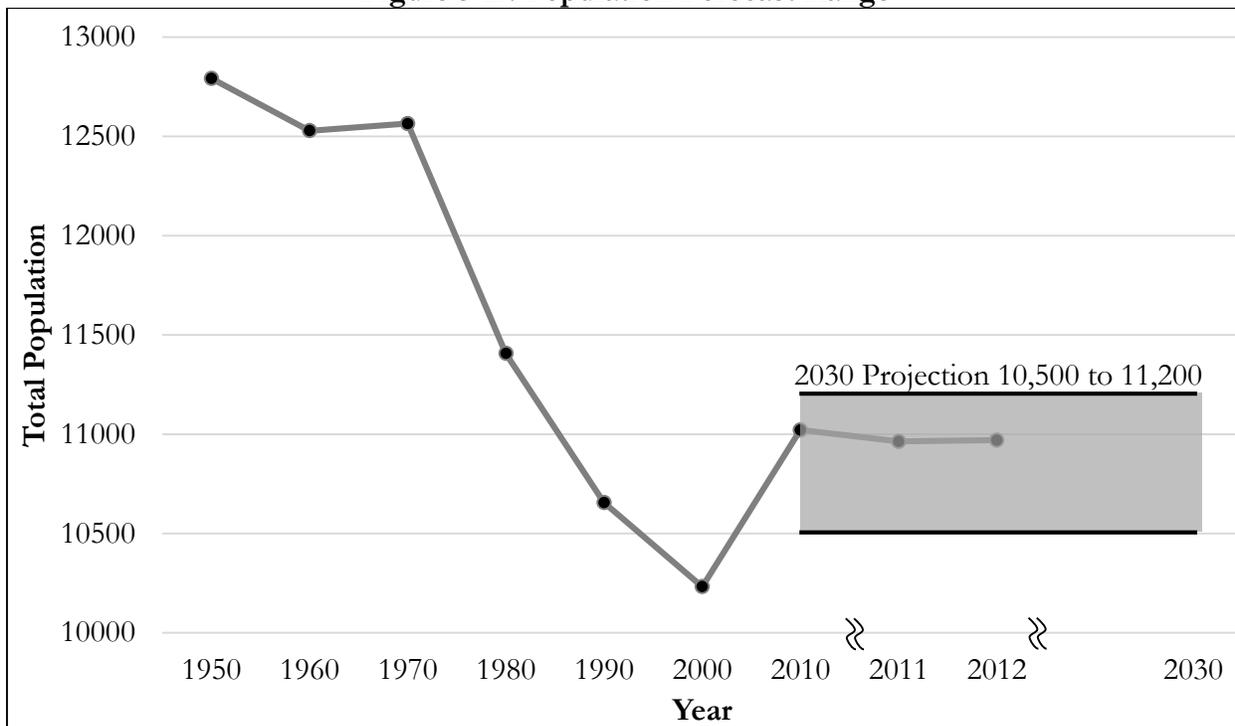
When these models are graphically displayed in Figure 5-C, the forecast of 10,500 is reaffirmed. In Figure 5-C, the black line represents the observed population or the population recorded by the U.S. Census, while the remaining lines represent each of the models. By comparing the observed line to the lines of the models, there is evidence that these curves have been both optimistic and pessimistic in the past. For example, in 2000 the curves suggested a higher population than what actually occurred, while in 2010 the curves revealed a lower population than what really occurred. This disparity is a reminder that a forecast can never be 100 percent accurate, and a realization that Atchison can gain more from a forecast with a population range rather than one specific quantity. In addition, since the forecasting models reflect the long-term population history and not the short term, providing a range is considered to be more appropriate due to the recent population increase in 2010. Based on both the long-term and short-term data, the forecast range for Atchison is 10,500 to 11,200 as seen in Figure 5-D. This range means if Atchison continues with the slight population decline, the city will still be better off than in 2000. More likely however, the population will remain stable and maintain through 2030, and has the potential for further growth.

Figure 5-C: Population Forecast Models (Curves)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1980-2010.

Figure 5-D: Population Forecast Range



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1980-2010. Shaded area denotes forecast and the curly brackets represent Census estimates.

Chapter 6

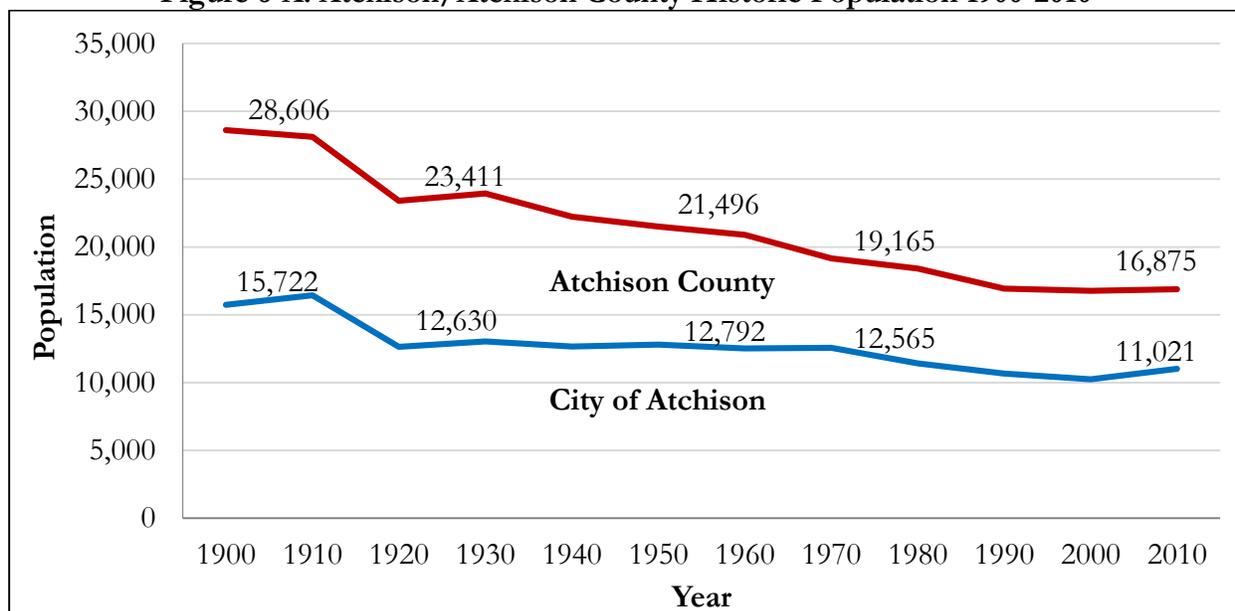
HOUSING

Housing is a chief building block, if not the foundation, of a community. It provides shelter – a basic need of local residents – and should provide an adequate, safe, decent, and diverse housing stock, critical to continued community progress and economic development. A well-maintained housing stock can be a financial asset to the community as it generates property taxes necessary for essential community services. A well-maintained housing stock contributes to community pride and can be a strong attraction for new employers seeking business locations rich in housing and community resources and amenities, including parks, civic buildings, educational facilities, and health and protection services. Housing is also the largest consumer of land in the community and is enormously beneficial to the local tax base. A healthy, well-maintained, and diverse housing stock is essential to the future growth and development of a community, providing residential space for different household compositions and incomes. Achieving a well-maintained, diverse, and vibrant housing stock is accomplished through the city’s ability to protect health, safety, and general welfare of the community and is implemented through local housing and building codes.

This chapter provides an overview of key housing characteristics of the City of Atchison, including the population trends of the community, income and earnings, the available housing stock, and analysis of housing tenure and vacancy rates. Housing condition is presented for central core neighborhoods. This chapter also investigates housing issues facing the city in the future.

Atchison Population and Housing Characteristics

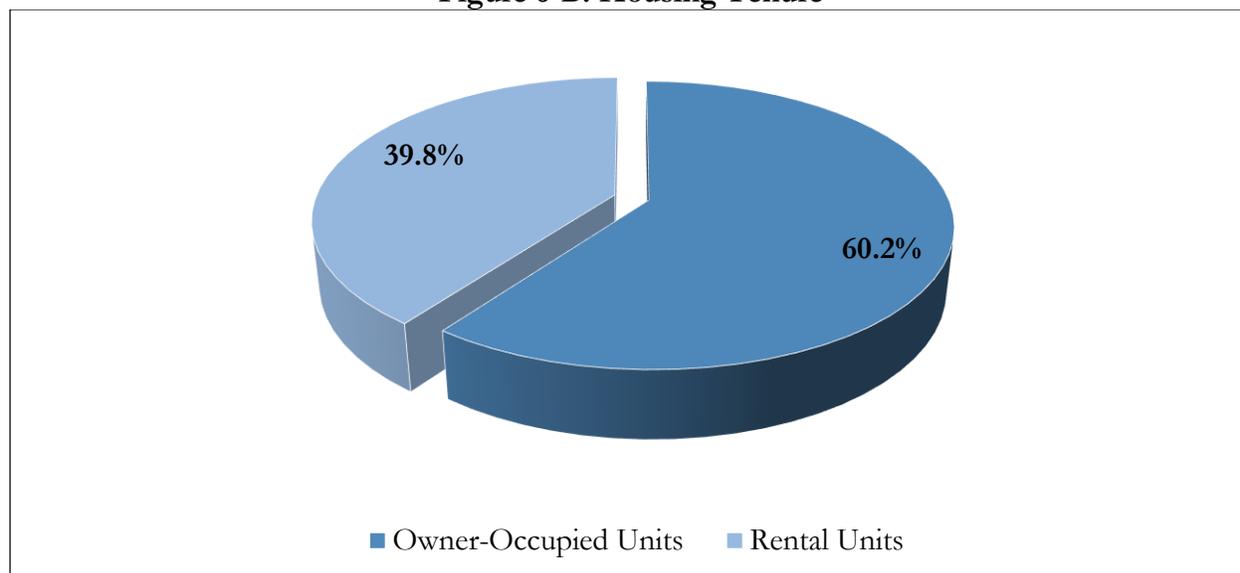
The City of Atchison is the largest community in Atchison County, with a 2010 residential population of 11,021. Although the historical population trend of Atchison has been one of decline since 1910 (see Figure 6-A), the city did increase its population between 2000 and 2010.

Figure 6-A: Atchison/Atchison County Historic Population 1900-2010

Source: <http://www.census.gov/population/cencounts/ks190090.txt>. April 13, 2014.

The Atchison population currently resides in 4,442 housing units, as counted by the 2010 Census, and a significant majority of Atchison residents own their homes. See Figure 6-B below. Housing tenure consists of 60.2% owner-occupied housing units and 39.8% rental housing units. The 2010 Census indicated that 11.5% of housing units in the city were vacant, well above the ideal vacancy rate of 5%, and slightly higher than the vacancy rate for the state as a whole in 2010. (See Table 6-A.) A positive side of the current vacancy rates is that only about 2.3% of owner-occupied homes are vacant, just above State of Kansas owner-occupied vacancy rate. However, rental housing vacancies in Atchison, according to Census information, is 10.1%, about 3 percentage points above the state average. The US Census 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates, in 2012, indicate an increasing percentage of vacant dwelling units, and estimates 15.7% of residential structures were vacant.

Figure 6-B: Housing Tenure



Source: Census 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates.

Table 6-A: Percentage Vacant Units

	Kansas	Atchison County	City of Atchison
Owner-Occupied Vacancy Rate	2.0%	2.0%	2.3%
Rental Vacancy Rate	7.0%	8.4%	10.1%

Source: 2010 Census, Census 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates.

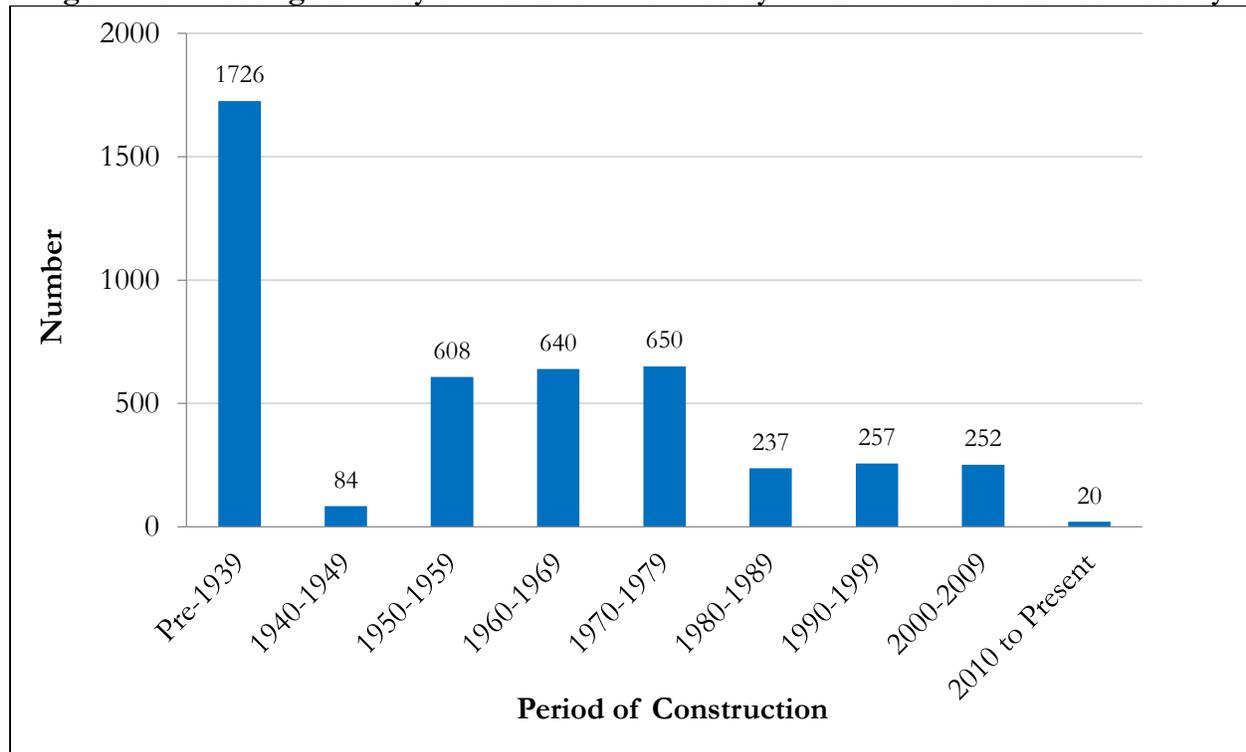
Housing Stock and Building Activity

Census data provides insight into the age of the city housing stock. The City of Atchison has an older housing stock, which suggests both historical quality in the central core of the community, and also the potential need for maintenance and improvement of an aging stock. A survey of the central core neighborhoods, completed in March 2014, indicated blocks with a mix of large homes of historical character and as well as smaller homes. Overall, 54% of the Atchison housing stock was constructed in 1950 or earlier, with about 39% having been constructed in 1939 or earlier. Figure 6-C below, compiled from Census estimates, provides a graphic representation of the construction period

6-3

of the Atchison housing stock. The March 2014 housing condition survey provided additional information about the age of housing and condition of housing in the central core neighborhoods of the city. Age of housing provides valuable information to the city and can be useful as the city assesses programs for neighborhood improvement and need future housing rehabilitation and/or renovation necessary to maintain neighborhoods and housing suitable and safe for community residents.

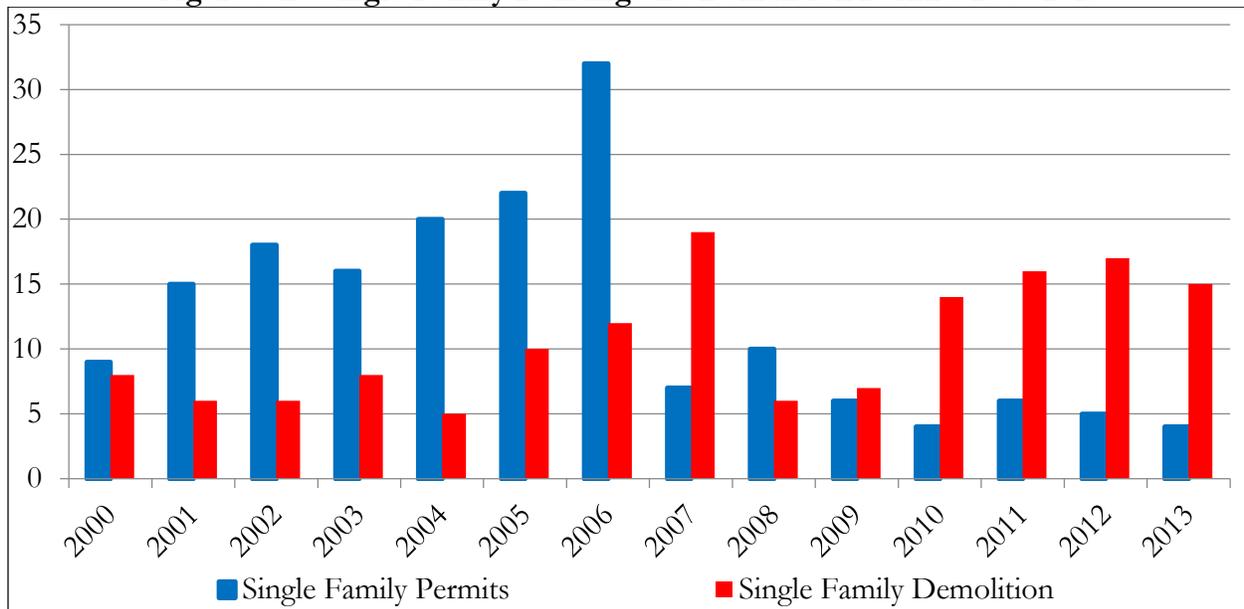
Figure 6-C Housing Stock by Construction Period City of Atchison and Atchison County



Source: City Building Permit Reports for 2010-2013 and Census 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates.

The City of Atchison has directed several resources targeting the residential stock of the community. An active demolition program has removed several unsafe and dilapidated single family residential structures. Many of these were located in the central core neighborhoods, the location of the most aged housing stock. Graphically, the results of this active demolition program can be gathered from Figure 6-D which provides new building permit activity compared to demolition permit activity between 2000 and 2013. In addition, the city has removed other unsafe structures. A tabular representation of building permits, demolitions permits, and permits improvements and renovation are provided in Table 6-B. In the period 2010 to 2013, 19 single family permits were issued by the city and 62 single family units were demolished, suggesting an aggressive program to remove unsafe and possibly aged structures.

Figure 6-D: Single Family Building and Demolition Permits 2000-2013



Source: City of Atchison Building Activity Reports.

