



**FINAL
DRAFT
for
Public
Hearing**

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

adopted by the
Benton City Planning Commission
on October 11, 2023

approved by the
Benton Governing Body
on October 16, 2023

technical assistance by



and
Benton City Staff

OFFICIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN APPROVAL

This document, entitled
Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043
is an official Plan of the City of Benton, Kansas, for the Planning Period 2023-2043.
The Planning Area comprises the City of Benton plus a certain surrounding area
in Butler County, Kansas, which is all within 3 miles of the City.

In accordance with K.S.A. 12-747, an officially advertised public hearing was held on October 11, 2023,
and this document was adopted by Resolution #_____ of the Benton City Planning Commission
on October 16, 2023.

A certified copy of the *Comprehensive Plan*,
together with a copy of the adoption Resolution and a summary of the hearing,
were then submitted to the Benton Governing Body.

ATTEST

/s/ _____

Tanner Swift
Chair, Benton City Planning Commission

/s/ _____

Kristy Brun
Secretary, Benton City Planning Commission

APPROVED by the Benton Governing Body on October 16, 2023 by Ordinance No. _____,
which was published on October __, 2023, in the *Butler County Times-Gazette*.

ATTEST

/s/ _____

Tyler Gottschalk, Mayor

/s/ _____

Joyce Casady, City Clerk

Acknowledgments

This Comprehensive Plan was prepared under the supervision
and with the aid of the Benton City Planning Commission and City staff,
with technical assistance by planning consultants Foster Design Associates LLC of Wichita,
and with the invaluable help of community volunteers on the Steering Committee.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1. Planning — Process, Parameters, & Principles _____ 1-1

Planning Process	1-1
Plan Parameters	1-2
Planning Principles	1-5

CHAPTER 2. History & Environment _____ 2-1

History	2-1
Climate	2-4
Geography	2-4
Soils	2-6
Topography & Drainage	2-6
Floodplains	2-6
Woodlands	2-7

CHAPTER 3. Background Data _____ 3-1

Demographics	3-1
Housing	3-9
Housing Conditions in Benton	3-14
Economy	3-19

CHAPTER 4. Transportation & Utilities _____ 4-1

Transportation	4-1
Utilities	4-6
Stormwater Management	4-10

CHAPTER 5. Facilities & Services _____ 5-1

City Facilities & Services	5-1
Community Partners	5-7

CHAPTER 6. Land Use Plan _____ 6-1

Existing Land Use	6-2
Future Land Use	6-8
Downtown	6-15

CHAPTER 7. Regulatory Tools _____ 7-1

Zoning Regulations	7-1
Subdivision Regulations	7-3
Construction & Environmental Codes	7-4
Annexation	7-8
Extraterritorial Jurisdiction	7-10
Site Plan Review & Approval	7-11

CHAPTER 8. Resources _____ 8-1

Seeking Grants	8-1
Regional Cooperation	8-2
Housing	8-3
Economic Development	8-4
Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation Programs	8-7

CHAPTER 9. Plan Implementation _____ 9-1

Adoption & Approval Process	9-2
Annual Review & Amendments	9-3
Planning Commission Responsibilities	9-3
Taking Action	9-6

CHAPTER 10. Benton's Planning Goals _____ 10-1

CHAPTER 1. Planning— Process, Parameters, & Principles

There are many good reasons to have a comprehensive plan. If a city wants to have subdivision regulations, State statutes require that a Comprehensive Plan be adopted first. The land use component of a Plan ensures efficient, balanced, and compatible land development, and provides a legal foundation for the judicial review of zoning cases. A Plan is often a prerequisite for grant applications, to win outside funding for City projects.

But the most important purpose of a comprehensive plan is this: **it is a leadership tool, intended to guide public policy decisions in directions that will accomplish long-term community planning goals.**

This document provides a foundation of background data, including an overview of City facilities and systems. It offers a review of regulatory tools and other resources available to support the Plan's implementation. But the core of this Plan is the **community goals**, which incorporate fundamental planning principles, express Benton's community values, and provide both current and future City leaders with a vision of Benton's future that should inform and help shape their policy-making decisions.

Planning Process

By State statute, the City Planning Commission is responsible for preparing, adopting and maintaining a city's Comprehensive Plan. When a Plan is completed to the satisfaction of the Planning Commission members, the Planning Commission must hold a **public hearing**, and formally **adopt** the Plan by resolution. They then send the Plan to the Governing Body, with a recommendation that the City Council **approve** the Plan by ordinance.

When this Plan is adopted and approved, it will become the official comprehensive development plan for Benton, Kansas, and its Planning Area, for the Planning Period from 2023 through 2043. It will replace any previous Comprehensive Plans prepared for the City of Benton.

After the Plan is approved, Planning Commission members, the Mayor and City Council members, and City staff are responsible for understanding the approved Plan in detail, and for determining the best methods to implement policies and procedures to achieve the community goals expressed in this Comprehensive Plan.

PUBLIC INPUT

As part of this planning process, **public meetings** were held, which provided a forum for members of the community to express their ideas and comment on the proposed plan. A **Steering Committee** of community stakeholders provided input throughout the planning process, and the City Council and the Planning Commission held discussions of planning goals.

In addition, a **Community Questionnaire** was conducted in the spring of 2023. Distributed both inside and outside the city limits, it was available in both paper and digital versions. A total of **149 responses** were received from Benton community members.

The **149 people who provided input to this Comprehensive Plan is a number equivalent to 15.8% of Benton's 2020 population of 943.** That is a remarkable achievement, and a testimony to the level of citizen involvement in this community!

The following table shows some of the characteristics of the people who completed the surveys.

Community Questionnaire		
Male	53	43%
Female	69	57%
Under 19 years old	0	0%
19 to 29 years old	15	10%
30 to 45 years old	45	31%
46 to 65 years old	55	38%
66 to 75 years old	19	13%
76 years old or older	9	6%
Inside City	127	86%
Outside City	20	14%

This is a fairly typical response profile for such surveys – more women than men completed the Questionnaire, and few young people expressed an opinion. Responses from those inside the city limits and those outside are well balanced to provide both perspectives on community issues.

Note, every person did not necessarily answer every single question, so sometimes the total answers to a particular question don't add up to the total number of surveys returned.

Periodically in this document, references will be made to the results of the Community Questionnaire. The tabulated results of the Questionnaire are available to the public on the City website, and from the office of the City Clerk in Benton City Hall.

Plan Parameters

This Comprehensive Plan addresses planning issues within a specific span of time (the *Planning Period*), and within a specific geographic area (the *Planning Area*).

Planning Period The Planning Period for this Plan is the twenty-year time span from its adoption in 2023 through 2043. For this type of plan, twenty years is typically the practical limit for useful forecasting of local needs and resources.

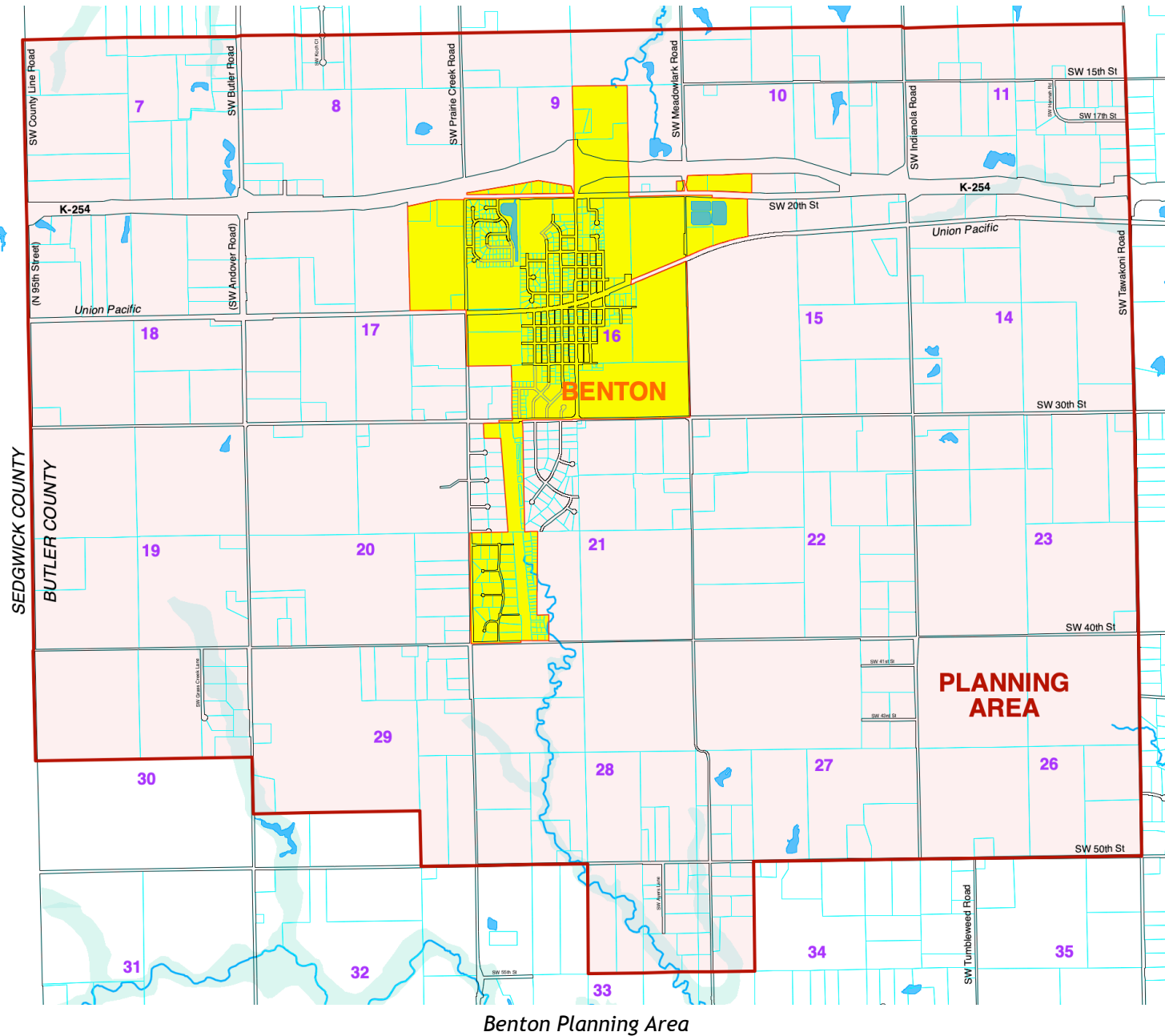
PLANNING AREA

The designation of a Planning Area recognizes that the City's activities both affect and are affected by the surrounding region. Delineating a Planning Area **does not create a regulatory boundary** as such, but instead identifies an area which has an influence on the planning and development of the City, and which therefore should be studied as part of what State statutes refer to as the "total community of which the City is a part".

By statute, any **extraterritorial jurisdiction** for Subdivision Regulations or Zoning Regulations around a city cannot exceed its delineated Planning Area—nor extend more than three miles from the city limits, nor extend more than one half the distance to another city, nor extend into another county.

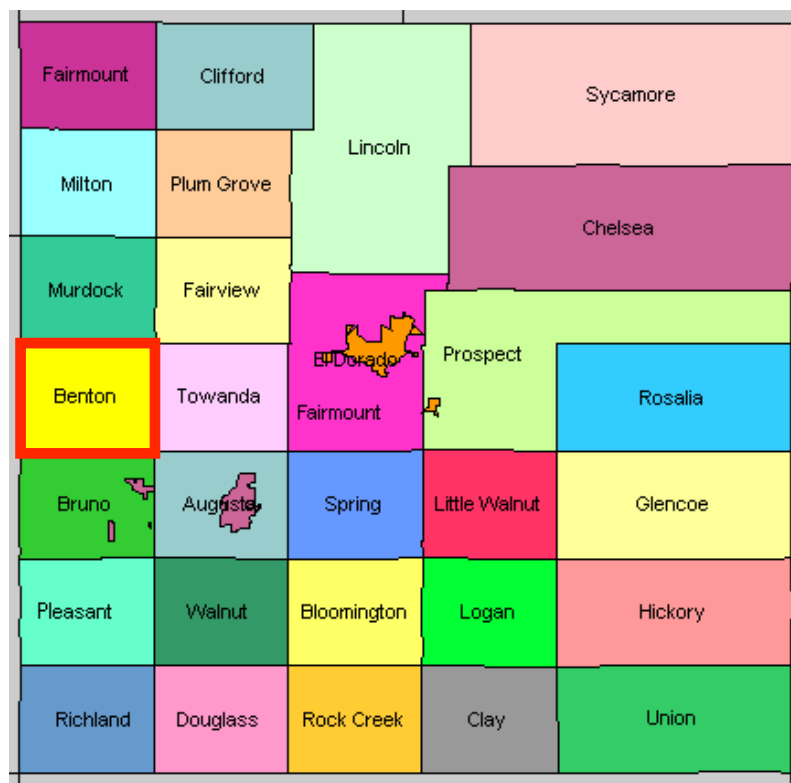
Shown on the following map, Benton's Planning Area covers about 18.45 square miles, extending a maximum of 4.25 miles north-to-south and five miles east-to-west. It encompasses areas of existing and likely future development near Benton. It extends less than halfway between the current city limits of Benton and the current city limits of Andover.

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043



As defined for this Plan, and shown on the previous page, the Benton Planning Area is composed of the following land in Benton Township (T26S, R3E), in Butler County, Kansas:

- South three-quarters of Sections 7 through 11
- Sections 14 through 23
- Sections 26 through 28
- North three-quarters of Section 29
- Southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 29
- North half of Section 30
- Northeast quarter of Section 33
- Westernmost 1,026 feet of the northwest quarter of Section 34



Map – Townships of Butler County

URBAN GROWTH AREA

Development which takes place on unincorporated land close to a city's boundaries is likely to eventually require City services, and will then be annexed into the City in order to support those services with their tax dollars. City and county governments generally cooperate in order to make sure that such development will meet city standards when it eventually does link up with a city's roads and utilities. County governments in Kansas support this concept by defining an **Urban Growth Area (UGA)** for each incorporated city within the county.

Article 6 of Butler County's 2006 Zoning Regulations describes the **UGA for Benton as all of Benton Township**. Benton Township is a six square mile area about the City of Benton, composed of Sections 1 through 36, as shown on the adjacent map.

Within any UGA, the County recognizes four districts:

- The **core** is the area within the city limits.
- The **gradient** is the area covered by the City's **Comprehensive Plan**, where City services are or will be available during the City Plan's planning period, in order to support urban growth during the time span of the County's Comprehensive Plan. **In the gradient district, urban development proposals and easement dedications must meet the standards of either the city or the county, whichever are more stringent.**
- The **periphery** is the area near the outer edge of the City's growth area, unlikely to see development until very late in the planning period. The periphery should be an area of progressively decreasing land use intensity, which serves as a **buffer between rural areas and more intense urban land uses.**
- **Rural** areas, primarily used for agricultural and some scattered residential use, do not have a full range of essential city services, and are unlikely to have them any time in the next 20 years.

Planning Principles

Good planning is a way to correct the mistakes of the past, preserve the best of the present, and deal with the challenges of the future. Effective planning should be farsighted, realistic in terms of existing resources and potential capabilities, and adaptable to changing community needs and opportunities.

Three fundamental guiding principles provide a framework to support and guide all such planning decisions—**quality of life**, **community health**, and **sustainability**. In addition, planners must always be aware of fundamental **demographic trends**.

Quality of Life

Every city competing for economic advantage understands that good public infrastructure, a trained labor force, tax rates that provide good value for the money, and available land are all necessary to attract economic activity—so most viable competitors already have those assets in place. According to the American Economic Development Commission, **it is quality of life that makes a community a *successful* economic competitor**.

In this highly mobile era, an excellent quality of life is essential both for retaining current residents, and for attracting new residents and new businesses to a community. But what does "quality of life" actually mean? And how do planning decisions affect this nebulous but essential community characteristic?

Definitions of the term "quality of life" vary by perspective and incorporate a wide variety of factors, including housing, neighborhood, schools, physical and mental health, family life, safety and security, the built environment, education, leisure time, recreational options, culture, values, social belonging, spirituality, employment, job satisfaction, and financial security—among others. In short, "quality of life" is a highly subjective way of describing the overall happiness and well-being of a person or a community.

The fact that quality of life is subjective and difficult to measure makes it no less important. Even without a precise definition, most people readily recognize the importance of the idea, and have a strong opinion about whether their personal quality of life is good or not.

Planning decisions affect housing, the local economy, safety, transportation, parks, health, and many other factors, which in turn profoundly affect the community's long-term quality of life. Maintaining and enhancing Benton's quality of life should be a primary focus of the community's planning goals. **Investments in quality of life should be regarded as investments in Benton's future.**



Community Questionnaire When asked which things contributed to their quality of life in Benton, participants in the Community Questionnaire placed the greatest emphasis on **community celebrations** and **walkable neighborhoods**, followed by **park and recreational opportunities**, then **school activities and events**.

Community Health

One of the most important factors in quality of life is health. Public planning policies and decisions impact both personal and community health.

In the last few generations, unintended consequences of planning decisions have had a dire effect on American health. Starting in the 1950s, the availability of cars and the development of interstate highways seemed to offer people the benefits of cheap land out in the country, privacy from close neighbors, wide open spaces, and personally controlled transportation. However, unintended side effects include suburban sprawl, social isolation, long commutes and their associated air pollution, and car-dependence—which are now considered major contributing factors to the current obesity epidemic in America.

In 1950, approximately 10% of American adults were obese, with a body mass index (BMI) equal to or greater than 30. By 2020, that number was more than four times higher, at 42%. In Kansas in 2021, 36% of adults were obese—a rate better than the national average, but still far too high.

Obesity is not simply a harmless expression of human diversity. It is a significant public and personal health problem, related to a number of serious chronic diseases—including diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, heart disease, and a variety of cancers.

Building physical activity back into people's daily routines is one of the best ways to combat obesity, and all its associated health risks. Levels of activity are strongly influenced by the design of the neighborhoods in which people live, work, learn, and play.

Planning policies and decisions shape our neighborhoods and our community, and should always be made with an eye toward crafting **places that encourage physical activity, nurture social connections, and promote good health**—not just for children, but for all ages.

Aim to increase opportunities for residents to engage in healthy lifestyle options. Possibilities include:

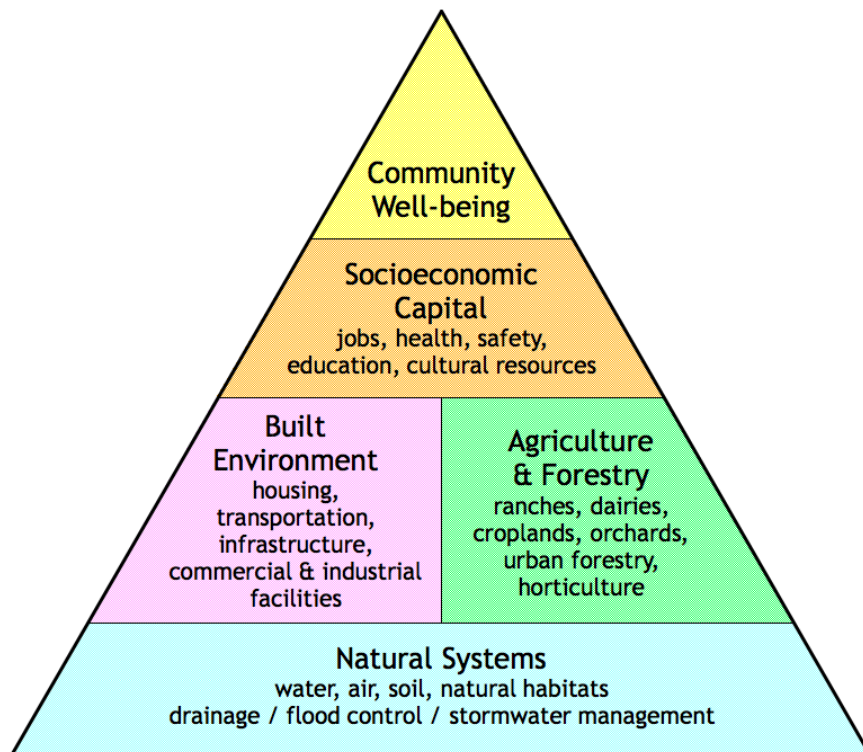
- Provide options for **walking and biking**, by supporting a community-wide network of well-maintained sidewalks, and bicycle paths, lanes, and routes. Connect residential neighborhoods with workplaces, schools, retail, parks, and other destinations.
- Design new developments to **maximize connectivity and walkability**, and pursue options to connect existing platted but undeveloped neighborhoods. In general, encourage traditional gridiron street networks, and discourage disconnected and car-dependent cul-de-sac development. Any cul-de-sacs that are developed should retain a pedestrian right-of-way or easement.
- **Strive to activate downtown as a walkable destination**, with shared on-street public parking, good lighting, bike racks, public art, street trees, and creative signage. Work toward developing a balance of workplaces, restaurants, services and retail.
- **Develop public gathering spaces** flexible enough to support community events and celebrations, which strengthen community ties.
- Develop park facilities that offer **opportunities for on-demand exercise**, such as dog parks or outdoor exercise zones, which encourage frequent use and enhance social connections.

Resources

- Urban Land Institute — [*Building Healthy Places Toolkit*](#)
- [*Healthy Places By Design*](#)
- National Association of County and City Health Officials — [*Healthy Community Design*](#)
- American Public Health Association — [*Healthy Community Design*](#)

Sustainability

Sustainable development is defined as development that meets a community's present needs—environmental, social and economic—without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Development that is *not* sustainable forecloses a community's future.



This diagram shows some of the key elements of sustainable planning, with each layer providing a foundation for the layers above.

Environmental sustainability for a community starts with leadership decisions that preserve clean air and water, protect the soil that supports agriculture, safeguard natural habitats and wildlife to maintain ecological diversity, and manage stormwater runoff to control flooding.

Social sustainability requires leadership decisions that recognize the relationship between planning and quality of life. Everyday choices made by Planning Commission and City Council members accumulate over time to have a profound affect on how the people of Benton can live their lives.

A community that is socially sustainable has high-quality **housing** options at a range of price points, a variety of types of **neighborhoods** (including ones that are **walkable**), and a **transportation** system that serves everyone (including people who don't drive). It has an **education** system that prepares the community's young people for a responsible and successful future, and access to a **health care system** that meets the needs of residents of all ages. It provides opportunities for people to **celebrate and enjoy life** in Benton.

Economic sustainability is also essential, supporting social and environmental resources which in turn support the local economy. Cooperative **economic development** efforts, both public and private, contribute to economic success.

- Foster cooperation between the City and County, in the pursuit of local **economic development** that will sustain the area's economic success.

Over the twenty-year span of this Plan, a sustainable supply of reasonably low-cost **energy** and high-speed, high-capacity **communications infrastructure** will become more and more important for economic success.

Demographic Trends

Certain nationwide demographic trends have significant impacts on a host of planning decisions. Over the course of this Plan's twenty-year Planning Period, expect the population to become **older**, to live in **smaller households** or **multi-generation households**, and to have continually rising expectations for **community amenities**.

American family and **household sizes have been trending smaller** for decades. A growing majority of U.S. households have only one or two people. Young adults often postpone marriage and child-bearing. More and more people choose to remain single their whole lives. Many find themselves single after divorce.

The exception to the shift toward smaller households is the increasing number of **multi-generation family households**, often supported by an **accessory dwelling unit** on the same lot as a single-family home. Common historically, the percentage of multi-generation households in the U.S. started to decline in the 1950s, bottomed out in the 1980s, and has since—driven by both social trends and economic pressure—continued to rise.

People are living longer. Healthy seniors are likely to live **long active lives after traditional retirement age**, and want access to flexible employment opportunities, and to services that will help them age in place close to family and friends.

More and more people, of all age groups, want to live in **walkable neighborhoods**, close to restaurants, shops and entertainment amenities.

Together, these trends signal a need for **down-sized and accessible housing options, housing options designed for multiple independent adults in one household, walkable neighborhoods near a vibrant downtown core, opportunities for part-time and flex-time employment, excellent internet service, access to good local health care services, and transportation options that don't require driving.**

CHAPTER 2. History & Environment

Planning decisions are built on a foundation of both local history and environmental context. In this chapter, a general picture of Benton's historical development is presented, as well as information on its climate, geography, soils, topography and drainage, floodplains, and community woodlands.

History

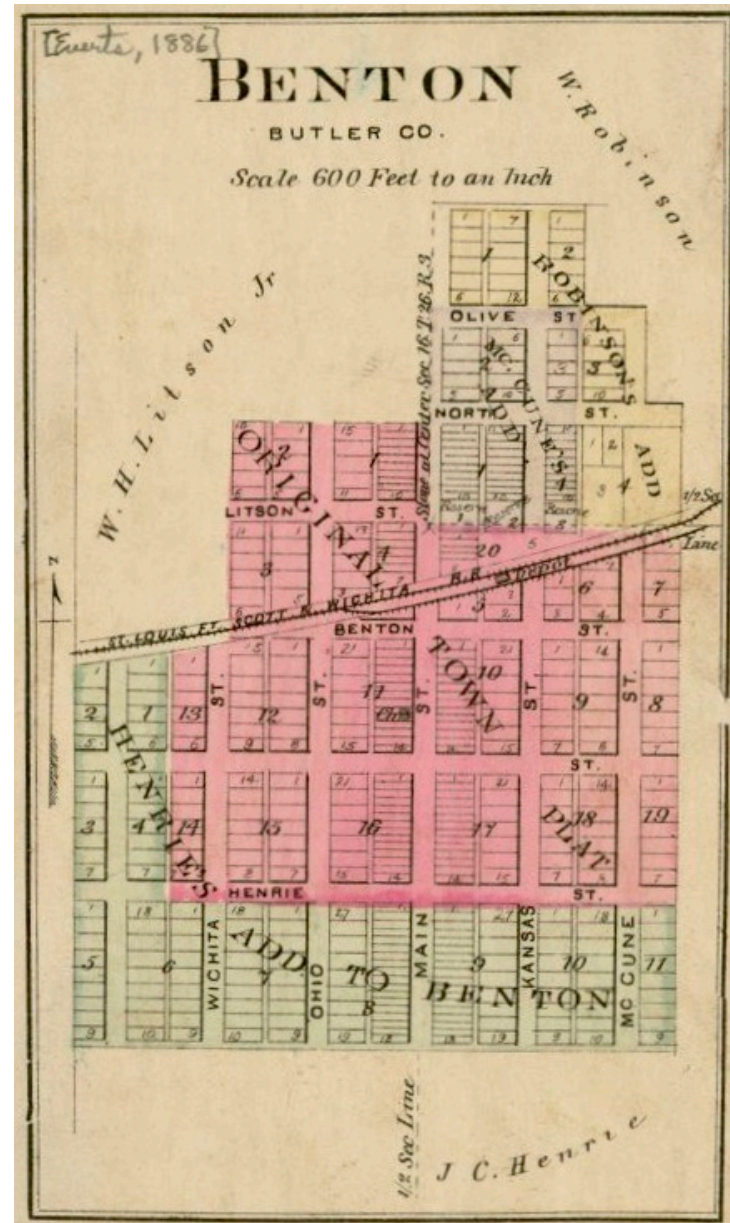
Much of the information in this section is from historical accounts provided for earlier Comprehensive Plans by community members Lucille Winegarner, Bernie Gill and Doris Gill.

In 1803, the United States bought most of what is now Kansas from France, through the Louisiana Purchase. Kansas became a U.S. Territory in 1854, and a state in 1861. After the Civil War, the Army drove Native Americans out of the Great Plains, and railroads were extended rapidly into the American west.

In 1855 the first Kansas territorial legislature designated Butler County as one of the state's original 33 counties. In 1857 the first immigrant to the County settled near what is now El Dorado. By 1859 there were 50 families living in the north central area of Butler County, and a County government was formally organized.

In 1880 the Saint Louis, Fort Scott, Wichita and Western Railroad was chartered. By 1883 the line was complete, connecting Wichita to Fort Scott near the state's eastern border, and under the ownership of the Saint Louis, Fort Scott and Wichita Railroad, a subsidiary of Missouri Pacific.

As with so many cities in Kansas, Benton was founded around the railroad. The city was first officially **platted** in **1884**, and the adjacent historical map shows that by 1887 Benton had already expanded, with two additions to its original town plat.



Map of Benton, from the 1887 Official Atlas of Kansas

In January of 1909, the Butler County Commission granted a petition from the community leaders of Benton to incorporate the City. The first election for a mayor and five City council members was held on January 26, 1909. About 240 people lived in Benton at the time.

By 1916, Benton was a commercial center for western Butler County. The City had a grade school and a high school, a bank, a newspaper (The Benton Bulletin), three churches, a grain elevator, five general stores, a hotel, two hardware stores, two garages, two physicians, two blacksmith shops, a livery barn, a lumber yard, a coal yard, a fraternal hall for the local chapter of the Order of the Knights of Pythias, and a Lodge for the local chapter of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

Transportation was provided daily with three Missouri Pacific passenger trains each way and three Southern Kansas Stage Line buses. Supplies arrived on freight trains, and were distributed by the local livery service.

On February 3, 1932, a fire destroyed most of the businesses on the west side of Main Street downtown.

In 1950 a successful bond vote provided funds for a new City Building, and purchase of a much needed fire truck. The structure of that City Building still stands on south Main Street, but its functions were later relocated to the current City Hall.

Several scenes for the 1969 movie *The Gypsy Moths* were shot at the airport in Benton.

Concerted efforts to asphalt the city's dirt streets were made in 1973 and again in the early 1980s.

In April 1977, the local Fire Department was organized as Butler County Rural Fire District No.7, and relocated to a new building.

Land obtained by the City in a trade for utility connections became the new City Park. The picnic shelter was built in 1983. Later additions included paths, picnic tables, and benches. A playground was added in 1996, and two multi-use courts were completed in 1997.