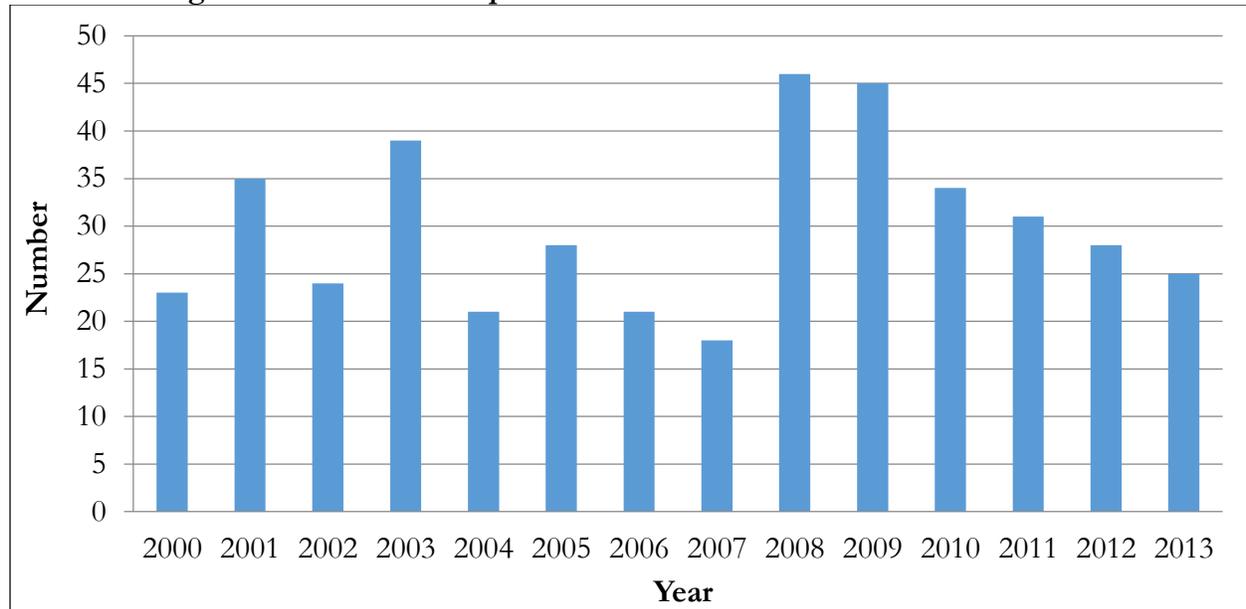
Table 6-B: Atchison Building/Demolition Permits 2000-2013

Year	Single-Family Permits	Single-Family Demolition	Multi-Family Permits	Multi-Family Demolition	Improvements/Renovation Permits
2000	9	8	0	0	23
2001	15	6	0	0	35
2002	18	6	0	1	24
2003	16	8	3	0	39
2004	20	5	1	0	21
2005	22	10	1	0	28
2006	32	12	0	1	21
2007	7	19	0	0	18
2008	10	6	1	0	46
2009	6	7	6	0	45
2010	4	14	0	0	34
2011	6	16	0	0	31
2012	5	17	0	0	28
2013	4	15	1	0	25
Total	174	149	13	2	418

Source: Atchison Building Permit Reports.

Also striking in this data is the number of permits issued for improvements and renovations between 2000 and 2013. During this 14-year period, 2000 to 2013, 418 projects were undertaken that either resulted in property improvement and or renovation. This is shown graphically in Figure 6-E below. This data suggests that improvement and renovation is being made to the housing stock.

Figure 6-E: Atchison Improvement and Renovation Permits 2000-2013



Source: Atchison Building Permit Reports.

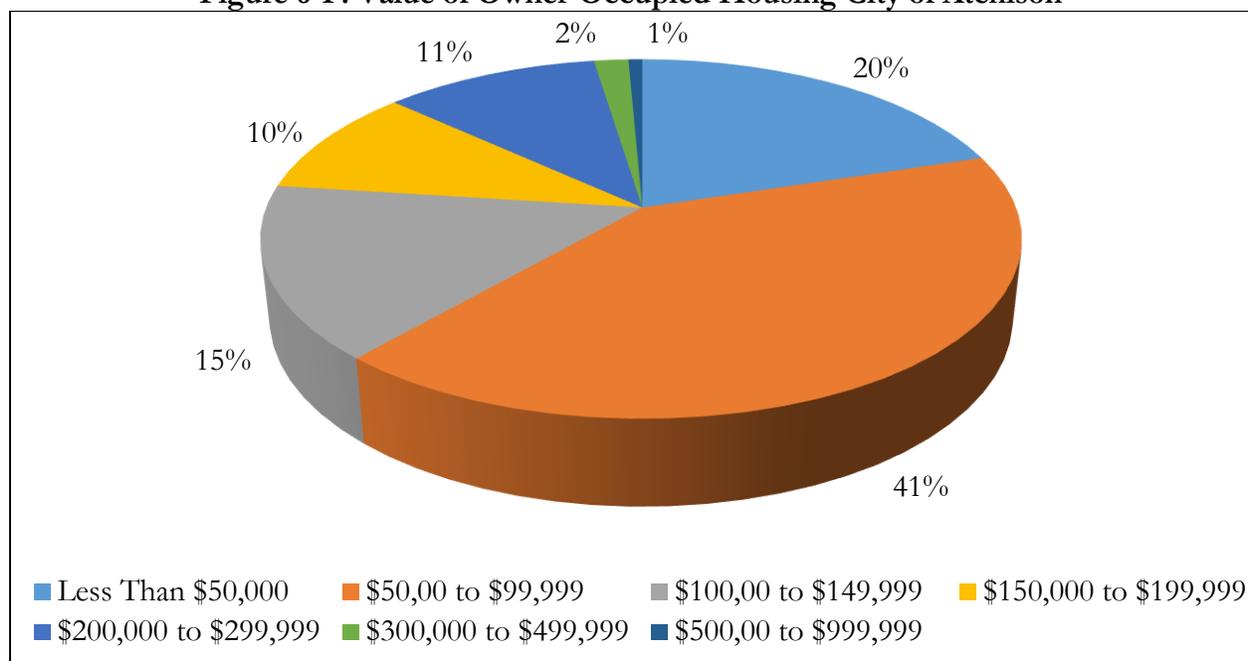
A second resource utilized by the city to encourage both home improvements/renovation and new residential construction is the county-wide residential Tax Abatement Program. Tax rebates are provided owners over a 7-year period on a declining basis, with owners receiving a 95% rebate in year one which incrementally declines until year 8 when the owner receives no rebate. This program plays a role in reducing housing costs through a tax rebate to property owners for the construction of new housing and for improvements made to existing housing.

Combined demolition of unsafe structures and tax abatement, are a positive direction by the City to improving housing and neighborhoods. The efforts should be continued in the future, and possible, be coupled with other neighborhood improvement programs.

Value of Owner-Occupied Housing

The median value of an owner-occupied home in the City of Atchison according to the 2008-2012 5-Year Census Estimates is \$84,400, while the state median is just over \$125,000. While the median value of an owner-occupied home in Atchison is significantly below the state median value, the median household income of Atchison residents is also significantly below the state median income, possibly accounting for the difference in home values in Atchison as compared to the state median home values.

Figure 6-F: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing City of Atchison



Source: Census 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates, rounded up.

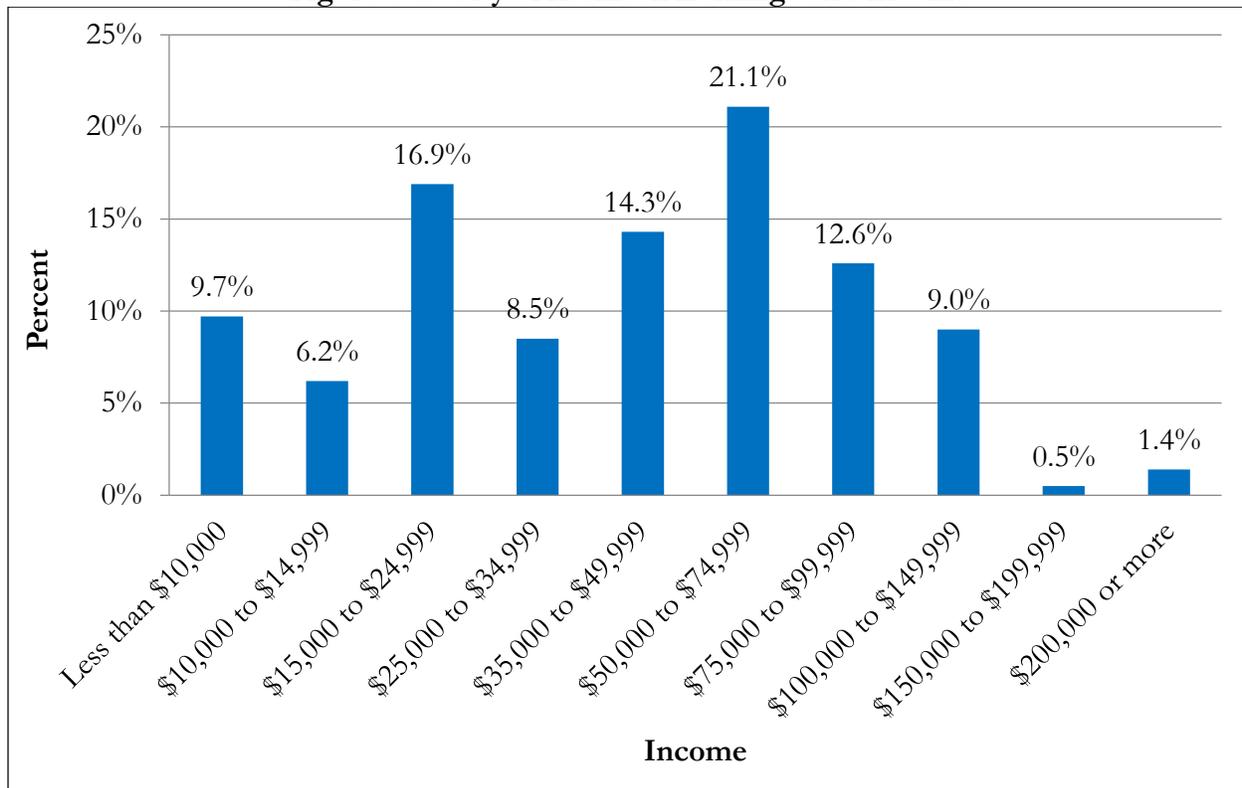
Table 6-C: City of Atchison Owner-Occupied Housing Values

Home Value	City of Atchison	Percent (Rounded Up)
Less Than \$50,000	491	20%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	1007	41%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	379	16%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	238	10%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	263	11%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	42	2%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	17	1%

Source: Census 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates.

Household Income

Housing affordability is a reflection of local housing costs and incomes. The Census 5-Year Estimates indicate that the median income for the City of Atchison \$41,949. Income falls short of Atchison County's median income, at \$45,666, and is about \$9,000 less than the State of Kansas median income of \$51,273. "Median" is the middle point in a group of data, and is often used as a barometer of sorts to show the middle point that is not affected by extremely low or extremely high values. Thus, 50% of Atchison households earn less than the \$41,949 and 50% earn more than that amount. Additionally, about 14% of Atchison families earn below poverty level. This is above the average for the State of Kansas (8.9%) and the US as a whole (10.9%). Poverty level is calculated for a family of four and is approximately \$23,000. In addition, more than 41.3% of Atchison households earn less than \$35,000 a year.

Figure 6-G: City of Atchison Earnings and Income

Source: Census 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates.

Cost burden – a benchmark in determining housing affordability – is defined as housing costs above 30% of the household’s annual gross income. Both homeowners and rental households can be cost-burdened, and rental households more likely to be cost-burdened. Atchison homeowners are more cost-burdened than the average for the State of Kansas, with 27.3% of Atchison homeowners expending greater than 30% of their income for housing costs. This compares to 25.8% for the state as a whole. Almost 18% of Atchison homeowners are spending more than 35% of their income for housing costs. See Table 6-D below.

Table 6-D: Cost Burden of Atchison Homeowners compared to the County and Kansas

	Kansas	Atchison County	City of Atchison
Spending 30%-34.9% of Income for Housing Costs	7.5%	7.7%	9.6%
Spending Greater Than 35% of Income for Housing Costs	18.3%	16.7%	17.7%
Cost-Burdened Homeowners	25.8%	24.4%	27.3%

Source: Census 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates.

Atchison rental households are also cost-burdened. As indicated in the Table 6-E below, 41% of rental households spend more than 30% of their gross income for rent. Although this is less than the average cost burden for the State of Kansas, it is significant and plays a role in household decisions for housing or other necessities.

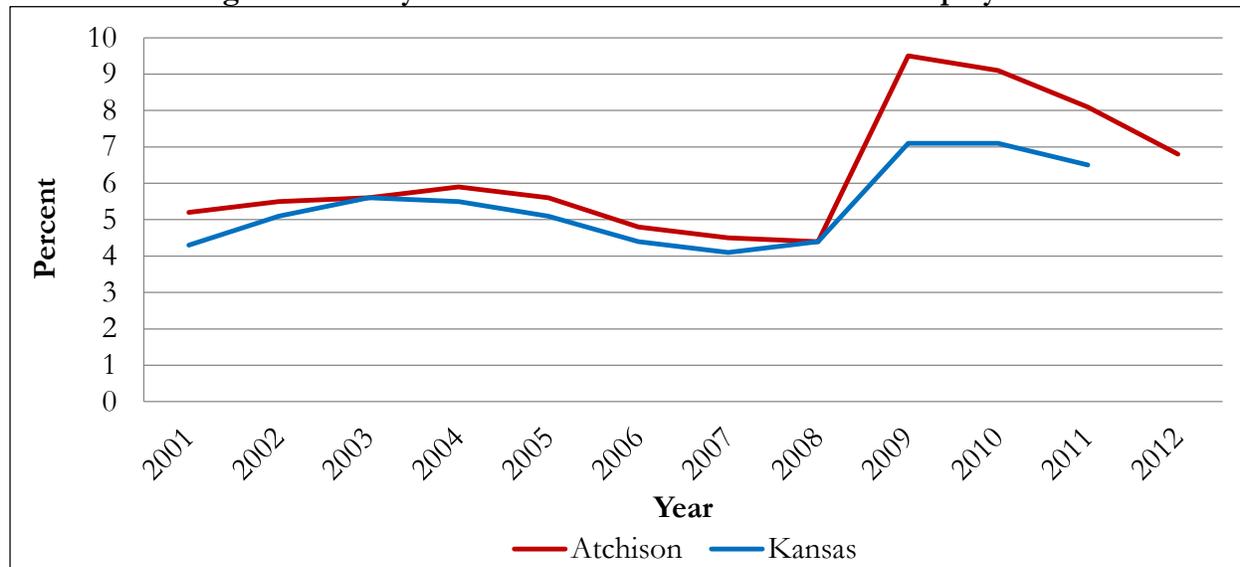
Table 6-E: Cost Burden of Atchison rental households compared to the County and Kansas

	Kansas	Atchison County	City of Atchison
Spending 30%-34.9% of Income for Housing Costs	8.5%	9.8%	8.3%
Spending Greater Than 35% of Income for Housing Costs	36.5%	30.3%	32.7%
Cost-Burdened Rental Households	45.0%	40.1%	41.0%

Source: Census 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates.

Coupled with high levels of cost-burdened households, the City of Atchison, since 2008, has been beleaguered with higher than state average unemployment, reaching almost 10% in 2009. Loss of one wage in a two-wage family can have a devastating effect on the cost burden of a household. Likewise, loss of employment can lead to loss of housing and can push homeowners into the rental market. Unemployment trends for the City of Atchison and the State of Kansas are provided in Figure 6-H below.

Figure 6-H: City of Atchison and State of Kansas Unemployment



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics; <http://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet>.

A large percentage of vacant housing units, when coupled with an aged housing stock, may impact housing affordability given the income and employment constraints Atchison residents face. The city is further challenged with low median income – with a large portion of the population earning below \$35,000 annually – and high unemployment. Housing challenges that the community appears to face include affordability, quality of existing structures, older housing stock

in the central core, some residential units with major structural integrity, and neighborhood blight as a result of poor housing condition in many central areas of the community. These issues are not insurmountable, and while a quick-fix solution is not available, these issues can be actively addressed by the community in the future.

Housing and Neighborhood Condition Survey

The housing condition survey for the City of Atchison was completed by Regional and Community Planning students of Kansas State University on March 29, 2014. The city was surveyed through a representative sampling of six neighborhood block groupings, highlighted in Figure 6-I, and generally located in the central core area of the city. The survey of the neighborhoods was conducted according to the Housing Condition Survey Guide created by the survey group.

Survey Classifications

For purposes of the Housing and Neighborhood Condition Survey, the group used the structure condition ratings shown in Table 6-F. Groups rated the current condition of each house based on the condition of four key elements: Roof & Chimney, Siding & Windows, Porch or Deck, and Foundation. The condition of each element was rated as New, Standard, Dilapidated, or Deteriorating. The Housing Condition Survey Guide helped groups distinguish between the different levels of quality.

Table 6-F: Structure Condition Guide Classifications

	New (4)	Standard (3)	Deteriorating (2)	Dilapidated (1)
<u>Roof & Chimney</u>	<p>Roof appears less than 5 years old.</p> <p>Ridge MUST be straight.</p> <p>Chimney appears recently built or rehabilitated.</p>	<p>Shingles show no sign of curling.</p> <p>Ridge is shows minimal sagging.</p> <p>Chimney shows minimal leaning</p>	<p>Shingles are curling</p> <p>Ridge is sagging</p> <p>Chimney is missing mortar and is noticeable leaning</p>	<p>Many layers of shingles visible and shingles missing</p> <p>Ridge is severely sagging</p> <p>Chimney is missing bricks</p>
<u>Siding & Windows</u>	<p>Siding appears less than five years old</p> <p>Windows appear less than five years old</p> <p>Trim around windows is new and not wrapped in aluminum</p>	<p>Siding appears has no cracking or missing pieces</p> <p>Windows appear in good condition</p> <p>Trim around windows may be wrapped in aluminum.</p>	<p>Siding is cracked, with few corners missing</p> <p>Widows beginning to show weathering, rotting. Minimal cracking of glass</p> <p>Trim shows signs of weathering or aging</p>	<p>Siding is missing large pieces and many signs of aging</p> <p>Windows do not appear to function, missing glass</p> <p>Trim missing.</p>
<u>Porch or Deck</u>	<p>Porch/Deck appears less than 5 years old</p> <p>Porch is tight to the foundation</p>	<p>Porch/Deck shows minimal signs of aging</p> <p>Porch is tight to the foundation</p>	<p>Porch/Deck is missing small bits of concrete or non-structural components</p> <p>Porch/Deck beginning to pull away from foundation</p>	<p>Porch/Deck is missing chunks of concrete or structural components</p> <p>Porch/Deck is severely pulling away from foundation</p>
<u>Foundation</u>	<p>Foundation appears to be less than 5 years old</p> <p>Foundation has no cracks</p> <p>Foundation is completely vertical</p>	<p>Foundation has minimal to no cracking</p> <p>Foundation appears to be vertical, with little to no leaning</p>	<p>Foundation has noticeable cracking</p> <p>Foundation is leaning minimally</p> <p>Foundation shows signs of bulging</p>	<p>Foundation has large cracks</p> <p>Foundation is noticeably leaning</p> <p>Foundation has visible bulging</p>

A similar set of criteria were used to rate the environmental condition of each lot. In rating the quality of the lot, the Housing Survey Condition Guide did not distinguish different elements of the lot. Groups simply rated the lot based on the combined condition of the landscaping and amount of visible trash and debris. Groups also rated the current condition of the sidewalk found on each lot. The quality classifications of New, Standard, Deteriorating, and Dilapidated were again used for Lot Condition and Sidewalk Condition. Table 6-G shows the descriptions of quality classifications used for environmental conditions.