By the summer of 1997, Benton's downtown hosted the Post Office, the City Building, the Fire Station, the Lions Community Center, a bank, a gas station, a grain elevator and feed store, a windmill repair business and a millwork shop. Further north on Main Street, near the highway, there was another business district with a convenience store, a car wash, a restaurant, an antique mall, and a bar and grill.

UTILITIES

Electrical service reached Benton in 1915. By 1916, the community also had **natural gas** and **telephone** services. The City upgraded from a switchboard to dial telephones in 1959. **Cable television** was first available in Benton in 1982.

The transition from individual wells to a City **water system** in Benton was not completed until 1953. In March of 1976, local voters elected to fund a connection to Wichita's water system. By August of that year, Benton's residents were receiving Wichita water, an arrangement which continues today.

The City **sewage system** was installed in 1958, with a lagoon just north of Highway 254 and east of Main Street. That lagoon was replaced in the late 1970s with a new wastewater treatment facility located on Highway 254 about three quarters of a mile east of Main Street.

Weekly **solid waste disposal** service in Benton began in 1976, at the same time a "no burning" ordinance went into effect.

POST OFFICE

Reliable postal service began in Benton in 1896, when Rural Postal Routes 1 and 2 were established. A new Post Office was built in 1912, then replaced in 1940 with another in a Main Street location. In 1980 the Benton Post Office was relocated to the Sprout Pitcher Building on Main Street.

EDUCATION

Education was very important to the early settlers. Immigrants first arrived in the Benton area in 1870, and by July of 1871 they had established a grade school southwest of Benton's current location. In 1883, as the town grew up around the railroad, the Benton School was moved to a building on Main Street.

By 1885, classes were being held in a new purpose-built school building, located on the same site as Benton's current elementary school. In 1911 a joint High School and Grade School was built, which was used until a new grade school was constructed in 1954.

In 1961, Circle Public Schools Unified School District 375 was created, and Benton schools now operate in coordination with those of Towanda, El Dorado, Bel Aire and northeast Wichita. Benton continued to host an Elementary School and a Middle School, but students attended High School in Towanda. The Benton High School was torn down in 1964, to allow construction of additional grade school classrooms.

COMMUNITY CENTER

The two-story Knights of Pythias building, on the east side of Main Street, burned to the ground in 1924. A new brick building was constructed on the site, eventually serving a variety of purposes, including as a hardware store, a restaurant, and a bar. Bernie and Doris Gill purchased the property in 1993, and donated it to the Benton Lions Club in 1995. It is now the site of the **Lions Club Community Building**, which is Benton's major civic meeting place.

The new Community Building was built and paid for by the Lions Club, with mostly donated labor, and financial contributions from both Lions International and the local chapter. In January of 1997 the building was dedicated to the City of Benton, debt free, with an estimated value of \$200,000.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Planning for any community should include appreciation of its historical places. Often the best way to preserve such buildings is to adapt them to an updated use. No buildings in Benton are currently listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places, but Benton should consider pursuing efforts to recognize and preserve local buildings which may qualify for recognition.

Benton continues to be a resource for local agriculture businesses, but it has become primarily a rural residential community, centered around its excellent schools.

While Benton is itself an employment center, many residents commute to work elsewhere, primarily in Wichita and Andover. More than four times as many residents commute to jobs outside the city, as compared to the number of people working within Benton.

Climate

Climate significantly affects agricultural, economic, and construction activities. Benton's Planning Area has a continental climate, characterized by frequent and abrupt weather changes, with wide daily and annual temperature variations, a great deal of sunshine, occasional high winds, and abundant spring rainfall.

While Benton's climate is notably variable, it is generally beneficial. The long growing season offers temperatures and sunshine conducive to agricultural production. Total precipitation is adequate for principal crops, though in some years its timing and distribution can cause problems. High winds or hail may occasionally damage crops or structures, sometimes catastrophically.

The typically mild winters mean that various outdoor recreational activities can be sustained almost all year round. Only during the coldest weeks of the year is construction restricted, or construction methods constrained. However, recurring abrupt temperature swings, and frequent, often daily, freeze-thaw cycles in winter profoundly affect the durability of road surfaces and some other building materials.

Benton's summers are typically hot, humid, and sunny, while winters are cold, dry, windy, and sometimes overcast. Fahrenheit temperatures over the course of a year typically range between 24 and 94 degrees, rarely falling below 10 or rising above 103.

Specific climate data for Benton is not readily available online, but a number of internet sources offer climate information for nearby Wichita.

• [WeatherSpark.com](https://www.weather-spark.com/) • [USClimateData.com](https://climate.data.noaa.gov/) • [WeatherBase.com](https://www.weatherbase.com/)

Geography

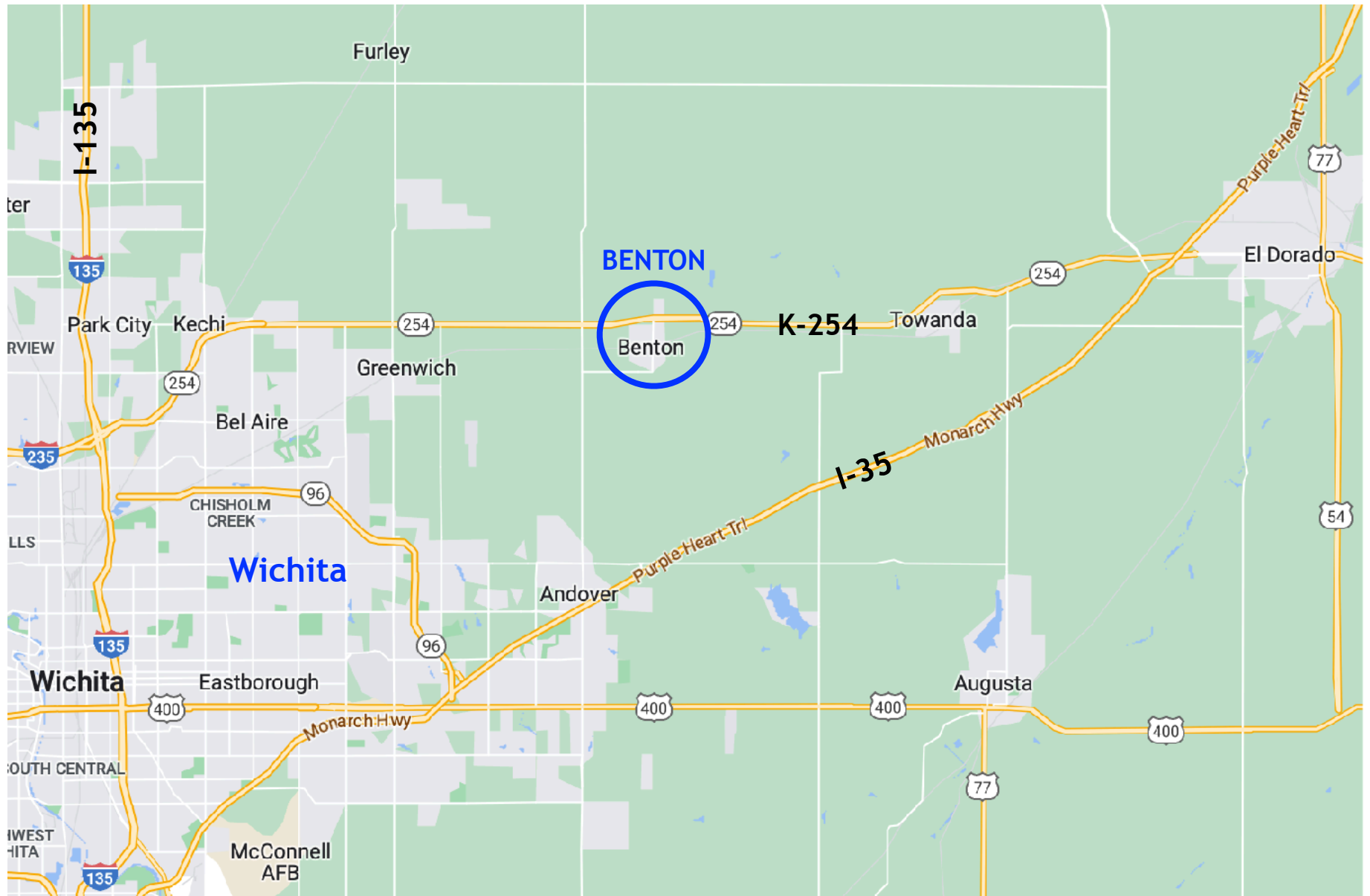
Land use patterns within a community are influenced by its location, and the natural resources, physical features, and regional destinations in its vicinity. Both natural and man-made features may positively support particular land uses, or they may restrict development possibilities and limit the directions available for urban growth.

Strive to establish development policies which maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of a planning area's location and physical characteristics, guiding development that is both economically efficient and esthetically pleasing.

Butler County is in south-central Kansas, and is the home of Andover and El Dorado, its two biggest cities. The City of Benton is in Butler County's Benton Township, just east of the Sedgwick County border. The Benton Planning Area is contained entirely within Benton Township.

Benton is not directly bordered by any other cities, but it is within a half-hour's drive of a variety of other communities, including Wichita, Andover, El Dorado, Towanda and Augusta. This increases options for both employers and employees in the Benton area, as well as making services and amenities available, that otherwise could not be supported by Benton's population alone.

State highway K-254 runs through the north end of Benton. The community has easy access to the interstate highway system via either I-35, which can be accessed about 4 miles south of town, or I-135, which can be accessed via K-254 about 12 miles west from Benton.



Geographic Location of Benton, Kansas

Soils

Soil is a valuable resource, which should be protected. Some soil types are suitable for certain land uses, but not for others; when an inappropriate land use is imposed on an unsuitable soil type, both the land use and the soil are compromised.

Official soil survey information, which is fundamental to many planning decisions, is provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on their website *Web Soil Survey*. Maps of soil types in any selected area are provided, as well as information on the characteristics of the soils themselves, including their suitability for various uses.

Using the *Web Soil Survey* (WSS)

The *Web Soil Survey* is available at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm>
Click on the green "Start WSS" button to begin.

Area of Interest (AOI) Simply zoom in on the aerial map until you find the property you are looking for, and draw your "Area of Interest" with the AOI tool. After you have drawn your AOI, you can save the web page as a link in your web browser, so you can easily return to it.

Map & Data After your AOI is defined, click on the "Soil Map" tab to see a soils map and a table showing the percentages of all the soil types in your area of interest.

Click on the "Soil Data Explorer" tab to find information related to your soils, in hundreds of categories—from soil chemistry, erosion factors, or depth of the water table, to its suitability for building basements or a septic field, to its probable yield of corn silage when irrigated.

Soils in the Benton Planning Area are typically silty clay, silty clay loams, or silt loams. In general, Benton's soils are well suited to both agriculture and urban development.

Topography & Drainage

The topography of local landforms, and the drainage patterns which result, have a significant impact on potential land uses. The location and design of some facilities—such as cell towers, water towers, sewage treatment plants, stormwater management structures, and wind turbines—are strongly influenced by relative land elevations.

Though overall fairly flat, the Benton Planning Area is located on high ground, draining to the northwest toward Whitewater Creek, to the northeast toward the West Branch of the Whitewater River, and to the south toward Dry Creek.

Topographic maps from the U.S. Geological Survey are available for viewing or download from the TopoQuest website at www.topoquest.com/places.php.

Floodplains

Historically, people were attracted to relatively flat land near waterways as a place to settle and build. While such land typically has rich soils and easy access to water, it is also prone to high-water flooding, making it potentially dangerous for both people and structures.

In the United States, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is responsible for mapping floodplains, classifying floodplains into various Special Flood Hazard Areas, based on degree of risk. Floodplain information for the Benton Planning Area is available from the [FEMA Flood Map Service Center](http://www.fema.gov/floodmap).

There are **no flood hazard areas inside the city limits of Benton**, and only a very small area of 1% Annual Chance Floodplain in the Planning Area. Floodplains are therefore not a significant factor in planning for the community's future. Benton does not participate in the *National Flood Insurance Program*, and doesn't need to.

Woodlands

When individual trees in yards, in parks, and along streets are considered collectively, they form an **urban forest**. The benefits of urban trees are well documented, and include providing shade, reducing noise levels, decreasing air and water pollution, sequestering carbon, diminishing summertime energy use, furnishing wildlife habitat, screening undesirable views, serving as buffers between land uses, and raising property values. A well-maintained and well-planned urban forest enhances the community's livability, its character, and its quality of life.

Under Kansas statute K.S.A. 12-3201 et seq., cities are authorized to regulate the planting, maintenance, treatment, and removal of trees and shrubbery on all street and alley rights-of-way. Abutting property owners hold "title to and property in" any trees and shrubbery in the planting strip between the property line (which is typically along the back edge of the sidewalk) and the back-of-curb line. Property owners can recover damages to such trees, and initiate actions to prevent their destruction. Cities can designate allowable street trees in the planting strip. Some cities conduct periodic stump removal programs.

Cities in Kansas have the option to require new developments to include trees, through their Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.

Many of Benton's street trees are mature, but still in good condition, and likely to remain so during the 20-year span of this Plan. Others are in need of restorative pruning or removal.

Ideally, the City should plant some new street trees each year, to maintain a healthy age spread in Benton's urban forest. The goal is to make sure that in future, there will never be a neighborhood where *all* the street trees reach senescence at the same time.

Public trees in Benton are addressed in Chapter 13, Article 3 of the City Code.

Shelter belts are an essential safeguard for farming on the prairie, yet throughout Kansas they are showing a decline in vigor due to the advanced average age of the trees.

Although woodlands in Benton's Planning Area cover a relatively small acreage, they are very important to the long-term health of the soil and water on which much of the Benton area economy depends. Every effort should be made to sustain and enhance these woodlands, and to **reinvigorate shelter belts**.

Information on government conservation programs that can help landowners both plan and pay for shelter belt renovation is available on the Kansas Forest Service website at www.kansasforests.org/rural_forestry/financialincentiveprograms.html.

Trees in Kansas come under extraordinary stress, from ice storms, drought, severe hot and cold spells, and insect and disease outbreaks—in recent years, diseases particularly affecting pines and ash trees. Also, many of the wonderful mature trees that were planted along streets and in parks during the early years of development in Kansas cities are now nearing the ends of their lives.

Maintaining a healthy community forest over the long-term requires expertise and ongoing efforts by City staff, a commitment by City officials to dedicate necessary resources to the task, and broad public support and understanding of the value of trees to the community's quality of life.

For information on helpful organizations, and on funding programs that can help improve your community forest, see the **Kansas Forest Service** website at www.kansasforests.org.

Information on the Arbor Day Foundation's **Tree City USA** program is available at www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/. Becoming a "Tree City USA" provides communities with a four-step framework to maintain and celebrate their urban forest.

CHAPTER 3. Background Data

Data in this chapter is from the *2020 Census* and the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (ACS).

The ACS has replaced the Census long form. Also administered by the Census Bureau, it provides more detailed and more current information than the decennial census. However, since the ACS is based on a smaller sample size, if at any point there is a discrepancy between the two sources, information from the Census is regarded as the official data.

Demographic, social, housing and economic information is available in more detail from the [U.S. Census Bureau Explore Census Data](#) website, where typing in the name of a place brings up an overview of available data for that location. Click on the table code number to link to the complete data table.

More detailed Kansas information, including historical demographic data, is available from the [University of Kansas Institute for Policy & Social Research](#).

Census Definitions Certain terms used in this chapter are defined precisely by the Census Bureau, with differences from standard usage which have significant implications for correctly understanding the data.

Housing Unit: A house, apartment, mobile home, a group of rooms, a single room occupied as a separate living quarter, or vacant units intended for occupancy.

Family: A family consists of two or more people who are related by blood or marriage residing in the same housing unit.

Household: A household consists of all people who occupy a housing unit regardless of relationship, and may refer to a person living alone.

Median / Mean: A *median* is the middle number in a distribution of numbers, such that there is an equal probability of being above it or below it. A *mean* is generally understood as the "average" of a set of numbers, calculated by adding all the numbers in a set and then dividing by the total number of numbers. While a mean may be skewed by a single out-of-the-norm number in the set, a median typically gives a fairly accurate picture of "normal".

Demographics

This section includes information on national demographic trends, as well as on Benton's demographic and social characteristics. Data is from the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*.

Understanding the characteristics of people in Benton helps community leaders develop policies to effectively meet residents' current and future needs.

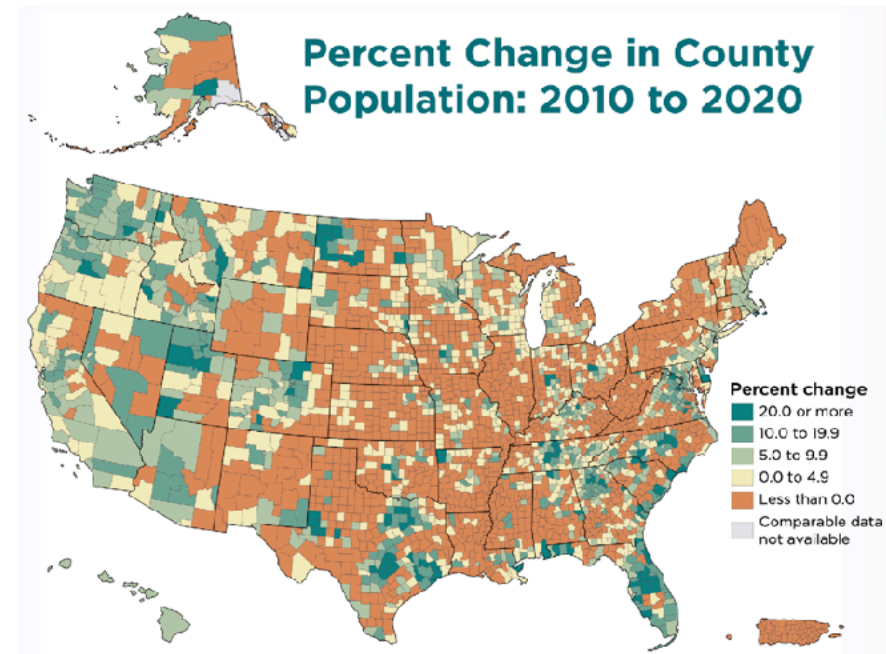
Population Trends

As detailed in the following table, the population of the United States grew during the fifty year period leading up to 2020 by an average of about 8.8% per decade, while Kansas grew by only about 4.9% per decade—a little over half the national rate. During that same time frame, Butler County's population increased by an average of 11.9% per decade—much better than the national average.

	U.S.		Kansas		Butler County	
	Population	% Change	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1970	203,211,926	—	2,246,578	—	38,658	—
1980	226,545,805	11.5%	2,363,679	5.2%	44,782	15.8%
1990	248,709,873	9.8%	2,477,574	4.8%	50,580	12.9%
2000	281,421,906	13.2%	2,688,418	8.5%	59,484	17.6%
2010	308,745,538	9.7%	2,853,118	6.1%	65,880	10.8%
2020	331,449,281	7.4%	2,937,880	3.0%	67,380	2.3%
AVG	—	8.8%	—	4.9%	—	11.9%

National Population Trends Recent national population trends show people moving from rural areas to cities, and from the northeastern and central parts of the nation to the south and west. The Great Plains region in particular is losing population to other parts of the country.

The following map shows the percentage of population change between 2010 and 2020, for each county in the country. Green shades indicate growth; the darker the green, the greater the growth rate. Tan indicates stability or slow growth, and orange indicates population loss.



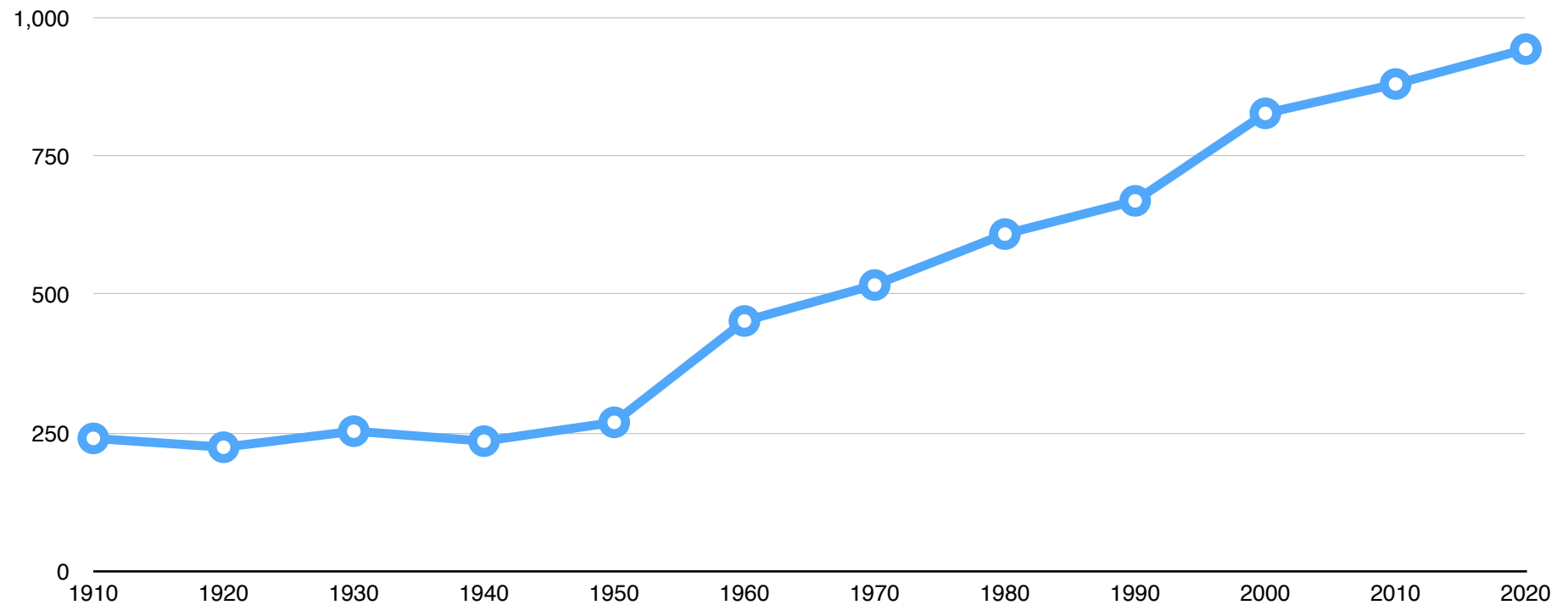
Kansas Population Trends Looking closely at Kansas on this map shows that most population growth in the last decade has taken place around Wichita, and in the northeastern part of the state—in the Kansas City suburbs, and around the university town of Manhattan.

Benton's Population History

During the fifty years period leading up to 2020, Benton's population has grown by an average of 13% per decade—a rate of growth about one and a half times the national average.

In the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*, Benton's population was estimated to be 823 people, while the 2020 Census itself found that the population was actually 943 people.

Benton				
Census	Population	Census	Population	% Change
1900	—	1970	517	—
1910	240	1980	609	17.8%
1920	224	1990	669	9.9%
1930	253	2000	827	23.6%
1940	235	2010	880	6.4%
1950	269	2020	943	7.2%
1960	452	Average per decade		13.0%



Future Population

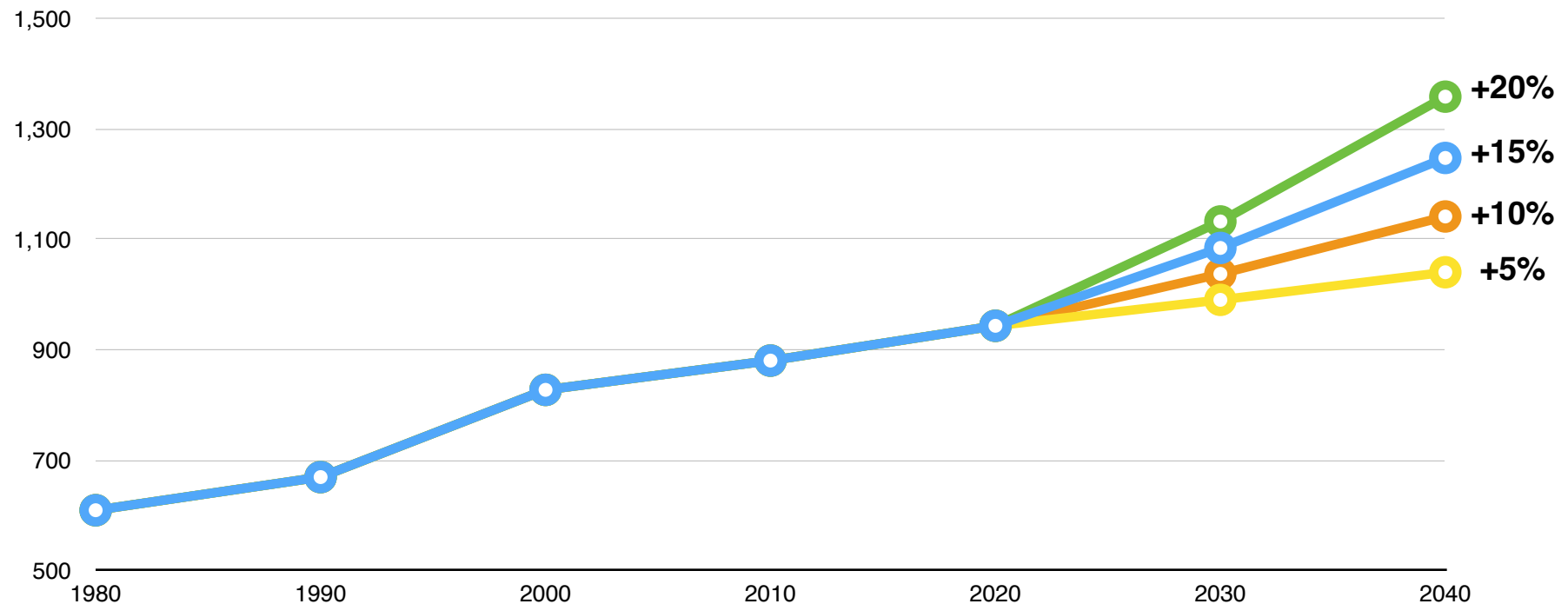
Many social and economic variables can affect the patterns of change over time in a community's population. Nevertheless, a reasonably accurate idea of a community's future population is an essential foundation for making planning decisions, because changes in population affect requirements for everything from police services to housing construction to sewage treatment capacity.

Making an accurate estimate for the future population of a small city is especially difficult, since a small change in absolute numbers can represent a substantial percentage of population change.

The following table and graph show what Benton's 2040 population would be under various potential rates of population change—gains of 5%, 10%, 15%, or 20% per decade.

Even at a growth rate of 20% per decade, Benton would still have fewer than 1,400 people in 2040, a number that would still allow the community to maintain its cherished small town ambience.

Future Population at Various Rates of Change				
Year	+5%	+10%	+15%	+20%
2020	943	943	943	943
2030	990	1,037	1,084	1,132
2040	1,040	1,141	1,247	1,358



Over this Plan's 20-year period, City leaders will work toward a goal of increasing the City's population at a rate that is consistent with or slightly higher than Benton's historic average rate of growth—a challenging but reasonable goal. To achieve it, community leaders will need to understand the changing dynamics that result from regional population shifts as Butler County continues to grow.

A city has three basic strategic options for maintaining and increasing its population, all of which should be pursued as appropriate: **retain existing residents, attract new residents, and annex additional residents** as the city grows geographically.

Important factors that allow a community to attract and retain residents include good-quality housing at a variety of price points and in a variety of types, reliable utilities services, good schools, and community amenities that enhance quality of life—especially good schools, good parks, sufficient child-care options, business creation opportunities, and employment opportunities.

Demographic Characteristics

The following table contains information which is useful primarily when viewed in comparison to the same data from other geographic areas. For instance, Benton has an unusually high percentage of households with children, and unusually low racial and ethnic diversity.

- **Disability** Of the total civilian non-institutionalized population in Benton (823 individuals), 118 people have a disability. Of those 118 disabled people, 24 (20.3%) are under 18 years of age, 57 (48.3%) are between 18 and 64 years in age, and 37 (31.4%) are 65 years of age or older.