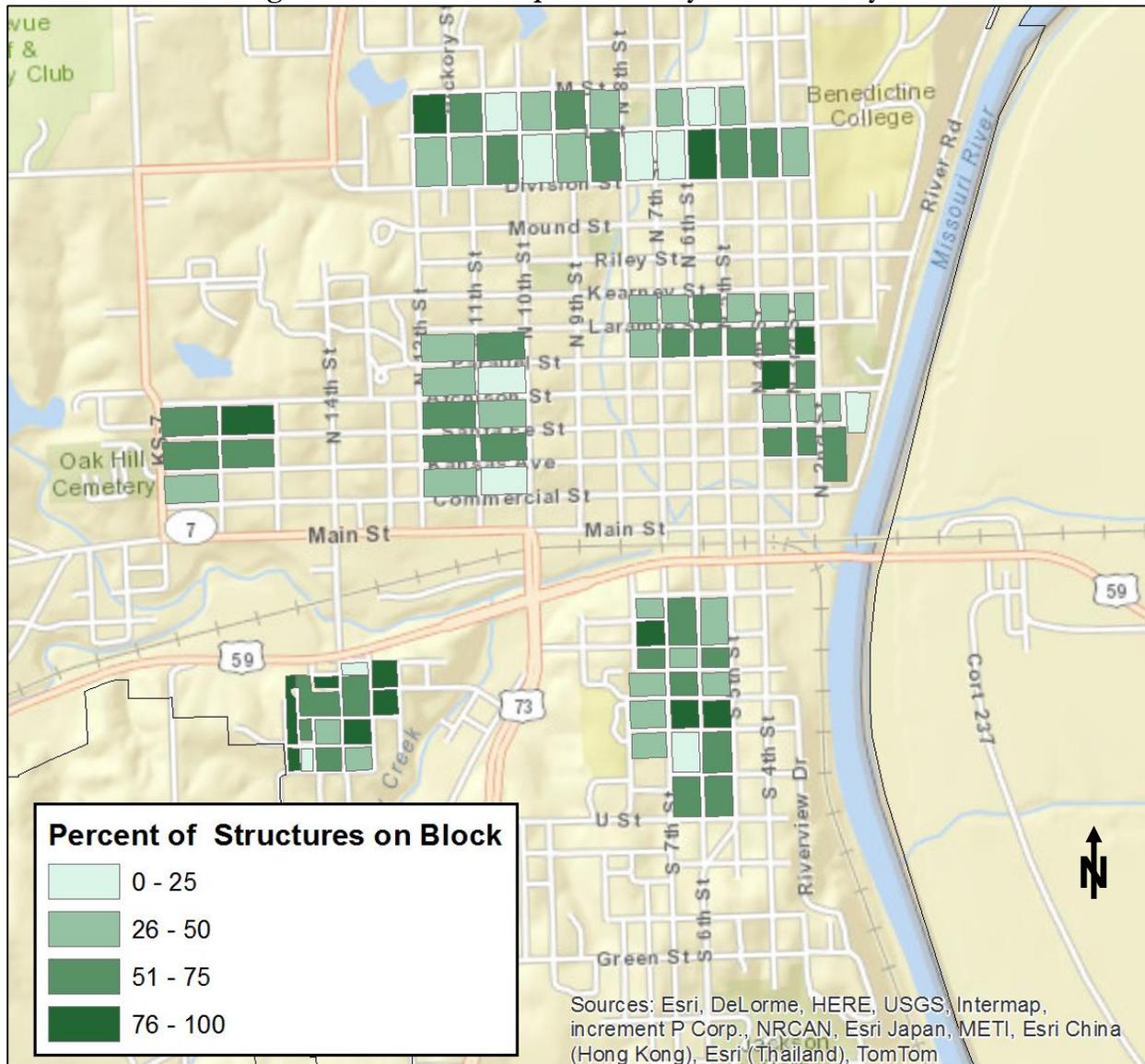
Table 6-G: Environmental Condition Guide Classifications

	New (4)	Standard (3)	Deteriorating (2)	Dilapidated (1)
<u>Lot Area</u>	<p>Landscaping and lawn appears seasonally cared for</p> <p>Trash is in appropriate receptacles</p> <p>Driveway and other paths are in great condition. Gravel is freshly laid</p>	<p>Landscaping and lawn appears seasonally cared for</p> <p>Trash is in appropriate receptacles</p> <p>Driveway and other paths have few visible cracks, or limited grass growing in gravel</p>	<p>Landscaping and lawn is somewhat overgrown, lacks basic care</p> <p>Some trash is visible throughout the lawn and landscaping</p> <p>Driveway and other paths contain large cracks and is somewhat uneven. Gravel is overgrown.</p>	<p>Landscaping and lawn are very overgrown, is not well maintained</p> <p>Trash is common on the lawn/landscaping, trash receptacles are overflowing</p> <p>Driveway/other paths are missing segments.</p> <p>Concrete is very uneven, gravel is completely overgrown.</p>
<u>Sidewalk (City)</u>	<p>Sidewalk is in new condition</p>	<p>Sidewalk has limited cracking in expansion joints, no grass, even</p>	<p>Sidewalk has small cracks throughout, limited unevenness, grass present</p>	<p>Sidewalk has large cracks throughout, every uneven, missing segments, lots of grass</p>

Owner-Occupied Units

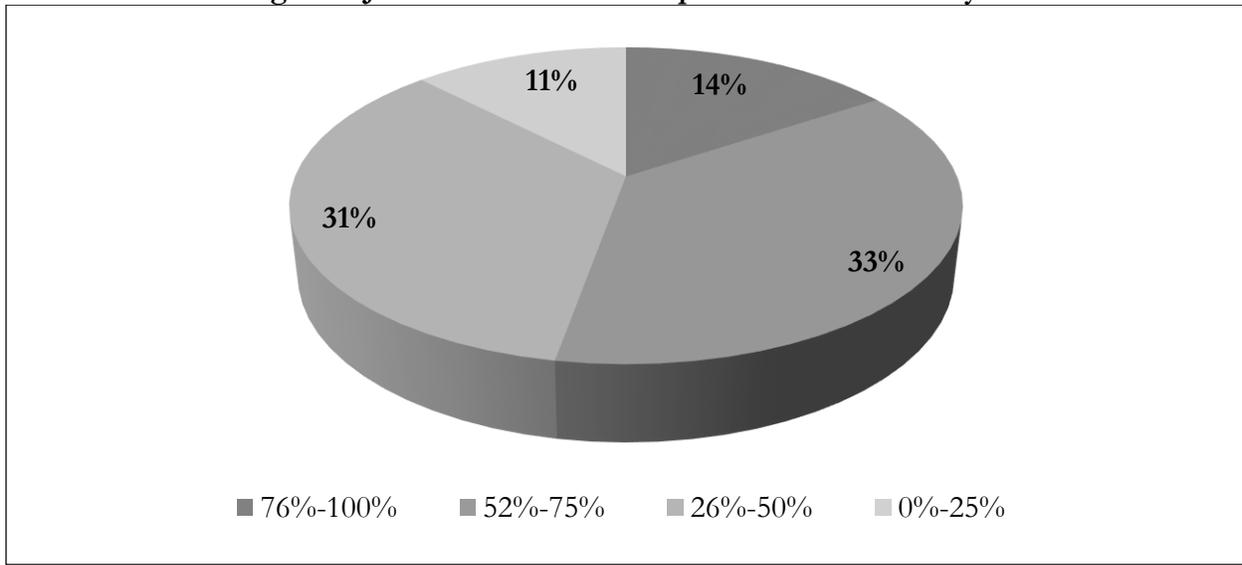
Figure 6-I provides the percent of houses occupied by owners in each block of the surveyed neighborhoods. The dark green indicates a higher percentage of owner-occupied homes and the light green a very low percentage of owner-occupied homes. The blocks shown in light green are blocks with a large number of rental housing units.

Figure 6-I Owner-Occupied Units by Blocks Surveyed



A search of homeownership records for Atchison County indicate that 14 blocks in the surveyed central core neighborhoods had between 76% and 100% owner-occupied homes. Thirty-three blocks in the areas were occupied by 52% to 75% of owners, and another 31 blocks by 26% to 50% of owners. Eleven blocks were predominantly rental, with 25% or less owner-occupied homes.

Figure 6-J: Percent Owner-Occupied for Blocks Surveyed



Sidewalk Condition

The survey, in addition to enumerating owner-occupied homes, also assessed sidewalk condition in the central core neighborhoods. The sidewalk conditions, shown by block in Figure 6-K, were scored according to the Housing Condition Survey Guide and recorded during the field visit in March 2014. The results mapped in Figure 6-K indicate that the majority of dilapidated sidewalk infrastructure is located in the northern-most blocks surveyed, along M Street. A “dilapidated” rating means the sidewalks are largely cracked, overgrown with grass, uneven, unsafe, or are missing segments. The majority of neighborhoods surveyed showed “deteriorating” sidewalk conditions, and were in need of improvement. The greatest number of “standard” sidewalks was identified in the eastern-most neighborhood surveyed, near Laramie and Third Street.

Figure 6-K: Sidewalk Condition on Surveyed Blocks

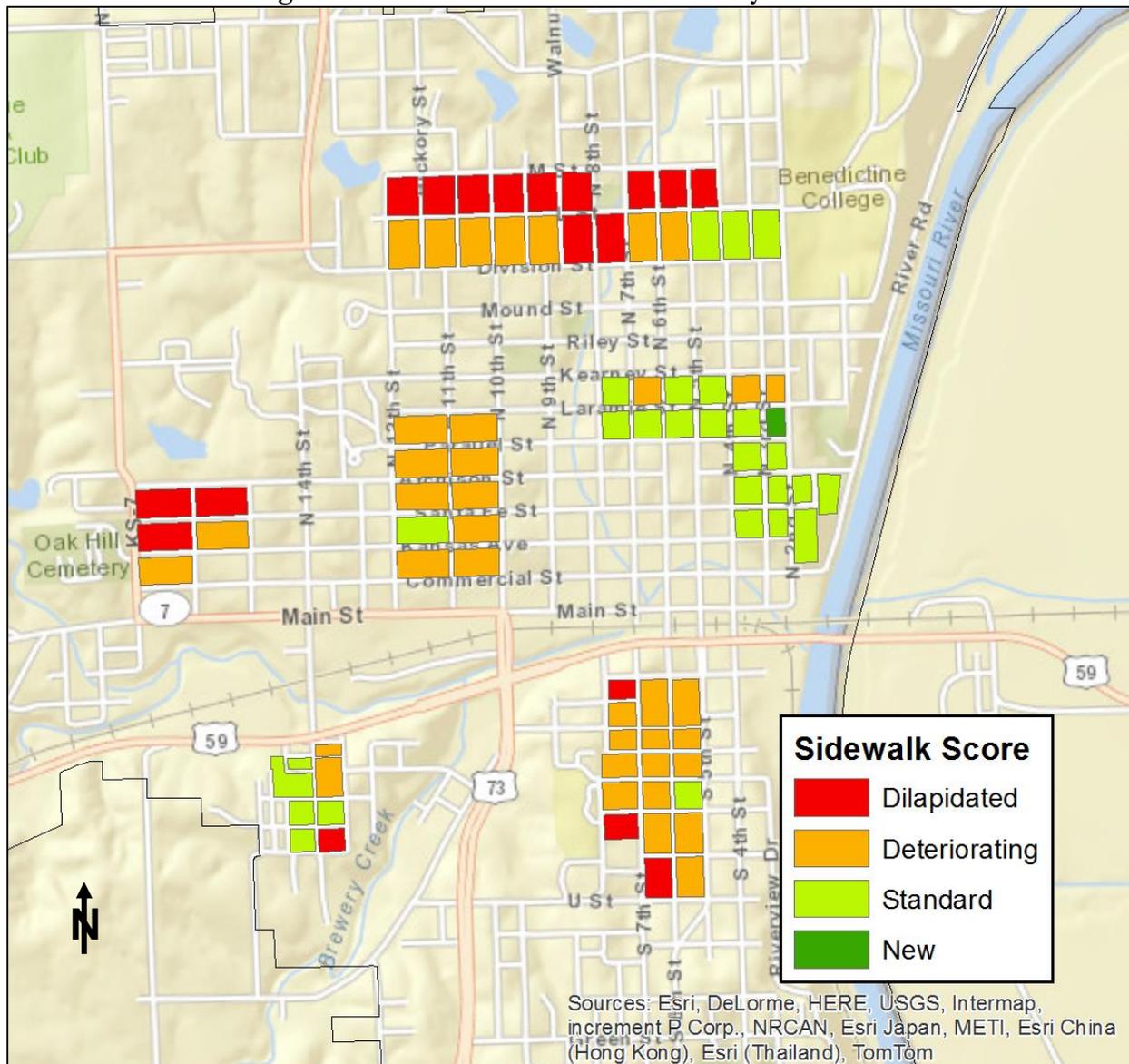
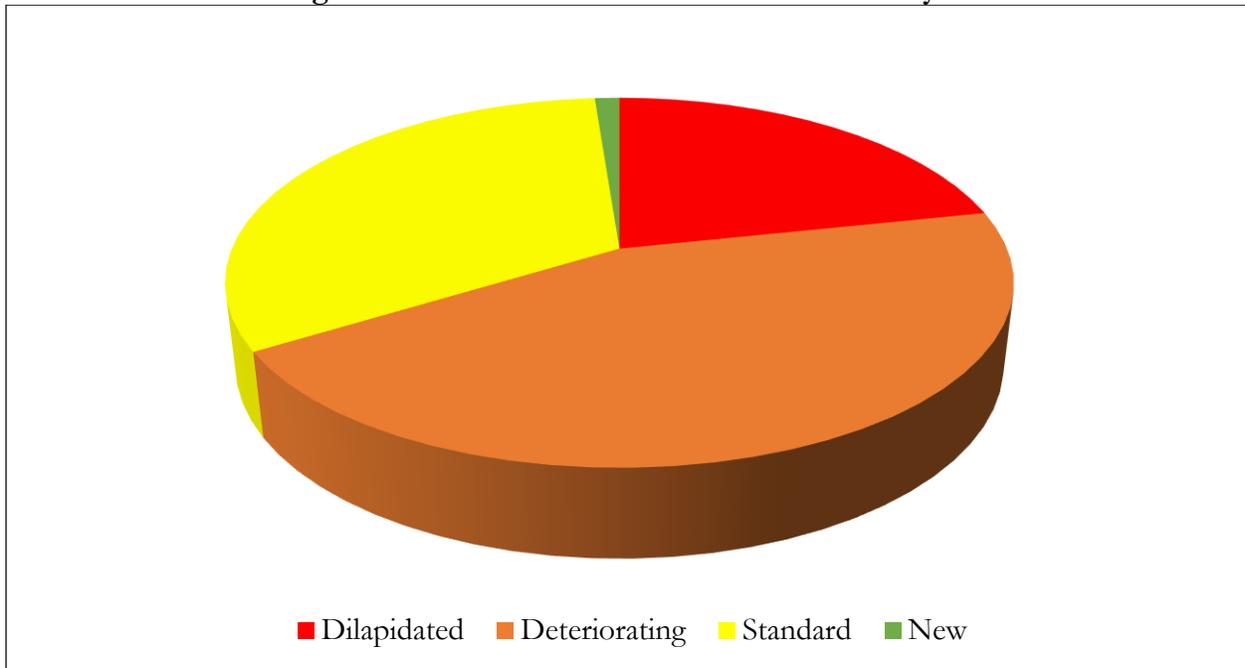


Figure 6-L indicates sidewalk condition ratings from “dilapidated” to “new.” Twenty-two percent of central core neighborhood sidewalks are dilapidated, suggesting that they are unsafe and should be repaired or replaced in order to make them safe. As previously mentioned, these unsafe sidewalks are predominantly located in the neighborhood west of Benedictine College. Another 45% of surveyed sidewalks are deteriorating and require attention to insure they are safe for pedestrian traffic. As Figure 6-L denotes, “standard” sidewalks (32%) of acceptable quality are found in the eastern neighborhood between Kearney and Laramie Streets. This area is also the location of the only block with a sidewalk rated “new,” suggesting good quality.

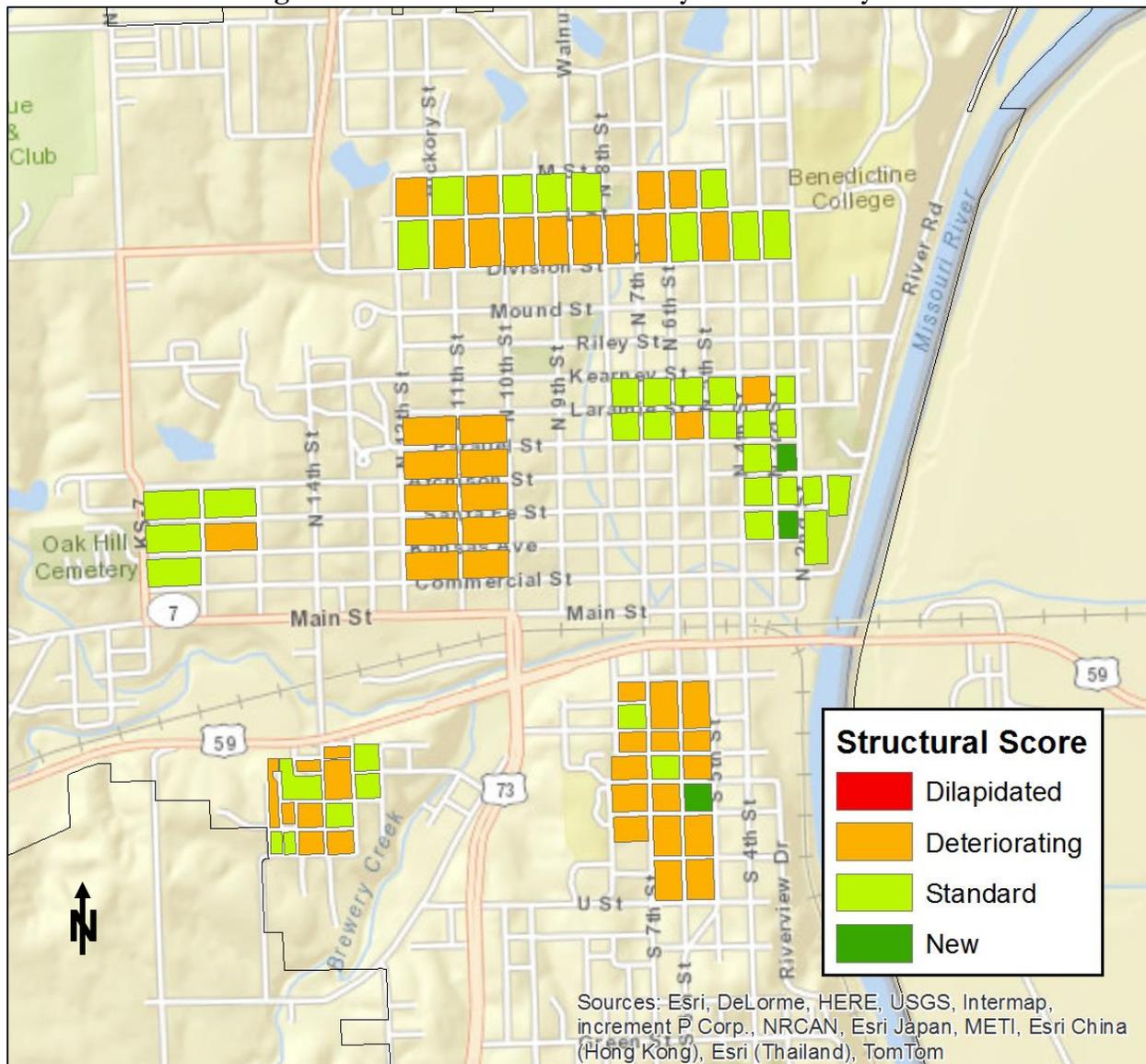
Figure 6-L: Sidewalk Condition of Blocks Surveyed