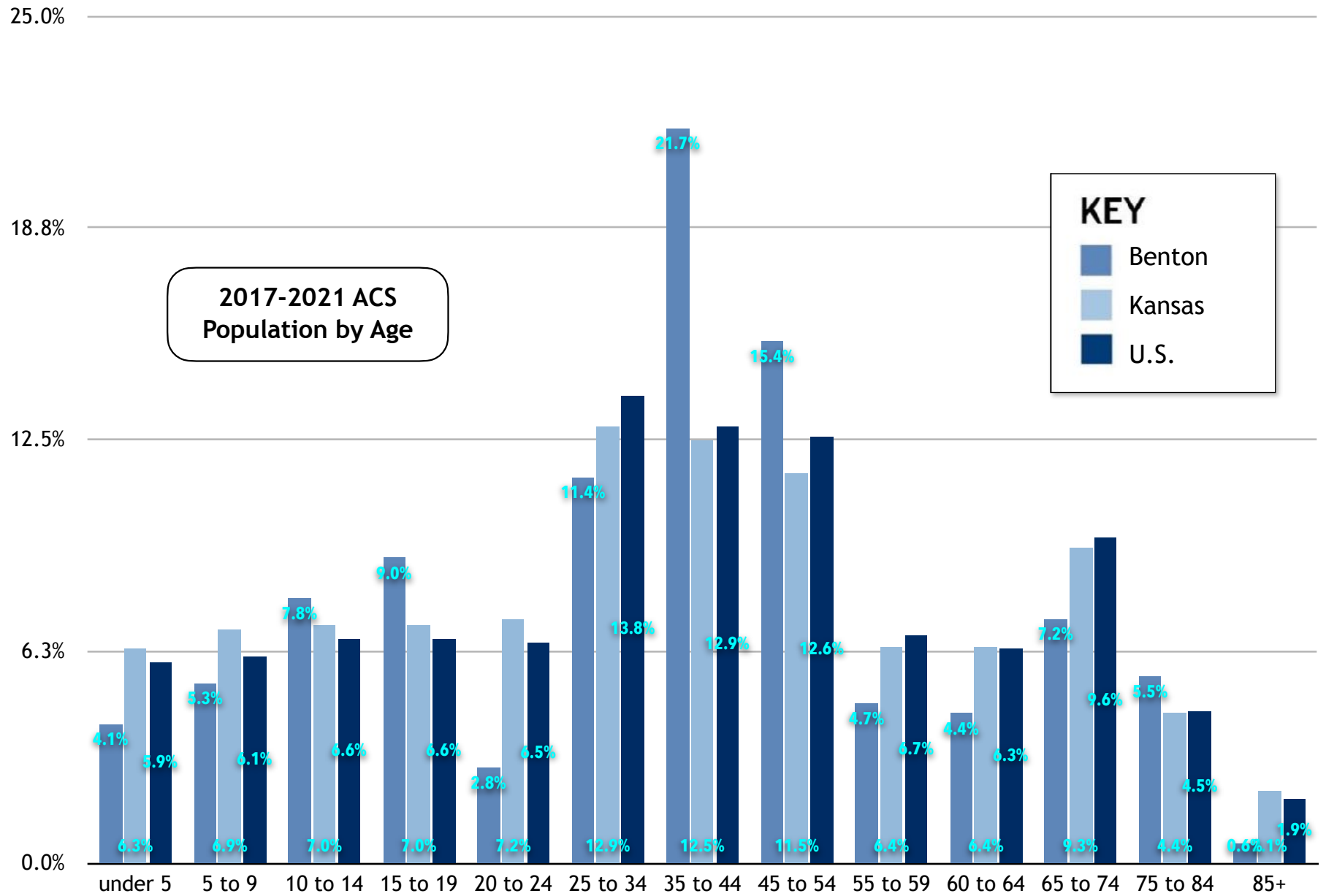
	Benton	Kansas	U.S.
Median Age (in years)	38.2	37.0	38.4
Average Household Size	2.54	2.51	2.60
Average Family Size	2.91	3.12	3.20
Households with 1 or more people under 18 years	34.9%	30.8%	30.6%
Households with 1 or more people 65 years and over	23.8%	28.9%	30.2%
% White	94.4%	87.2%	74.5%
% Hispanic or Latino	0.0%	12.3%	18.4%
% Disabled (civilian, non-institutionalized)	14.3%	13.2%	12.6%

Population by Age / Age Distribution The chart on the following page shows the percentage of each age category for Benton residents, compared to figures for Kansas and the United States.

Benton's population is heavily skewed toward people in the 35 to 54 year age brackets, and their children. These are likely the people at the stage of their careers where they can find and afford appropriate housing in Benton for their families.

The percentage of 20 to 24 year olds is very low, which is typical in small towns where young adults are likely to leave to go to college or start a career. Another drop occurs among 55 to 74 year olds, perhaps because retirees are moving to communities which offer more senior services.

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Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

Households & Families in Benton		
Family Households	247	76%
<i>Married couple without children</i>	123	38%
<i>Married couple with children under 18 years</i>	61	19%
<i>Cohabiting couple without children</i>	11	3%
<i>Cohabiting couple with children under 18</i>	23	7%
<i>Male householder with no spouse/partner present, with children under 18 years</i>	0	0%
<i>Female householder with no spouse/partner present, with children under 18 years</i>	29	9%
Non-Family Households	77	24%
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	324	100%

- **Children / Seniors** Out of 324 households in Benton, 113 (34.9%) had at least one child under 18 years of age in the household; 77 (23.8%) had at least one person 65 years of age or older in the household; and 134 (41.4%) had neither.
- **Parents** Out of 113 family households where adults are living with their own children under 18 years of age, 61 households (54.0%) are married couples, 29 (25.7%) are female single parents, 23 (20.4%) are cohabiting couples, and none are male single parents.
- **Multigenerational Households** According to the 2020 Census, there are 14 households in Benton with three or more generations living together.

Single Person Households in Benton		
<i>Male householder living alone, under 65 years</i>	35	51%
<i>Male householder living alone, 65 years or over</i>	9	13%
<i>Female householder living alone, under 65 years</i>	6	9%
<i>Female householder living alone, 65 years or over</i>	18	26%
TOTAL SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS	68	100%

These figures have significant planning implications for both housing needs and social services in Benton.

Benton Educational Attainment (25 years old and over)		
Less than 9th grade	0	0.0%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	13	2.2%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	159	27.2%
Some college, no degree	135	23.1%
Associate's degree	64	11.0%
Bachelor's degree	116	19.9%
Graduate or professional degree	97	16.6%
Total	584	100.0%

- Of people in Benton 25 years old or older, 97.8% had a high school degree or higher, compared to 91.6% in Kansas, and 88.9% nationally.
- Of people in Benton 25 years old or older, 36.5% had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 34.4% in Kansas, and 33.7% nationally.

Demographic Data from the Community Questionnaire

On the Community Questionnaire, several questions were asked to help community leaders understand why people choose to move to Benton, and why they choose to stay.

- **How long have you lived in or near Benton?**

- Less than 5 years: 27%

- 5 to 10 years: 24%

- 11 or more years: 48%

- **Where did you live before moving here?**

- N/A—I have lived here all my life: 9%

- Within 50 miles of Benton: 62%

- Elsewhere in Kansas: 18%

- Outside Kansas: 10%

- **If you moved to Benton within the last 10 years, what were the major reasons you moved here?**

- N/A—I have lived here longer than 10 years: 25.9%

- To live in a smaller town: 23.4%

- For the good schools: 16.1%

- To be close to relatives and friends: 14.6%

- For an economical place to live: 6.8%

- To be close to work: 5.9%

- For the good housing: 4.4 %

- To retire: 2.4 %

- To live in a larger town: 0.5%

- **If you are planning to leave the Benton area, what are your reasons for leaving?**

- N/A—I am not planning to leave: 83.5%

- Retirement: 3.6%

- Personal reasons: 3.6%

- Need lower-cost housing: 3.6%

- Need better-quality or different kind of housing: 2.2%

- Better community facilities: 1.4%

- Job change: 0.7%

- My children are graduating: 0.7%

- Health reasons: 0.7%

- **Do you plan to stay in the Benton area only until your child or children graduate from high school?**

- Yes: 17% No: 21% Undecided: 10%

- N/A—No kids in school: 52%

- **Do you plan to stay in the Benton area after you retire?**

- Yes: 30% No: 12% Undecided: 38%

- N/A— Already retired, and staying: 21%

Housing

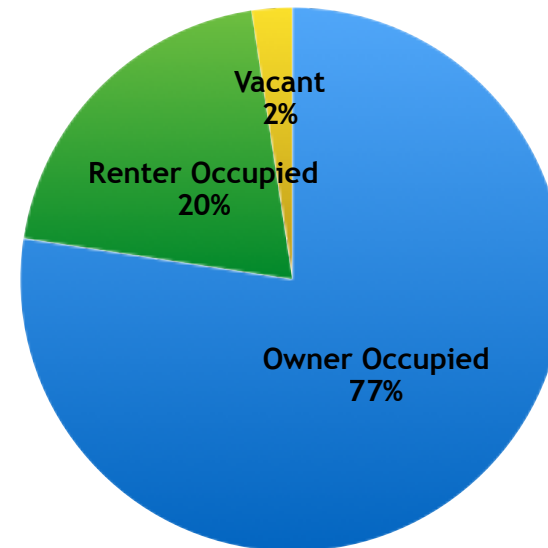
The variety and quality of housing options available in Benton impact both the community's quality of life, and whether or not homeowners choose to move to or remain in the city. Residential properties are a major source for the City's tax revenues, and a healthy housing market benefits many businesses as well. A sufficient, diverse, and high-quality housing supply also increases the opportunity to attract new businesses and their employees.

A house is usually the largest single investment for a family or individual, and a home and its neighborhood are a source of great influence on household satisfaction. While a nice house does not guarantee a happy home life, a house which is unsuitable or which does not function properly for its residents can certainly increase chronic stress levels. Houses that are difficult to maintain can generate financial concerns and physical discomfort.

Young adults, families with children, singles, couples, empty nesters and retirees all need housing suited to their particular requirements—and if it is not available locally, they will often consider moving to another community to find it.

This section gives an overall picture of the housing situation in the City of Benton, based primarily on Information from the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Housing information from the 2020 Census is also included; though very limited, it is the official data on the few points of information which were counted.

Definition of Housing Units: The Census count of housing units includes both occupied and vacant residential buildings. Recreational vehicles and the like are included only if they are occupied as someone's usual place of residence. Vacant mobile homes are included provided they are intended for occupancy on the site where they stand, but if they are on sales lots or in storage yards they are not counted as housing units.



- **Occupancy** Out of 332 housing units in Benton, 324 (97.6%) were occupied and 8 (2.4%) were vacant. Of the 324 occupied units, 257 (79.3%) were owner-occupied, and 67 (20.7%) were renter-occupied.
- **Household Size** The average household size of owner-occupied units was 2.61 persons. The average household size of renter-occupied units was 2.25 persons.

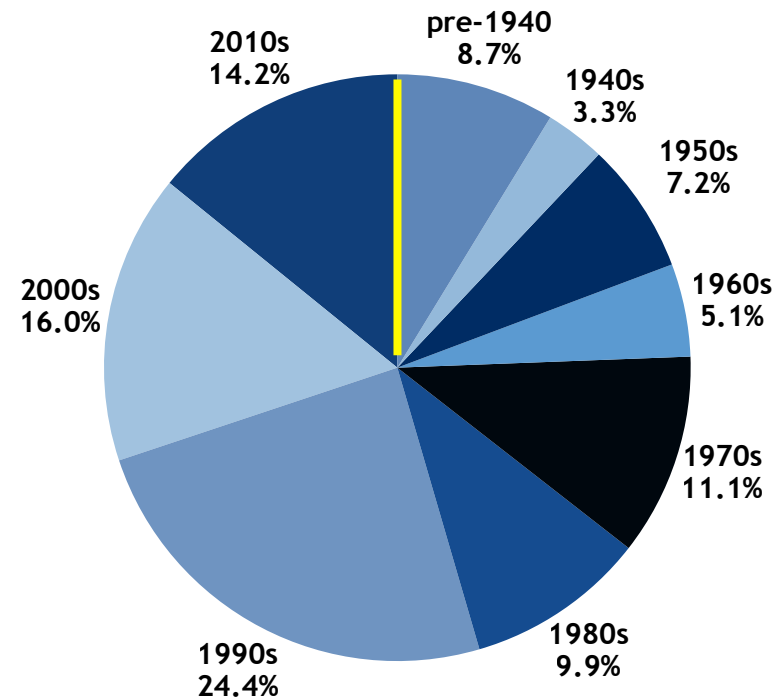
Housing Types	Number	Percentage
Single, detached	300	90.4%
Single, attached	7	2.1%
2 Units	0	0.0%
3 or 4 Units	12	3.6%
5 to 9 Units	0	0.0%
10 to 19 Units	0	0.0%
20 or more Units	0	0.0%
Mobile Home	13	3.9%
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	332	100.0%

Housing Types The majority (90.4%) of Benton's housing stock is single-family detached homes. While the demand for such homes in Benton is likely to remain high, there is also a need for a wider array of other housing type options.

Bedrooms per Housing Unit	number	percent
0	0	0.0%
1	21	6.3%
2	48	14.5%
3	139	41.9%
4	91	27.4%
5 or more	33	9.9%
TOTALS	332	100%

Bedrooms For many years, the real estate industry has used the number of bedrooms per house as a key factor in marketing homes. A 3-bedroom house has been considered the standard starter home for a typical family; over 40% of Benton's housing stock falls into this category.

However, as household sizes trend smaller, and one- or two-person households become the norm, smaller houses are becoming more and more marketable, especially in walkable neighborhoods.



Age of Housing Units in Benton

Age of Housing Units The majority of Benton's housing has been constructed within the last three decades. Nevertheless, the community has a good balance of older and newer homes.

When they are well maintained, older homes can help give a community continuity and character, but if they are allowed to fall into disrepair, they can become a source of blight.

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

Value of Owner-occupied Housing Units	Number	Percentage
Less than \$50,000	7	2.7%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	54	21.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	57	22.2%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	67	26.1%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	44	17.1%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	11	4.3%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	17	6.6%
\$1,000,000 or more	0	0.0%
TOTAL OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS	257	100.0%

Value Nearly 70% of Benton's owner-occupied housing units are between \$50,000 and \$200,000 in value.

- **Median Value** The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Benton was \$157,700.

Note, much of this data on housing values and costs was collected before the notable rise in housing costs that occurred as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Selected Monthly Owner Costs – Housing Units WITH a Mortgage		
	number	percent
Less than \$500	0	0.0%
\$500 to \$999	18	10.8%
\$1000 to \$1499	63	37.7%
\$1500 to \$1999	58	34.7%
\$2000 to \$2499	1	0.6%
\$2500 to \$2999	7	4.2%
\$3000 or more	20	12.0%
TOTALS	167	100%

Selected Monthly Owner Costs – Housing Units WITHOUT a Mortgage		
	number	percent
Less than \$250	3	3.3%
\$250 to \$399	10	11.1%
\$400 to \$599	42	46.7%
\$600 to \$799	23	25.6%
\$800 to \$999	8	8.9%
\$1000 or more	4	4.4%
TOTALS	90	100%

Housing Costs The cost of owning a house varies significantly between those paying a mortgage, and those who do not have a mortgage to pay.

- **Mortgages** Out of the 257 owner-occupied housing units in Benton, 167 (65.0%) had a mortgage, and 90 (35.0%) did not.
- **Monthly Cost** The median monthly owner cost for housing units with a mortgage was \$1,515, and for housing units without a mortgage was \$567.

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

Housing Costs as a Percent of Income People paying a very high percentage of their income in housing costs are often people with a very low household income, such as students, or elderly people on a fixed income.

Selected Monthly Owner Costs				
Percentage of Income	Housing Units WITH a Mortgage		Housing Units WITHOUT a Mortgage	
	number	percent	number	percent
less than 10%	—	—	43	47.8%
10 to 14.9%	—	—	17	18.9%
15 to 19.9%	—	—	18	20.0%
less than 20%	78	46.7%	—	—
20% to 24.9%	50	29.9%	4	4.4%
25% to 29.9%	30	18.0%	4	4.4%
30% to 34.9%	0	0.0%	4	4.4%
35% or more	9	5.4%	0	0.0%
Not computed	0	—	0	—
TOTALS	167	100%	90	100%

The following tables show information on rent in occupied rental units in which rent was paid.

Gross Rent in Occupied Units	Number	Percentage
Less than \$500	10	14.9%
\$500 to \$999	22	32.8%
\$1000 to \$1499	20	29.9%
\$1500 to \$1999	15	22.4%
TOTAL OCCUPIED RENTAL UNITS	67	100.0%

- **Median Rent** The median rental rate of Benton's occupied rental units was \$1,023 per month.

Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income		
Percentage of Income	Households	
	number	percent
less than 15%	7	10.4%
15% to 19.9%	4	6.0%
20% to 24.9%	6	9.0%
25% to 29.9%	19	28.4%
30% to 34.9%	7	10.4%
35% or more	24	35.8%
TOTALS	67	100%

Rental Costs as a Percent of Income About a quarter of renters in Benton paid less than 25% of their household income per month in housing costs. The 36% of Benton tenants that are paying more than 35% of their income on rent are likely people with a very low household income, such as elderly people on a fixed income.

Housing Data from the Community Questionnaire

On the Community Questionnaire, several questions were asked that revolve around maintenance of quality neighborhoods.

- Should the City increase efforts to encourage homeowners, including landlords, to maintain their property, in order to maintain the quality of residential neighborhoods?
Yes: 74% No: 13% I Don't Know: 13%
- Should the City invest more resources to demolish abandoned or dilapidated properties?
Yes: 73% No: 10% I Don't Know: 16%

Survey participants were asked if they think the City should **encourage housing development by subsidizing infrastructure** (streets, water lines, sewer lines, electric lines) to new subdivisions.

Yes: 43% No: 27% I Don't Know: 30%

Survey participants were also asked their opinion about the types of housing that they think Benton needs to develop.

- **Other Types of Housing Needed** In addition to single-family homes, Benton needs some lower-cost and lower-maintenance housing options in order to retain more of its young adults, empty-nesters, and retirees. Assuming that all new residential development will meet high standards of quality, what *types* of housing do you think Benton should focus on developing over the next 20 years?

In order of preference, respondents preferred patio homes, apartments, town homes, duplex homes, accessory dwelling units (granny flats), and triplex or quadplex homes.

- **Types of Senior Housing** In order to allow our elders to retain their independence and stay in the community near family, Benton will need to develop a greater variety of accessible senior housing options. Assuming that all new residential development will meet high standards of quality, what *types* of senior housing do you think Benton will need most over the next 20 years?

In order of preference, respondents preferred accessible single-family homes, assisted-living apartments, accessible apartments, and full care nursing homes.

Housing Conditions in Benton

A survey of housing conditions in a community provides baseline data on residential structures at the time of the survey. When that information is mapped and analyzed, it allows City leaders to evaluate overall levels of housing quality in the community, to individually identify dilapidated buildings, and to recognize neighborhoods where clusters of houses in substandard condition may indicate a need for particular attention.

Housing Condition Survey

A windshield survey of housing conditions was conducted by Benton's Zoning Administrator and the planning consultant, on June 13, 2023. Every house within the city limits was surveyed.

As visible from a vehicle on the adjacent street, the front and both sides of each house were observed and evaluated, and each house was then assigned a rating in one of the following four categories:

- **Standard** – A sound house with no apparent deficiencies, or only very slight flaws which could be easily corrected by a homeowner during the course of regular maintenance. (For instance, painting the front door, or replacing a torn window screen.)
- **Minor Substandard** – A basically sound house in need of some minor repairs, which could be accomplished by a reasonably handy homeowner as weekend projects. (For instance, painting all the window trim on a single-story house, or repairing a broken porch railing.)

- **Major Substandard** – A house which may otherwise be in good condition, but which is in need of at least one major repair that is generally beyond the skills or ambition of most homeowners, and is likely to require a professional contractor's help to resolve. (For instance, painting a two-story house, or replacing a roof.)
- **Dilapidated** – A house, sometimes occupied but often vacant, in such a state of disrepair that most people would consider it not fit for habitation. A dilapidated structure has often deteriorated to the point that it is no longer economically feasible to rehabilitate, and generally inflicts a blighting influence on nearby properties.

A certain degree of subjectivity is inherent in a survey of this nature, and these ratings are based on the condition of a house's exterior alone – but to a trained eye the state of a building's exterior generally provides a reasonable indication of its overall condition. Despite these limitations, a housing condition survey is a worthwhile endeavor, and provides useful insights into the overall state of the City's housing inventory.

Housing Conditions in City of Benton (as of June 13, 2023)						
Single-family Dwellings	Detached Houses		Manufactured / Mobile Homes		TOTALS by Condition	
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Standard	314	85.6%	6	35.3%	320	83.3%
Minor Substandard	28	7.6%	0	0.0%	28	7.3%
Major Substandard	19	5.2%	6	35.3%	25	6.5%
Dilapidated	6	1.6%	5	29.4%	11	2.9%
TOTALS	367	100.0%	17	100.0%	384	100.0%

Detached Houses

Of Benton's 367 detached houses, 93.2% were in either Standard or Minor Substandard condition. Compared to similar surveys done in a number of other Kansas communities, this is a very high percentage. It indicates that Benton's housing stock is generally well-cared-for, and on the whole in notably good condition.

Many of the 19 detached houses that were rated Major Substandard were actually in good condition overall, but had a single significant problem that bumped them into the Major Substandard category—typically either serious roof problems, or structural cracks in foundation walls. Other houses in this category were seriously degraded, with multiple problems, yet were still short of being rated Dilapidated.

Roofs in Kansas are often damaged by wind or hail, so it is not unusual to see a number of houses with roof problems. Foundation issues are very typical of older homes, and about a quarter of Benton's houses are more than 50 years old. Many homeowners do not have construction experience, and may not notice these defects or recognize their implications. A **public education effort on the City's part** could help motivate local residents into pursuing repairs before roof and foundation problems further compromise these fundamentally sound older homes.

There were just six houses in Benton rated as **Dilapidated** — 1.6% of the city's single-family homes. These houses were not confined to a particular "bad neighborhood", but instead tended to be widely distributed across the City's older neighborhoods.

There were also seven **detached garages** that were judged to be dilapidated, and three that were evaluated as Major Substandard. Some of these garages were on the same lot as a house that was in good condition. Outbuildings in such a deteriorated condition can also be a cause of neighborhood blight.

Multifamily Dwellings

Benton has only a little multifamily housing available. There are three 4-unit apartment buildings, providing senior housing, all in Standard condition. There are two duplexes, one building in Standard and one building in Minor Substandard condition. There are four duplex town homes, five units in Standard and one unit in Minor Substandard condition,

Housing Conditions — 1995 to 2018

A similar field survey of housing conditions in Benton was done in 1997 by Jones Rice Foster P.A., using the same set of categories. Standards of categorization by those doing the survey may not be exactly the same, but a comparison of the data is shown below, for whatever value it may have.

Housing Conditions — COMPARISON						
Detached Single-family Houses	1997		2023		Difference	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Standard	220	92.1%	314	85.6%	94	-6.5%
Minor Substandard	17	7.1%	28	7.6%	11	0.5%
Major Substandard	0	0.0%	19	5.2%	19	5.2%
Dilapidated	2	0.8%	6	1.6%	4	0.8%
TOTALS	239	100.0%	367	100.0%	128	—

- During the 26 years between surveys, the number of manufactured/mobile homes in Benton went from 31 in 1997 to just 17 in 2023.

Housing Conditions Map

The Housing Conditions Map is shown in sections on this and the following two pages. The map shows the location and condition rating of every house, manufactured / mobile home, and multifamily residential building in the City of Benton. A table showing the percentages of each category of housing is on page 3-14.

A pdf of the complete Housing Conditions map is available on the [City of Benton Planning and Zoning](#) webpage.

Housing Conditions Key

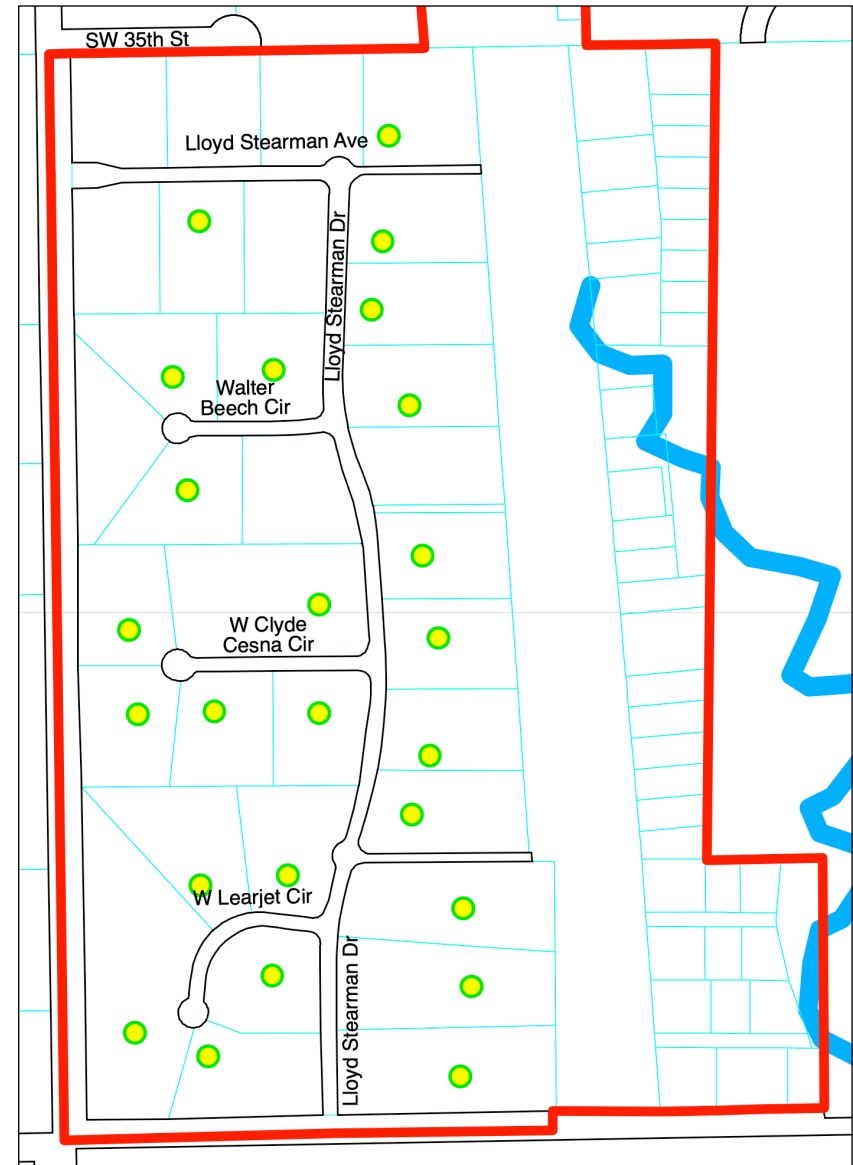
- House — Standard
- ⊕ House — Minor Substandard
- House — Major Substandard
- ⬮ House — Dilapidated
- ⊕ Garage — Major Substandard
- ⬮ Garage — Dilapidated
- △ Mobile Home — Standard
- ⬮ Mobile Home — Minor Substandard
- △ Mobile Home — Major Substandard
- △ Mobile Home — Dilapidated

*Housing Condition Field Survey
by Foster Design Associates LLC
and City of Benton City Administrator,
June 13, 2023.*

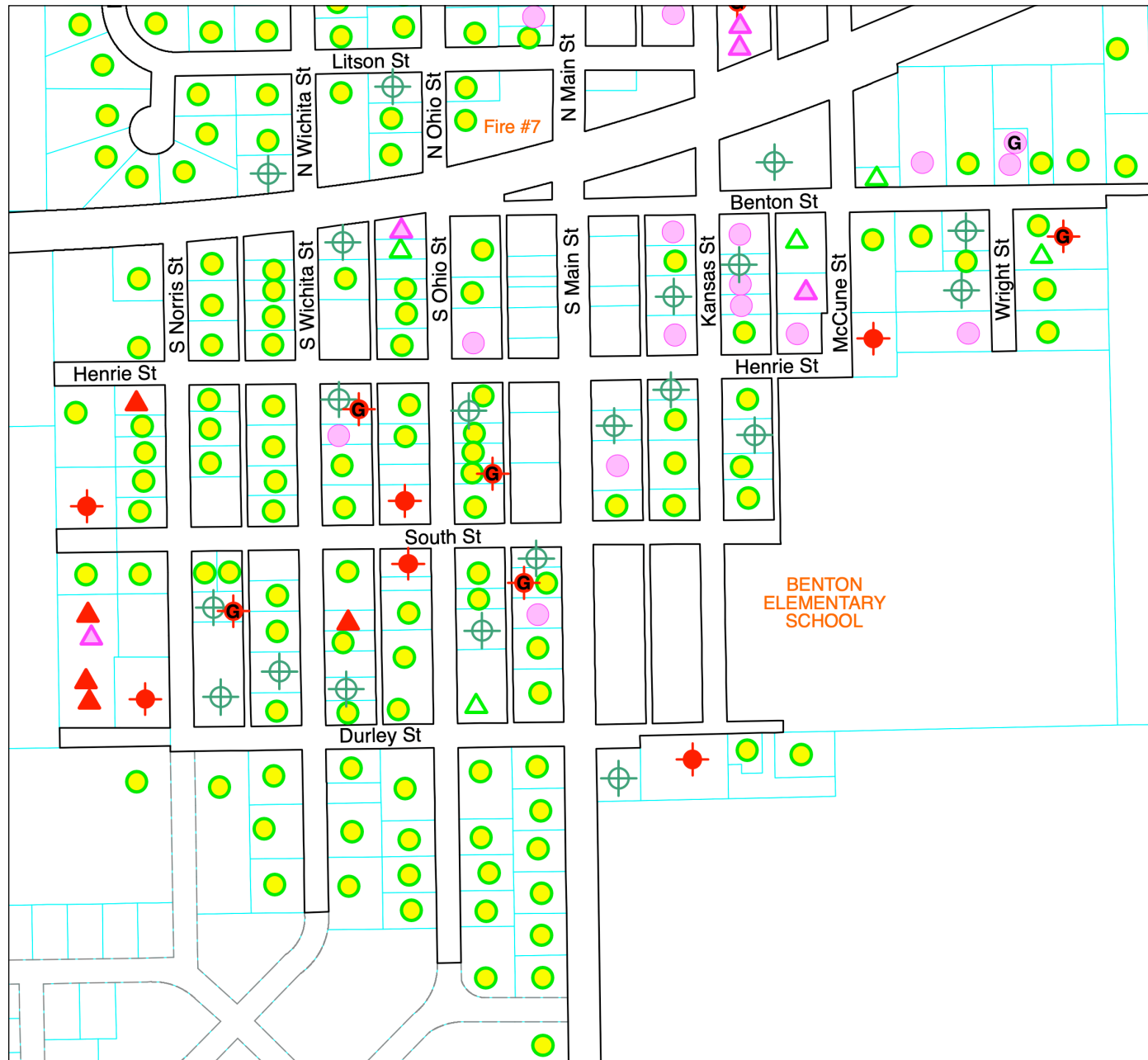
Multifamily Key

- 2 2 units per building — Standard
- 2 2 units per building — Minor Substandard
- 4 4 units per building — Standard

South area of Benton







*Mid area
of Benton*

Economy

Census information in this section applies only to people living *inside* the city limits of Benton, and does not include data on those living in the Benton Planning Area. Therefore, the extensive agricultural component of the local economy may not appear proportionately in the data shown for the City, but may be inferred from the data for Butler County.

Annual Per Capita Income

"Income" includes not just earnings, but also income from other sources, such as investments, Social Security or Supplemental Security, retirement accounts, or public assistance.

The per capita income figure is a mean, derived by dividing the total income of every person 16 years old and over in a geographic area by the total population in that area. This figure is most useful when compared to the same datum for other places, and should not be construed as an accurate representation of actual income for a typical Benton wage or salary earner.

Annual Per Capita Income	
United States	\$37,638
Kansas	\$34,968
Butler County	\$32,482
Benton	\$42,194

The annual per capita income for the City of Benton is notably higher than comparable figures for the county, state and nation.

Median Earnings

	Median Earnings					
	(full-time, year-round workers)				(also part-time)	
	Male Workers		Female Workers		All Workers	
	amount	% of US	amount	% of US	amount	% of US
USA	\$57,803	—	\$46,823	—	\$38,732	—
Kansas	\$54,631	94.5%	\$42,859	91.5%	\$36,603	94.5%
Butler County	\$61,667	106.7%	\$46,713	99.8%	\$39,970	103.2%
Benton	\$59,904	103.6%	\$61,563	131.5%	\$51,959	134.2%

Earnings in Benton are also quite high—about 104% of the national average for full-time men, and 132% of the national average for full-time women.

Gender Wage Gap This country, along with most of the world, has long had a significant gap between what males earn versus what females earn. Some of the wage gap is accounted for by factors such as differences in educational attainment, work experience, and family caregiver responsibilities. However, gender discrimination is also still a major factor, including segregation of women into lower-paying jobs, and outright wage discrimination.

The 2017-2021 ACS data in the table above shows that nationally, the wage gap between men and women was **19%**—that is, full-time working women earned 81% of what full-time working men earned. **In Benton, however, a typical full-time working woman earns about 3% more than what a typical full-time working man earns.**

Retaining young talent is one of the most important ways a community can secure its economic future. Consider marketing Benton's extraordinary wage equality as a factor to attract and retain new residents and entrepreneurs.

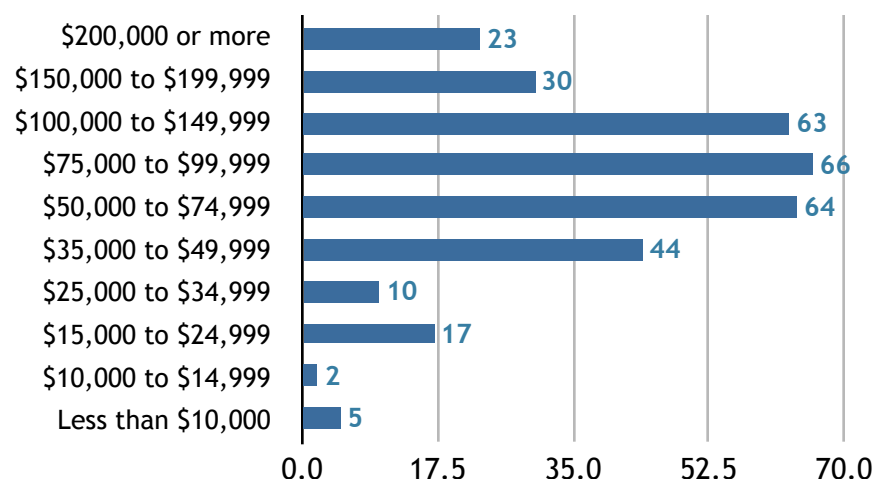
Median Household Income

Non-family households include persons living alone, while family households often have more than one income earner.

	Median Household Income		
	Family	Non-family	All Households
United States	\$85,028	\$41,394	\$69,021
Kansas	\$82,260	\$37,451	\$64,521
Butler County	\$87,407	\$34,107	\$71,651
Benton	\$83,875	\$51,964	\$81,389

Annual Household Income & Benefits

Out of 324 households in Benton, annual household income and benefits were distributed as shown in the graph below. The bars indicate the number of households in each income range, with incomes shown in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars.



Types of Employment

Out of an estimated 2021 population of 823 persons in the City of Benton, there were 652 people who were 16 years of age and older. Of those 16 and up, 475 were in the labor force (72.9%), including 456 (69.9%) employed civilians, and 19 (2.9%) who were unemployed. No members of the armed forces live in Benton.

The following three tables show data from the 2017-2021 ACS for Benton's 456 employed civilians 16 years of age and older—by occupational category, by the class of worker, and by the industry in which they were employed.

Occupational Category	Persons	%
Management, business, science, and arts	214	46.9%
Natural resources, construction, & maintenance	69	15.1%
Service	60	13.2%
Sales and office	58	12.7%
Production, transportation, & material moving	55	12.1%

Class of Worker	Persons	%
Private wage, salary, and commission	349	76.5%
Government workers (working for federal, foreign, international, tribal, state or local government)	87	19.1%
Self-employed (in own not-incorporated business)	17	3.7%
Unpaid family workers	3	0.7%

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

Industry in which Employed	Persons	%
Manufacturing	91	20.0%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	91	20.0%
Wholesale trade	54	11.8%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	51	11.2%
Construction	48	10.5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	34	7.5%
Retail trade	26	5.7%
Public administration	17	3.7%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	16	3.5%
Other services, except public administration	15	3.3%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	13	2.9%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0	0.0%
Information	0	0.0%

Unemployment

The Census defines the **labor force** as those civilians, 16 years old or older, who are employed or seeking employment. The **unemployment rate** is the percent of people *in the labor force* who are unemployed—a ratio which only includes those working or *actively looking* for work; it excludes retirees, full-time homemakers, and full-time students, among others.

Unemployment Rate (2017-2021 ACS)			
United States	5.5%	Butler County	3.4%
Kansas	4.1%	Benton	4.0%

The 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates show that Benton's unemployment rate is higher than that for Butler County as a whole, but better than the national average.

The percentages of "unemployed civilians" shown in the table below include people who are *not* actively looking for work, such as students, homemakers and retirees.

Employment	Benton		Butler County		Kansas	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
Population 16 years of age and over	652	100.0%	52,134	100.0%	2,299,477	100.0%
• Civilian labor force	475	72.9%	31,952	61.3%	1,512,063	65.8%
<i>Employed / civilian</i>	456	69.9%	30,858	59.2%	1,450,216	63.1%
<i>Unemployed civilians</i>	19	2.9%	1,094	2.1%	61,847	2.7%
• Military labor force	0	0.00%	381	0.73%	18,367	0.80%
• Not in labor force	177	27.1%	19,801	38.0%	769,047	33.4%

Out of the 652 people in the City of Benton who were 16 years old or older, **27.1% were not in the labor force**, compared to **33.4% in Kansas**. People in this category are typically retired, disabled, full-time students, or full-time homemakers.

Poverty

The Census uses federal poverty guidelines to determine poverty levels. Other indicators often used to estimate the degree of poverty in a community include rates of health insurance coverage, and the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches at school. As with many such indicators, the numbers are most useful when compared to similar data for other geographic areas.

The following table shows percentages of people whose income in the previous 12 months was below the federal poverty level, as well as rates of health insurance coverage for the civilian non-institutionalized population. Information is from the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*.

	Poverty Rates		Health Insurance Coverage (% of civilian non-institutionalized population)	
	All Families	All People	With	Without
United States	8.9%	12.6%	91.2%	8.8%
Kansas	7.6%	11.5%	91.1%	8.9%
Butler County	7.1%	9.5%	92.9%	7.1%
Benton	6.1%	4.5%	95.3%	4.7%

Benton's poverty rates are lower than those for the nation, state, or county. People living outside a family support structure typically endure higher rates of poverty than people living within a family, but in Benton that is not the case.

The percentage of Benton's population that has **health insurance coverage** is higher than that for the nation, state, or county.

Commuting

The 452 workers living in Benton, 16 years old or older, commuted to work as shown in the following table. The **mean travel time to work** for them was **20.9 minutes**.

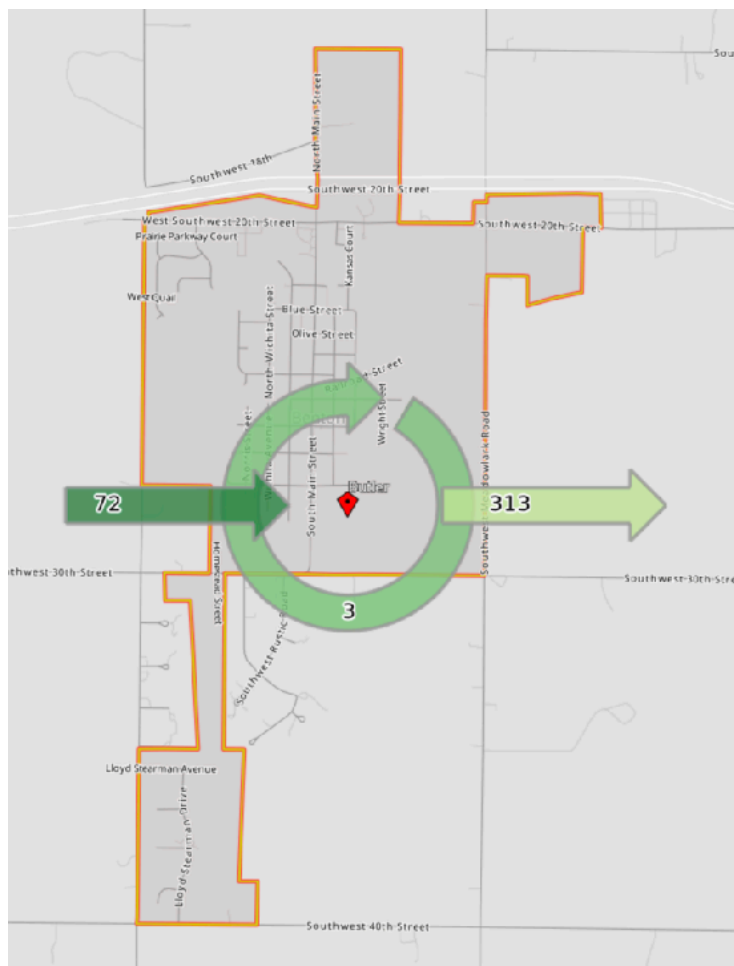
Commuting	Persons	%
Drove in car, truck or van—alone	356	78.8%
Worked from home	60	13.3%
Drove in car, truck or van—carpooled	28	6.2%
Walked	5	1.1%
Other means	3	0.7%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	0	0.0%

As is typical for rural Kansas communities, most people commute by vehicle, alone. Note, this information was collected over the five years between 2017 and 2021, then averaged; the Covid pandemic lockdown began in March of 2020, resulting in far more people working from home.

This pattern reflects Benton's status as a rural city which functions to some degree as a local employment center, but primarily as a bedroom community for the larger regional economy, including the nearby Wichita metropolitan area.

Location of Employment Responses received from the Community Questionnaire indicated that 42% of respondents worked in Wichita and 16% worked in Benton. Others worked in a variety of nearby cities, and 22% of respondents were retired or not working outside the home.

Stores & Services Needed Over 88% of Survey respondents felt there was a need for more stores and services in Benton. The following tables shows which stores and services were felt to be needed the most.



Fast Casual Restaurant	88	25.6%	Hair Salon	19	5.5%
Grocery	78	22.7%	Dentist	12	3.5%
Fast Food Restaurant	74	21.5%	Clothing	8	2.3%
Sit-down Restaurant	65	18.9%	Shoes	7	2.0%
Hardware	36	10.5%	Optician	7	2.0%
Pharmacy	27	7.8%	Appliances	5	1.5%
Laundromat	27	7.8%	Furniture	5	1.5%
Auto Repair	25	7.3%	Electronics	5	1.5%
Gas Station	23	6.7%	Cleaners	4	1.2%
Doctor	21	6.1%	Motel	4	1.2%

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Shopping Locations The table below shows the responses received when Community Questionnaire respondents were asked where their households shopped for a variety of goods and services.

Where does your household do most of its shopping for the following goods & services:												
Shopping Location	BENTON		WICHITA		ANDOVER		NEWTON		EL DORADO		INTERNET	
Households	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Fuel	39	23%	67	40%	62	37%	1	1%	31	18%	0	0%
Auto Repair	14	11%	85	64%	28	21%	3	2%	16	12%	2	2%
Groceries	13	8%	66	40%	85	52%	0	0%	45	27%	0	0%
Clothing	7	4%	114	70%	10	6%	2	1%	24	15%	30	18%
Electronics	3	2%	107	73%	4	3%	1	1%	8	5%	32	22%
Hardware	1	1%	99	63%	53	34%	1	1%	16	10%	2	1%
Furniture	1	1%	134	87%	4	3%	1	1%	6	4%	14	9%
Appliances	1	1%	129	88%	3	2%	1	1%	14	10%	12	8%
Pharmacy	0	0%	49	38%	80	62%	0	0%	25	19%	1	1%
Medical Care	0	0%	90	61%	55	37%	1	1%	15	10%	1	1%
Total Responses	79	5%	940	62%	384	25%	11	1%	200	13%	94	6%

The table is sorted in order of the percentages of Benton responses, shown in blue.

Local Tax Levies

Property tax rates are expressed in mills, or tax dollars due per one thousand dollars of the assessed valuation of property. Assessed value is substantially lower than market value. In Butler County, taxpayers have the option of paying personal property taxes assessed in one year in two installments, with the first half due in December of that year and the second half due the following May.

The amount of taxes paid should always be judged against the value received.

- The property tax levy to the **State** pays for educational and institutional building funds.
- **Butler County** taxes pay for county government and facilities, courts, road and bridge maintenance and bridge construction, public safety (sheriff and jail), emergency medical services, health services, senior citizen services, and economic development, among other purposes.
- Property tax levies also support township government (road and ditch maintenance and the Benton Cemetery), public schools, fire protection, and Butler County Community College.
- **City of Benton** property taxes pay for city government and facilities, municipal utilities (water and sewer), police, the parks, building inspections and code enforcement.

The following table shows the official 2022 ad valorem tax levies for property owners in the City of Benton. Tax levy information is available on the [Butler County Levies](#) website.

2022 Levy	in mills
State of Kansas	1.500
Butler County	32.093
Benton Township	2.009
Circle Public USD 375	59.932
Butler County Community College	13.855
Butler County Fire District #7	5.215
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>114.604</i>
City of Benton – General	59.332
<i>Total 2022 Levy</i>	<i>173.936</i>

The 2022 City of Benton total tax levy of 173.936 is almost four mills lower than the 2021 rate of 177.853.

The 2022 assessed valuation of property in Benton was \$11,836,720. Applying the 2022 total mill levy of 173.936 would produce total property taxes of \$2,058,832, to be paid from Benton property owners in 2022 and 2023, to the State of Kansas, Butler County and the County Fire District, Benton Township, USD 375, Butler County Community College, and the City of Benton.

Tax Rate Compared to Other Cities

In Kansas, cities with a population of less than 2,000 are Cities of the Third Class, and cities with a population of at least 2,000 but less than 15,000 are Cities of the Second Class. All thirteen cities in Butler County are Cities of the Second and Third Class, although at this time both Andover and El Dorado have populations very close to 15,000.

In the chart below, cities are listed in order of the size of their population, from largest to smallest (*shown in blue*).

Cities of the Second and Third Class in Butler County	2020 Census Population	2022 Total Assessed Valuation	2022 City Levy in mills
Andover	14,892	\$201,178,171	43.727
El Dorado	12,870	\$105,939,903	58.664
Augusta	9,256	\$71,497,721	59.593
Rose Hill	4,185	\$35,202,598	42.991
Douglass	1,555	\$9,306,117	59.148
Towanda	1,447	\$8,225,679	49.583
Benton	943	\$11,836,720	59.332
Leon	669	\$3,015,023	37.059
Whitewater	661	\$4,231,664	55.899
Potwin	421	\$1,714,563	89.115
Elbing	226	\$1,596,462	17.212
Cassoday	113	\$728,369	17.395
Latham	96	\$296,529	59.107

Compared to other Cities of the Second and Third Class in Butler County, Benton had the 7th highest 2020 population, the 5th highest 2022 Total Assessed Valuation, and the 3rd highest mill levy.

Benton is a rural city, which must depend entirely on local resources to provide many needed local services. Benton had a somewhat higher mill levy compared to many of the County's small cities, but it also provides far more municipal services than many of them.

Public Perception of Tax Rates

The Community Questionnaire asked what people thought of their tax rates. Compared to typical responses to this question, a remarkably large percentage of Benton residents think their taxes are providing them with good value for the money.

	High		Good Value for the Money		Low		Don't know	
City Tax Rate	46	32%	45	31%	1	1%	51	36%
School District Tax Rate	49	33%	51	35%	0	0%	47	32%

Local Debt

As of July 2023, the City had \$1,152,397 in outstanding debt, in a general obligation bond which was refinanced in 2021, and which will be retired in 2030.

Of this amount, none was used for water, sewer, storm sewer, and electrical improvements, which are exempt under the state debt limitation statutes governed by [K.S.A. 10-308](#). This statute limits a city's bonded indebtedness to 30% of its total tangible assessed valuation, including that for motor vehicles. The 2022 assessed valuation of property in Benton was \$11,836,720, not including motor vehicles; 30% of that amount is \$3,551,016—an amount which would be even higher if the value of vehicles in Benton was included. The City's outstanding debt is less than a third of the amount it is permitted to borrow under state statutes.

CHAPTER 4. Transportation & Utilities

This chapter provides an overview of transportation options and utility services in Benton.

Transportation

A good transportation system impacts other community goals, including economic vitality and overall quality of life. A transportation system should serve community facilities, respond to both existing and future land use patterns, and support desired development.

STREETS—FEDERAL FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

The roads in the Benton Planning Area are part of a nationwide system of federal street classifications, which are reviewed periodically, and revised as necessary to reflect changing conditions. Changes in federal classification must be approved by the local County Commission.

Federal street classifications affect funding for road improvements. A street must be in the approved federally classified roadway system before projects on that roadway can receive federal transportation funding.

Streets are classified into a function-based hierarchy depending on how they balance traffic volume and speed against access to adjacent land uses. **Freeways and Expressways** are dedicated to high-speed traffic, typically providing no access at all to adjacent properties. **Arterials** maximize traffic flow and speed, but provide limited access to adjacent properties. **Collectors** balance traffic with access, and **Local Roads** reduce speed and traffic volume in order to maximize access.

As of May 2023, the Federal Highway Administration's 5- to 10-year future functional classifications map for Butler County includes streets with the following federal classifications, listed in order from most speed and traffic to least:

- Interstate, Other Freeway/Expressway, Other Principal Arterial, Minor Arterial, Major Collector, Minor Collector, Local Road

Within the Benton Planning Area, **K-254 is classified as Other Freeway/Expressway**, and **Andover Road is classified as a Major Collector**, designated as RS 72. **Main Street from K-254 south to SW 30th Street, and SW 30th Street from Main Street west to Andover Road, together are classified as a Major Collector**, designated as RS 1015. All other streets are considered **local streets**.

Maps showing federal functional street classifications for each county in Kansas are maintained by the state Department of Transportation (KDOT), available on the web at KDOT's [County Roadway Functional Classification Maps](#).

More information on the federal functional street classifications can be found in the 2013 Federal Highway Administration report [Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria and Procedures](#).

*"The role of streets
is to build communities,
not the other way around."*

Gary Toth — Project for Public Spaces

COMPLETE STREETS

Benton's rural location means its people will always be primarily dependent on vehicular transportation. Nevertheless, the city itself should still offer residents at least some neighborhoods that also support other means of transport.

Such neighborhoods have streets based on the principles of complete streets – a design philosophy which calls for utilizing the public rights-of-way to support safe and comfortable travel by all users, of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

Complete streets include sidewalks with curb ramps, and good crosswalks. In downtown areas, streets may also have curb extensions, crosswalk medians for pedestrian refuge, and shared on-street parking. Amenities might include shade and benches for pedestrians, and bike racks. Where appropriate, streets may include bike lanes or bike routes.

For more information on complete streets, see:

- [National Complete Streets Coalition](#).
- USDOT's [Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center](#), for links to more resources on complete streets, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, e-scooters, e-bikes, and bike share programs.

Whenever the design or renovation of a right-of-way is part of a planning project, Planning Commission and City Council members have the opportunity to incorporate complete streets principles. Each small project may allow only an incremental change in the City's overall transportation network—but over time, such incremental changes can accumulate, and have a profound effect on Benton's quality of life.

PARKING

A vehicular circulation system must accommodate vehicles not only when they are traveling, but also when they are parked. Census data from the American Community Survey indicates that, for a population of 823 people, there are currently **at least 676 vehicles based in Benton**—an average of more than four vehicles for every five people.

- **Vehicles** Of the 324 occupied housing units in Benton, 14 (4.3%) had no vehicles available; 61 (18.8%) had one vehicle available; 132 (40.7%) had two; and 117 (36.1%) had three or more.

In older neighborhoods, streets were expected to support both traffic flow and shared on-street parking. Modern suburban developments often require off-street parking, and so devote less land to paved streets but more to driveways and garages.

Commercial Parking It is important to have adequate parking to support local businesses, but it is also important not to *overbuild* parking facilities. Parking spaces and their associated aisles are surprisingly expensive to construct, and they generate runoff which adds significant load to stormwater management systems. Requiring every business to have its own dedicated parking spaces can exacerbate these costs, while shared public parking reduces them.

American small town main streets were traditionally designed to support shared on-street public parking. Though out of fashion in recent decades, this parking solution is now being recognized again as a valuable and cost-effective parking strategy.

Benton's one-block downtown has diagonal on-street parking with two mid-block ADA spaces on the east side. The rest of the community is served by off-street parking.

WALKABILITY

Walkability is an important asset for enhancing quality of life and improving community health. Benton has the size, compactness, and grid-type street layout that give it great potential as a very walkable community.

Pedestrian pathway systems are most successful as a viable transportation option when they **connect residential neighborhoods to community destinations**, including schools, parks, churches, and downtown businesses.

Urban residential streets can be categorized as either gridiron or subdivision types. The type of street impacts the character of the neighborhood, the efficiency of traffic patterns, the provision of utilities, and how people live.

Gridiron streets form a grid of 90-degree intersections, creating rectilinear blocks, with **alleys** for utility and garage access.

Subdivision streets usually occur in neighborhoods platted in the 1950s or later. They typically incorporate a maze of curvilinear streets, T-intersections, and cul-de-sacs. Rather than public alleys, they use a system of **easements** across private property to allow utility access. This street pattern creates neighborhoods that are extremely car-dependent, and are now becoming less desirable as more and more Americans recognize the value of walkable neighborhoods.

Benton's older neighborhoods have gridiron pattern streets. Newer developments on the west and south ends of town are designed with subdivision-style streets.

To improve future walkability in Benton, consider requiring **cul-de-sac streets to be platted in such a way that they allow for direct pedestrian and bicycle connections** linking cul-de-sacs to each other, and to the street grid.

SIDEWALKS

Benton has minimal sidewalks along either side of Main Street in the downtown area, but almost none elsewhere in the city. The few isolated fragments of sidewalk that exist have limited utility, since they don't connect to a larger sidewalk network.

Vehicle traffic in Benton is usually light enough that most people are comfortable walking in the roadways, at least in residential neighborhoods. However, as the City's population continues to grow, this will gradually become less safe.

Cultural changes are making walkable neighborhoods more and more desirable, increasing the potential value of both residential and commercial properties in such areas. Investment in sidewalks should be regarded as an investment in Benton's quality of life, and its future.

Sidewalk Policies Other than a mention in its Subdivision Regulations regarding the option to require sidewalks in new development, Benton currently has no sidewalk financing or installation program. Consider adopting a sidewalk policy to help Benton develop and maintain a functional sidewalk system.

A good sidewalk policy should stipulate an ongoing program to properly maintain existing sidewalks, provide a means to retrofit new sidewalks into existing neighborhoods where they were never built, and address sidewalk construction in new development and remodeling projects. It should also define funding methods that can sustain ongoing construction and maintenance needs.

Under Benton's **Subdivision Regulations**, new development may be required to include sidewalks on one or both sides of a street, when needed to serve pedestrian traffic leading to schools, parks, shopping areas or public gathering places, or when needed for safety. Sidewalks may be required in residential areas when lot fronts are less than 150 feet wide. (See Benton Subdivision Regulations, Article 7, Section 102C.)

Sidewalk Funding There is no national standard for how sidewalk installation and repair projects are paid for. While public streets and parking areas are regularly funded with tax dollars, sidewalk funding is a patchwork of solutions that varies from city to city. Often, cities use either full municipal funding, or a cost split program between the City and adjacent landowners.

For more information, see the Federal Highway Administration's [Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities for Enhanced Safety Research Report](#), which includes an overview of funding options.

Community Questionnaire Responses on Sidewalk Questions

- Does anyone in your household walk to work or school?
Regularly (4 times per week or more): **15%**
Occasionally: **14%** **Never:** **72%**
- Would you support additional funding to improve and expand Benton's sidewalk system, particularly downtown and in the vicinity of schools?
Yes: **59%** **No:** **18%** **I Don't Know:** **23%**
- Would your preference be that future sidewalk projects be paid for by the City, by the adjacent landowner, or by a share-the-cost split?
Entirely by the City at large: **61%**
Entirely by the adjacent landowner: **1%**
Share the cost: **38%**
- Should new residential or commercial development in Benton be required to include sidewalks?
Yes: **66%** **No:** **16%** **I Don't Know:** **18%**
- Should the City allocate a regular annual budget to fund sidewalk improvement and expansion projects?
Yes: **67%** **No:** **11%** **I Don't Know:** **23%**

BICYCLING FACILITIES

Benton currently has no dedicated bicycle paths, lanes, or routes. Bicyclists generally share the roads with motor vehicles.

A **bike path**, typically used by both pedestrians and bicyclists, may be from 8 to 10 feet wide, is paved, and is separated from the street but built within a right-of-way or along a drainage route.

A **bike lane** is typically 5 feet wide, and located on a street or its shoulder, between a motor vehicle traffic lane and the gutter or road edge.

A **bike route** is designated with signs and pavement markings, on a street specifically intended for simultaneous use by both motor vehicles and bicycles.



Bike Path



Bike Lane



Bike Route Signs

Bicycle racks should be available at local destinations, particularly at schools, parks, and downtown.

Select a **bike rack design** that meets functional requirements for proper two-point bicycle support, is lockable, and is constructed of low maintenance materials. Avoid ribbon racks, spiral racks and schoolyard racks, which do not provide effective support. Racks located along a sidewalk usually need a crossbar in order to be compliant with ADA vertical-element requirements.

The simplest rack design which meets these functional criteria is the inverted "U" type, with or without a crossbar. There are endless variations on the theme, and they can easily be customized to be unique to Benton.



Visit the [Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals](#) website to find more information about bicycle rack design and installation.

While every single street does not need to provide for every type of user, Benton's street *system* should serve the needs of all its citizens.

As a first step, consider **enhancing the pedestrian experience downtown**— improving sidewalks, adding curb extensions on either end of the block, and installing ornamental lighting. The curb extensions would shorten crosswalks, and could be landscaped with street trees, benches and bike racks.

Even if Benton chooses not to make any immediate plans to implement a sidewalk system or a bicycle network, **make sure that planning decisions made now do not foreclose the possibility of their future development.**

RAILROAD, AIR TRAVEL & PUBLIC TRANSIT

Train Service While Union Pacific railroad tracks run from Wichita through Benton to El Dorado, linking to the national rail network, there is no access to **freight rail service** in Benton. The nearest **passenger rail service** for Benton is available at the AMTRAK station in Newton, about a 35 minute drive northwest.

Airline Travel Benton residents have good access to national and international air travel. The Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport is about a 30 minute drive away, on the southwest side of Wichita. It hosts seven airlines.

General Aviation Benton is a destination for general aviation travelers because of **Lloyd Stearman Field Airport**. Located in the south end of town, this airport has been in operation since 1947. Charter services and flight training are available, and Stearman Field Bar & Grill restaurant is on the airport property. The Airport is privately owned by Benton Airpark Inc.

According to AirNav.com, Stearman Airport has 219 aircraft based on the field, and averages 124 aircraft operations per day.

There are a number of other general aviation airports within an hour's drive of Benton, including Colonel James Jabara Airport in Wichita, Newton City-County Airport, Augusta Municipal Airport, and El Dorado's Captain Jack Thomas Memorial Airport.

Public Transit There is no public transit system in Benton. However, the *Butler County Department on Aging* operates a low-cost curb-to-curb transportation service, in wheelchair accessible vehicles. Rides are available by reservation, to destinations including Wichita, Andover, El Dorado and Augusta.

There is no **taxi service** located in Benton, although **rideshare** services such as Uber or Lyft may be available.

The nearest access to **intercity bus service** is in Wichita, through Greyhound Lines, Inc.

Utilities

A community's long-term success depends very much on the caliber of its infrastructure and utilities. Dependable and cost-effective utility services are essential, both to maintain a high quality of life for current residents, and to support future growth.

The City of Benton provides **water distribution**, as well as **wastewater collection and treatment** services as municipal utilities. Electricity, natural gas, trash disposal and recycling, and communications services are available from corporate providers.

City staff administers billing services for municipal utilities.

WATER SUPPLY & DISTRIBUTION

The City of Benton's water is supplied by the City of Wichita. Wichita's water originates from the Equus Beds well field, Cheney Reservoir, and wells along the Arkansas River in Wichita.

Water is treated at the Wichita Water Treatment Plant, and then pumped through a 12-inch water main to the Benton water tower. Built in 1993 on the east end of Railroad Street, the tower has a capacity of 100,000 gallons. The height of the tower provides the water pressure to distribute water via gravity flow through mains and supply lines throughout Benton.

Benton City staff monitor the City water supply daily, to assure that it meets all safety standards.

A City-owned and maintained network of **distribution pipes** carries water from the tower to individual homes and businesses. The water distribution system also supports all the City's **fire hydrants**, which are flushed and tested annually.