Structural Condition

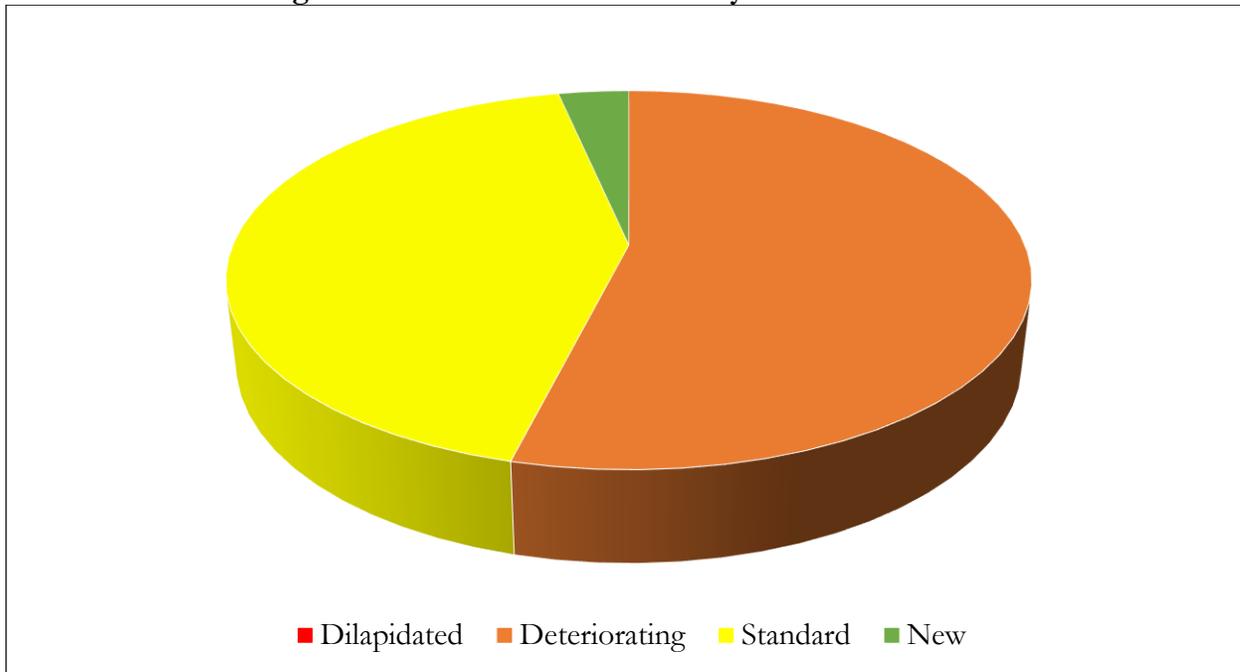
The field survey assessed the condition of each structure in all of the central core neighborhoods shown on Figure 6-M. The assessment took into consideration the condition of the home, including condition of roof and chimney, siding and windows, porch or deck, and foundation. Cracks in the foundation, and leaning, sagging, or broken elements of the exterior of the structure are also taken into consideration and influence the condition rating of the structure. A “dilapidated” structure is one beyond repair, or beyond reasonable repair, and is a likely candidate for demolition. “Deteriorating” structures require renovation to make them structurally sound and safe for residents. “Standard” structures are in good condition and require no major repairs. “New” housing units have recently been constructed or, are in very good condition. The housing condition ratings were determined by the Housing Condition Survey Guide prepared by the survey group.

Figure 6-M: Structural Condition by Blocks Surveyed



The survey team found no dilapidated blocks during the survey. However, 54% of the blocks had deteriorating structures that dominate the housing stock on a block. “Deteriorating” suggests that immediate attention is needed to stabilize the structure and maintain the building integrity. The survey also determined that a larger percentage of the blocks in the central core neighborhoods, 43%, had housing rated as “standard” condition, with few major structural or exterior threats. Finally, the survey team found 3% of the blocks classified as “new,” having housing in good condition and well-maintained. See Figure 6-N for a breakdown of structural condition, by percentage of the blocks surveyed.

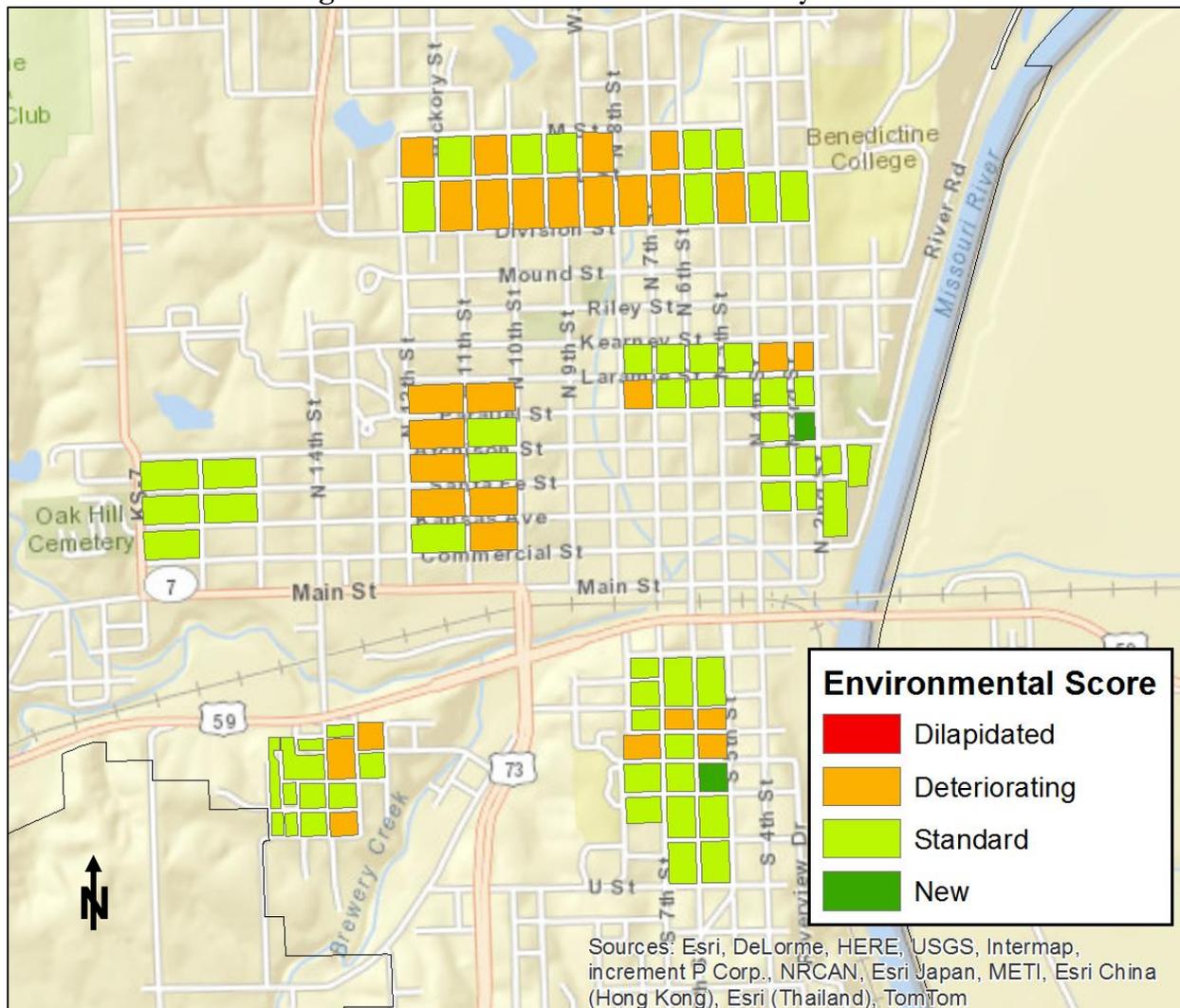
Figure 6-N: Structural Condition by Percent of Blocks



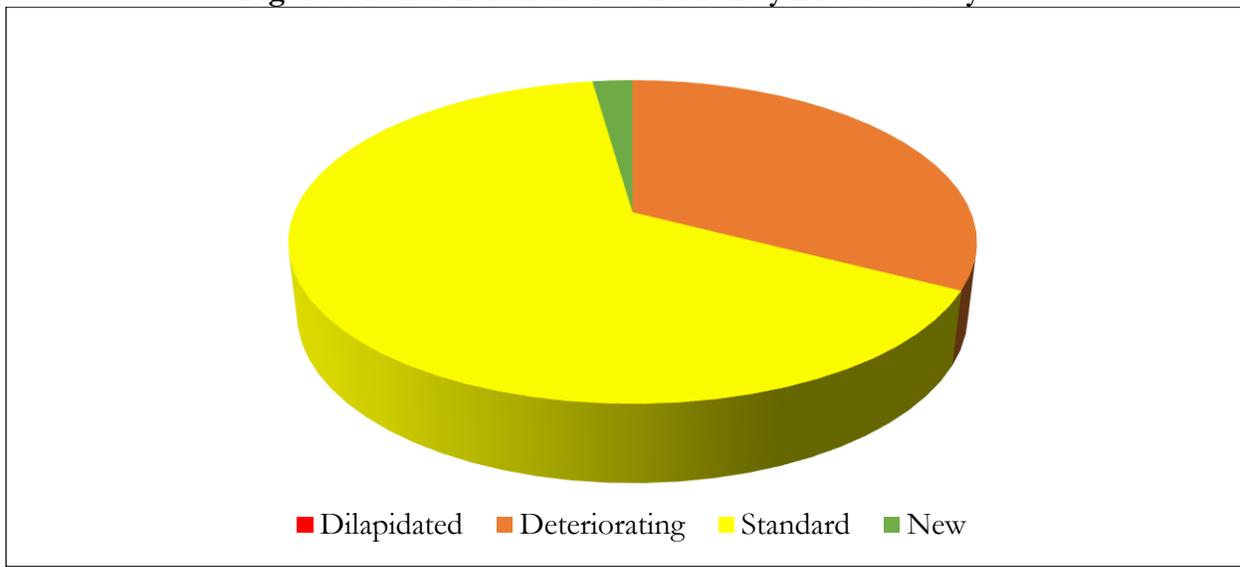
Environmental Conditions

Environmental conditions refer to the overall lot area of homes, taking into account the landscaping and lawn maintenance, trash receptacles, driveway, and other pathway conditions. These conditions were mapped by block in Figure 6-O, and rated according to the Housing Condition Survey Guide. The “environment” includes homes and surrounding conditions on the lot. Following the survey in March 2014, the results were tabulated and a majority of the blocks received a rating of “standard.” The majority of “deteriorating” environments were found on lots located in the both northern-most neighborhood group located west of Benedictine College and within the central core blocks located along Eleventh and Santa Fe Streets. A “standard” lot is one in which the landscaping and lawn appear to be seasonally cared for, trash or debris is not visible on the lot, and the driveway and paths are well-maintained with few cracks. Only two blocks surveyed resulted in a rating of “new.”

Figure 6-O: Environmental Condition by Block



As Figure 6-P depicts, no “dilapidated” environmental conditions were reported in the central core neighborhoods. A low percent of blocks, 33%, were found to be “deteriorating.” A majority of the remaining blocks, or 65%, were rated “standard” and were free of trash and debris. About 2% were in excellent condition and were rated “new.”

Figure 6-P: Environmental Condition by Blocks Surveyed

Survey Conclusions

The combined results of the four different rating processes of ownership, housing condition, sidewalk condition, and lot environment, all indicate that substantial improvement is needed in the central core neighborhoods. There are pockets of high quality housing with a high percentage of owner-occupied housing. However, there are a significant number of blocks that need attention to structures, sidewalks, and environmental conditions. Improvement would make these blocks vibrant and inviting places to live. A major purpose of the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) available to small cities under 50,000 in population, is to improve neighborhoods such as those surveyed. The goal of the CDBG program is to stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods through housing and infrastructure improvements, create reinvestment in neighborhoods and enhance the local tax base. The City of Atchison should consider this program as a step in neighborhood improvement in the central core neighborhoods.

Future Housing Need

The future housing need of Atchison was determined using the model provided in Table 6-H. The model utilizes the current population and the projected population at the end of the planning period, in this case 2030. A low-population projection figure of 10,506 and a high-population projection of 11,200 were used in the model. The housing projection technique, which contains a 5% vacancy rate, projected no additional residential housing need for the City of Atchison in 2030. This conclusion is based on its projected future population of Atchison, primarily because of low future population growth and the fact that the city has a residential vacancy rate of 11.5% in 2010, according to the 2010 US Census count. This conclusion is further supported by a trend of increasing percentage of vacant dwelling units of 15.7% determined by the US Census 2008-2012, 5-Year Estimates in 2012. The city currently has a surplus of housing and projected low population growth to fill the vacant housing units. See Table 6-H for housing need projections. Two assumptions were utilized in this projection. First, there will continue to be an average of 2.45 persons in each household — a number determined using the 2010 Census data — in 2030. Second, the percentage of persons in group housing in 2030 is the same percentage as that identified in the 2010 Census count.

Table 6-H: City of Atchison Future Housing Need

ID	2010 Housing Demand	Obs.	ID	2030 Housing Demand	Low Projection	High Projection
1	Population for 2010	11021	11	Population Estimate for 2030	10506	11200
2	Population in Group Quarters for 2010 if known	1375	12	Percent Population in Group Quarters (From Line 3)	0.125	0.125
3	Percent Population in Group Quarters	0.125	13	Population in Group Quarters	1311	1397
4	Population to be Housed	9646	14	Population to be Housed	9195	9803
5	Average Persons per household from the 2010 Census	2.45	15	Average Person per Household from 2010 Census	2.45	2.45
6	Number of Households to be Housed	3937	16	Number of Households to be Housed	3753	4001
7	Preliminary Housing Demand	3937	17	Preliminary Housing Demand	3753	4001
8	Demand with 5% Vacancy Rate	4134	18	Demand with 5%, Vacancy Rate	3941	4201
9	Housing Stock	4442	19	Housing Stock in 2010	4442	4442
10	Housing Surplus	308	20	Surplus of Housing Units in 2030 Based on a 5% Vacancy Rate	501	241

Source: Larry Lawhon, Kansas State University.

Housing vacancy rates for the City of Atchison are well above the ideal 5% vacancy rate suggested by many sources. A 5% vacancy rate is suggested to allow enough housing for choice among buyers and renters as they seek housing that meets their changing housing needs as they move through the housing life cycle. Likewise a vacancy rate of 5% is not believed to have a depressing effect on housing prices. Unfortunately, Atchison had a vacancy rate of 11.5% in 2010 according to the US Census. This suggests an excess of vacant housing, which may potentially depress housing prices.

The projected housing need in 2030 is based on the projected, or expected, population growth between 2010 and 2030. Both a low population projection and a high population projection were calculated. The low 2030 population projection for Atchison (10,506 residents), using appropriate population projections methods, indicates a surplus of 241 units in 2030. The city would need to absorb 241 units through new residents moving to the city and filling housing, or through demolition of unsafe or dilapidated housing in order to reach a housing supply of 4201 units and a vacancy rate of 5%.

Approximately 591 new residents would need to be added to the community, beyond what is currently projected for 2030, to absorb the surplus housing. Another possibility in reducing the surplus housing is to aggressively pursue demolition of substandard housing units, and utilize the vacant land for new housing – this approach could be used to assemble enough contiguous land to construct new housing that complements the architecture of existing neighborhood and possibly meet the affordable criteria of local residents through public/private partnerships or through public/non-profit partnerships.

The US Census 5-Year Estimates indicate that most of the vacant housing in Atchison is rental housing, and that only 2.3% of owner occupied units are vacant. This is good news for existing homeowners, but allows little choice for residents who desire to move from rental housing into homeownership. However, this low owner-occupied vacancy rate, could stimulate private market development for purchase by homebuyers. This reflects the concerns expressed by Atchison residents in the February 2014 focus group meeting about the high cost of rental housing.

In late summer 2013, Atchison residents, in preparation for this planning project, were surveyed on a variety of topics, including housing. The results of that survey indicate a desire by some survey respondents for smaller homes on smaller lots. It is doubtful that a private developer would consider this option, given the amount of surplus vacant housing in the community. Linked to this need or desire for newer housing is the issue of affordability. The US Census 5-Year Estimates suggest that more than 41% of Atchison households earn less than \$35,000 a year. Using a rule of thumb that a household can purchase a home costing three times its income, it appears these households could afford housing priced around \$100,000. Another 32% of Atchison residents earn less than \$25,000 annually, and could afford owner-occupied housing priced around \$75,000. It should be recognized that the Homestead Affordable Housing Program, Inc. and its first time homebuyer assistance program, since 2004, has been successful in securing homeownership for 31 households earning 60% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) that purchase, on average, homes selling for about \$64,000. Unless additional affordable housing options are identified and pursued, many of these household earning under \$35,000 annually will likely be pushed to the rental housing market.

It is apparent from income and earnings found in Census data that there are a number of families and households that likely find it difficult to afford suitable and decent housing. Census data does not support an extraordinary growth in the number of seniors in the near future, and the number

of seniors in Atchison is close to the average for the State of Kansas. If the workforce age cohorts continue to contract, these cohorts will not mature within the city and will not increase the senior age cohorts in future years. However, it is likely that seniors now residing in the city desire newer, accessible, and universally-designed housing as they age, beyond that which is now available. Meeting that need would likely fall on non-profit providers that can package affordable, reduced-cost housing for seniors, or possibly a for-profit developer of market-rate senior housing. Both public senior housing and Trinity Place senior housing are at full occupancy and have a waiting list, suggesting more senior housing is likely needed.