Some of the community's water distribution pipes are fairly new, but others are many decades old. As pipes age, they may experience cracking and intrusion by tree roots. Ideally, an annual budget item should be dedicated for ongoing maintenance of the water distribution system, as well as replacement of a portion of the oldest pipes in the system each year.

The entire **Benton Planning Area** is within Butler County Rural Water District #5. Some rural residents may connect to Benton City water system, and some may get water from RWD #5. Alternatively, they may maintain private water wells, which are regulated by the Butler County Department of Inspection.

WASTEWATER COLLECTION & TREATMENT

The City of Benton provides wastewater collection and treatment as a municipal service.

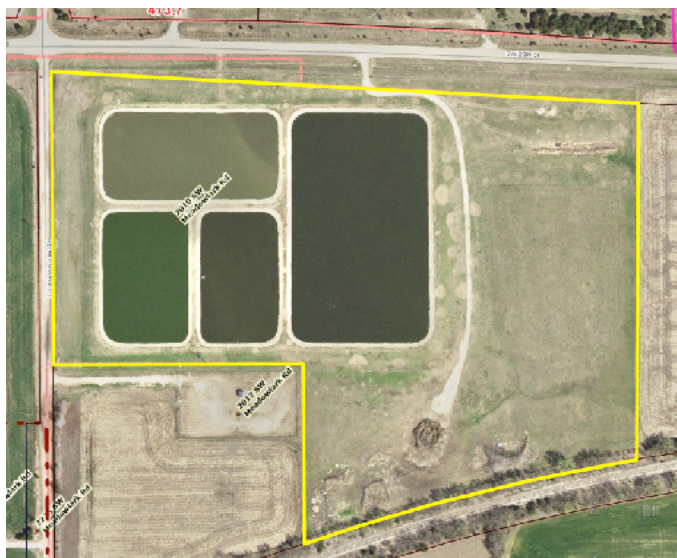
A gravity flow sewer system conveys wastewater by gravity, through pipes installed with sufficient slope to keep the suspended solids moving through the system. Where local topography limits the option of gravity flow, a lift station must be employed to pump the sewage from the low point in the system up to another gravity line. Lift stations are expensive to construct and maintain, so when possible, development within the system's existing gravity flow limits is preferable to development which requires a new lift station.

Benton's wastewater collection system has three lift stations, the most recent constructed in 2009. Wastewater eventually reaches the main lift station at SW 20th and Main Street, which pumps sewage to the City Wastewater Treatment lagoons.

As sewer lines wear out, cracks allow tree roots to grow into the pipes, causing blockages. Waste may leak out and contaminate groundwater. Stormwater infiltration into the system also occurs, which increases the volume of influent the Wastewater Treatment facility must treat, and therefore its operational costs.

Benton's network of **sewage collection pipes** vary in age. During the 20-year span of this Plan, the City may need to fund and develop an ongoing program to begin replacement of the oldest parts of the system, as segments reach the point where it is more cost-effective to replace them than to maintain them.

Once, replacing a sewer line involved digging a trench along the entire length of the existing pipe, then replacing the deficient pipe piece by piece, or building a new sewer pipe parallel to the old one in order to maintain service. Modern **trenchless sewer rehabilitation** techniques use the existing pipe as a host for a new pipe or liner, and can correct deficiencies with much less disturbance and environmental disruption.



Aerial of Benton's Wastewater Treatment Facility

Benton's **Wastewater Treatment Facility** is a four-cell lagoon system, located on 29.5 acres of City owned property in the northeast corner of the City, between SW 20th Street and the railroad tracks. Construction of the lagoons began in 1981, and a new cell was added in 2007.

Once wastewater reaches the lagoons, it undergoes treatment for a minimum of 180 days before being discharged. Sewage must be treated to the point that effluent from the lagoons meets or exceeds strict permit requirements prescribed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Benton's wastewater treatment system is monitored daily by maintenance staff for compliance.

Benton's 2020 population was 943 people. By the end of the 20-year Planning Period, the City's population is likely to be no more than 1,400 people. However, **students and teachers** in the schools need to be accounted for, as well as use by local **businesses and industries**.

Only a bit over half of the Wastewater Treatment facility site is currently occupied by lagoons, so there is still space available for additional cells. If necessary, the levels in the lagoons could be raised to allow for longer detention time of the wastewater in the lagoons, also raising the capacity.

Such relatively straightforward improvements to the existing wastewater treatment system are likely be able to handle Benton's wastewater treatment needs for the next twenty years. However, depending on how fast Benton grows, the City may need to transition to a different system in the future.

By the end of this Planning Period, City leaders may need to either purchase additional land to allow construction of another set of lagoons, or begin making plans to transition to a less space-intensive method of treating the community's wastewater, such as an **oxidation ditch**. Whatever solution is selected, it will have to meet KDHE design standards.

Rural Sewage Disposal Many properties in the Planning Area are beyond the reach of the municipal sanitary sewer system, and must deal with sewage disposal on their own sites, utilizing septic tanks, leach fields, and/or private sewage lagoons. Private residential sewage disposal systems in the Planning Area outside the City are regulated by the Butler County Department of Inspection.

ELECTRICITY & NATURAL GAS

Currently, in the City and in the Planning Area, **electrical power** is provided and the distribution system is maintained by the public utility company Evergy.

In the City and in the Planning Area, **natural gas** is provided and the distribution system is maintained by the public utility company Kansas Gas Service. Gas lines are currently in good condition.

All public utility companies are regulated by the Kansas Corporation Commission.

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

The City of Benton has a contract with Waste Connections for once-a-week solid waste collection. Recycling is collected every other week. Yard waste is not picked up.

Everyone in the city is required to have their garbage collected. All residential customers in the city are required to have recycling collection.

The City has a "no burning" ordinance (Section 7-104 of the municipal code).

COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

Publicly regulated private companies provide communications services in Benton, including both hardwired and wireless phone service, cable TV service, and internet service. Such companies normally maintain continuing short and long-range facility planning programs.

Cell phone service in the Benton area is available from a variety of carriers. **Internet and cable television** in the Benton area is currently provided mostly by Cox, T-Mobile and IdeaTek.

POLICIES

Standards and procedures for installation and maintenance of utilities should be regularly reviewed, and updated as necessary—to reflect both changes in technology, and changes in public expectations for environmental responsiveness.

Policies on the placement of structures, fences and vegetation in **utility and drainage easements** should be reviewed and amended, and rigorously enforced.

Overhead Lines There is growing public awareness of the visual impact and sometimes noise made by utility equipment, and an increasing public expectation that electric, telephone and TV cable lines should be installed underground. Though underground utilities are more costly to install, they are far less prone to service outages during inclement weather, and can reduce long-term maintenance costs.

The City's Subdivision Regulations require new developments in Benton to have utility lines underground. There are no plans to bury any existing overhead lines, nor is there any City incentive program to encourage property owners to have their supply lines buried.

Benton's **water and sewer lines are mapped**. Good maps of municipal utility systems are an essential tool for efficient coordination of maintenance activities, and an indispensable asset in long-term planning.

Agreement to Not Protest Annexation Cities often have a policy which requires that any landowner who wants to have property outside the city limits served by municipal utilities must first agree in writing that they will not protest if the City chooses to annex the property. This is generally described as an *Agreement to Not Protest Annexation*, or a *No Protest Agreement*.

Currently, new subdivisions outside the City must be annexed in order to be connected to the Benton wastewater treatment system. However, individual landowners outside the city limits are permitted to connect to the City's sewer system without signing an *Agreement to Not Protest Annexation*.

Neither new subdivisions or individual landowners outside the city limits are required to be annexed in order to be connected to the Benton water distribution system, nor are they required to sign an *Agreement to Not Protest Annexation*.

This means that the City is providing municipal services to properties outside the city limits, even though the landowners there do not pay City taxes. While Benton's utilities *operations* are funded by user fees, those fees do not typically support construction or capital improvement costs.

Stormwater Management

When precipitation occurs too rapidly to be absorbed by plants and soil, water runs off the surface of the land and flows down to streams, rivers, or lakes. While this is a natural process, development creates large expanses of impervious surfaces (roofs, streets, parking lots, etc.) which may generate far more runoff than natural systems can handle.

Excess runoff can cause localized flooding. It can collect trash and other pollutants and transport them into natural waterways. It can erode river banks and scour stream beds, depositing so much sediment in ponds and lakes that they have to be dredged.

Stormwater management systems prevent excess runoff from accumulating in low areas to the point where it causes localized flooding, and potential water damage to homes, roads, and other structures. Areas prone to such flooding are constrained in their development potential, create traffic safety problems, and may contribute to blighted conditions.

In urban areas, runoff is typically guided by streetside curbs and gutters into underground storm sewers, while in rural areas runoff is usually transported by open roadside drainage ditches.

Changing Strategies Traditional stormwater management strategies simply moved the problem downstream, diverting stormwater away from developed areas, and channeling it as quickly as possible into a natural drainage system such as a stream or river.

Stormwater management strategies have evolved to recognize the advantages of reducing runoff in the first place by reducing impervious surfaces, and increasing opportunities for precipitation to be absorbed as close to the point where it falls as possible.

Utilizing **green infrastructure** techniques—from residential raingardens to urban bioswales to permeable parking lots—can often help **manage stormwater more effectively and less expensively than traditional methods**.

More information on green infrastructure is available from the [Environmental Protection Agency](#).

Stormwater Management in Benton

Benton is located on high ground, and has relatively few stormwater management challenges. Most of the community is drained via shallow roadside ditches, with culverts that allow driveway access across them.

A retention pond was constructed in 2023 to serve the Prairie Village development, and is now the main feature of Prairie Park. In the summer of 2023, Benton is installing new ditches and a new retention pond along south Main Street.

All new developments in Benton should have curbs and gutters, unless waived by the Planning Commission for valid reasons.

If localized flooding does occur, consider using green infrastructure solutions to solve the problem.

CHAPTER 5. Facilities & Services

A community's quality of life depends very much on the caliber of its public services and facilities. Today, public expectations for municipal services extend beyond basic fire and police protection, and include a high demand for community facilities related to education, health, and leisure time activities.

Benton's existing public facilities are generally in good condition. Most essential public services in the community are supported by public funds, and maintained under public control.

It is vitally important to provide adequate staff and budgetary support for *maintenance* of public facilities. **A good maintenance plan is the most cost-effective investment a City can make in preserving the quality of its community facilities.**

When planning for any future community facilities, it is important to determine their optimum location, to maximize efficiency and economy in serving the public. **Identify and acquire suitable sites for community facilities in advance of need.** Otherwise, ideal sites may be preempted for other purposes. The need for land acquisitions for public facilities should be a consideration in the review of subdivision plats and rezoning applications.

City Facilities & Services

This section describes public facilities and services which are owned and directly operated by the City of Benton:

- City Hall / Police Department / Maintenance Shop
- Lions Community Center
- City Storage Garage
- City Storage Yard
- Prairie Park
- Benton City Park

Municipal facilities are evaluated on **their ability to continue to serve through the Planning Period to 2043.**

City Hall / Police Department / Maintenance Shop

Benton City Hall is located at 154 South Main Street, on the northeast corner of Main and Henrie Street. The 110 by 50 foot, metal on wood frame, single-story building was built in 1990.

The west 40 feet of the building is City Hall, with a Lobby, offices, restrooms and a kitchenette. The offices house City staff, including the City Manager, City Clerk, Police Chief, Public Works Supervisor, administrative clerks and Police officers. The east 70 feet of the building is used for the City Maintenance Shop and garage; it does not have central heat or air conditioning.

The 0.36-acre site has a gravel parking lot with space for 12 vehicles is directly south of the building, and there is on-street diagonal parking along Main in front of the building. There are two handicapped-reserved parking spaces at mid-block on the east side of Main Street, just north of the Lions Community Center; they do not appear to be ADA-compliant.

City Hall has been well maintained and is in good condition. Within the 20-year Planning Period, it is likely that the Maintenance Shop will need to be moved to larger quarters. That vacated space may eventually need to be renovated for additional office space, for a City staff which will likely need to expand as Benton's population grows.



Benton City Hall / Police Department / Maintenance Shop

POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Benton Police Department is headquartered inside City Hall, and is allocated two offices, a storage room and an evidence closet. An off-site firing range is also available. The City does not have its own detention facility, so prisoners are held in the Butler County Jail.

The Department utilizes the Butler County Emergency Communications (E-911) call system.

As of April 2023, staff consisted of 2 full-time and 5 part-time officers, who provide police protection services for about 16 to 18 hours of each day, seven days a week. When no local officers are on duty, the Butler County Sheriff's Department will respond to any calls.

As of April 2023, the City has three police vehicles, as listed below. Every other year, typically, the oldest vehicle in service is replaced.

- 2013 Chevrolet Tahoe
- 2020 Ford Explorer
- 2022 Ford Explorer

Lions Community Center

Located at 150 S. Main Street, just north of City Hall, the Lions Community Center was built in 1996. It is a 47 by 110 foot, single story structure of concrete block with brick veneer. The building completely covers its lot, leaving no outdoor space, but there is on-street parking available on the adjacent street.

The Community Center building has an entry vestibule, a large meeting room, a kitchen area, restrooms, a storage closet for chairs and tables, and central heat and air. The building can accommodate up to 244 people.

The Lions Community Center was built and paid for by the Lions Club, and then donated to the City of Benton. It is used for City Council and Planning Commission meetings, as well as other civic functions. It supports local Senior Services as a meeting place for the Golden Agers, and is also available for private rental.



Lions Community Center

City Storage Garage

Located at 223 South Main Street, the City Storage Garage is a 20 by 60 foot concrete block structure, built in 1950. It has no central heat or air conditioning. There is a small gravel parking area adjacent to the building.

The Storage Garage is in very poor condition, and the City has plans to demolish it. It will be replaced with a new Storage Garage located in the City Storage Yard.



City Storage Garage

City Storage Yard

The City maintains a fenced outdoor storage yard, located on the same parcel as the Benton Water Tower, at the east end of Railroad Street.



City Storage Yard

Prairie Park

The 10.7-acre **Prairie Park** is located on the south side of 20th Street, just west of Circle Middle School. The retention pond which is the major feature of this Park was constructed in 2003, to contain runoff from the Prairie Village residential development to the west.

Prairie Park facilities include a **walking path** called the **Two Angels Trail**, which circles the pond. Where the path is adjacent to Prairie Parkway, it is a concrete sidewalk; elsewhere in the Park, the path is gravel.



A **Covered Bridge** carries the path across a drainage way at the north end of the Park. The word "Benton" is painted on the north side of the Bridge, visible from K-254.

A small asphalt-paved **parking lot** with ten spaces is accessible from North Prairie Parkway.



Prairie Park aerial



Benton City Park
— aerial view

Benton City Park

The 3.97-acre **Benton City Park** is located northeast of the intersection of Main and Blue Streets, and is Benton's original public park. Its facilities were constructed in 1992, and have been very well maintained, and updated as needed.

City Park facilities include a Park Shelter Building, two gazebo-style picnic shelters, a tennis court, a basketball court, three playground areas, two horseshoe courts, a concrete walking path with two footbridges, and a number of benches and picnic tables.

The Park has vehicular access from both Main Street and Blue Street, with informal parking along the gravel access drive connecting the two entries.

The **Park Pavilion** is a metal on wood frame single story structure, 42 by 80 feet in size, also built in 1992. The Pavilion has restrooms, but no heating or air-conditioning. Instead, it has a total of 16 overhead garage doors lining its four walls, allowing it to be opened to the fresh air, or closed for weather protection as needed. The Pavilion was remodeled in 2023.

The building can be rented except during freezing weather—typically it is available for rent between April and November.



Park Pavilion

Park System Data from the Community Questionnaire

BENTON CITY PARK

- Have you ever visited? Yes: 94%
- If so, approximately how often in the last 2 years?
 - 0 times: 4%
 - 1 to 3 times: 25%
 - 4 to 10 times: 39%
 - About once per week during the summer: 16%
 - Twice per week or more during the summer: 16%

How would you rate the facilities & programs in Benton City Park?								
	Excellent		Adequate		Inadequate		Don't know	
walking trail	41	29%	75	53%	8	6%	17	12%
south playground	29	22%	83	62%	5	4%	17	13%
north playground & swings	29	22%	76	57%	9	7%	19	14%
vehicle access & parking	22	16%	94	68%	14	10%	8	6%
main picnic shelter Building	21	15%	83	60%	10	7%	24	17%
Shelter Reservations Program	20	15%	54	40%	2	1%	60	44%
pedestrian & handicapped access	19	14%	77	57%	18	13%	21	16%
south picnic shelter	18	13%	84	63%	6	4%	26	19%
north picnic shelter	16	12%	86	64%	6	4%	26	19%
basketball court	14	10%	77	56%	13	9%	33	24%
tennis court	13	10%	65	48%	21	15%	37	27%
Totals	16	12%	86	64%	6	4%	26	19%

This table, and others that follow, are sorted in order of the percentages of "Excellent" responses received, shown in blue text.

BENTON CITY PARK

How would you rate the facilities & programs in Benton Prairie Park?								
	Excellent		Adequate		Inadequate		Don't know	
Two Angels Trail (walking path)	45	35%	31	24%	1	1%	53	41%
vehicle access & parking	31	23%	55	42%	3	2%	43	33%
fishing ponds	24	18%	51	39%	6	5%	51	39%
fish stocking program	20	15%	26	20%	12	9%	75	56%
pedestrian & handicapped access	18	14%	59	45%	6	5%	47	36%
shade	9	7%	46	35%	29	22%	48	36%
Totals	147	19%	268	34%	57	7%	317	40%

- Have you ever visited Benton Prairie Park, including the Two Angels Trail?
Yes: 59%
- If so, approximately how often in the last 2 years?
0 times: 8%
1 to 3 times: 26%
4 to 10 times: 31%
About once per week during the summer: 12%
Twice per week or more during the summer: 23%

PARK SYSTEM – MOST WANTED FUTURE FACILITIES

What additional facilities would you most like to see in the Benton Park System?		
Farmers Market	85	16.7%
Waterspray Park (splashpad)	74	14.6%
Hiking/Walking Paths	60	11.8%
Bike Paths	55	10.8%
Dog Park	44	8.7%
Gazebo / amphitheater / wedding venue	35	6.9%
Birdwatching / nature trail	28	5.5%
Dedicated Pickleball Courts	27	5.3%
Lighted practice fields	23	4.5%
Outdoor fitness equipment area	22	4.3%
More baseball fields	21	4.1%
Practice fields	18	3.5%
More T-ball fields	10	2.0%
More football fields	6	1.2%
Total Responses	508	100.0%

Community Partners

A variety of important public services for local residents are provided by governmental entities other than the City of Benton, but are still supported by local property taxes. Private businesses and non-profit organizations provide other needed services.

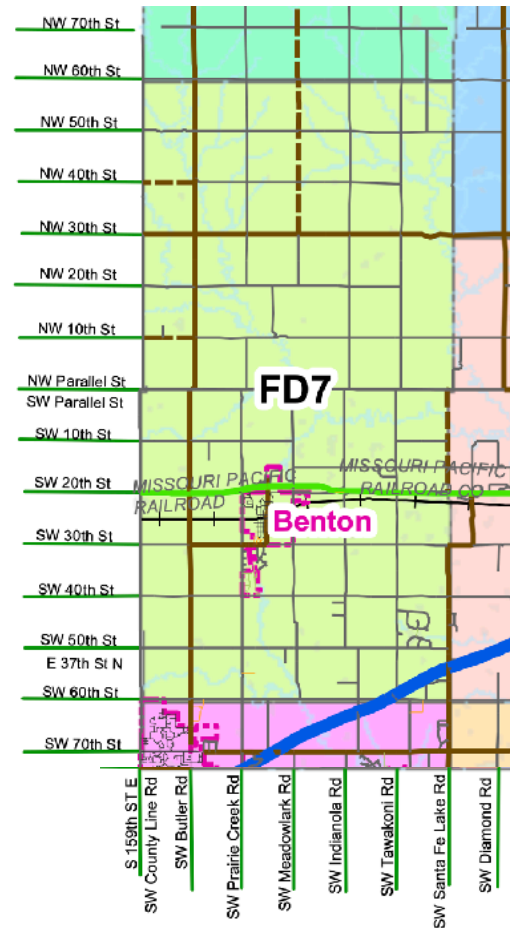
- **Fire protection and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)** for Benton are provided by Butler County.
- A variety of **healthcare facilities** available in the Benton area are provided by various non-profit entities and private businesses.
- Benton's **schools**, a vitally important part of the community's public services, are owned and operated by Circle Public Schools Unified School District (USD 365).
- The **Benton Cemetery** is owned and managed by Benton Township.

Fire Protection & EMS

The Fire Station for **Butler County Fire District #7** is located in Benton, at 125 North Main Street. The Benton Fire Station is a 50 by 90 foot building with 12 bays. The structure was built in 2018.



Benton Fire Station / Butler County Fire District #7



Fire District #7 extends from County Line Road east for six miles to Santa Fe Lake Road, and 12 miles north to south from NW 60th Street to SW 60th Street—an area of 72 square miles.

Fire District #7 is staffed with 19 professional volunteer firefighters who provide 24/7 service to the entire District—responding as needed to fires, hazardous materials events, first response for medical emergencies, and rescue calls. In addition, all the Fire Districts in Butler County cooperate to aid each other in case of need.

In 2022, Fire District #7 personnel made 25 response runs inside the city of Benton, and 139 runs outside city.

Ambulance services are provided by **Butler County EMS**, which has stations in Andover (an 11 minute drive away), El Dorado (a 15 minute drive away), Augusta (an 18 minute drive away) and Rose Hill. In 2022, Butler County EMS personnel made 142 response runs inside the city of Benton.

Communications Like the Benton Police Department, the County Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services also use the Butler County Emergency Communications (E-911) call system.

ISO Ratings Fire department services nationwide are rated by the **National Insurance Services Office (ISO)**. Ratings, which cover a wide variety of factors, are made on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the highest rating. The most recent ISO inspection for Benton rated fire protection services inside the city at 5. In rural areas near Benton, anything over 5 miles away from the Benton Fire Station is rated. The ISO rating may impact fire insurance rates for local residents.

Healthcare Facilities

Good access to adequate health care is an important component of a community's quality of life. While there are no medical facilities in Benton proper, the community has easy access to a wide range of medical services in nearby cities, including El Dorado, Augusta, Andover and Wichita.

The nearest **Hospital and Emergency Room** is at Kansas Medical Center in Andover, only a ten minute drive from Benton. Constructed in 2006, it is a 58-bed full service hospital with a 24-hour Emergency Room, three primary care clinics, two cardiology clinics, an ambulatory surgery center, and multiple outreach clinics. Hospital staff offer numerous specialties—with the exception of Major trauma care, obstetrics/gynecology and pediatric specialty care, all of which are available at Wichita hospitals.

Nearby Wichita is a regional medical center, with a wide variety of physicians, dentists, optometrists, chiropractors, pharmacists, clinics and hospitals, all available within a 30 to 60 minute drive from Benton.

Circle Public Schools USD 375

Schools are not City-owned facilities, but their quality is a critical factor in securing any community's future.

Circle Unified School District 375 includes both Benton and Towanda, extending along K-254 from the east edge of Wichita to the west edge of El Dorado. *(See map on following page.)*

USD 375 is financed with a mill levy on property owners within the school district boundaries. The District's administrative headquarters is in Towanda. Additional information regarding Benton's School District is available www.usd375.org/.

USD 375 is served by four elementary schools, a middle school and a high school. Benton hosts one of the Elementary Schools and the Middle School. Benton's 9th through 12th graders attend Circle High School in Towanda, about a 10 minute drive away.

- **Circle Greenwich Elementary** is located in the northeast area of Wichita.
- **Circle Towanda Elementary** is located in Towanda.
- **Circle Benton Elementary** is located at 350 South Kansas Street in Benton.
- **Circle Oil Hill Elementary** is located on the west side of El Dorado.
- **Circle Middle School** is located at 14697 SW 20th Street in Benton.
- **Circle High School** is located in Towanda.

About 9% of USD 375 students live inside the City of Benton. Between 2019 and 2022, enrollment in USD 375 schools increased by nearly 10%, and this trend is expected to continue.

The map displays the Toledo, Ohio area, highlighting four school districts: USD 262, USD 259, USD 375, and USD 490. The districts are outlined in red. Major roads are shown in black, and water bodies are in blue. The map includes labels for streets, highways, and landmarks. The districts are located in the following areas:

- USD 262:** Located in the northwest corner of the map, near the University of Toledo.
- USD 259:** Located in the southwest corner of the map, near the Toledo Express Airport.
- USD 375:** Located in the central part of the map, near the Toledo Express River.
- USD 490:** Located in the northeast corner of the map, near the Toledo Express River.

The map also shows major roads such as I-190, I-75, and I-54, and landmarks like the University of Toledo and Toledo Express Airport. The districts are outlined in red, and their names are in blue boxes. Major roads are labeled with numbers and names. Water bodies like Lake Erie and the Toledo Express River are shown in blue.

page 5 - 9

CIRCLE BENTON ELEMENTARY

The original Benton Grade School was built in 1954, with major additions constructed in 1964, 1994, and 2001. That structure was demolished in 2023.

A new Elementary School is currently under construction on the same site, and nearing completion. It will be a three-section structure, 70,650 square feet in area, and equipped with the latest safety and security features—including two storm shelters, cameras, and automated locks and controls.



The new Circle Middle School

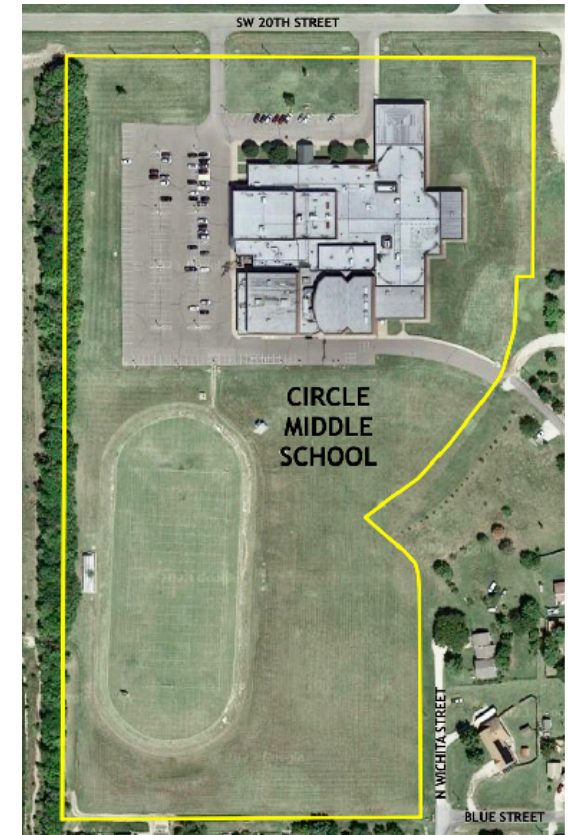
According to data for the 2021-2022 school year from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), **Circle Benton Elementary** had a total of 267 students, in pre-Kindergarten through 6th grade. There were 17.7 full-time-equivalent teachers working at Benton Elementary, maintaining a student:teacher ratio of 15.08 to 1.

The new Benton Elementary will be able to accommodate approximately a third more students than were most recently enrolled.

CIRCLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Middle School was constructed in 2001, with major additions built in 2008, 2011, and 2021. The structure is made of concrete block with a brick veneer, and sits on a 20 acre site. Various site improvements and outbuildings have been added over the years.

According to data for the 2021-2022 school year from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), **Circle Middle School** had a total of 312 students, in 7th and 8th grades. There were 16.8 full-time-equivalent teachers working at Benton Middle School, maintaining a student:teacher ratio of 18.57 to 1.

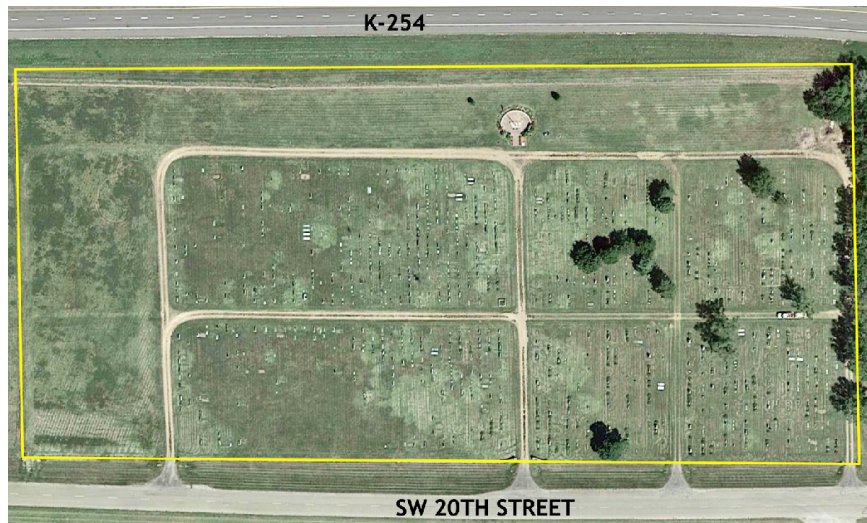


Circle Middle School

Benton Cemetery

Benton Cemetery is located on the north side of SW 20th Street, approximately half a mile east of Meadowlark Road. The 11.1 acre site has no buildings. The Cemetery is operated, managed and financed by Benton Township.

Benton Cemetery should serve the needs of the people of Benton for well beyond the 20-year Planning Period.



Benton Cemetery aerial

Public Perceptions of Community Facilities

The adjacent table shows results from the Community Questionnaire, when people were asked how they would rate the listed community facilities, programs, and services in the Benton area. The results are arranged in order of the percentage of responses that were marked "Excellent", with tie rankings broken based on the percentage marked "Adequate".

The highest scores went to the schools and parks, and to Police and Fire protection.

Five different options addressed housing issues, from various perspectives. Shown in red text, all five are clustered near the bottom of the ratings.

How would you rate the following community facilities, programs, and services in the Benton area?								
Facility / Service	Excellent		Adequate		Inadequate		Don't know	
Circle Schools Facilities	71	50%	36	25%	2	1%	33	23%
Prairie Park / Two Angels Trail	28	47%	20	33%	3	5%	9	15%
Police Protection	66	46%	68	48%	3	2%	6	4%
Fire Protection	65	46%	65	46%	4	3%	8	6%
Steelman Field Airport	57	40%	68	48%	10	7%	7	5%
Circle Schools Programs	54	38%	45	32%	2	1%	40	28%
Benton City Park	40	28%	74	52%	20	14%	8	6%
Benton Cemetery	39	28%	70	50%	1	1%	31	22%
Trash Disposal / Recycling Service	36	26%	84	62%	9	7%	7	5%
Lions Community Center	39	26%	76	51%	4	3%	29	20%
Emergency Medical Service	34	24%	69	48%	9	6%	31	22%
City Hall	33	23%	85	60%	4	3%	20	14%
Electrical Service	30	22%	92	67%	6	4%	10	7%
Traffic Signs & Signals	26	18%	100	70%	12	8%	5	3%
Water Supply System	24	17%	95	67%	8	6%	14	10%
Circle Recreation Programs	18	13%	46	33%	13	9%	63	45%
Street Maintenance & Cleaning	17	12%	88	62%	32	23%	5	4%
Street Lighting	16	11%	99	69%	23	16%	5	3%
Street Paving	14	10%	70	50%	52	37%	5	4%
Sewage Disposal System	12	9%	100	72%	12	9%	15	11%
Old Benton Cemetery	12	9%	61	44%	12	9%	54	39%
Stormwater Drainage System	8	6%	66	47%	44	32%	21	15%
Sidewalks	8	6%	48	34%	81	57%	6	4%
Housing Quality	7	5%	74	53%	43	31%	16	11%
Sufficient Variety of Housing Types	7	5%	39	28%	77	55%	17	12%
Economic Development Promotion	7	5%	29	21%	48	35%	52	38%
Health Services	7	5%	25	18%	53	39%	51	38%
Housing Availability	6	4%	35	25%	76	54%	24	17%
Industrial Development Sites	5	4%	28	21%	48	36%	54	40%
Sufficient Quality Rental Housing	5	4%	24	17%	69	50%	41	29%
Job Opportunities	5	4%	22	16%	73	54%	36	26%
Housing for Elderly & Handicapped	4	3%	20	15%	73	53%	40	29%
Totals	800	18%	1,921	44%	926	21%	763	17%

CHAPTER 6. Land Use Plan

Analysis of existing land use patterns is a basic component of comprehensive planning, affecting planning decisions regarding everything from new community facilities to transportation system improvements. It is the essential first step in order to determine desired future land use patterns, a determination which in turn impacts municipal policies and programs.

The use of any given parcel of land may change over time, but it is typically a slow process. Therefore, existing land use patterns are generally accepted as the basis for a realistic projection of future land use patterns.

A Land Use Plan describes existing patterns and future goals for various categories of land use—such as residential, commercial, and industrial. Types and amounts of future land use categories should be designed to accommodate the estimated future population of the City by the end of the Planning Period.

A Land Use Plan must **coordinate** future land uses with the patterns of existing land use, **minimize incompatible adjacent land uses**, strive for **harmony** between land uses and existing physical conditions such as floodplains, and maintain an appropriate **balance** among the various types of land uses within a community.

This Land Use Plan addresses the distribution and interrelationships of existing land uses in the City of Benton and its surrounding Planning Area. It also evaluates the potential for future development in the area, and will help to guide that development as it occurs.

MAPS

Included within this chapter are diagrammatic maps showing existing land use patterns for both the City and the Planning Area, as well as maps showing proposed future land use patterns and growth areas for the City.

Although zoning and land use are interrelated, an Existing Land Use Map is **not** a Zoning Map. An **Existing Land Use Map** is a snapshot of what types of use a parcel or part of a parcel of land was being used for, at the time the map was created—irrespective of that parcel's zoning.

An analysis of how actual land uses intersect with existing zoning districts can help to inform any potential adjustments that may be needed to zoning district boundaries on the City's Official Zoning Map.

A **Future Land Use Map** is a projection of proposed future land use patterns. A Future Land Use Map in a legally adopted and valid Comprehensive Plan provides a **legal foundation** for both the judicial review of zoning cases, and for the adoption of Subdivision Regulations.

Existing Land Use

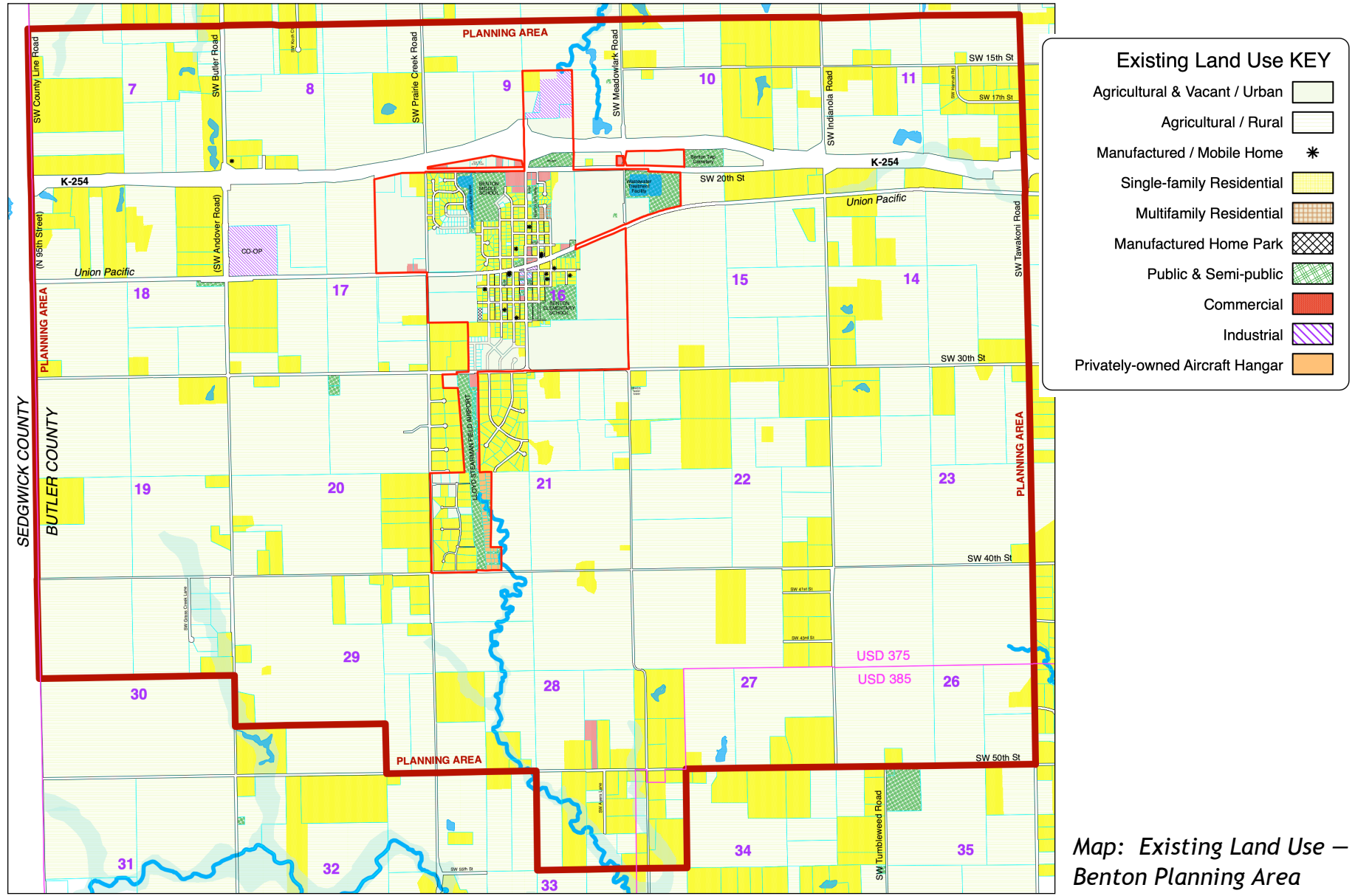
Existing land use in the Benton Planning Area was evaluated in the summer of 2023. Land uses were determined using a review of the use designations available from the [Butler County GIS](#) website, coordinated with an examination of aerial photos and street views. City leaders and municipal staff then reviewed the map for accuracy.

Each parcel of land was classified by its current type of use, according to the following land use definitions:

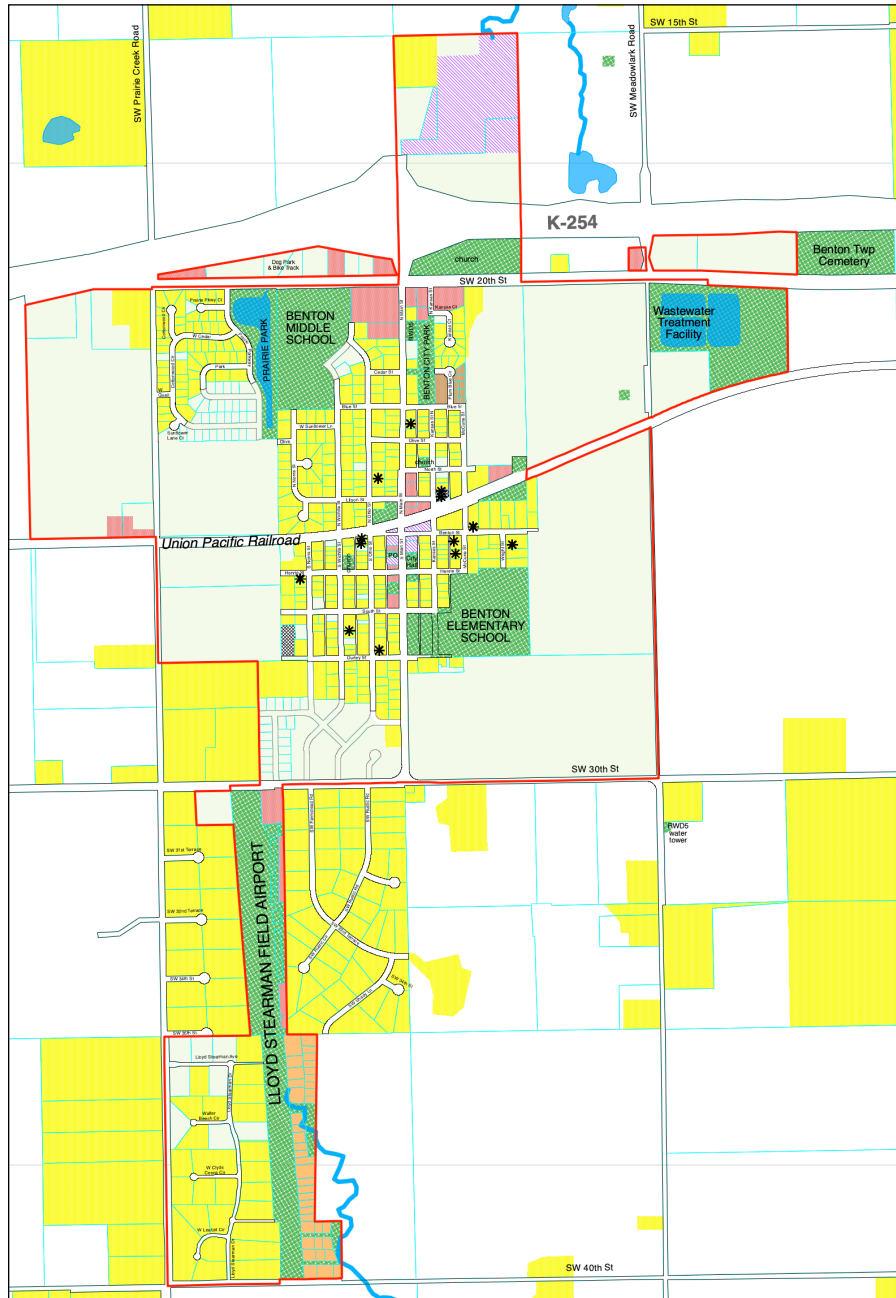
- **Agricultural & Vacant / Urban** – Land within the city limits which is not built upon, such as vacant lots, natural open space, and urban land used for agricultural purposes.
- **Agricultural / Rural** – Land outside the city limits which is used for agricultural purposes, such as growing crops or raising livestock, or retained as natural open space.
- **Single-family Residential** – Land devoted to residences occupied by one household. Individual manufactured/mobile homes, outside of mobile home parks, were identified separately from site-built housing.
- **Multifamily Residential** – Land devoted to multiple occupancy dwellings containing two or more individual residential units, such as duplexes or apartment buildings.
- **Multifamily Residential** – Land devoted to multiple occupancy dwellings containing two or more individual residential units, such as duplexes or apartment buildings.
- **Manufactured Home Park** – Land under single ownership, on which there are two or more manufactured or mobile homes in which people reside. (Land used for an individual mobile home or manufactured home was counted as single-household residential land use, not as part of a mobile home *park*.)
- **Public and Semi-public** – Land devoted to city, township, county, or state-owned buildings, parks, schools and other governmental activities, including special uses regulated by government, such as utilities and cemeteries. Also includes institutional uses of land for public purposes, such as churches, or social organizations.
- **Commercial** – Land and buildings where merchandising, service oriented, or professional activities are conducted.
- **Industrial** – Land and buildings used for manufacturing or heavy construction purposes, or their associated storage. Includes grain elevators and salvage yards.
- **Transportation** – Public land used for transportation right-of-way or other transportation related purposes. Includes streets, alleys, highways and railroads; does not include driveways, garages, or parking lots.

Maps on the following pages show patterns of existing land use for the Benton Planning Area. Closeup views are provided, showing the land within the city limits, the main developed area of Benton, and the downtown area. Pdf files of the complete Existing Land Use Maps are available on the City of Benton website, under the [Planning & Zoning](#) tab.

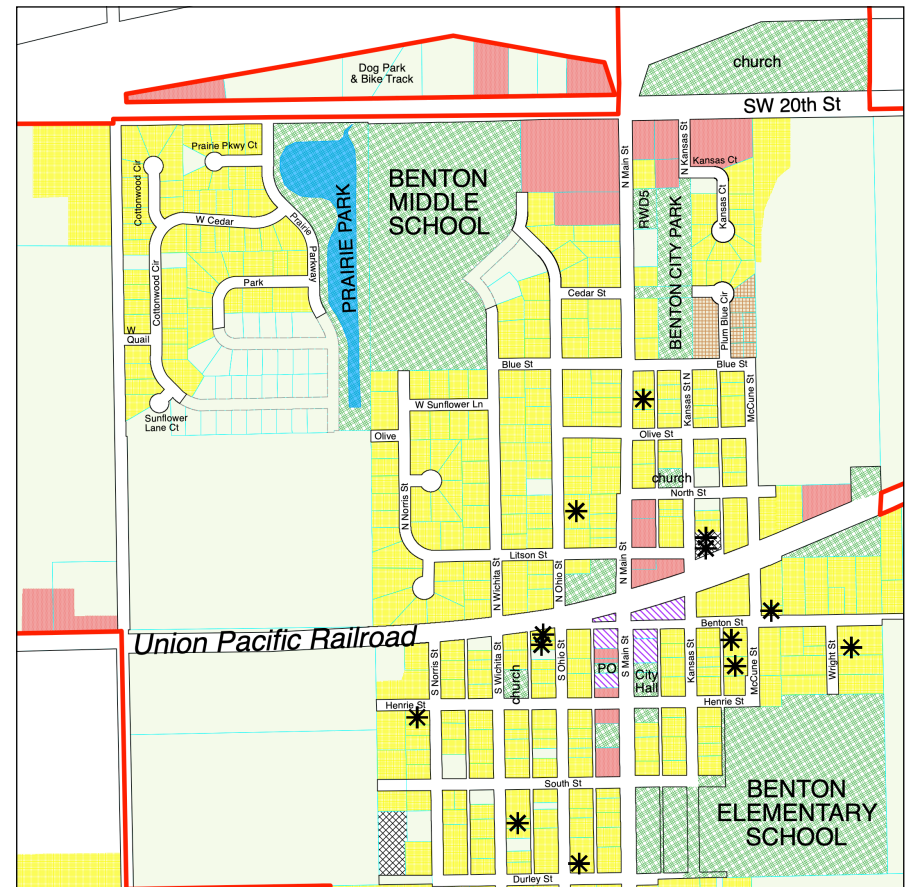
Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043



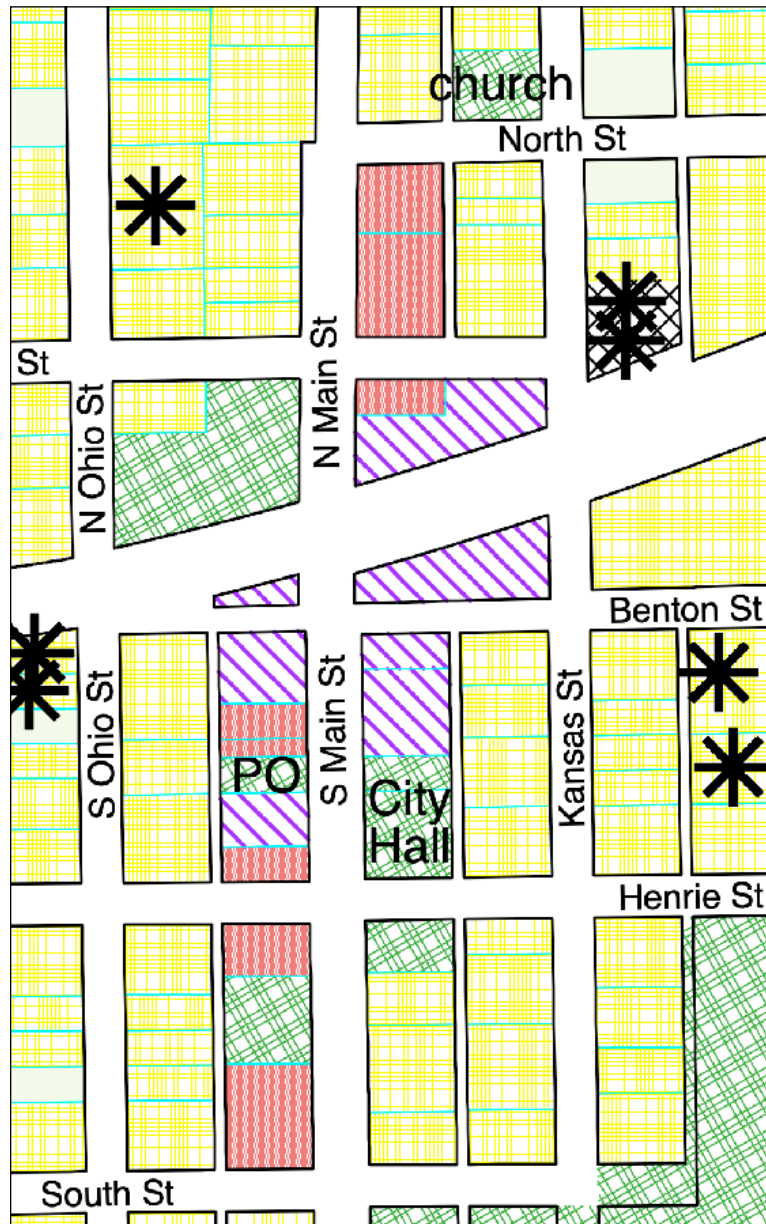
Map: Existing Land Use – Benton Planning Area



Map: Existing Land Use –
City of Benton



Map: Existing Land Use
– Benton Urban Area



Map: Existing Land Use – Benton Downtown Area

GENERAL CITY LAND USE PATTERN – EXISTING

The City of Benton incorporates 966.4 acres, or 1.5 square miles. Land use patterns within the city limits are generally cohesive. The following table shows the percentages of various land use categories in the city.

Existing Land Use in the City of Benton			
Land Use	Total acres	% of developed area	% of total area
Residential (total)	185.0	36.8%	19.1%
Single-family	181.3	36.0%	18.8%
Multifamily	2.2	0.4%	0.2%
Manufactured Home Park	1.5	0.3%	0.2%
Public & Semi-public	143.9	28.6%	14.9%
Commercial	21.9	4.4%	2.3%
Industrial	27.4	5.4%	2.8%
Transportation ROW	125.0	24.8%	12.9%
Total Developed Area	503.2	100.0%	52.1%
+ Agricultural & Vacant	463.2		47.9%
= Total Area	966.4	—	100.0%

Developed land represents 52% of all the land in the city, and totals about 503 acres. The remaining 48% of the land is categorized as **undeveloped**, and is vacant or in use for agricultural purposes. Some of the undeveloped land is in residential-scale platted lots, but most is in large parcels near the city's perimeter, particularly in the northern portion of the city.

Benton originally developed around the intersection of the railroad and Main Street, and the majority of the city's developed land is still in that section. Along with the residential development around the Airport, Benton has a compact and contiguous urban area.

Parts of a city that are geographically separated from the majority of the city by unincorporated land are termed "island annexations". Benton has three small island annexations, of land that lies between SW 20th Street and K-254. Such dispersed development can sometimes be problematic, so as the City expands, pursue annexation of the portions of SW 20th Street that separate the islands from the core of the City.

RESIDENTIAL – EXISTING

Residential land use covers 185 acres within the city limits, accounting for 37% of developed land. It is the single largest category of land use in Benton. Of the land in residential use, about 181 acres are used for single-family homes, while only 2 acres are used for multifamily homes, and 1.5 acres is used for just two mobile home parks.

Single-family Housing Benton has a range of housing types, from 19th and early 20th Century bungalows, to ranch-style homes, to contemporary subdivision homes.



Typical single-family homes in Benton



Multifamily Housing The only multifamily land use in Benton is located on Plum Blue Circle. The *Benton Senior Residences* on the west side of the street have three 4-unit apartment buildings. On the east side of the street there are three duplex town homes, with each of the six dwelling units under individual ownership. At the end of the cul-de-sac, there are two duplexes, each building under single ownership.



*Benton Senior Residences –
three four-unit apartment buildings*



Typical duplex



Typical duplex townhome

Manufactured Homes There are no formal manufactured home parks in Benton. However, any more than one manufactured home per lot technically fits the land use definition of a "manufactured home park" as used in this Plan. There is one lot on the east side of Kansas Street, just north of the railroad tracks, which has two manufactured homes on it. A lot on the north side of the west end of Furley Street has four manufactured homes on it.

Eleven other manufactured homes are scattered about Benton's residential neighborhoods. Some blend in quite well with neighboring stick-built houses, while others clash with the character of the neighborhood.

PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC — EXISTING

The 144 acres of public and semi-public land use in Benton represent 29% of the developed area within the city limits. It is the City's second-largest category of land use, after residential.

Benton's schools are the largest single public land use in the city, using 42.8 acres. The Airport is a close second, using 42.7 acres. The City Wastewater Treatment facility uses 29.6 acres. The two municipal parks use 14.6 acres.

Smaller public land uses include City Hall, the Fire Station, the Rural Water District office, the Post Office, and the City Storage Yard. Semi-public land use is primarily churches.

COMMERCIAL— EXISTING

Benton has 22 acres of land in commercial use within the city limits, comprising just 4% of the developed area. This is the smallest category of land use inside the city.

Commercial land uses in Benton are located primarily along SW 20th Street or near downtown, with a couple of additional commercial parcels along the railroad tracks near the east and west edges of the city.

- Vehicle-oriented businesses along or near SW 20th Street include a Dollar General store, a bank, a Kwik Shop and the Benton Banquet Hall.
- Businesses along Main Street in or near downtown include another bank, an auto repair shop, a lawn mower store, an art glass store, a computer store, a couple of used car dealers, and a child care center.

INDUSTRIAL— EXISTING

There are 27 acres of industrial land inside Benton, comprising 5% of the developed area. It is the City's second-smallest category of land use.

The largest industrial area in Benton is located on the east side of Main Street, north of K-254. The three parcels in this location comprise 2.6 acres of industrial property. Other industrial uses occur downtown, just south of the railroad tracks.

TRANSPORTATION RIGHTS-OF-WAY — EXISTING

Within the the city limits, 125 acres are incorporated in platted rights-of-way for streets, alleys and the railroad. This land use comprises about 25% of the developed area, and 13% of the City's total area. Transportation is Benton's third-largest category of land use, after residential and public/semi-public.

LAND USE OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS — EXISTING

The Planning Area, excluding land within the city limits, encompasses 10,843 acres, or 16.9 square miles. About 74% of that land is in **agricultural** use, though residential, public, commercial and industrial uses also occur.

Of land inside the Planning Area but outside the city limits:

- About 2,191 acres (20%) are in **single-family residential** use.
- 17 acres of land are in **public and semi-public** use.
- 7 acres are in **Commercial** use.
- 39 acres are in **industrial** use.
- About 562 acres are in use as transportation right-of-way, for roads and the railroad.

Future Land Use

A future land use plan is intended to encourage efficient, balanced, and compatible land use patterns in the City and its immediate area. The **Future Land Use Map shown at the end of this chapter** exhibits a desired pattern of land use, and is intended to guide land use planning decisions during the Planning Period.

However, flexibility is also essential in the implementation of a future land use plan, and it is expected that the Planning Commission may occasionally need to make minor adjustments. When a specific area in the city is about to be developed, policy decisions on its development should remain in keeping with the overall land use concepts expressed in the Future Land Use Map, but must also respond to current data.

When an area is designated for a particular future land use, that designation should be considered as an indication of preferred land use character and predominant type, rather than an absolute requirement that the area be developed exclusively for the noted land use. For example, a church or park could be considered a compatible use in an area designated for future residential development.

A number of factors must be considered when projecting future land use—including community attitudes and goals, existing physical features, existing land use patterns, potential utility service areas, future population goals and housing needs, and proposed development projects.

In general, it is considered desirable for **residential** land use patterns within a city to be separated from commercial or industrial uses. The exception to this guideline is in **mixed-use neighborhoods, such as Benton's downtown, where the proximity of residences to commercial and public areas promotes walkability.**

Some **public** land uses are compatible with residential areas (such as neighborhood parks or small churches), and some are appropriate to commercial areas (City Hall or the Post Office, for example). Modern schools tend to be larger and generate more traffic and noise than schools in earlier times, but ideally should still be located close enough to residential neighborhoods to allow at least some children the option to walk or bike to school.

Commercial land uses are typically clustered together to create economic synergy. Businesses that are dependent on vehicle traffic tend to cluster near highway intersections, while businesses that cater to pedestrians prefer a walkable downtown location. By preference, both retail destinations and workplaces should be within walking distance of at least some residential neighborhoods.

Industrial land uses, particularly for heavy industry, often require heavy-duty utility services, generate considerable truck traffic, and may produce dust and other air pollutants, as well as considerable noise. Therefore they are often consolidated in a few areas with appropriate utility services, typically near highways and railroads, and away from and downwind of residential neighborhoods.

Light industrial uses are often indistinguishable from commercial uses in their impact on the character of a neighborhood. They typically have no retail component, and so do not have to attract customers in the same way as a commercial business.

GENERAL CITY PATTERN — FUTURE

Since the development of the interstate highway system began in the 1950s, the United States has been on a 70-year building spree of sprawl. Only recently have we begun to face the fact that we cannot possibly afford to *maintain* the sprawling infrastructure that we have built.

- For more information on the costs of America's deferred infrastructure maintenance needs, see the American Society of Civil Engineers' [2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure](#).
- For more information on alternative strategies for making your city fiscally strong and resilient in the long term, see [Strong Towns](#).

It is crucial for cities to maintain a compact development pattern, because it maximizes the efficiency and minimizes the cost of providing public services, from utilities to police patrols—not only in short-term operating costs, but in long-term maintenance costs.

Compact and contiguous development is not only an economical strategy, it is also a pragmatic one. Kansas statutes [K.S.A. 12-520 et.seq.](#) make new island annexations very difficult for Kansas cities to implement, while it is relatively easy for cities to annex land that is adjacent to existing corporate limits.

- An overview of the detailed requirements for various types of annexation processes is available in the [2015 Kansas Legislator Briefing Book on Annexation](#).

Benton is basically compact, and should continue its pattern of contiguous development. Consider encouraging development of a higher percentage of more dense, urban-style neighborhoods in proportion to larger-lot suburban developments.