Strategies and Recommendations

Strategies

1. Target neighborhoods that are in most need of housing rehabilitation and the demolition of unsafe and deteriorating structures. The city may choose to “target” one or more neighborhoods simultaneously. Targeted neighborhood typically must have at least 51% of residents meet the low- and moderate-income guidelines of no more than 80% of the area median income (AMI).
2. Investigate funding opportunities to improve housing, infrastructure, and facilitate demolition of unsafe structures from the Kansas Department of Commerce (CDBG Program and Neighborhood Stabilization Program); the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (HOME funds, and Low and Moderate Income Housing); and Rural Development (First Time Homebuyer loans, direct loans for home purchase, mutual self-help funds for affordable home development, and home modification loans/grants for senior residents).
3. Recognize the city’s ability as a “small city” under 50,000 in population to qualify for state CDBG and HOME funds, as well as a variety of programs funded by the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation and Rural Development. Although annual grant funding is not a guarantee, if the city does not apply it will not receive consideration for any of the funds set aside for small cities seeking to improve and stabilize neighborhoods. It is recommended that the city apply for multiple programs that have been identified as possible sources of aid. Grants through the Kansas Department of Commerce Community Block Grant Program (CDBG) may be used for neighborhood infrastructure, housing rehabilitation, and housing demolition. City General Funds currently used for demolition and other neighborhood improvements could potentially be replaced with state funds. Although annual grant funding is not a guaranteed source of revenue for any entity, these funds, when received, can be important in their impact on neighborhood improvement.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the City of Atchison pursue funding from the Kansas Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant Program. There are six programs available through the Department of Commerce that potentially offers sources of neighborhood improvement funds. These programs include:

- **Community Improvement and Housing** – include, but are not limited to, water and sewer improvements, fire protection, bridges, community and senior centers, streets, architectural barrier removal, natural gas systems, electrical systems and public service activities. Housing grants support rehabilitation of owner- and renter-occupied residences within targeted areas to encourage neighborhood revitalization.
- **Water and Sewer Grants** – maximum award is \$500,000 with a funding ceiling of \$2,000 per beneficiary. Applicants are encouraged to appear before the Kansas Interagency Advisory Committee (KIAC) prior to application submission.
- **Community Facilities** – consist of, but are not limited to, fire protection, bridges, community/senior centers, streets, architectural barrier removal, natural gas and electrical systems, health, mental health and other public facilities projects. The maximum award is \$400,000 with a funding ceiling of \$2,000 per beneficiary.
- **Housing Rehabilitation Grants** – rehabilitation funds are awarded to local units of government (cities and counties) and the maximum amount awarded is \$400,000. Eligible activities include Homeowner and Rental Rehabilitation.
- **Commercial Rehabilitation**
- **Economic Development**

It is also recommended that the city contact the Kansas Department of Commerce, which also provides funds to reduce the number of substandard and/or dilapidated and/or abandoned residential structures in a neighborhood. The Kansas Department of Commerce offers the following programs:

- **The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)** was established for the purpose of stabilizing communities that have suffered from foreclosures and abandonment. Through the purchase and redevelopment of foreclosed and abandoned homes and residential properties, the goal of the program is being realized.
- Kansas Department of Commerce **Economic Development CDBG grants** provide gap financing for private business that create or retain permanent jobs. Such eligible projects include land acquisition, fixed assets and working capital. At least 51% of jobs created or retained by the entity must meet the low -- and moderate -- income standards defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- The Department of Commerce also offers the **Kansas Small Towns Environment Program (KAN STEP)**, an annual CDBG grant and self-help program for communities seeking to address water, sewer, and other public infrastructure needs. Communities must demonstrate a readiness and willingness, through the provision of human resources, to solve these needs. These grants require the use of volunteers to match the CDBG funds.

The City of Atchison might also investigate a variety of programs offered for small cities through the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation. Programs pertinent to Atchison are:

- **HOME Program** – The HOME Rental Development Program, funded through the Federal HOME Investment Partnerships program, assists communities and developers with increasing the supply of affordable rental housing.
- **Low Income Housing Tax Credits** – Typically LIHTC funds are available to both private and non-profits organizations to encourage investment of private capital in the development of rental housing by providing credits to offset an investor's federal income tax liability.
- **Moderate Income Housing** – In 2012, the Kansas Legislature approved \$2 million to create the Moderate Income Housing (MIH) Program, an initiative serving needs of individuals who cannot afford market-rate housing, yet do not qualify for Federal housing assistance. The program serves moderate-income individuals, with eligibility ranging from 60% to 150% of HUD's State Non-Metro Area Medium Income and is adjusted for family size.

Finally, it is recommended that the city create stronger ties with Rural Development, which provides a variety of programs for housing, including:

- Rural Repair and Rehabilitation Grant, providing home repair funds to very low-income homeowners, or homeowners at 50% or below of the area median income
- Housing Preservation Grants program
- Rural Community Development Initiative Grants
- Rural Rental Housing Loans
- Rural Repair and Rehabilitation Loans and Grants
- Investigate the Section 502 Mutual Self-Help Housing Loan Program, in which homeowners and families provide 65% of the construction labor on each other's homes, enabling them to save costs and own their homes.

Most importantly, the city should consider dedicating a staff position to facilitate and administer grant applications for the City of Atchison, researching a variety of sources and programs. Many grants require an annual application; a staff position can facilitate the process. Receipt of grants can also be beneficial to the city as it could potentially reduce the use of the city's general funds currently expended for demolition efforts in existing older neighborhoods.

Chapter 7

ZONING

The term “zoning” refers to the practice of designating permitted uses of land based on mapped zones which separate one set of land uses from another. A community's zoning plan provides information concerning the distribution patterns and interrelationships of existing land uses and the potential of the city and its surrounding area for future development. Because other elements of a comprehensive community development plan are directly dependent upon the findings and recommendations of the zoning element, it is considered to be a basic and critical component of the planning process.

In addition to its function of guiding and coordinating the other elements, much coordination is necessary within the zoning element itself. Development patterns should consider and strive for compatibility with an area's physiographic conditions as well as between the various types of land use. A zoning plan influences, among other factors, development. When prepared as part of a comprehensive plan, it also provides the necessary legal foundation for the implementation tools of zoning and subdivision regulations.

Zoning Classifications

Agricultural Districts

Agricultural Districts are intended to provide open space for economic activities that require large tracts of land in one block.

- **A-1, General Agricultural District:** The intent of the A-1 General Agricultural District is to permit continuation of agriculturally oriented activities in the incorporated area of Atchison that has been annexed and is not yet developed for urban purposes.
- **A-OR, Agricultural-Outer Residential District:** The intent of the A-OR Agricultural - Outer Residential District is to permit a combination of rural residential living with animal husbandry.

Residential Districts

Certain classes of districts, designated by the Symbol "R" and referred to as Residential Districts are established to provide space and a suitable environment in which the inhabitants of the incorporated area of the City of Atchison may dwell.

- **R-1, Single Family Residential District:** The intent of the R-1 Single Family Residential District is to provide suitable locations for single family dwellings.
- **R-2, Two Family Residential District:** The intent of the R-2 Two Family Residential District is to provide suitable locations for two family dwellings, said dwellings to include such types of dwellings as townhouses and condominiums.

- **R-3, Multiple Family Residential District:** The intent of the R-3 Multiple Family Residential District is to provide suitable locations for multiple family dwellings, said dwellings to include such types of dwellings as townhouses and condominiums.

Business Districts

Certain classes of districts designated by the symbol "B" and referred to collectively as Business Districts are established to provide space and suitable locations for commerce and trade while coordinating physical development in accordance with present and future needs as developed by the Comprehensive Master Plan of the City of Atchison.

- **B-1, Neighborhood Business District:** The intent of a B-1 Neighborhood Business District is to provide for the conduct of retail trade and to provide personal services for the regular needs and convenience of the people in adjacent residential areas. As these shops and stores are an integral part of the neighborhood closely associated with residential, religious, recreational, and educational elements, more restrictive requirements for air, light, open spaces, and off-street parking are made than are provided in other business districts.
- **B-2, Highway Business District:** The intent of the Highway Business District is primarily for the conduct of retail trade catering to the motoring public. Since the intent of the Highway Business District is to cater to the motoring public and these districts are located on thoroughfares and interstates, the ingress and egress to the thoroughfares and interstates from these districts must be carefully determined. The intent of this district is not to "strip" the thoroughfares or interstates of the city; rather it is to be used at certain major thoroughfares and interstates where access can be best controlled.
- **B-3, Central Business District:** The intent of the Central Business District is primarily for the conduct of personal and business services and general retail business centrally located in the downtown area. This district requires good access and ample parking, either public or private. Traffic should be oriented toward passenger movements and only servicing trucks are encouraged in this shopping area.
- **B-4, General Business District:** The intent of the General Business District is to allow for the conduct of commerce and trade and to provide personal services which, due to their character, require an economic base that extends beyond the community and thereby creates increased traffic flow and higher density land use. Therefore, in the General Business District, care must be taken to insure adequate movement of goods and services and reasonable accessibility.

Industrial Districts

Certain classes of districts designated by the primary symbol "I" and referred to collectively as Industrial Districts are established for the production of marketable commodities by manufacture or other operations which, due to their characteristics, generate waste materials and can create nuisances, thereby requiring controls for the health and safety of the inhabitants of the City of Atchison.

- **I-1, Limited Industrial District:** The intent of the I-1 Limited Industrial District is primarily for the further refining of semi-finished commodities and materials into highly valued semi-finished products or finished wares. This process may result in unsightly conditions or obnoxious smoke, odor, dust, heat, glare and noise that should be prevented or controlled.
- **I-2, General Industrial District:** The intent of the I-2 General Industrial District is primarily for the processing of large quantities of raw materials into finished or semi-finished commodities.
- **I-3, Central Business Industrial District:** The intent of the I-3 Central Business Industrial District is primarily for making possible industrial-district uses in the denser area of the city which is typified by the central-business-district areas where such uses would otherwise be precluded by the Industrial-District-Density-Requirements Table of Section 503 for I-1 and I-2 districts.

Miscellaneous Districts

Certain classes of districts designated by various primary symbols such as "F" Flood Area District; "G" Recreational District; "PD" Planned District; "O" Professional Office District; "RFG" Riverfront Recreational and Park Land District and referred to collectively herein as miscellaneous districts are established for special purposes as hereinafter set forth.

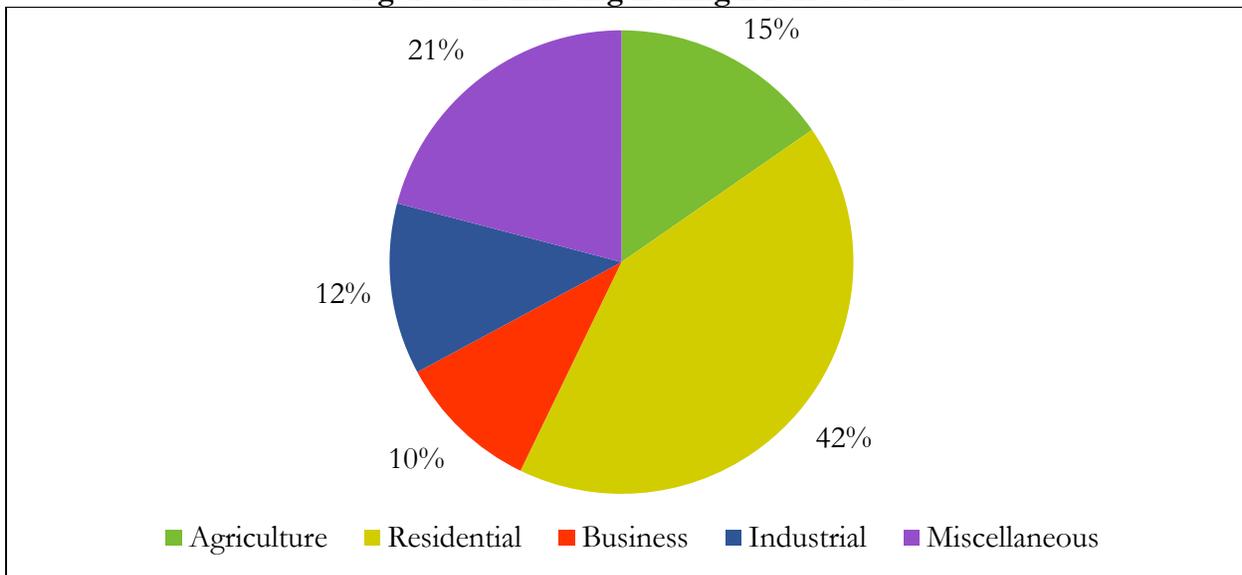
- **G, Recreational District:** The intent of a "G" Recreational District is to provide large tracts of open space for leisure time activities around public and private water reservoirs, ponds, lakes and other areas and therefore the erection of structures within this district is limited to those whose use is relative to leisure time activities.
- **PD, Planned District:** The intent of the Planned District is to allow flexibility in the development of land, structure of road, location of buildings (including such types as townhouses and condominiums), and at the same time to preserve the general intent and spirit of these regulations.
- **O, Professional Office District:** The intent of the "O" District is to provide, along selected major thoroughfares, areas where professional offices, under specific conditions, are permitted along with residential uses in order to protect and preserve these thoroughfares as major traffic arteries rather than service streets to businesses and industries.
- **RFG, Riverfront Recreational and Park Land District:** The intent of the RFG is to provide tracts of open space for leisure time activities bordering on the river and limit the erection of structures within this District to those whose use is relative to leisure time activities such as parks.
- **MHC, Mobile Home Communities:** The intent of this Order is to insure a systematic development of MHC within the City of Atchison and to achieve an environment that will promote the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the city.

Zoning Analysis

The zoning patterns observed in the analysis are provided in Table 7-A. The total acreage, square feet, square miles, and percent of total land use have been calculated for each zoning category. This table shows a total of about 3,961 acres within the existing city limits. Note that this figure is for the city limits in effect on April 1, 2014. According to this data, there are 625 acres of agricultural use, 1,704 acres of residential use, 332 acres of business use, 491 acres of industrial use, and 810 acres of miscellaneous use. Figure 7-B illustrates the overall distribution of these zoning categories in Atchison.

Table 7-A: Existing Zoning for Atchison Inside City Limits

USE	SQ. FT.	ACRES	SQ. MI.	PERCENT
Agriculture				
A-1	24,751,703	568	0.89	14%
A-OR	2,466,243	57	0.09	1%
	27,217,946	625	0.98	15%
Residential				
R-1	61,222,475	1,405	2.20	35%
R-2	4,710,009	108	0.17	3%
R-3	8,273,556	190	0.30	4%
	74,206,041	1,704	2.67	42%
Business				
B-1	488,928	11	0.02	1%
B-2	1,545,379	35	0.06	1%
B-3	289,886	7	0.01	1%
B-4	12,135,094	279	0.44	7%
	14,459,286	332	0.53	10%
Industrial				
I-1	5,571,582	128	0.20	3%
I-2	14,597,807	335	0.52	8%
I-3	1,230,635	28	0.04	1%
	21,400,024	491	0.76	12%
Miscellaneous				
G	29,178,278	670	1.05	16%
PD	4,698,577	108	0.17	2%
O	66,228	2	0.00	1%
RFG	205,029	5	0.01	1%
MHC	1,126,573	26	0.04	1%
	35,274,684	810	1.27	21%
Total				
	172,557,981	3,961	6.21	100%

Figure 7-B: Existing Zoning Distribution

Existing Zoning

Residential Zoning

Land zoned Residential in Atchison occupies 1,704 acres, approximately 42% of the land within the city. Land zoned for single-family dwellings, including manufactured homes, account for 1,405 of these residential acres, and land zoned for multiple-family dwellings occupy the remaining 299 acres. Much of the multiple-family housing consists of two and three family dwellings scattered among the single-family residential neighborhoods. In some cases, these are older single-family houses, which have been converted to apartments.

Business Zoning

Land zoned for Business in Atchison accounts for 332 acres, approximately 10% of the incorporated city. The commercial activity is predominately located in or near the Central Business District (CBD) or along one of the two main highways, U.S. Highway 59 throughout the city and U.S. Highway 73 south of Highway 59 in Atchison.

Industrial Zoning

Land zoned Industrial occupies 491 acres, approximately 12% of the land in the city. Industrial uses are divided between light and heavy industries with the light uses normally found closer to residential uses.

Agricultural Zoning

Agricultural-zoned land accounts for 625 acres, approximately 15% of the land in the city. This proportion of undeveloped land is not relatively large since it is not unusual for a city to have as

much as one-fourth vacant land. This indicates that overall development of the city has occurred in a fairly efficient and compact manner.

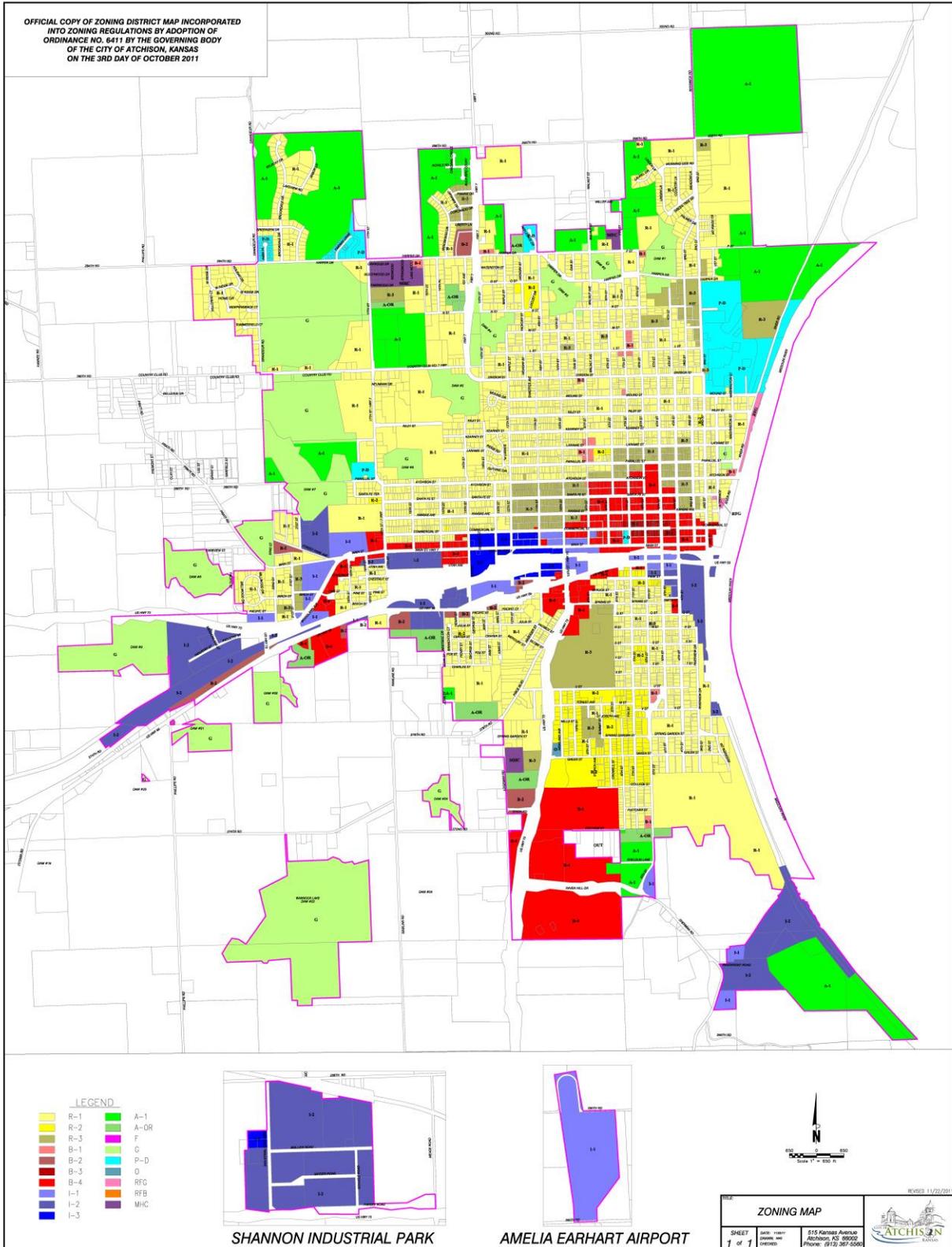
Building Permit Trends

The examination of total building permits per year provides a great precedent of what the future is likely to produce. Between the years 1996 and 2013, there have been 1,055 residential building permits and 365 non-residential building permits, a total of 1,420 building permits. The year 2008 had the most building permits at 130, while 2007 had the least number of permits at 42. The average number of residential permits in a year is 59, a number which has yet to be reached since 2009 likely due to the national economic downturn. The average number of non-residential permits in a year is 20, a number which has been generally met in recent years. Figure 7-C illustrates the number of building permits for each year and shows the annual fluctuations. The trend line for residential building permits is currently at a slight decline, while the trend line for non-residential building permits is slightly increasing. Overall, the number of building permits acquired in recent years suggest that Atchison is maintaining a consistent rate of new construction, additions, remodels, etc.