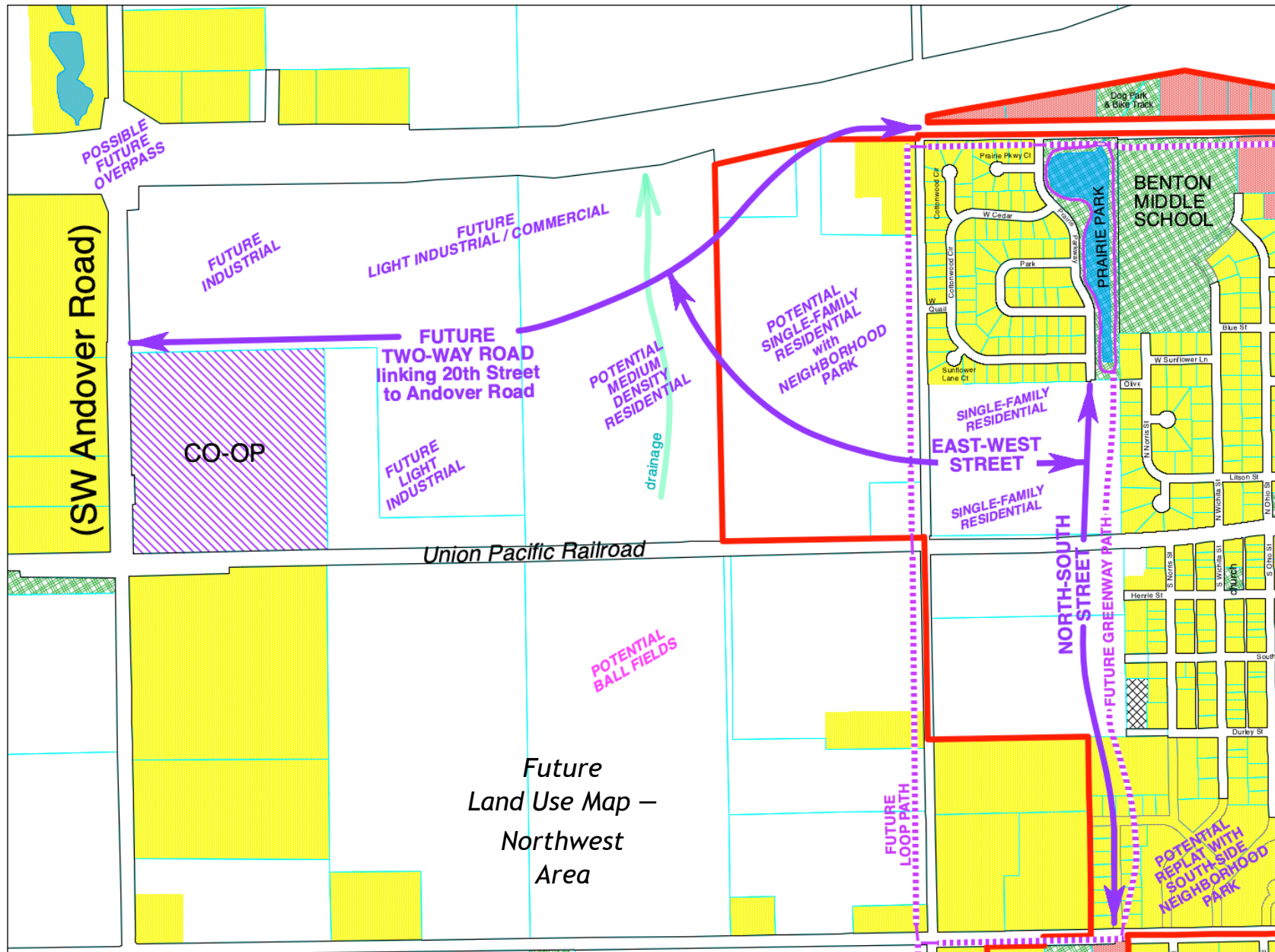
DIRECTION OF GROWTH

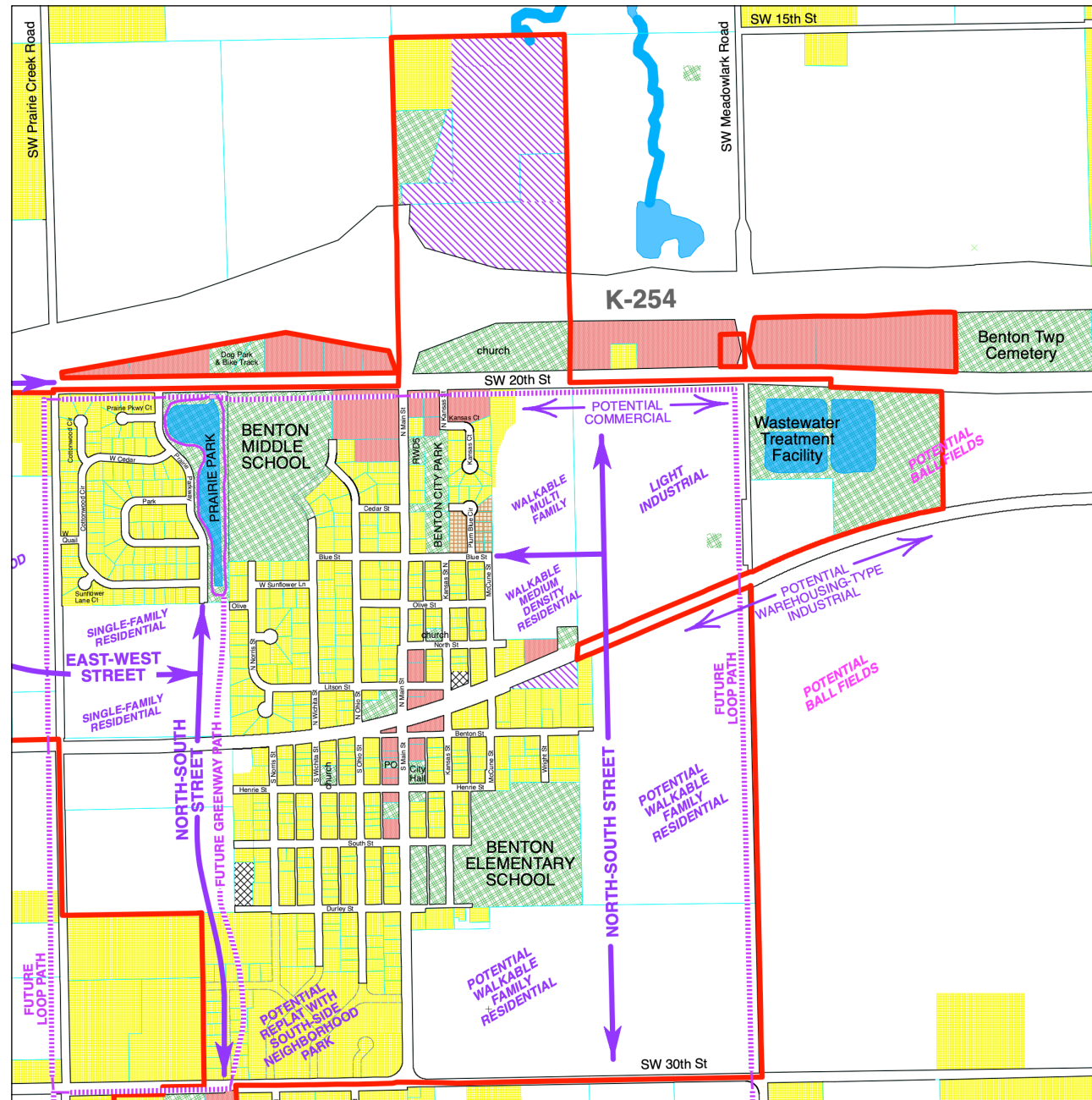
Benton's location on high ground in the relatively flat topography of Kansas means that there are few geographic constraints on its direction of growth. Today, the main factors determining Benton's likely future growth pattern are K-254 Highway, and proximity to Wichita and rapidly growing Andover.

The new Benton Elementary School opening in 2023 should stimulate residential growth in its vicinity. There is already-annexed land adjacent to the school site, ideal for such development in the southwest area of the city.

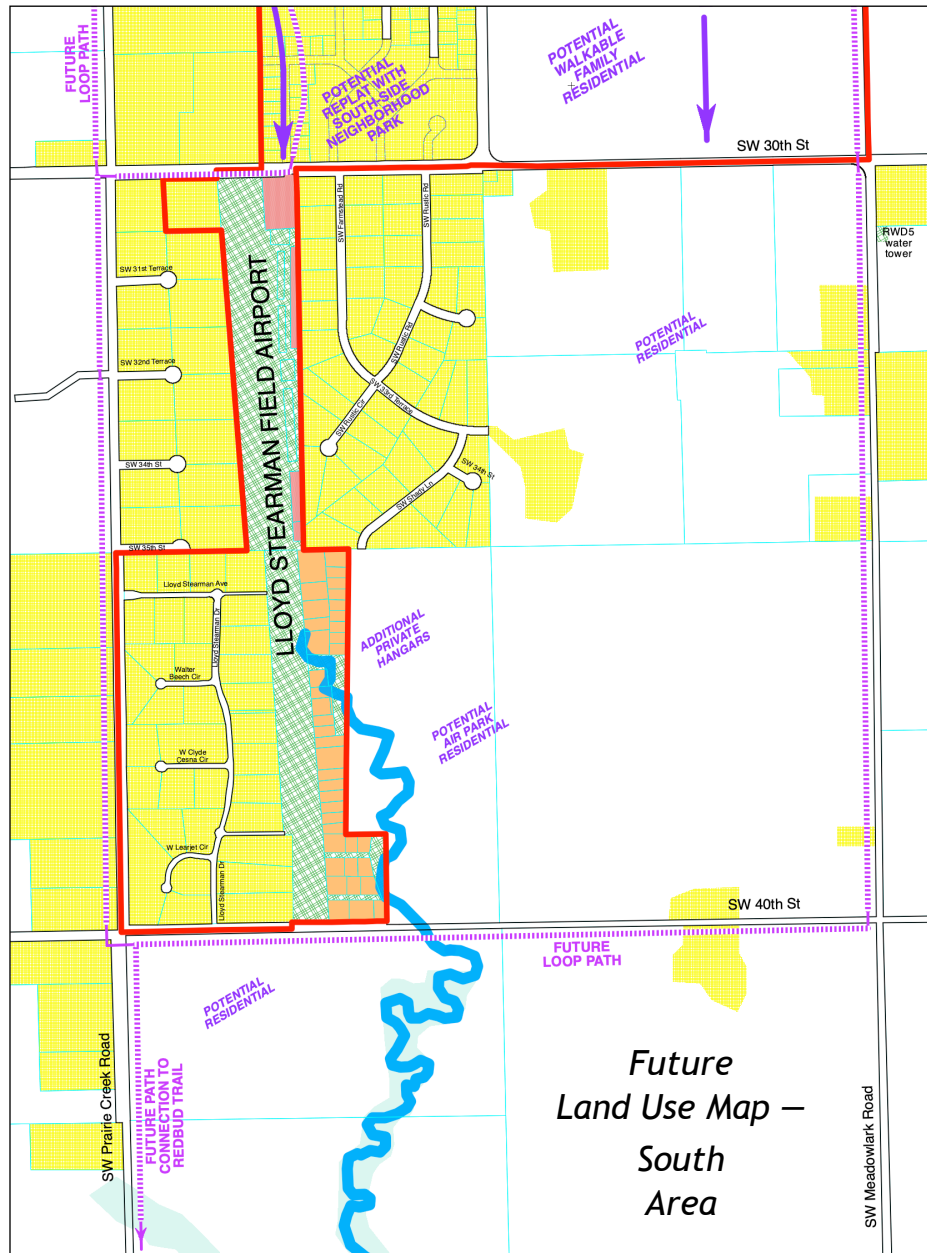
Expected industrial development in the vicinity of K-254 and Andover Road will produce thousands of jobs over the course of the Planning Period, which will draw Benton's growth to the west and south.

The following pages show closeup views of the **Future Land Use Map** developed for this Comprehensive Plan—the northwest area, the north central area, and the south areas of Benton. A pdf file of the complete Future Land Use Map is available on the City of Benton website, under the [Planning & Zoning](#) tab.





Future
Land Use Map –
North Central
Area



RESIDENTIAL – FUTURE

Before the development of interstate highways the 1950s, it was common for American neighborhoods to have a mix of single family and multifamily homes, including garage or upstairs apartments, duplexes, and even small 3- or 4-unit apartment buildings. These neighborhoods worked well, supporting diverse multi-generational communities with housing at a range of price points.

In the last half of the 20th Century, however, it became standard practice to isolate single-family housing in large and homogeneous developments of similar houses. On the occasions when multifamily housing was built, it tended to be in the form of big apartment complexes or whole neighborhoods of duplexes, completely separated from single-family neighborhoods.

Now, in the 21st Century, the social and economic advantages of traditional mixed neighborhoods are appreciated again. Such neighborhoods offer the option for multiple generations of a family to find appropriate housing without having to move far away. Higher density allows more people to be supported with less infrastructure, and improves options for walkability and the social connections that walkability encourages.

Many small rural cities have insufficient low-cost and rental housing to meet local demand, and therefore lose young residents who cannot yet afford to own a home, as well as older residents who may be looking for a lower-maintenance lifestyle.

There is often a tendency to think that all single-family homes are owner-occupied, and all multifamily homes are rentals, but this is not the case. Twin homes and condominiums of various configurations allow individual ownership of homes within a multifamily structure, and single-family detached houses may be rented.

Only 22 (6.6%) out of Benton's 332 housing units are in multifamily configurations. About 67 (20.7%) of Benton's occupied housing units are rentals.

While there is clearly an ongoing demand for **large, single-family suburban homes** in Benton, there is also a national trend toward **smaller homes in walkable, urban-style neighborhoods**. Ideally, such neighborhoods should supply both owner-occupied and rental options.

Encourage development in Benton that offers a **mix of both single-family and appropriately-scaled multifamily housing**. Such housing might include townhomes, patio homes, duplexes, triplexes, small apartment buildings, or accessory apartments.

Smaller types of multifamily housing can often be accommodated in single-family neighborhoods, so long as they are designed to fit in with the character of the neighborhood, and parking requirements are handled sensitively. Only apartment complexes large enough to generate significant amounts of traffic are incompatible with single-family neighborhoods.

Zoning regulations sometimes need to be changed in order to allow development of neighborhoods with a mix of compatibly designed multifamily housing scattered among single-family homes.

Maintaining an array of **diverse housing options at a range of price points** should be a primary goal of future development in Benton, including economical units for young adults and accessible units for seniors. Continue to encourage development of single-family homes, as well as high-quality, accessible, and low-maintenance multifamily housing.

20-year Housing Need Projection The following rough calculations show the scale of Benton's 20-year housing needs. These estimates do *not* account for the replacement housing units that would be needed in order to compensate for existing houses which may be lost to causes such as fire or demolition.

- If the City's 2020 Census population of 943 continued to grow by its historic rate of about **13% per decade**, Benton would have 1,205 people by 2040, for a net gain of about 261 individuals.

Taking the additional population, and dividing that number by the *2017-2021 American Community Survey* average household size of 2.54 people per household, Benton might expect to have **about 103 additional households by 2040**, which would require an average increase of **about 5 housing units per year**, each and every year for the next two decades.

- A similar calculation for a **20% per decade** rate of population growth would result in **about 163 additional households by 2040**, requiring an average increase of **about 8 housing units per year** each year for the next twenty years.

Of course, housing is rarely built at smooth and predictable rates. In fact, it tends to be developed in spurts. Nevertheless these estimates should help provide an idea of the scope of long-term housing demand in the community.

As of 2023, Benton had enough platted lots available to support **47 additional housing units**.

- Infill lots — 13 lots
- Prairie Village— 34 lots

There are also an additional 22 platted lots shown in the platted area northwest of 30th Street and Main, but that area is likely to be replatted. Benton will need to plat additional neighborhoods to accommodate its likely growth over the 20-year Planning Period.

PUBLIC & SEMI-PUBLIC — FUTURE

The City may need to acquire additional land during the 20-year Planning Period, possibly to allow for necessary expansion or relocation of municipal support facilities, and almost certainly to allow for additional **park land** that will be needed as new residential development occurs.

COMMERCIAL — FUTURE

Work to enhance Benton's two primary commercial areas. Ideally, businesses in each area should serve different commercial needs, complementing each other, rather than unduly competing.

The business district developing at the north end of town, along 20th Street, should continue to be focussed on larger-lot commercial development that depends on vehicle traffic and ample parking lots for success. Downtown's commercial development will be addressed in more detail in its section at the end of this chapter.

INDUSTRIAL — FUTURE

Future industrial development in Benton should be focussed in the area of town north of K-254, and west of town in the vicinity of the Co-op. It would be beneficial if at some point in the Planning Period the industrial uses currently located downtown would choose to relocate to more appropriate places, allowing commercial development on their sites instead.

Industrial growth will substantially impact Benton's future economy, its transportation network, and its future housing needs as well.

To attract additional light industry to Benton, consider encouraging the development of pad-ready sites on the existing industrial area north of K-254. Such sites are graded, with utilities stubbed, and with road access already developed—in short, ready to be built on.

TRANSPORTATION RIGHTS-OF-WAY — FUTURE

From a land use perspective, Benton has an adequate right-of-way network to sustain expected growth. If new subdivisions are developed on currently vacant land, their streets should be platted with enough width to accommodate paved roadways suitable for expected traffic loads, as well as adequate drainage facilities, utilities, sidewalks, and street trees.

Street patterns should be designed to coordinate with both existing streets, and with potential future expansion of both the street network, and the **sidewalk and bike path network**.

LAND USE OUTSIDE THE CITY – FUTURE

Portions of the Planning Area near Benton have already been developed for residential use.

If demand for **large-lot residential housing** occurs in the Planning Area, **discourage scattered lots** and instead **establish platted rural subdivisions**. Such subdivisions should have good road access, and be located to allow future connection to City utilities.

In general, however, the Planning Area outside the City should continue to be used mainly for **agriculture**, which should be regarded as the highest and best use for such productive soils.

Consider implementing a policy of annexation, or at least requiring an *Agreement to Not Protest Annexation*, for any property outside the city limits that wishes to connect to City utilities.

Downtown

Ideally, a city's downtown is a concentration of commercial, cultural, and civic activities. No matter how large or small the city, having a vibrant downtown is critical to both its quality of life and its economic success.

Its downtown is not only a small town's major economic driver, it is "everybody's neighborhood", a cultural center where people from the entire area congregate. When people think of a particular small city, its downtown is usually the first image that comes to mind, so the character and attractiveness of a community is often judged by the character and attractiveness of its downtown.

Community Questionnaire participants were asked to think about Benton's downtown business district, and check factors of the physical environment which need improvement. Factors are listed in order of the percentage of respondents that expressed concern.

- General appearance of building facades: 15%
- Storefronts used as storage: 14%
- General attractiveness of streets & sidewalks : 12%
- Areas behind businesses: 11%
- Condition of sidewalks: 10%
- Lack of street trees : 9%
- Restrooms: 7%
- Business signs: 7%
- Parking lots: 5%
- Condition of streets: 5%
- Handicap access to businesses: 3%
- Ease of vehicle access: 3%

DOWNTOWN – EXISTING

Benton's downtown currently has very little to make it attractive to either businesses or visitors. If businesses are waiting for more people, and people are waiting for more businesses, the log jam will never break.

Either City government or a coalition of local volunteers—or, ideally, both!— will need to step up to take some kind of a first step. Often that first step is an improved streetscape.

- Consider adding **curb extensions** at either end of the prime block of downtown Benton, at Main and Benton Street, and at Main and Henry Street. Extensions could be landscaped with **street trees**, benches and bike racks.
- Improve the streetscape between the extensions. Consider including better **sidewalks** and **ornamental lighting**, as well as improved **ADA accessible parking**.
- Consider establishing a volunteer coalition to fix up business facades downtown. Even some paint could make a big difference.

Having City Hall, the Post Office and the Lions Community Center downtown creates a potential focus of pedestrian activity that could contribute considerably to the success of downtown businesses. Every effort should be made to keep all three destinations downtown permanently.



Main Street in Benton

DOWNTOWN – FUTURE

It will take work to create a public space that will attract more businesses and more people downtown. Focus on attracting businesses which thrive in the synergy of a walkable neighborhood, such as restaurants, small retail shops, service businesses, or professional offices.

Institute community events that attract people downtown. Anything from coordinated sales events by downtown businesses, to car shows, to holiday celebrations can work to bring people together.

Coordinate with the local Chamber of Commerce or some similar organization to promote special events, implement holiday lighting and displays, and coordinate group advertising. Kansas state statutes allow for the creation of a **Business Improvement District** by the City, with taxing authority to fund such efforts. (K.S.A. 12-1781 et seq.)

Ideas for Renovating Small Town Downtowns

Consider the following resources to inspire ideas for improving Benton's downtown:

- [Main Street Kansas](#) program offers resources and tools to breathe new life into historic commercial districts.
- USDA's [Downtown Revitalization](#) webpage includes case studies and a list of **funding resources**.
- [What businesses would work in a small town? Filling empty buildings](#), an article on the webpage of *Small Biz Survival: The Small Town and Rural Business Resource*.
- [Creative Uses for Downtown Buildings in Small Towns](#), a 2017 study from Wisconsin that offers 23 examples of creative uses that brought activity back to small town downtowns.
- 50 Best Small Town Downtowns in America is a 2015 article in *Best Choice Reviews*.
- Season 1/Episode 8 of HGTV's *Home Town Takeover* highlights the logic behind selecting renovation projects to revitalize the whole community.

CHAPTER 7. Regulatory Tools

A community's planning goals are implemented in a variety of ways, including the use of regulatory tools. This chapter provides an overview of such tools—Zoning Regulations, Subdivision Regulations, Construction and Environmental Codes, Annexation, Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, and Site Plan Review.

While Benton does not currently utilize the last two options, Planning Commissioners and other City leaders should nevertheless be familiar with all of their potential regulatory resources.

By statute, a city's Planning Commission is directly involved with the development and administration of Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, can recommend other local codes, and makes recommendations to the City Council on annexation decisions.

Zoning Regulations

The goal of zoning should be to ensure high standards for development, without unduly restricting private initiative or causing excessive development costs.

Zoning Regulations protect property values by ensuring that residential, commercial and industrial land uses are located in compatible arrangements which prevent conflicts. **Zoning seeks to *prevent* conflicts between adjacent land uses, and is the major tool for resolving conflicts which do occur.**

Zoning can help maintain the rate of development at a pace which can be sustained by the community's infrastructure of public and private facilities and utilities.

Zoning regulations establish residential densities, by specifying standards for building setbacks from property boundaries, as well as requirements for maximum building height and maximum lot coverage. They establish standards for required parking spaces, and for the size and location of signs. They regulate accessory structures and uses, and home occupations.

Zoning regulations in Kansas are **not retroactive** and, therefore, they are not effective in cleaning up past mistakes—except over very long periods of time, by the gradual demise of lawful nonconforming uses (grandfathered-in land uses). This is why it is **important to adopt and enforce appropriate zoning *before* problems occur.**

Legislative Capacity and Quasi-judicial Actions: When a city adopts new zoning regulations or makes revisions to existing regulations, it is acting in a ***legislative*** capacity. Since a 1978 court case, cities in Kansas have been required to act in a ***quasi-judicial*** manner when holding a hearing and deliberating on an application for rezoning of a specific parcel of land.

To act in a **quasi-judicial** manner, the **Planning Commission is required to make its recommendations based on findings of evidence and an issue oriented analysis, in order to prevent arbitrary and capricious zoning decisions. The Governing Body is held to the same standards.**

If the Governing Body chooses to differ with or amend the recommendation of the Planning Commission, it may not do so arbitrarily. It **must support its decision by determining its own findings and analysis**, and either override the Planning Commission's recommendation by a two-thirds majority vote, or by a simple majority vote return the recommendation to the Planning Commission to be reconsidered.

Reasonableness: The Governing Body must establish specific **factors** on which zoning decisions and special use cases are to be determined. According to K.S.A. 12-757(a), the governing body *"...shall establish in its zoning regulations the matters to be considered when approving or disapproving a zoning request..."*.

Court tests of zoning cases are based upon the "reasonableness" of the City's decision. Any zoning amendment (for instance, to change a zoning district classification or boundary), is legally **presumed to be reasonable if it is in accordance with a land use plan or the land use element of a comprehensive plan.** Having a good land use plan within this Comprehensive Plan is a key component of the City's defense, should one of its zoning decisions ever be challenged in court.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS (BZA)

Any city which enacts zoning regulations must create a Board of Zoning Appeals. Under K.S.A. 12-759, cities may establish boards of three to seven members who serve staggered three-year or four-year terms. When a city exercises zoning only inside the city limits, as Benton does, all members must reside inside the city limits. For a city with extraterritorial zoning, at least one member of the BZA must reside outside the city.

A BZA must have at least three members, but no more than seven, and all of them must reside within the city limits. Should the City ever decide to administer Zoning Regulations outside of the City, then one BZA member would have to reside in that extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Kansas statutes permit the members of a Planning Commission to be concurrently designated as the Board of Zoning Appeals, and Benton has implemented this option.

An appeal from a decision of the BZA can be made only to the County District Court, and must be made within 30 days.

Any appeal of a determination by the Zoning Administrator is decided by the BZA. The BZA also has the authority to grant variances, or conditional uses as exceptions to the zoning regulations.

- **Variances** can permit modifications in such standards as the maximum height of a structure, in building setbacks, or in minimum lot sizes.
- Each type of Zoning District permits some land uses by right, and other uses which may only be allowed after individual review by the BZA. Such uses must be **specifically listed** in the Zoning Regulations as a potential exception in each specific Zoning District. Exceptions are typically referred to as **conditional uses**, because conditions are usually attached to their being granted.

The *Zoning Regulations of the City of Benton, Kansas* were adopted by the Governing Body, incorporated by Ordinance No. 2015-04, and became effective on October 3, 2015.

URBAN GROWTH AREA

County governments in Kansas define an **Urban Growth Area (UGA)** for each incorporated city within the county, in order to allow each city to have some ability to affect zoning on land that is close to it, but outside its municipal boundaries.

Butler County's 2006 Zoning Regulations describe the **UGA for Benton as all of Benton Township**. Within any UGA, the County recognizes the **area covered by a City's Comprehensive Plan as the gradient district**.

In the gradient district, **urban development proposals and easement dedications must meet the standards of either the city or the county, whichever are more stringent**.

While this gives the City some ability to influence zoning decisions in its Urban Growth Area, Benton does not currently have an extraterritorial jurisdiction. Without one, Benton's Zoning Regulations now apply only inside the city limits.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations are another important method of controlling the development of land. As required by K.S.A. 12-749(a), **a city must have adopted a comprehensive plan before it can adopt subdivision regulations**.

Subdivision Regulations specify the standards and conditions under which a tract of land can be subdivided. They set standards for the arrangement and design of streets, utility easements, lots, block sizes, open space, installation of public improvements, and proper drainage.

Subdivision Regulations may stipulate requirements for street lighting, sidewalks, and water supply and sewage disposal systems, among other things. They may encourage the dedication or acquisition of land for schools, parks, open space, or other community facilities within the new subdivision.

Subdivision Regulations also provide a framework to establish a working arrangement between the City and developers—to accept **dedications** of land within a development for future public facilities, to guarantee to the City the installation of necessary **public improvements** such as streets or sidewalks, and to allow for the use of **impact fees** to mitigate the City's costs of providing public utilities and services for the new development and other nearby areas which are benefited.

According to K.S.A. 12-749(a), a city may extend its **Subdivision Regulations extraterritorially**. This arrangement recognizes that cities are the main providers of urban utilities in most counties, and logically should be able to administer the initial design and construction of utility services, even outside current city limits. Extraterritorial enforcement of Subdivision Regulations also increases a city's ability to ensure that new streets tie properly into the existing urban street system.

When a standard in the Subdivision Regulations is less restrictive than a standard in other applicable regulations or codes, the most restrictive requirement applies. However, in rural areas, **interim standards** on water supply, sewage disposal, and future easements may be applied temporarily, until urbanization is a reality.

Benton's current Subdivision Regulations apply only within the city limits. The City has no Extraterritorial Jurisdiction.

The *Subdivision Regulations of the City of Benton, Kansas* were adopted in 2015 under Ordinance No. 2015-06.

When Benton's Subdivision Regulations are next updated, consider revising them to support and encourage development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), such as garage apartments or granny flats. ADUs allow both a primary and a secondary but independent home on one residential parcel, and are becoming increasingly popular as more and more families become multi-generational.

Construction & Environmental Codes

Various construction and environmental codes are the tools used to maintain minimum construction standards, to remedy substandard housing, and to deal with sanitary and nuisance conditions. Codes also establish the process for permit approval for construction projects, determine standards for licensing contractors, and create enforcement procedures for inspections and appeals.

Codes are generally administered and enforced by trained municipal staff specifically assigned those duties, typically a Code Enforcement Officer.

City Extraterritorial Codes If a city has extraterritorial jurisdiction for their subdivision or zoning regulations, they have authority to enforce city building codes outside the city limits (see K.S.A. 12-751(b)). A petition procedure permits 20% of the electorate to require an election to be held to decide whether the adopted extraterritorial building codes should be retained. If building codes are removed by such a vote, they cannot be reestablished for at least four years.

County Codes A county can adopt construction and environmental codes for all its unincorporated area, or for a defined area around a city. Counties may also adopt a city's codes by reference for an area around the city, or a city may adopt its county's codes by reference. Either the city or county may perform the administrative functions needed, as may be jointly agreed.

TYPES OF CODES

A variety of building, construction, and environmental codes play a role in protecting the health, safety and welfare of the public and their property. **Codes establish minimum standards** which, over time, help to upgrade and maintain the quality of the community's building inventory, in turn improving the quality of life and the city's tax revenue base.

Model Codes Typically, national or international model codes are adopted by reference, sometimes with specific amendments to address unusual local conditions. Model codes are developed by independent standards organizations, which regularly update their codes to deal with the latest in building materials and techniques.

It is generally far more cost-effective to adopt a model code, than to invest municipal resources in writing and regularly updating a local code. Also, contractors are already familiar with most model codes, but may be reluctant to work in a community with its own idiosyncratic requirements.

Building Codes govern the construction requirements for all types of buildings, by regulating their design, methods of construction, quality of materials, types of use, degree of occupancy, site location factors, and certain equipment required for their construction and operation. **Energy-efficiency** requirements and **historic preservation standards** may also be incorporated in building codes.



example: Building Code violation



*example:
Plumbing Code
violation*



*example:
Electrical Code
violation*



*example:
Sanitation
Code violation*

Plumbing Codes are responsible for regulating both potable water carrying systems and sanitary sewers.

Electrical Codes safeguard persons, buildings, and their contents from hazards arising from the use of electricity in new and remodeled structures.

Mechanical Codes serve to protect individuals and property by controlling the design, construction, installation, quality of materials, location, operation and maintenance of heating, ventilating, cooling, and refrigeration systems, as well as incinerators and other heat-producing equipment.

Fire Prevention Codes prescribe regulations for safeguarding life and property from the hazards of fire and explosion. They set safety standards and attempt to prevent fires from starting and spreading. They are a factor in fire insurance ratings.

Sanitation Codes regulate a wide range of health concerns including sewage disposal, water supply, abandoned and inoperable vehicles, pest and animal control, and environmental features in and around buildings, such as outside storage, that often lead to health hazards and blighting conditions.

Dangerous Structures Ordinances require the repair or removal of dangerous and unsafe structures by the owner or the City.