Figure 7-C: Building Permit Trends



Figure 7-D: Existing Zoning Map



Chapter 8

ECONOMY

Economic Analysis

A community's economy plays a substantial role in its future growth. Understanding a community's economic forces is essential to developing public policies that will accommodate and manage expected future growth. This section analyzes the existing economic and industrial characteristics of the City of Atchison and provides a general assessment of local economic and employment trends. The most current economic data was sought in order to produce as accurate an assessment as possible. Data from the 2000 US Census was used, as was information from the Selected Economic Characteristics of the 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates. Data was also provided by the Atchison Chamber of Commerce, the City of Atchison, and the Kansas Department of Revenue.

Recent Economic Trends

During the 1990s, a period of economic prosperity brought tremendous expansion of economic opportunity to the nation, and to Atchison as well. Numerous retail and service businesses, along with the area's major industrial employers, prospered even as the city's population decreased. After a brief recession in 2002-03, Atchison's industrial and public-service employers performed well until the Great Recession of 2007-09. While Kansas has generally weathered economic downturns more easily than the nation as a whole, the City of Atchison has struggled to return to pre-Recession levels of industrial employment, even as employment in the public sector has grown in the intervening years.

Employment Sectors of the Atchison Workforce

In the City of Atchison, the highest percentage (39.1%) of the total workforce of 5,292 people is employed in educational, health, and social-service occupations. The next largest percentage of Atchison workers (16.7%) are employed in manufacturing occupations. Those in retail occupations accounted for 11.6% of the city's workforce. Many of Atchison's largest employment sectors closely mirror those of the State of Kansas. Table 8-A displays the distribution of Atchison workers by industry.

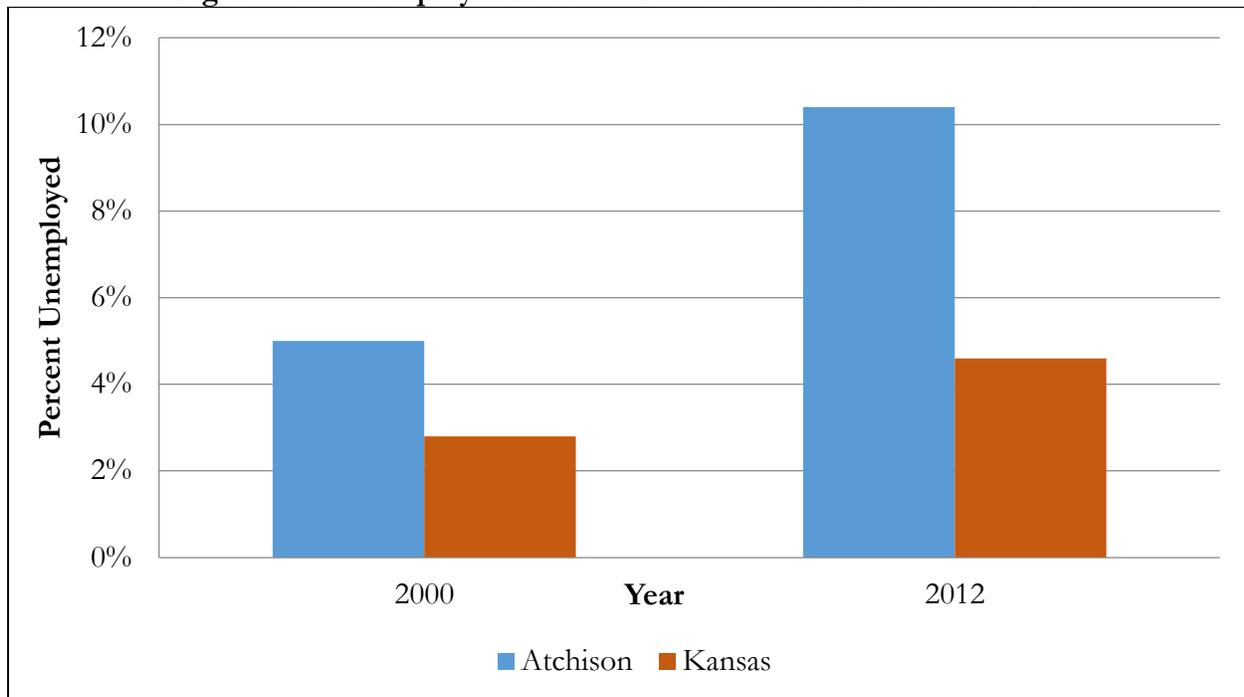
Table 8-A: Employed Civilian Population by Industry

Industry	Kansas Number	Kansas Percent	Atchison Number	Atchison Percent
	1,395,634	100.0%	4,740	100.0%
Educational, health care/social Assistance	341,871	24.5%	1,853	39.1%
Manufacturing	179,685	12.9%	790	16.7%
Retail trade	156,320	11.2%	549	11.6%
Arts, entertainment, accommodation, food service	108,752	7.8%	328	6.9%
Construction	88,243	6.3%	292	6.2%
Public administration	67,200	4.8%	222	4.7%
Other services, except public administration	64,074	4.8%	184	3.9%
Professional, scientific, management, waste management	117,261	8.4%	139	2.9%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	66,797	4.8%	136	2.9%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	48,741	3.5%	129	2.7%
Wholesale trade	39,154	2.8%	50	1.1%
Information	32,953	2.4%	41	0.9%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and property leasing	84,583	6.1%	27	0.6%

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

Employment Status

In 2012, the City of Atchison's unemployment rate was 10.4%, more than double the Kansas rate of 4.6%. Both of these rates are higher than in 2000, when Atchison had an unemployment rate of 5% and Kansas had a rate of 2.8%. Some of Atchison's increase can be attributed to the increase in college-age population, many of whom are full-time students and do not work, and some can be attributed to the after-effects of the Great Recession. Still, over time, Atchison tends to have a higher unemployment rate than the State of Kansas. This is displayed in Figure 8-A.

Figure 8-A: Unemployment Rate of Atchison and Kansas over Time

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

In 2012, most workers in Atchison (80.1%) were employed in the private sector. Slightly less than 15% of Atchison's workforce was employed by government entities. The distribution of Atchison workers by sector groupings is shown in Table 8-B.

Table 8-B: Workforce Distribution by Sector, 2012

Class of Worker	Number of Workers	Percent of Workforce
Private wage and salary workers	3,797	80.1%
Government workers	708	14.9%
Self-employed business workers	224	4.7%
Unpaid family workers	11	0.2%

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

Largest Employers in Atchison

As shown in Table 8-C, the six largest employers in Atchison together account for over 1,800 employees, nearly 40% of the city's total workforce. Two of the employers are public agencies, two are non-profit organizations, and two are industrial employers.

Table 8-C: Largest Employers in Atchison, 2012

Largest Employers	Number of Employees
Bradken Limited (formerly Atchison Casting)	587
Atchison Public Schools (USD 409)	320
Atchison Hospital	312
Benedictine College	266
MGP Ingredients	187
Atchison County	170
Total Employees Represented	1842

Source: City of Atchison.

Commuting Characteristics

Residents of Atchison commute to work in a variety of locations. Because Atchison is situated in a border county, over one-sixth of its workforce (16.8%) commutes to jobs in another state, most commonly Missouri. About three-quarters of Atchison's workforce works within Atchison county, a statistic which is common among county seats and a reasonable indicator of the city's economic strength relative to the county as a whole. This dataset is illustrated in Table 8-D.

Table 8-D: Commuting Characteristics of Atchison Workers and Kansas Workers

Place of Work	Atchison	Kansas
Worked in Kansas	83.2%	92.5%
Worked outside of Kansas	16.8%	7.5%
Worked in county of residence (Atchison County)	74.2%	76.5%
Worked in a Kansas county outside of Atchison County	8.9%	16.0%

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

Atchison's Trade Area Pull Factor

A city's retail Pull Factor measures per-capita sales tax collected within a city divided by the per-capita sales tax collected in the entire state. A Pull Factor less than 1.0 indicates that a city is losing some of its sales tax dollars to neighboring communities. Conversely, a Pull Factor greater than 1.0 indicates that a city is not only retaining its residents' sales tax dollars, but also attracting consumers from other cities. As shown in Table 8-E, Atchison's Pull Factor in 2013 was 0.86, meaning Atchison residents spend approximately 86% of their retail dollars within the city.

Table 8-E: Trade Area Pull Factor of Selected Kansas Cities

City	Pull Factor
Leavenworth, KS	0.74
Atchison, KS	0.86
Kansas City, KS	0.89
Overland Park, KS	1.47

Source: Kansas Department of Revenue, “Study of Retail Trade in Cities Across Kansas.” 2013.

Based on data gathered by the Kansas Department of Revenue, it is evident that the City of Atchison collected 89% of the total sales tax revenue collected in Atchison County. This is an indication of Atchison’s strength as the main commercial center for Atchison County. That same report showed that the City of Atchison served a customer base of 9,440 people in 2013, which is less than the city’s 2013 population of 10,953. The difference between these two populations indicates that roughly 1,500 Atchison residents make the majority of their retail purchases outside of city limits. Still, when compared to the nearby cities listed in Table 8-E, many of which are larger and have a far larger base of retailers, Atchison performs well at retaining local consumer dollars.

Educational Attainment

The educational attainment of Atchison’s labor pool is a vital component of any understanding of the city’s potential for economic and industrial growth. When compared to data gathered in the 2000 Census, Atchison’s labor force has become significantly more educated in the intervening years. As shown in Table 8-F, Atchison’s adults have shown improvement in virtually every level of educational attainment since 2000. The percentage of workers lacking a high school diploma is down, while the percentage of workers possessing a college education (particularly graduate and professional degrees) is up significantly. This growth in this latter cohort is likely due to the growth of Benedictine College, which has attracted many faculty and administrative professionals possessing advanced degrees. Other employers, such as MGP Ingredients and Atchison Hospital, have also grown in that period, attracting workers with advanced degrees in business, medicine, and the sciences. Alongside the growth of major employers in the city, shifts in state and federal education policies have also caused high school dropout rates to decrease nationwide and throughout Kansas. Also, the percentage of Americans pursuing and completing a college education, and in particular completing a graduate-level education, has increased notably since 2000. Table 8-F shows the results of these shifts as they pertain to Atchison’s working adults.

Table 8-F: Educational Attainment of Atchison’s Adult Workforce

Education Level	2000	2012
Less than 9th Grade	5%	4%
High School, No Diploma	10%	8%
High School/GED Graduate	37%	40%
Some College, No Degree	23%	19%
Associate's Degree	4%	6%
Bachelor's Degree	11%	13%
Graduate/Professional Degree	3%	11%

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

Median Household Income

When compared to the state average, Atchison's households generally correlate with the income levels of Kansas households. The median income for households in Atchison was \$41,949 in 2013, while the median income for a Kansas household in that same year was \$67,564.

Table 8-G: Income Distribution of Atchison and Kansas Households

Income and Benefits by Household	Atchison Number	Atchison Percent	Kansas Number	Kansas Percent
\$0-\$14,999	596	15.9%	128,712	11.6%
\$15,000-\$34,999	232	25.4%	244,936	22.1%
\$35,000-\$49,999	536	14.3%	167,946	15.1%
\$50,000-\$74,999	792	21.1%	217,021	19.6%
\$75,000-\$99,999	472	12.6%	140,509	12.7%
\$100,000-\$149,999	336	9.0%	132,561	11.9%
\$150,000-\$199,999	17	0.5%	41,125	3.7%
\$200,000 or more	52	1.4%	36,581	3.3%

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

Poverty Status

The percentage of Atchison residents living at or below the 2013 poverty rate of \$11,170 per person is greater than the state average across all age cohorts. The comparison of Atchison and Kansas residents living in poverty may be seen in Table 8-H. The percentage of Atchison adults aged 18 to 64 living at or below the poverty line is likely inflated somewhat due to the fact that 12% of Atchison's adult population are full-time college students, many of whom earned less than \$11,170 in 2013. Still, a greater percentage of Atchison residents live in poverty than Kansans as a whole.

Table 8-H: Percentage of Atchison and Kansas Residents Living in Poverty

Age Cohort	Atchison Percentage	Kansas Percentage
Under 18 years	22.9%	17.9%
Adults, aged 18-64	18.8%	12.5%
Adults, aged 65 and over	13.2%	7.5%

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey.

Economic Strategies and Recommendations

1. Enhance Atchison's labor-market competitiveness

- Increase connections between the Atchison Chamber of Commerce and area firms
- Pursue strategies to reinvigorate downtown Atchison's storefronts
- Market the region's rail and road connectivity to potential industrial employers
- Enhance the mentorship program between Benedictine College and Atchison Public Schools, specifically in business, engineering, and the sciences
- Provide free or low-cost job-skill seminars to Atchison residents, particularly computer literacy and information technology

- Work with the State of Kansas to provide large-scale tax incentives/abatements to attract suitable employers matching Atchison’s labor force
 - Market the Atchison labor force as a reinvigorated and well-educated pool of workers
2. Offer incentives to retain and grow existing Atchison employers
- Encourage diversification of Atchison’s economic base
 - Examine the city’s policy of issuing industrial revenue bonds, and pursue joint funding partnerships with Atchison County and the State of Kansas
 - Establish a “Buy Local” marketing campaign to increase Atchison’s retail pull factor
 - Assist Atchison employers with pursuing state and federal grants to rehabilitate decaying downtown buildings and/or clean up contaminated sites
3. Promote a restored, efficient, and prosperous downtown
- Pursue adoption of zoning policies that would simplify the process of developing residential apartments on the upper floors of downtown retail/office spaces
 - Provide a cash or regulatory incentive to promote commercial or residential development in the vacant lots and surface parking lots of downtown
 - Encourage the relocation of Benedictine College students to living spaces in or near downtown
 - Consider pursuing federal Main Street Grants to remove the canopies on the downtown mall and refinish the façades of affected buildings
 - Work with area organizations and Benedictine College to create a year-round calendar of festivals and events situated around the public spaces downtown

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Chapter 9

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT COMMUNITY SURVEY

Methodology

For the first phase of public participation and community input, a community-wide survey was distributed to Atchison residents in the fall of 2013. The survey was developed by the staff of Atchison’s Department of Community Development. It was distributed via city utility bills, with directions encouraging any other members of the household to participate in the survey at a website link provided at the end of the survey. By the end of November 2013, 515 residents had completed the survey. Survey questions were related to a broad range of topics, including quality of life, housing, future growth, industry, city assets and weaknesses, and residents’ hopes for the future.

One survey question, concerning the desired age groups the city should work to attract, is not included in this report due to unclear directions for how to answer the question, resulting in a large number of invalid responses that would have greatly skewed any findings.

Current Quality of Life

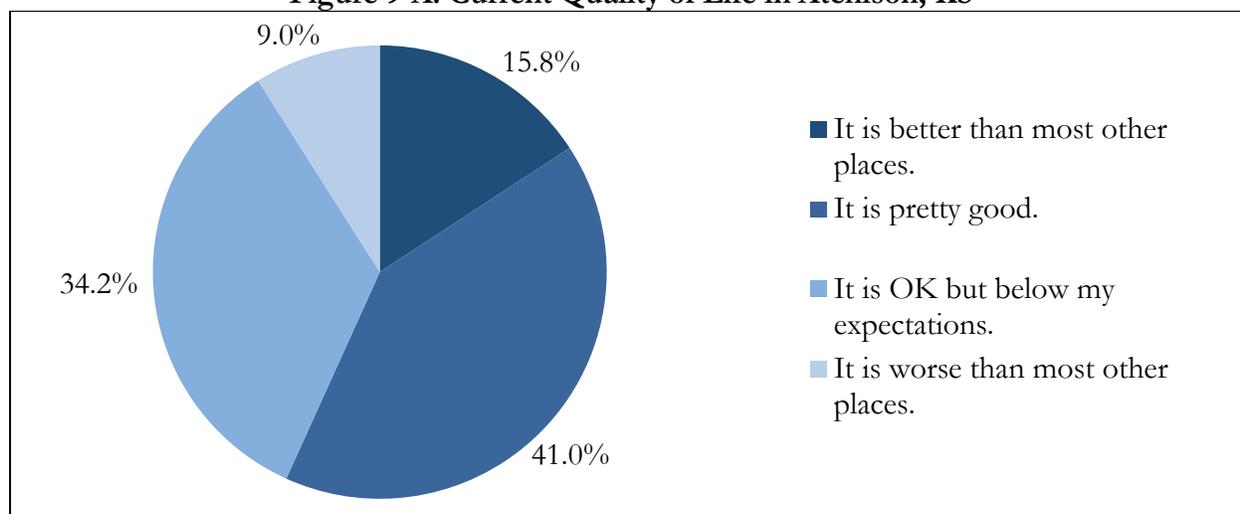
Four hundred and eighty-eight residents responded to the question, “How would you rate the quality of life in Atchison?” Survey participants could choose from four options:

- a. It is better than most places.
- b. It is pretty good.
- c. It is OK but below my expectations.
- d. It is worse than most other places.

Of the 488 respondents, 58% indicated a positive quality of life experience in Atchison. The distribution of those responses is shown in Table 9-A and Figure 9-A.

Table 9-A: Current Quality of Life in Atchison, KS

Current Quality of Life	Frequency	Percent
It is better than most places.	77	15.8%
It is pretty good.	200	41.0%
It is OK but below my expectations.	167	34.2%
It is worse than most other places.	44	9.0%

Figure 9-A: Current Quality of Life in Atchison, KS

Future Growth

Concerning future growth, 485 residents responded to the question, “How would you like to see the city grow?” “Growth” in this question refers to the physical size of Atchison as well as the number of people. Nearly 60% of respondents hope both the population and the boundaries of the city grow, followed by 32% of respondents who hope the population grows but the city boundaries remain the same. This reflects a general desire for some amount of population growth; and for the overall population density to stay the same or increase. The distribution of all responses is shown in Table 9-B.

Table 9-B: Desired Pattern of Future Growth

Future Growth	Frequency	Percent
I hope it does not grow.	26	5.4%
I hope the population grows but the city boundaries remain the same.	155	32.0%
I hope both the population and the boundaries of the city grow.	283	58.4%
I hope the population remains the same but the city boundaries expand.	21	4.3%

Future Housing Needs

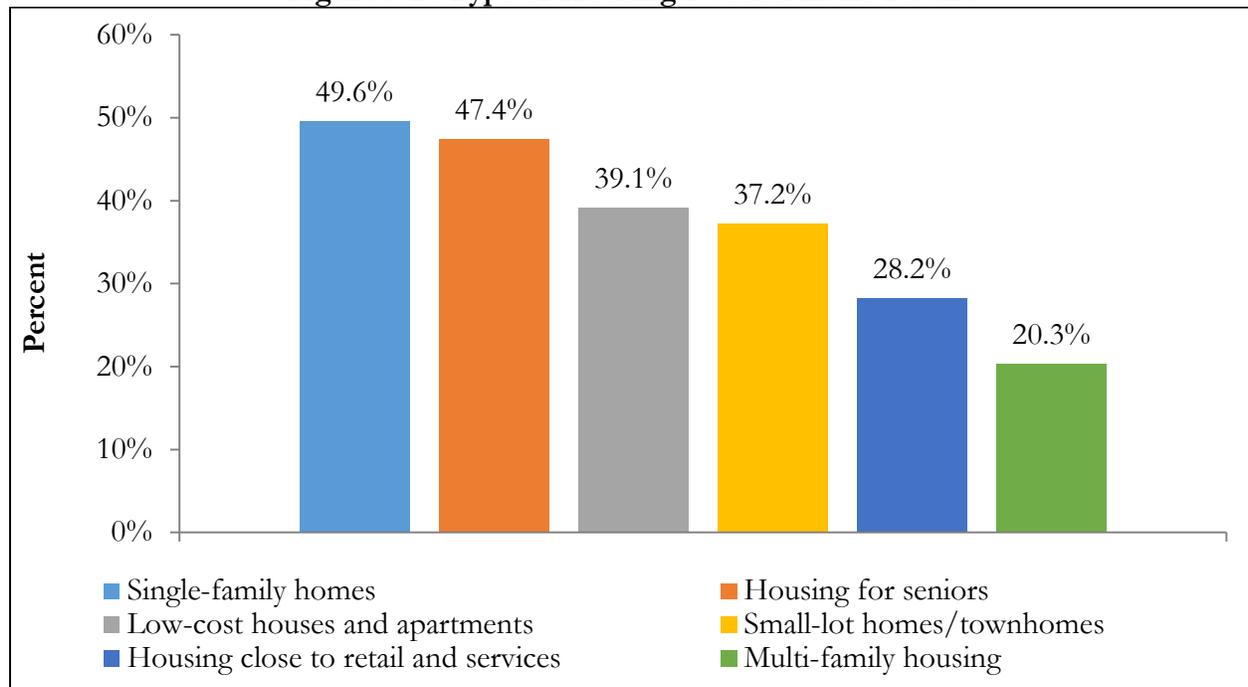
Regarding housing in Atchison, 468 residents responded to the question, “What type of housing will be needed in Atchison in the future? Select all that apply.” The frequency and percent of tabulated responses is shown in Table 9-C. The greatest need expressed was for single-family homes, followed by housing for seniors. However, as shown in Figure 9-B, the distribution of responses is fairly dispersed, indicating a certain level of desire for all of the housing types listed.

Table 9-C: Type of Housing Needed in the Future

Type of Housing	Frequency	Percent
Single-family homes	232	49.6%
Housing for seniors	222	47.4%
Low-cost houses and apartments	183	39.1%
Small-lot homes/townhomes	174	37.2%
Housing close to retail and services	132	28.2%
Multi-family housing	95	20.3%

Note: As respondents could select multiple housing types, percentages do not add up to 100.

Figure 9-B: Type of Housing Needed in the Future



Location of Future Retail

Residents were also asked about their preferences regarding the location of future retail in Atchison. 498 residents responded to the question, “If retail expands, where is the best place for it to be located?” Locations survey participants could select from were downtown, highway/outskirts, both, or other. The frequency and percentage of responses to each option is shown in Table 9-D. The greatest number of respondents felt that future retail should be located downtown, followed narrowly by respondents calling for future retail to be located both downtown and along the highways/outskirts. Therefore, a large majority of respondents support the continuation of retail expansion in downtown Atchison.

Table 9-D: Best Location for Future Retail

Item	Frequency	Percent
Downtown	234	47.0%
Highway/outskirts	27	5.4%
Both	230	46.2%
Other*	7	1.4%

*Of the survey participants that selected “Other,” responses related to the location of future retail included:

- Along major thoroughfares
- It depends
- Riverfront
- Wherever new retail wants

Industry

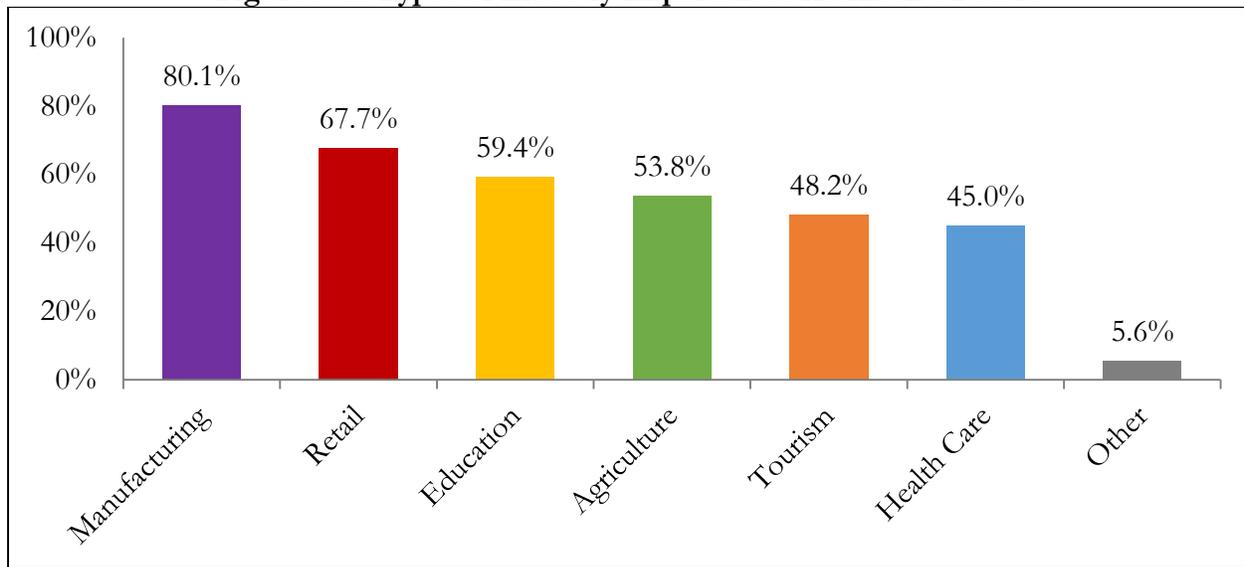
Five hundred and two survey participants responded to the question, “What type of industry is most important to Atchison’s future? Select all that apply.” Options to select from included retail, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, education, health care, or other. The frequency and percentage of responses is shown in Table 9-E. A large majority (80%) of survey respondents believe manufacturing is important to Atchison’s future. The wide distribution of responses, as shown in Figure 9-C, indicates the importance of a diverse industrial base for Atchison’s future.

Table 9-E: Types of Industry Important to Atchison’s Future

Item	Frequency	Percent
Manufacturing	402	80.1%
Retail	340	67.7%
Education	298	59.4%
Agriculture	270	53.8%
Tourism	242	48.2%
Health Care	226	45.0%
Other*	28	5.6%

Note: As survey participants could “select all that apply,” percentages do not add up to 100, but instead indicate the percent of respondents that selected that option. *The responses of the 28 participants that selected “Other” were broken out into themes. Those themes are more restaurants and dining options, all industries, entertainment, and white collar professions.

Figure 9-C: Types of Industry Important to Atchison's Future



The remaining open-ended questions of the survey intended to allow respondents to elaborate on their responses to the previous, more narrow-focused questions. To allow for easier analysis of the information, responses were coded into themes, with some responses coded into multiple themes. Themes cited by 25 or more respondents are shown following the remaining questions below.

City Assets

The first open-ended question asked residents, “What is one of Atchison’s assets you hope will not change?” Of the 337 responses, the themes cited the most included:

- Small town atmosphere, sense of community, and friendliness of people “Our friendly, hometown atmosphere.”
- History, historic atmosphere and historic buildings
- Riverfront “Small town closeness, great place to raise a family.”
- Major employers (e.g., MGP)
- Benedictine College “Waterfront park area. I love it.”
- Amenities and services (e.g., parks, schools, library, hospital, trash/recycling service, YMCA)
- Amelia Earhart Festival and other community events

City Weaknesses

Four hundred fifteen residents responded to the question, “What is a threat to the area’s future or something you would like to change?” It should be noted that, at the time of this survey, the future of MGP Ingredients, Inc. – one of the city’s largest employers—was uncertain. This may have skewed results somewhat toward economic concerns, with many respondents explicitly stating the greatest threat to the area’s future was industry, specifically MGP, leaving. Weaknesses most cited by respondents included:

Availability of steady, well-paying jobs

- Taxes
- Businesses closing/leaving
- Downtown Mall
- Crime
- Vacant or dilapidated houses/buildings
- City government
- Lack of infrastructure maintenance/improvement, and unattractive city entrances and appearance.

“Young professionals leaving the city for work elsewhere.”

“The mall....needs to go.”

“Lack of employment and derelict and abandoned building which would discourage people (businesses) from locating in Atchison.”

Hopes for the Future

On the topic of future hopes, 354 residents responded to the question, “What do you hope Atchison will be like in 20 years?” Themes most commonly cited by respondents included:

- Greater employment opportunities
- Stronger industry/economic base
- Increased retail, entertainment, and restaurant options
- Busier, thriving city
- Cleaner city/well-maintained properties
- Prosperous or improved downtown
- Improved infrastructure, services, and amenities (e.g., streets, sidewalks, and water)
- Safer/less crime
- Increased population

“Same Midwestern small town appeal with an improved local economy.”

“More retail opportunities downtown, with the mall removed.”

“A bustling, thriving small town, where the people are comfortable, safe, and happy.”

FOCUS GROUP

Methodology

The focus group was conducted by the graduate students of Kansas State University (KSU) to find out how the citizens of Atchison felt about their city. The focus group was held at Paolucci's Restaurant in Atchison on February 18th, 2014. The focus group was organized by the Director of Community Development, Stefanie Leif. She invited a variety of community members to voice their opinions about the city's condition. The variety of community representatives included high school and college students, business owners, a pastor, a banker, and a real estate agent. There were also representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Benedictine College, Atchison Housing Authority, Atchison Art Association, Atchison Hospital, and the City of Atchison. To begin the meeting, students presented a brief introduction and explanation of what the goal of the evening was. After the presentation, the 22 attendees divided into three groups. Each group had two KSU students, one facilitating the discussion and one taking notes. The topics discussed were: Amenities and Activities, Community, Connections and Appearance, Housing, Population, Economics, Tourism, Downtown, and Benedictine College.

Figure 9-D: Focus Group Presentation



Source: Photo by Kathryn Rush, 2014.

Findings

The volunteers stated that the concern with amenities was related to varying perceptions among different age groups. The older, married people in town claimed that Atchison is a great place to live and provides them with everything they are looking for in a community. The younger, single people in town, however, considered Atchison to be lacking in attractive amenities. The next concern was the time at which events generally occur in Atchison. The participants stated that there were plenty of good daytime events in the city, but that nightlife is lacking. One of the concerns mentioned was the lack of communication about events. Self-identified “active citizens,” however, stated that events are usually advertised fairly well.

On the topic of restaurants and nutrition in Atchison, there was a split opinion about the restaurants in Atchison. Some people stated there were enough restaurants, while others wanted more variety. The grocery selection was also mentioned many times, and people stated a desire for more healthy and high-quality food options. Shopping was said to be quite difficult in a town as small as Atchison. Participants seemed to like the downtown mall and its potential for redevelopment. It was generally agreed that Atchison does not provide for last-minute shopping needs, or clothing retailers for young people.

The volunteers at the focus group had differing opinions about the active amenities. For example, there was a split opinion on the YMCA, Golf Course, and Pool. People spoke highly of the roller-skating and basketball courts, and mentioned a desire for a batting cage. When asked where people like to spend their free time, many mentioned simply visiting at friends' houses. They agreed that the community aspect of Atchison is a very desirable trait. When spending time outside their homes, people are able to visit the library, the Elk Lodge, the local ice cream shop, or Benedictine College. Although residents do not generally spend their free time at the conference center on the old Mount St. Scholastica College campus, the volunteers agreed that it is an asset to the community. Many people mentioned improving the downtown movie theater as a goal. Some of the natural locations people mentioned enjoying included the lakes and the riverfront. The green space in Atchison was considered an asset, but participants mentioned not liking how the city's smaller parks can be hard to find. The most frequently mentioned infrastructure assets were the new Amelia Earhart Memorial Bridge and the town's railroad tracks. Participants appreciated how the schools are being renovated, but expressed worry about keeping the young teachers interested in staying in town.

Figure 9-E: Focus Group Discussion



Source: Photo by John Keller, 2014.

Community

When asked about their favorite and least favorite thing about Atchison, the focus group participants had a fairly consistent response. The people expressed appreciation for the small town community atmosphere Atchison provides, yet were concerned about the lack of pride in Atchison in recent years. Participants had negative impressions about what Atchison has to offer, and joked about Atchison's faults in a self-deprecating manner. Atchison was positively perceived as racially diverse, but income diversity was an issue. Generational poverty was mentioned more than once, and the consensus of the groups was that the city should provide opportunities for families to break free of generational poverty. At first response, many citizens stated there was an issue with high crime in Atchison. The public safety concerns mentioned were stray dogs, burglaries and thefts, drug abuse, and sex-offenders. After further inquiry it was concluded that the crime rate in Atchison was not as excessive as it seemed to many residents. Some members hypothesized that the issue was actually only a perception of high crime.

Connections and Appearance

When discussing connections, many people liked the location of Atchison and its close proximity to other towns. However, there was a concern of the quality of the entrances into town. Once in town, people agreed that the new bridge makes it easier to drive through the city. They agreed that almost all amenities are near one another in Atchison, however getting around may be difficult because of poor way-finding signage. Although most amenities are in close proximity, people still did not think Atchison is a very walkable community. This was attributed to poor sidewalk connections, low quality of sidewalks, and stray dogs. People agreed that Atchison is very beautiful with some fantastic topography, however the physical connections between the amenities are often lacking.

Housing

When shopping for housing, it is readily evident that Atchison's housing stock is deteriorating in some sections of town. People expressed a desire for affordable, non-fixer-upper homes. Many participants explained their experiences in shopping for a house in Atchison, having found that houses are either much too large or much too small, and either inexpensive and in disrepair, or in excellent condition but quite expensive. There is also a concern in the community about inconsistency of housing condition, with well-maintained homes adjacent to poorly-maintained or unattractive homes. The volunteers hoped the city would improve programs aimed at helping homeowners maintain their properties in an attractive and harmonious manner throughout each individual neighborhood. In general, people seemed to hold the homes on the north-west side of town in highest regard. They advised increasing housing downtown to help liven up the area.

Population

When asked about the forces shaping the population, everyone quickly agreed on economics, whether related to business trends, employment opportunities, or cost of living. Everyone agreed on the positive influence Benedictine College has had on the community. They also spoke highly of Atchison's public schools, but expressed worry over the continued trend of recent graduates leaving Atchison and settling permanently in surrounding cities.

Economics

Given the discussions at the focus group meeting, the community clearly understands how business and industry affect the economy. Some people expressed support for the city's current industrial employers and spoke of their benefits to the community, while others felt that Atchison was too dependent on a small number of major employers that could change or relocate with economic shifts. Participants generally agreed that small businesses and new industries should be promoted in Atchison. They conceded that the national economy plays a role in Atchison's economy, and spoke in favor of growing businesses that could enhance Atchison's business connections to national or global economy. They suggested utilizing the connection with Benedictine College to create an entrepreneurship program in Atchison. They also mentioned a desire for a retail succession plan, both to keep existing retailers in business and also to keep retail spaces occupied by quickly replacing departing tenants. Improving technology could also assist in economic improvements. The volunteers also noted the advantages agriculture and tourism have for the community, and would like to continue to tap into that resource.

Tourism

The citizens felt the historic components of Atchison should be the best assets for the city to promote. The groups discussed the many historical and cultural activities provided throughout the year. Everyone seemed to agree that Atchison has a lot to offer for tourists, and that the greatest opportunity for improvement lies in marketing the town's assets. One major concern was the perception of apathy and lack of hospitality among the front-line employees of Atchison's customer-service businesses. When visitors come to explore Atchison and ask people for directions or suggestions, locals do not speak of their town in a positive light. This results in tourism being reduced. Some of the locals' hospitality is communicated verbally, while other elements are visual in nature. The amount of trash and clutter visible from roads and sidewalks makes Atchison look unkempt. The groups agreed that a clean town is a proud town, and the community should make a greater effort to both look and act more hospitable if they wish to attract tourists' attention and money.

Figure 9-F: Amelia Earhart Birthplace: An example of Atchison's tourist amenities.



Source: Photo by Kathryn Rush, 2014.

Downtown

In general, the community stakeholders agreed that downtown is a good place that has a lot of potential for growth and productivity. The community likes the number of businesses that are located downtown, but would like to see some local branding and independent firms. They were in agreement at the meeting that the downtown shops are not well-organized by type of retail, and there are too many offices placed in what used to be retail storefronts. They would like to see more boutiques, particularly those oriented toward tourists. The main concern on the subject was that the downtown has lost sight of its core audience. The variety of shops has been improving, but many downtown retailers offer very limited hours of service. The stores are not open late, so people feel compelled to shop elsewhere. The Chamber of Commerce has tried to alleviate this problem by giving out certificates to promote local shopping and by promoting a First Friday event each month to encourage shops to stay open late. These tactics have worked for many retailers and customers, so the focus groups recommended more businesses remain open later in the day to attract evening customers. The other issue mentioned with attracting people to downtown was the visual element. People are noticing the businesses installing façade improvements. However, many people mentioned not liking having to walk from the rear-oriented parking lots to the entrances at the front of buildings. Many downtown businesses are aware of this issue, and have added entrances to the rear of their buildings. The concern is that the backs of the buildings are not as visually appealing or cohesive as the fronts, and that the “Main Street” atmosphere on the front side of downtown businesses is suffering from the lack of foot traffic.

Figure 9-G: The Downtown Pedestrian Mall: A Local Amenity.



Source: Photo by Kathryn Rush, 2014.

Benedictine College

Everyone at the meeting seemed to understand and agree on the importance Benedictine College to the community. The campus hosts many amenities, including open space, guest lectures, and athletic events. These events bring in outside visitors, but a serious issue has been providing lodging for them. During games and graduation weekends, hotel rooms are in high demand. The volunteers agreed that the major issue with Benedictine College in the community is not the lack of

amenities or events, but rather the poor communication between the community and the College. The College has a lot of programs and spaces that the community can use free-of-charge, but residents do not generally know of everything that is offered. The volunteers proposed bringing back events like the Watermelon Feed to bring college students into the community. Although the connection with the community as a whole can be improved, there are active connections between Benedictine College and the local public schools. The College invites middle school students to sporting events, and college students volunteer at the middle school. There are engineering-mentorship programs for high school students to learn from the college students' perspective.

Figure 9-H: Benedictine College



Source: Photo by Kathryn Rush, 2014.

Summary

In summary, the City of Atchison has a lot to offer and is improving its assets as a community. The focus group participants ultimately concluded that civic engagement is the greatest issue facing Atchison. The consensus was that the community is its own worst enemy. They agreed that citizens must take pride in their town by maintaining a level of cleanliness and quality. The community has the opportunity to increase communication and marketing techniques, so all citizens may be made aware of the unique amenities, activities, and events that Atchison has to offer. The economy is so strongly influenced by the dominant industries that whenever a business contemplates moving, it sends the citizens into a worried frenzy. Atchison's economic base must be diversified, and it must strive to provide goods and services for all age groups. The population will increase if employment is good and people have trustworthy local amenities. The citizens at the meeting agreed that the City of Atchison has done a lot to improve the living conditions and business climate of the town, and they would like to continue to see more such improvements.

Comparing the Focus Group to the Community Survey

The the two forms of public participation yielded similar results. The same themes and issues of local importance continued to surface.

Chapter 10

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

A SWOT analysis was conducted to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a community. This section outlines the critical issues facing the City of Atchison, and lists specific strengths and advantages that may be useful in mitigating present and future challenges.

Strengths

- Historic landmarks
- Natural beauty (topography, riverfront)
- Community atmosphere
- Amelia Earhart Festival and other community events
- Cultural diversity
- Low cost of living
- High economic Pull Factor
- Tourism
- Benedictine College
- Educated citizens
- Amenities and services (e.g., parks, schools, library, hospital, trash/recycling service, YMCA)

Weaknesses

- Small town perception
- Lack of town pride
- Few activity nodes
- Poor walkability
- Poor visual entrances into the city
- Visual clutter and unkempt city appearance
- Poor housing quality
- Low economic diversity
- High unemployment rate
- Citizen perception of crime

Opportunities

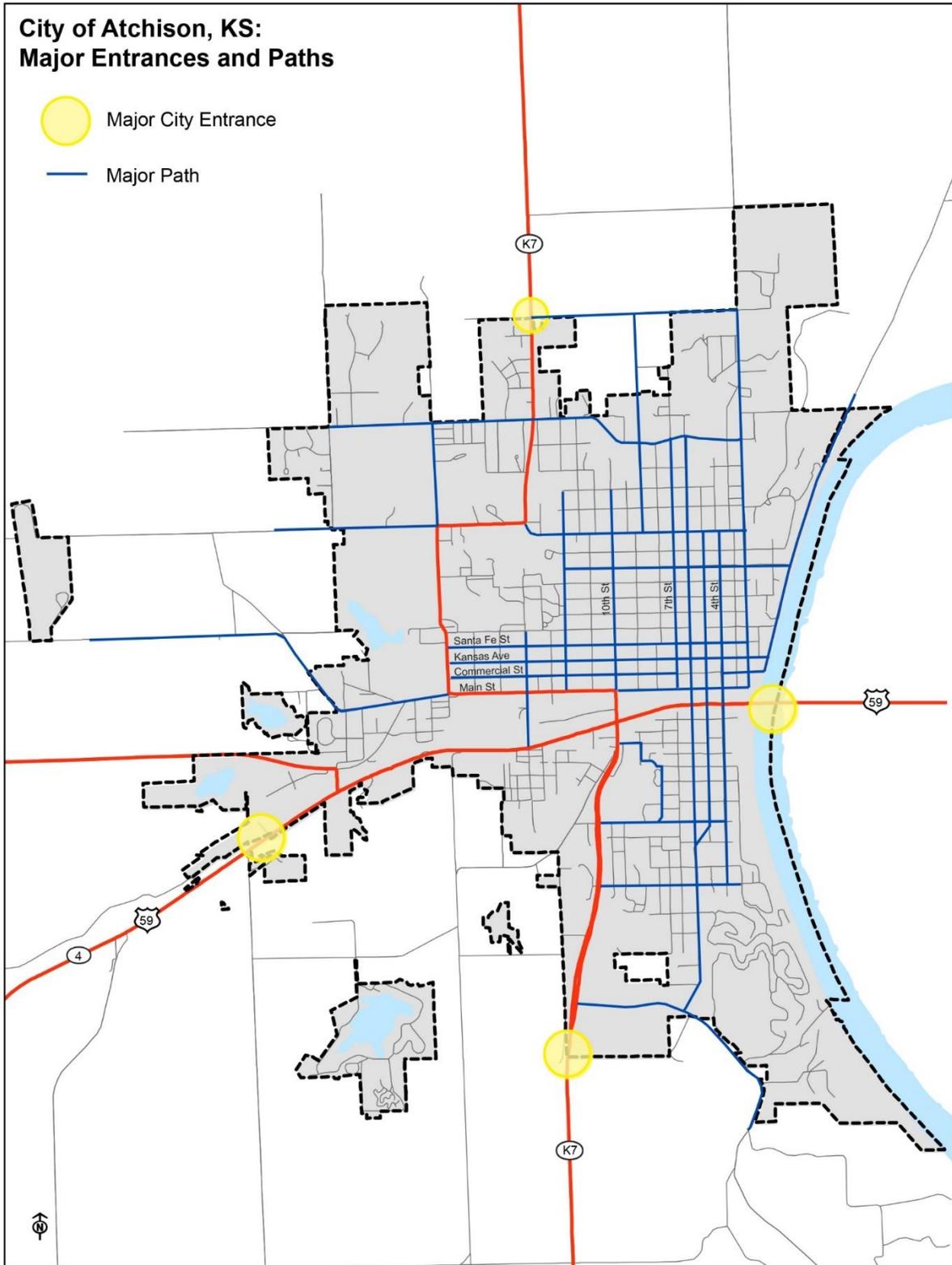
- Preserve historic structures with the assistance of funding mechanisms such as historic preservation tax credits, the Heritage Trust Fund, and other historic preservation funding sources
- Develop design guidelines to improve city entrances
- Improve way-finding
- Promote historic identity as an economic asset

- Consider seeking designation of the city as a federal “Preserve America Community” to promote the city’s historic identity and for the opportunity to apply for Preserve America Community grants for heritage tourism grants
- Maintain an updated list of properties and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Encourage preservation and rehabilitation of significant structures
- Reconsider the boundaries of Downtown Atchison to create a cohesive downtown district
- Promote a restored, efficient, and prosperous downtown
- Promote attractive pedestrian and vehicular paths between the community and downtown
- Evaluate the adequacy of parking in the downtown area
- Seek broader and more comprehensive business and community input on the future direction of the Commercial Street mall
- Work with area organizations and Benedictine College to create a year-round calendar of festivals and events situated around the public spaces downtown
- Encourage the relocation of Benedictine College students to living spaces in or near downtown
- Enhance Atchison’s labor-market competitiveness
- Offer incentives to retain and grow existing Atchison employers
- Examine the city’s policy of issuing industrial revenue bonds, and pursue joint funding partnerships with Atchison County and the State of Kansas
- Assist Atchison employers with pursuing state and federal grants to rehabilitate decaying downtown buildings and/or clean up contaminated sites

Threats

- Aging infrastructure
- Changing needs of the population
- Lack of diversity of housing types
- Potential for large businesses to move away from Atchison

Appendix
Visual Resources



Atchison Resident Survey

How would you rate the quality of life in Atchison?

- It is better than most other places
- It is pretty good
- It is OK but below my expectations
- It is worse than most other places

How would you like to see the city grow?

- I hope it does not grow
- I hope the population grows but the city boundaries remain the same
- I hope both the population and the boundaries of the city grow
- I hope the population remains the same but the city boundaries expand

What type of housing will be needed in Atchison in the future? (Select all that apply)

- Low-cost houses and apartments
- Housing for seniors
- Multi-family housing
- Single-family homes
- Housing close to retail and services
- Small-lot homes/townhomes

How would you like to see the population of Atchison change?

- More kids
- More young adults
- More mid-career adults
- More late-career adults
- More retired people

If retail expands, where is the best place for it to be located?

- Downtown
- Highway / outskirts
- Both

What type of industry is most important to Atchison's future? (Circle all that apply)

- Retail
- Tourism
- Manufacturing
- Agriculture
- Education
- Health Care
- Other

What is one of Atchison's assets that you hope will not change?

What is a threat to the area's future or something you would like to change?

What do you hope Atchison will be like in 20 years?

Focus Group Questions

1. What is your favorite and least favorite thing about Atchison?
2. What **amenities** are missing from Atchison? (downtown, for example)
3. Do you think Atchison has an **appropriate mixture of housing types**?
4. Outside of your home, where do you like to go to spend your free time?
5. What forces are currently driving **population** change?
6. What do you think of **downtown**? What are some of its strengths, and what is it missing?
7. What do you believe the **main economic strength** of Atchison will be in 2030?
8. Of the **activities** that are important to your family, which are you able to do in Atchison and which must you do somewhere else? Why?
9. What are some of the **critical issues** facing Atchison in the next 5-10 years?
10. What type of activities can you enjoy within walking distance of your home?
11. What are the internal and external forces that have shaped the community for the past 20 years, and what forces are currently shaping the town?
12. What can the community of Atchison do to **increase ties between the town and Benedictine College**?
13. What are Atchison's **economic drivers** today?
14. How can the community increase the rates of tourism? What attractions could Atchison enhance?
15. How has the **quality of life** changed over the past several years?
16. How has the overall **housing condition** changed in the past few years?
17. Are there any impediments to greater **economic development** in the city?
18. How easy is it for you (or your kids) to walk to a **park**?
19. What are things that citizens can do to improve housing conditions?
20. Describe two **events** that would spell disaster for Atchison? And describe two **events** that would improve future prospects for Atchison?
21. What are two words you would use to describe Atchison?

Focus Group Results

<i>Community</i>			
<i>Example Question</i>	<i>What is your favorite and least favorite thing about Atchison?</i>		
Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Social	Community	More community involvement (awareness, acceptance)	Keep a happy healthy community
	Get to know individuals	Atchison used to have swagger	
	Helpful and Kind	Negativity, Lack of pride	
	Able to get involved	Townies can't wait to get out of here	
	Good size feel close	We want to make a move	
	Our kids can get involved	Young people want to leave because there is nothing to do here	
	Support each other, People to look up if you are in trouble	People resistance change	
	Accepting	Complacency of low-average standards	
Diversity	Racial Diversity	Generational poverty	Opportunities for families to break from generational poverty
Safety	Safety: I walk my dog at night; daughter walked a few blocks to him	Safety: stray dogs	
		Crime vs perception of crime (I like it here, because of my perception of being in Chicago)	
		Crime: Breaking-in issues; I have never feared of my life	
		Drug issue	
		Sex offenders	

<i>Connections and Appearance</i>			
<i>Example Question</i>	<i>What type of activities can you enjoy within walking distance of your home?</i>		
Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Connections to Other Towns	Close proximity to other towns	59 is the worst	
		Entrances into the city	
Connections In Town	Bridge makes it easy to drive through city, really helped	The old bridge	
	It only takes me 5 min to get to work, so everything is close	Change of trends of those wanting suburbs vs living downtown	
		I live 2 blocks away and I drive-I drive to the YMCA.	
		Signage/way finding	
		Viaducts over railroads...there is a walkway but it may not be compliant to today's standards. If you didn't have those, it would take 15 min to get around	
Walkability	People enjoy walking for fun	Almost 8.8% of those in the county do not have a car. They walk, but not by choice.	
		Animals tied to trees make it hard to walk in some parts of town	
		Lacking walkability	
		Need sidewalks- accessible for seniors? For all?	
		Midtown (division/main/14th) is accessible if sidewalks were in good condition	
Maintenance		Lot of decay	
		Infrastructure issues- aging	
		Curbs are bad	
		Needs more curb appeal	
		Junk in peoples' yard overstuffed furniture	Yard of the week (use this as the standard)
Nature	Natural beauty	Parks are located in unbuildable areas (hidden pocket parks)	
	Topography	Riverfront connections	

<i>Housing</i>			
<i>Example Question</i>	<i>Do you think Atchison has an appropriate mixture of housing types?</i>		
Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Perception	Perception: telling others about moving to Atchison “oh, I would love to live there”	Perception: house shopping, beautify home...what happened (housing decay)	Perception: I'd like those lots cleared, but I think there are some great things.
		Perception: really hard to have neighborhoods	
Location	Location: I live in the only loft downtown	Location: Didn't want an apt adjacent to freeway	Location: housing downtown is a must (not low income)
		Location: Lacking downtown adjacent housing options. Switchboard lofts were full	Location: Proximity of amenities to housing
	North-west side there are a few sub developments, middle range. But those houses do not go for sale very often.	Location: problems finding housing rentals in a nice place	
Type		Rentals: no accountability system to landlords	
		Rentals: rent is high	
		Rentals: Shopping for houses (80% rentals) This surprised me! Lack of ownership	
Quality		Fixer-uppers: housing only ridiculously expensive or with ridiculous amounts of work	Affordable vs too big
		Fixer-uppers: It is an issue-starter homes don't exist. Affects the ability to recruit workers	
		Aesthetics: Curb appeal. Clutter 3rd street is major issue	
		Aesthetics: Too much difference in housing types, no aesthetic consistency	
		Parking for housing-streets are full.	

<i>Population</i>			
<i>Example Question</i>	<i>What forces are currently driving population change?</i>		
Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Money	Business: Industry ebbs and flows. Overall stable	Business: When business leaves we hold our breath.	
	Low cost of living	Employment: Unemployment	
	Employment: Move in because parents gained employment, [example:] Valley Hope.	Employment: we see kids move in and out. I get weekly updates. When kids leave we tract why. Move to KC for jobs.	
Education	Education: population grown directly tied to college		
	Education: School system		
Children	Young people are beginning to stay (college rep)	Majority do not retain in Atchison. High percentage that do not come back. That is not too different than other cities.	Stepping stone for life
		Overland park, KC, Chicago. Kids want to move to a bigger place they grew up.	
Personal		Personal: Transient population, moving around.	
		Personal: Unhealthy behaviors including obesity, drugs, teen pregnancy	

<i>Economics</i>			
<i>Example Question</i>	<i>What do you believe the main economic strength of Atchison will be in 2030?</i>		
Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Agriculture	Agriculture-end users and farmers	Self-sufficient in some ways	
Tourism	Tourism	No commercial center	Need to capitalize on history-lodging for retreats
Business	Business helping community	Business cycle is very visible	Business need to be online (wifi)
	Business pride	Business: It worries me that if any one of the businesses close, what would that do to the community? devastating.	Business: incentive program for younger (older business be mentors)
Industry	Industry	Very industrial	Big box stores: growth of the
	MGD	Industries; bankruptcies	Need of economic boom to bring people out of poverty
		Industry- unpredictable	Need small businesses
			Retail succession plan
Diversity	Employment: Grew up here but moved back for work	Employment for creative class	Employment is very specialized. I would not have moved back here without a specific job. If you want to move there and then look you can do that in KC or Chicago, but not Atchison. Maybe if you are going to retire, but not at this age.
	Good start up: wife's Chiropractic open here as business choice	Working class does not get catered to	No middle class, highs and lows
	Diversity	Hard for locals to compete	Maintain employment diversity
Community	Family donors	Atchison will support you but it is unforgiving	

<i>Economics - Continued</i>			
Education	Education: 80%-graduated high school, 20%-college degree or higher (about 2010 numbers. Off top of my head)	High poverty	Education: college continuing to grow (I don't see that changing) we have quality systems. I want a cost effective system (Get what you want when). Educated work force.
	Benedictine College		Education: We have a college that is bumming, education strong, colleges close by. It is inexpensive here. We need to utilize that.
			Education: Need Entrepreneurship program at college. Start something small.
Infrastructure		Renovations are expensive and are risky	Building requirements: lessen to encourage development
			Technology
National	Healthcare	Tax rate is high	Economy: City depends on health of national economy

<i>Tourism</i>			
<i>Example Question</i>	<i>How can the community increase the rates of tourism?</i>		
Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Activities	Activities: arts and cultural plan		Atchison pride week (was good but then it was gone)
	Activities: Lake days and Amelia festival-good		Activities: Catfish tournament-Missouri river
			Activities: public facilities that are inexpensive (conferences)
			Activities: would an updated movie theater keep them from going to St Joe? Coffee shop?
Branding	Branding: going digital (example: Facebook).	Night Life: Tell people to come here, but nothing for them to do. You can get a drink at restaurant but that is it	Branding: Tourism which is unique should be a focus (especially on the weekends) daytrip destination
	Branding: Strong chamber of commerce		Branding: people want national brand experience
			Connections: Can we piggy-back on KC trips?
			Connections: new regional airport should be a focus
Lodging		Lodging: housing/lodging.	Lodging: hotel development as incremental step. We should be in that rotation! (for conferences). Graduation housing is also an issue.
		Lodging: Need hotels	Lodging: hotel in historic building, use that extra parking spaces
		Lodging: no rooms (hotel-motels)	
		Lodging: we have meeting spaces at conference center, but nowhere to lodge them	

<i>Tourism - Continued</i>			
History	Historic Buildings		History: "History, Mystery, Entertainment"-fresh off the press; Lewis and Clark, Amelia Earhart; railroads; walking tours year around (not just haunted Atchison); Get them here from one interest; keep them with the other historic content.
Hospitality	walk around, feel safe doing it	Clean: Big difference between 8th and 5th street. "oh, you weren't supposed to see that"	
		Clean: unkempt properties, we become callused to it. Needs fixing up for ourselves and for tourism. "[community has blinders, has become numb to their issues]"	
		Hospitality: we are our own worst enemies.	Hospitality: Are we giving BC visitors info of places to go, so they do not ask the wrong person?
			Hospitality: hospitality training

<i>Downtown</i>			
<i>Example Question</i>	<i>When you think of downtown, what are some of its strengths, and what is it missing?</i>		
Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Context	No vacancies	Mall production fell in early 80's, sprawl cause shrinkage	Improving connections to rest of the city
	Small businesses have consulting help	Industries are not being replaced, main issue is competing with Amazon	Think about where we are asking people to go
		Complacency of people (those grew up here) vs those wanting change (seeing other areas)	
Branding	Locally owned shop, restaurant. Looking for unique things	Not a flow to shops, lots of offices	
	Only place to get sports ware	Clothing is lacking	I know there are people trying to shop locally...continue that push
	People cleaned up downtown. There is a core group strong about community. Take charge groups exist.	It is difficult having retail in a small town	Know your audience
Hours	Chamber gives certificates-shop local-first Fridays: shops open late		Extend hours for after work
Landlords		Absent landlord problem? Individual landlords. No coordination.	Are you visiting with relators? There are none at this table today
Apartments	I like living in Downtown. I am close to restaurants, shopping, and riverfront.		Those buildings were built with apt on top. Make it so people could live there.
Visual	Façade improvements	Not sure what parking lot I need to go to. Park and walk around-I don't want to walk one extra half a block	Parking lots are land banks of the future
	Some relators make their front look great. Nice, cute shops	See it from back side-need cars driving by	Not getting rid of mall, just opening it up (canopy/traffic)

<i>Benedictine College</i>			
<i>Example Question</i>	<i>What can the community of Atchison do to increase ties between the town and Benedictine College?</i>		
Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Amenities and Events	Amenities: Nursing program		Visitors: lodging needed for BC sports games
	Amenities: We as the public need to embrace it. There are so many things they offer. Green space, presentations		Visitors: Open mall to cars to pull families of students to downtown
	BC brings a lot, without BC Atchison would be in trouble		Events: Need Student discounts get students out of campus
	Events: College has events all the time-We just may not promote them		Events: Try something again like the watermelon feed at mall that brought students downtown
Connections to Community	Communication: the connection might not be as bad as the question makes it seem.	Communication: Disconnect of programs and local business. Students and jobs don't match	Communication: Awareness-tours of local businesses to see what is here
	Communication: you can come whenever. If you have never been to a college campus, it can be intimidating.	Communication: Lack of open communication-both sides, college made own pizza shop not using local place	Communication: community needs to know what college is doing. It is a two way street. Both sides need to meet in the middle. What are either doing that they can be doing?
	I see people wearing BC sweatshirt around town that don't have a direct connection to the university.		Communication: getting people to school, and getting students into community

<i>Benedictine College - Continued</i>			
Connections to Public Schools	Middle School: 25-30 BC students volunteering at schools		
	Middle School: BC rolled out the red carpet for us [middle school visits]. But kids that are 12-14 yrs. old do not know what BC is.		
	Middle School: Entire middle school went to college game		
	Middle School: our kids go to games. Expanding into the arts. Allowing mini college experiences.		
	Middle/High School: New engineer program-good for city (high school student)		
Students and Faculty	Students: college kids love Snow Ball (ice cream shop)	Students: 1800 students, 400 people live off campus. Housing stock 78% mission 90% reality. School continues to move students on to campus	Students: Move college seniors off campus to create energy. Try downtown.
		Students: It was a top party school	
		Students: sometimes we [as a city] consider the college kids a nascence	
		Faculty: Execs want to live outside Atchison	