Housing Codes prevent overcrowding, and maintain minimum health and safety features in dwellings. They are concerned with the quality of the residential environment, and affect the upkeep and maintenance of existing dwellings. They can be enforced as a response to regular house-to-house inspections, or complaints, or be triggered by a change in ownership or renter.

Weed Mowing Ordinances establish a maximum standard for the height of vegetation outside of planting beds. Typically, if the owner does not keep vegetation within required limits, the City will mow, and then assess the cost to the owner.

City Beautiful Ordinances are a method of removing or causing the repair of unsightly and blighted structures in order to promote beautification. They can apply to both principal and accessory structures. Such ordinances are often combined with housing code minimum standards.

Manufactured Home Park Codes cover such items as water supply, sewage disposal, drainage, and street and parking facilities in manufactured home parks, density, open spaces and recreational areas, refuse disposal methods, and utility connections. Manufactured Home Park Codes may also be written to include **recreational vehicle campgrounds**.

Manufactured Home Park Codes cannot control the actual location of manufactured home parks, or the locations of individual manufactured homes scattered in a community, since this can only be accomplished by zoning regulations. However, since Manufactured Home Park Codes are adopted as health and safety codes, they are not limited by the grandfather clause inherent in the administration of zoning regulations, and so can be used to upgrade existing parks.



*example:
Dangerous
Structure
violation*

MANUFACTURED, MODULAR, & PREFAB HOUSING

Manufactured, modular, and prefab homes are all forms of housing constructed in factories. A manufactured home may cost about half the per square foot cost of a site-built dwelling. Provided they meet local construction codes, modular and prefabricated units are usually permitted by zoning regulations anywhere that site-built housing can be constructed.

HUD Code In 1974, the U.S. Congress changed the name "mobile home" to "manufactured housing". A **nationwide certification process was initiated in 1976** by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which set standards for all such housing under the federal Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act, otherwise known as the **HUD Code**.

Homes which do not meet the HUD national standards, almost all of which were built prior to June 15, 1976, are still referred to as "mobile homes".

Manufactured homes which are certified under the HUD Code override any local construction codes, except for the manner in which they are installed—that is, hooked up to utilities, skirted, placed on a permanent foundation, or anchored.

Kansas Standards The Kansas Legislature passed the extensive Kansas Manufactured Housing Act in 1991 as K.S.A. 58-4201, et seq. Kansas also has statutes requiring the state architect to establish tie-down design standards under K.S.A. 75-1226, et seq. The state does not enforce tie-down standards locally, but instead regulates their design at the manufacturer.

Residential-design Manufactured Homes In K.S.A. 12-742 and 763, effective January 1, 1992, the Kansas Legislature adopted mandatory provisions for a "residential-design manufactured home". Such homes must meet the minimum standards of the HUD Code, be at least 22 feet in width, have a pitched roof, have siding and roofing materials customarily used on site-built houses, and be placed on a permanent foundation. These statutes do not preempt or supersede valid **restrictive covenants** running with the land.

Additional architectural and esthetic standards may be adopted in local zoning regulations to ensure the compatibility of residential-design manufactured homes with site-built housing. However, **zoning regulations which exclude residential-design manufactured homes from single-family residential districts solely because they are manufactured homes cannot be adopted or enforced in Kansas.**

Because of the similarity of lot sizes needed, **multiple-wide manufactured homes** are sometime accommodated in neighborhoods of site-built homes. Their shorter length permits them to be oriented parallel to the street.

However, the longer 70' to 90' **single-wide manufactured homes** pose a problem in neighborhoods of site-built homes. If placed parallel to the street, they create a wide frontage which significantly increases the cost of utilities and streets. If placed perpendicular to the street and intermixed with site-built houses, the extension of the manufactured home into the rear yard tends to reduce the open space and privacy of adjacent neighbors. In practice, single-wide homes are usually angled on the lot in order to permit more windows on one side to have some view of the street. The effect is to further cause some disorientation in the relationship of two dissimilar types of structures. In general, the intermixing of single-wide manufactured homes with site-built houses tends to depreciate the value of the site-built houses.

EXISTING CODES FOR BENTON

The City of Benton adopts the same major codes as Butler County, such as the International Building Code, Uniform Plumbing Code, National Electrical Code, and International Mechanical Code. Butler County's current adopted codes also apply to all unincorporated areas within Butler County, including all of the Benton Planning Area outside of the City's boundaries.

Benton's adopted codes are reviewed and updated as necessary.

On the **Community Questionnaire**, participants were asked to what degree they felt the following issues are problems in Benton.

	Serious		Minor		No problem	
Poorly Maintained Housing	58	42%	70	51%	10	7%
Dilapidated Outbuildings	55	40%	72	52%	11	8%
Unsightly Outdoor Storage	44	34%	69	53%	17	13%
Unkempt Vacant Lots	37	28%	69	53%	24	18%
Inoperable Vehicles	35	26%	79	59%	21	16%
Barking Dogs	25	18%	57	42%	55	40%
Stray Animals	16	12%	65	49%	52	39%

Annexation

Annexation is the process by which a city expands its boundaries, in order to manage its physical growth in a sensible, predictable, and fiscally responsible manner.

Annexation brings property which has been under the jurisdiction of a county into the jurisdiction of a city. It is generally applied to land that is developed or about to be developed, and which uses or will use the city's utilities or other services.

Annexation allows a city government to exercise the regulatory authority necessary to protect public health and safety in peripheral urbanizing areas. It also ensures that residents and businesses who benefit from access to a city's facilities and services share fairly in the tax burden associated with constructing and maintaining those facilities and services.

Ideally, annexation occurs with the consent of the property owners involved. Unilateral annexation by a city is also an option, though it is more time consuming and complex than a consent annexation.

ANNEXATION IN KANSAS

State statutes governing annexation in Kansas were revised in 2005, making the process more complex and very detailed. K.S.A. 12-520 through 12-520(c) stipulate a variety of conditions that must be met before a city can annex land, mostly having to do with public ownership, agricultural use, fire districts, and with how contiguous the proposed annexation is to existing city boundaries.

Platted areas of any size which adjoin a city are the most eligible for annexation. Limitations exist on unplatted land over 21 acres in size. Unplatted agricultural land of 21 acres or more must have the consent of the landowner.

When property which does not adjoin city limits is annexed, it is termed an **island annexation**. In Kansas, such property may be annexed without a formal hearing by the county, but only if the property is *city owned*. For such property that is *not* owned by the city, even if the landowner consents, annexation must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

Whether a proposed annexation does or does not meet any of K.S.A. 12-520's conditions for annexation, **a city has the right to petition** their Board of County Commissioners to consider an annexation. Under K.S.A. 12-521, the Board of County Commissioners must consider the matter at a **quasi-judicial hearing**, where the Board is required to make its findings based on a preponderance of evidence.

PETITION OR CONSENT ANNEXATION

A property owner may petition a city to have their property annexed, or may consent to annexation when approached by the city. Annexation is generally a straightforward process under either of these circumstances.

Cooperation often occurs as a result of an **Agreement to Not Protest Annexation**, also known as a *No Protest Agreement* or *Waiver of Annexation*. Most cities require a landowner to sign such an agreement before allowing municipal utilities to be extended to serve property outside the city limits. In an *Agreement to Not Protest Annexation*, the property owner agrees not to oppose current or future annexation, as a condition of receiving municipal utilities or other city services. Without such agreements, annexing land after development takes place can be very difficult and costly for a city.

In general, the City of Benton does not currently require an *Agreement to Not Protest Annexation* before providing utilities to properties outside the city limits.

UNILATERAL ANNEXATION

A city can unilaterally annex land, without the cooperation of all affected property owners, but the process is long and difficult.

For a unilateral annexation in Kansas, K.S.A. 12-520a requires extensive notification to public agencies in the area, including any city, county or regional planning commissions with jurisdiction. In the case of Benton, this would involve both the City and the County Planning Commissions, which would each be required to review the proposed annexation and make a finding of its compatibility or incompatibility with any adopted comprehensive plans or other land use plans.

K.S.A. 12-520b requires the City to have a **plan for providing appropriate public facilities and services** to annexed properties. The plan must describe the extent of public improvements, their financing, and provide a time-table to ensure that facilities and services will be available when needed. The plan must be in *"sufficient detail to provide a reasonable person with a full and complete understanding of the intentions of the city for each major municipal service"*.

K.S.A. 12-531 and 532 establish a procedure for **deannexation** of unilaterally annexed land. Three years after a unilateral annexation, county commissioners are required to hold a hearing to determine if city services have been provided as required. If services have not been provided within two and one-half years following the hearing, the county may order the city to deannex the land.

Resource: *Annexation in Kansas: A Manual Concerning the Annexation Powers and Duties of Cities* (2015 Edition) is published by the League of Kansas Municipalities (LKM). Among other things, it provides samples of plans for extensions of municipal services, and various procedural forms. It is available through the LKM website at LKM.org. It is due to be updated in late 2023.

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

Benton currently has no extraterritorial jurisdiction, for either its Zoning or its Subdivision Regulations. Nevertheless, City leaders should be aware of the option.

Kansas statutes (K.S.A. 12-715b et seq.) allow a city to extend regulatory control beyond its boundaries, through zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, building codes, and floodplain regulations, within three miles of its city limits—but only if the county does not choose to assume the responsibility,

A city's extraterritorial jurisdiction is the area of land beyond the city limits, in which the city's zoning or subdivision authority is exercised. Butler County allows cities in the county to have extraterritorial jurisdiction if they so desire.

There is an **exemption for agricultural uses and related agricultural structures**. Cities are not authorized to adopt regulations outside the city which apply to or affect "...any land in excess of three acres under one ownership which is used only for agricultural purposes". This exception, however, does not apply to floodplain regulations in areas designated by FEMA as floodplain.

If a City administers Zoning or Subdivision Regulations in an extraterritorial jurisdiction, **at least two members of the City Planning Commission must reside outside of the city** but within three miles of the city limits. (See K.S.A. 12-744.)

In general, a city's extraterritorial jurisdiction may extend for a maximum of three miles outside the city limits, but not more than one-half the distance to another city, nor into another county, nor beyond the City's Planning Area as designated in its approved Comprehensive Plan.

EXTRATERRITORIAL ZONING REQUIREMENTS

Before a City can implement extraterritorial zoning, its Zoning Regulations must authorize it, and incorporate provisions to apply it.

A city must notify the board of county commissioners of its intention to adopt extraterritorial zoning regulations, in writing, 60 days before initiating such regulations by ordinance.

Joint Planning Option A rarely used alternative to accomplish extraterritorial zoning is to establish a joint, metropolitan or regional planning commission that includes both the city and the county. In such a case, the land proposed for extraterritorial zoning has to have been included in a comprehensive plan which was recommended by one of those two planning commissions, and which was then approved by either the city governing body or the board of county commissioners.

EXTRATERRITORIAL SUBDIVISION REQUIREMENTS

According to K.S.A. 12-749, a city planning commission may apply subdivision regulations to land outside of but within three miles of the city limits, provided such land is in the same county, and does not extend more than half the distance toward another city which has adopted subdivision regulations. A county may establish subdivision regulations for all or for parts of the unincorporated areas of the county.

If both a city and county want simultaneous subdivision jurisdiction in the same area, a joint city-county subdivision committee may be formed. According to K.S.A. 12-750(a), such a committee must be composed of at least three planning commission members from both entities, who then adopt and administer mutually agreed upon regulations. This is generally considered to be an extremely cumbersome method of subdivision regulation, and is rarely used in Kansas.

Site Plan Review & Approval

Currently, Benton has not adopted any Site Plan Review standards, and has no Site Plan Approval process in place. City leaders should nevertheless be aware of the option.

A Site Plan is a detailed drawing that shows how a parcel of land will be developed. Site Plan Review is the process of reviewing site plans to ensure that the proposed land use meets the community's specified design standards. Site Plan Approval is typically required for all new development, except for single-family dwellings and certain duplexes.

Authority State statute K.S.A. 12-755(a)(4) allows for Site Plan Approval to be authorized in a community's Zoning Regulations, in order to "*control the aesthetics of redevelopment or new development*".

Site Plan Review (SPR) is intended to maintain and enhance the quality of a city's built environment. SPR can help improve the livability of neighborhoods, express community identity, preserve a sense of place, and contribute to a positive community image. Properly applied SPR standards can enhance the appearance of commercial areas, screen undesirable views, and improve relationships among non-compatible land uses. Over time, the Site Plan Approval process can increase property values and improve quality of life for the entire community.

Applicability SPR typically applies to all new development except single-family dwellings or duplexes which are not contained in a courtyard setting. SPR also applies to extensive alterations of existing sites and structures. SPR Criteria generally apply only to those parts of a development project which can be seen from public rights-of-way, such as building exteriors, accessory structures, parking areas, outdoor lighting, and landscaping.

Design Criteria: Written and illustrated Design Criteria may be adopted, to establish the esthetic standards utilized during the Site Plan Review process. Design Criteria can include both streetscape criteria which address improvements in the public rights-of-way, and other criteria which address design elements that may be used on private property.

Design Criteria are **not** intended to impose inflexible rules of style, size, material, or color on private and public spaces. Rather, design choices must be based on sound fundamental principles of successful planning, and then adapted to the specific needs of Benton.

Site Plan Review Committee: The Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing and making final decisions on all site plans submitted for approval. However, the review process can be facilitated by use of a Site Plan Review Committee, tasked with making recommendations to the Planning Commission. The Committee usually includes members of the Planning Commission, as well as a selection of local residents with backgrounds in design or construction.

Plans for a proposed project, whether new construction or significant renovation, are reviewed from the perspective of how the exterior of the building and the design of its site visually impact the community, as well as how it accommodates vehicle and pedestrian traffic, parking, utilities, drainage, trash services, emergency vehicle access, and other features.

Site Plan Approval often **helps makes development possible**. By clearly specifying the required conditions for a project, it ensures that new development is compatible with the character of the community, and will contribute to the Benton's future quality of life.

CHAPTER 8. Resources

In order to implement the goals of this Comprehensive Plan over the next twenty years, Benton's Planning Commission members and Governing Body will need to be aware of available resources of information and funding.

Though resources change over time—existing programs may be ended or defunded, and new programs may begin—this chapter will provide an overview of some of the state, regional, and national programs that are often useful in helping Kansas communities achieve their planning goals. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather to demonstrate the range of available possibilities.

Background on existing programs, information resources, and potential funding options are organized within this chapter under the following general headings:

- Seeking Grants
- Regional Cooperation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation Programs

Seeking Grants

Grants are available from both public and private sources. Public funding may include local capital improvement funds, bond referendums, or state and federal grant programs. Federal and state grants are often matching grant programs, and require partial local funding of each project. Private funding sources may include grants from foundations, land acquisition with the help of land trusts, or corporate sponsorships of specific projects or special events.

Some grants are available only to governmental entities, and some only to private nonprofits—so having a strong and active partnership between the City and local nonprofit organizations offers access to the greatest range of funding opportunities.

Competition for grant funding is fierce. The advantages of procuring outside funding should always be weighed against the sometimes substantial costs of grant research, selection, preparation, submittal, and administration.

To successfully compete for grant funding, carefully select projects that are well matched to the specific criteria of each grant. Be prepared to budget funds for either staff time for grant proposal preparation, or to employ a professional grant writer.

Ideally, funds for the City's portion of matching grants should be pre-approved by the Governing Body, so they are readily available when needed. If a City is willing to raise their percentage of matching funds even a little beyond a grant's required minimum, the likelihood of winning the grant may increase substantially.

To help grant seekers navigate the hundreds of thousands of potential grants available in the U.S. in any given year, there are any number of online grants search websites available, most of them basing their data on Form 990s filed with the Internal Revenue Service. Some are free, but most require a monthly fee.

Two websites that offer more than Form 990 data are Candid and GrantStation. FoundationSearch offers grant information through a map interface. Other options include Grants.gov, Kansas GrantWatch, the Rural Health Information Hub, and GrantFinder. Training in grant writing is available from organizations such as The Grantsmanship Center.

The [National League of Cities](#) also provides grant information to its members.

Regional Cooperation

Some factors impacting a community's economic development extend beyond planning area boundaries into a regional context. In particular, communication systems and transportation systems must be considered from a larger perspective. Environmental issues are also usually regional in nature—including air quality, water quantity and quality, and drainage and flooding.

Rather than having communities undercut each other as they compete for economic opportunities, **economic development** is most successfully achieved through cooperation on a regional level—with other governmental entities, with regional agencies, and with private organizations. Such **joint undertakings** can reduce the cost of providing a facility or service individually, improve its quality, and often make a project or program possible which would not be economically feasible if supported only by a single city. Regional cooperation is also sometimes an eligibility requirement of various state and federal grant programs, or may qualify grant recipients for added financial incentives.

The City of Benton is indirectly represented in many regional organizations by the Butler County Board of Commissioners, whose members often serve on the boards of such organizations.

In order to effectively manage regional issues, many state and federal agencies operate by regional divisions. In addition, cities and counties often cooperate across political boundaries by utilizing **intergovernmental agreements**.

The **Interlocal Cooperation Act**, *K.S.A. 12-2901 et seq.*, is the principal statute which authorizes cooperation between public agencies and private groups for specific public improvements and services. Such interlocal agreements require the approval of the State Attorney General, and must be filed with the Secretary of State and recorded with the County Register of Deeds.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Community Foundations are 501(c)3 philanthropic nonprofit corporations that provide a legal vehicle for local residents to make charitable gifts back to their communities. They offer a variety of grant opportunities.

For smaller communities, it may be more cost-effective to set up a local fund with a larger community foundation, which then handles administrative responsibilities.

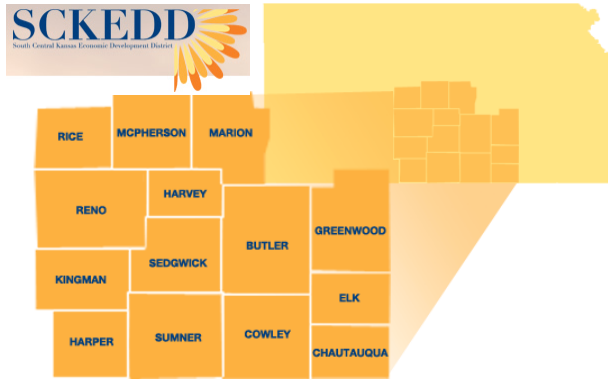
- Kansas Rural Communities Foundation
- Central Kansas Community Foundation

Butler County Research & Extension Office The extension service is a partnership between Kansas State University and federal, state, and county governments, with offices in every Kansas county. The Extension Service does not write applications or provide grants, but does provide many **training programs for officials and civic leaders** on the "how to" of community development. They offer classes and technical information that can enhance economic viability and quality of life.

KSU Extension also administers the **First Impressions** program, which helps communities learn about their strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of a first-time visitor. Trained volunteers from a comparable community visit unannounced, and evaluate appearances, access to services; friendliness, and other community attributes. They follow standardized review procedures to document their visit and report on their findings.

South Central Kansas Economic Development District (SCKEDD)

Established in 1972, with headquarters in Bel Aire, SCKEDD is a nonprofit membership organization. It partners with communities in 14 south central Kansas counties, including Butler County, to support efforts to improve economic vitality, community infrastructure, and housing quality.



SCKEDD services include **loan programs** that provide access to various Small Business or Rural Business Development Loans, as well as direct loans, to help provide startup capital to new innovative companies, and expansion capital for established companies.

SCKEDD has **grant specialists** available to help communities find and apply for grants to attract new businesses, accelerate job growth, and encourage new private development. SCKEDD **community grants** and **rural development grants** help fund improvements to community facilities, water and sewer systems, and housing rehabilitation.

SCKEDD has **housing specialists** that work with communities to renovate existing housing—to attract new residents, a skilled workforce, private investment and economic growth. It also conducts a **weatherization program** that helps eligible low-income households improve their home's energy efficiency.

Housing

Over the course of the next twenty years, Benton must both begin to improve its older housing and develop substantial amounts of new high-quality housing of various types.

There are a number of resources available that could aid the City in pursuit of these goals.

- The federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program provides federal grants to state and local governments to create affordable housing. The program can assist with rehabilitation, rental housing, new construction, and home ownership targeted to low and moderate income families.

In Kansas, HOME funds are distributed through the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation. Their First Time Home Buyer Program provides forgivable loans to Income-eligible households that have not owned a home in the past three years.

Programs to help provide affordable mortgages for low and moderate income people are typically administered by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) of the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**, or the **Rural Development (RD)** office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. RD also helps rural residents make health and safety repairs to their homes.

- Information on various types of **HUD loans** is available at www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/sfh/ins.
- Information on **RD Single Family Housing programs** is available at www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/single-family-housing-programs
- Information on **RD Multifamily Housing programs** is available at www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/multifamily-housing-programs

Economic Development

Cities have a vital interest in promoting economic development. Although economic development is not typically a responsibility of the Planning Commission, many planning decisions have a profound impact on the local economy. From housing options, to infrastructure upgrades, to downtown streetscaping—planning decisions affect quality of life, which is fundamental to successful economic development.

GOVERNMENTAL TOOLS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs) These bonds are a potentially useful tool to encourage economic development and job creation. IRBs are issued by a government, but at the request of and on behalf of a private business, in order to support a specific project, such as the construction or expansion of a new manufacturing plant.

Since the bonds are issued by a government entity, they are tax exempt, and therefore the private business receives a lower interest rate on funds for startup. The business is responsible for repaying the IRB. The sponsoring government holds title to the collateral until the bonds are paid in full.

There are federal limits on the amount of IRBs that can be issued, and the uses to which the funds can be put.

- **Small Issue IRBs** are restricted to the construction, expansion, or renovation of manufacturing facilities. They are generally limited to \$1 million, but under certain circumstances that amount can go up to \$10 million.
- **Exempt Facility IRBs** have no size limits, but they can be used only for specific types of projects, such as water and sewer facilities, electricity and natural gas facilities, and certain types of rental housing.

Property Tax Exemptions Under various federal, state, and local programs, property taxes for certain property owners may be either eliminated or reduced. For instance, religious organizations and governments do not pay property taxes at all.

Other property owners may not be completely exempt, but may have their property taxes reduced by a specific percentage. For instance, veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces qualify for a partial exemption on taxes for their homes. Exemptions are often made for people over 65 years of age, for people with disabilities, and for agricultural properties.

Property Tax Funding for Recruiting Industry & Manufacturing Under K.S.A. 12-1617(h), cities are authorized to annually levy a property tax "...for the purpose of creating a fund to be used in securing industries or manufacturing institutions for such city or near its environs..."

The proposed levy must be initially approved by the voters at a referendum, may not exceed one mill, and is not subject to the property tax lid. Monies may also be expended from the general fund; however, they would be subject to the tax lid.

Such funding should be used judiciously and strategically, but occasionally may be necessary for a successful business recruitment effort.

FEDERAL & STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Some federal economic development programs are administered by state agencies. State economic development initiatives may create state programs, or simply enable local programs. In the 2010s, many state programs in Kansas were discontinued, or had their budgets severely cut or entirely defunded.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program:

This program distributes federal funds to Kansas cities and counties via the Kansas Department of Commerce. To receive funds, a project must meet at least one of three federally mandated criteria:

- Benefit low- and moderate-income individuals
- Remove or prevent slum or blight conditions
- Eliminate an urgent need created by a disaster, when local funds are unavailable

The State of Kansas receives an annual allocation for CDBG grants, which are distributed in four categories—Annual Competitive Grants, Economic Development Grants, Commercial Rehabilitation Grants, and Urgent Need Grants.

- **Annual Competitive Grants** Awarded annually, these grants apply to projects such as improvements to water, sewer, natural gas or electrical systems, fire protection, housing rehabilitation, demolition, bridges, community and senior centers, streets, architectural barrier removal, and public service activities.
- **Economic Development Grants** Business finance grants awarded to cities or counties are loaned in turn to private businesses that create or retain permanent jobs. Funding is also available for infrastructure improvements that directly create or retain permanent jobs. At least 51% of the jobs created or retained must meet HUD's low- and moderate-income standard.

- **Commercial Rehabilitation Grants** This is a relatively new CDBG program, designed to assist private business owners in rehabilitating downtown commercial buildings to stem the tide of decay. The buildings must house viable businesses that will carry on for-profit business activity.
- **Urgent Need Grants** Provided on an as-needed basis, these grants assist a local government to meet community needs created by a severe natural or other disaster that poses an immediate threat to community health or welfare, when no other financial resources are available.

Workforce Development Programs Federal funding under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act supports state workforce development programs, which are available to employers at no cost. Workforce Center services may include job listings, applicant pre-screening, assessment testing, interview scheduling, veteran services, and current labor market data.

Rural Development Kansas Programs The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers a number of programs through its Rural Development offices in each state, offering loans, grants and loan guarantees to support essential services such as housing, economic development, health care, first responder services and equipment, and water, electric and communications infrastructure. They also promote economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks, credit unions, and community-managed lending pools.

- A summary of all major RD programs is available at www.rd.usda.gov/files/RD_ProgramMatrix.pdf

BONDS

Kansas Development Finance Authority (KDFA): KDFA is authorized to issue tax-exempt or taxable bonds for public and private educational facilities, healthcare facilities, and to finance affordable multifamily housing. It operates the **Beginning Farmer program** to provide start-up funding for agricultural businesses.

KDFA can also issue obligations for qualifying private activities, including energy and electric generation and transmission projects and facilities; education facilities; energy conservation improvements; manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution facilities; communication facilities; research facilities; transportation; corporate and management offices; and computer services.

KDFA works in partnership with other state departments to implement various low-interest tax exempt bond programs for municipalities, through five state revolving loan funds.

- *Kansas Clean Water Supply Revolving Loan Fund Program* for municipal and rural waste water systems (with KDHE)
- *Public Water Supply Revolving Loan Fund Program* which targets public drinking water systems (with KDHE)
- *Transportation Revolving Loan Fund* to provide financing for local road and bridge infrastructure improvements (with KDOT)
- *Communications Revolving Loan Fund Program* to upgrade communications equipment (with KDOT)
- *Investments in Major Projects and Comprehensive Training Program (IMPACT)* to issue bonds which provides funds for job training, and for major project investments for companies which are locating or expanding their business in Kansas (with Kansas Department of Commerce)

TAX INCENTIVES

The State of Kansas provides a variety of tax incentives for business development, through income tax credits or deductions, property tax exemptions or abatements, and sales tax exemptions.

RESOURCES

- Information on state economic development programs is available on the Kansas Department of Commerce Programs & Services web page.
- Information on economic development tools for Kansas communities is available from the *League of Kansas Municipalities*, in a 2013 publication called Economic Development Tools for Kansas Municipalities. An updated version will be published in late 2023.

Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation Programs

Surface Transportation Block Grants (STBG) Previous federal funding programs that supported development of the bulk of the nation's bike paths and pedestrian trails have now all been replaced with a **Transportation Alternatives (TA)** set-aside of STBG program funding.

In Kansas, federal STBG/TA set-aside funds are administered by the Kansas Department of Transportation. TA projects are selected through a statewide competitive process. For each fiscal year, KDOT allocates about half of its TA funds to projects in smaller Kansas communities.

Only entities with taxing authority, such as local governments or school districts, are eligible to apply for TA funds, although nonprofits can and often do partner with cities on TA projects. The TA program provides no money upfront but rather is a **cost reimbursement program**. TA funds may pay for up to 80% of eligible expenses, but local matching funds are required to pay for at least 20% of project costs.

Transportation Alternatives program projects can include on-road and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, the conversion of abandoned rail corridors to railtrails, construction of scenic overlooks, and the preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities.

Certain **environmental projects** are also eligible for TA funding, including erosion control and stormwater mitigation activities, invasive species prevention, the construction of wildlife corridors, and billboard inventories and removal of illegal and non-conforming billboards.

For more information, see the [KDOT Transportation Alternatives Program Guide 2020](#).

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) This is a federal program intended to make it safer for more children to walk and bike to school, thereby reducing childhood obesity, as well as the traffic accidents, wasted fuel, and air pollution that result from traffic congestion near schools. More information on Safe Routes to School is available at www.saferoutesinfo.org, and on the KDOT website at www.ksdot.org/burTrafficEng/sztoolbox/default.asp.

A city or a school district can apply for 100% SRTS funding to plan, design, and build projects that improve the ability of students to walk and bike to school, for projects within about two miles of a school.

Eligible projects include sidewalk improvements, traffic calming and speed reduction improvements, pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities, secure bike parking, and traffic diversion improvements

SRTS also funds activities that encourage walking and bicycling to school, including public awareness and outreach campaigns, traffic education and enforcement near schools, and student training programs on bicycle and pedestrian safety.

School Zone Program The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) funds a School Zone Program that can help towns with a population of fewer than 20,000 people improve their school zones with pavement striping, school zone signs, and reduced speed assemblies. For more information, see www.ksdot.org/burTrafficEng/sztoolbox/School_Zone_Program.asp.

Walking School Bus Consider implementing a Walking School Bus program, which arranges for children to walk in groups, with adults along to supervise. The program can be as informal as a couple of families taking turns walking their kids to school—or as structured as a defined route with meeting points, a timetable, and a schedule of trained volunteers. For more information, see the website at www.walkingschoolbus.org.

CHAPTER 9. Plan Implementation

This chapter reviews methods for implementing this Comprehensive Plan, and provides an **overview of Planning Commissioners' statutory responsibilities**.

City planning can be defined as a decision-making process which is expressed in the form of a plan. A plan typically **defines community goals** (physical, social and economic), and includes project proposals and policy statements, all aimed at the **broad objective of improving a community's quality of life**.

Policies are established principles and guidelines, intended to ensure that every important decision is made with long-term goals in mind.

- **Policy Resource:** The League of Kansas Municipalities provides sample policy statements on a variety of subjects, available to members on their website.

Leadership and organization are the keys to successful implementation of this Comprehensive Plan.

It takes a coordinated effort to successfully achieve community goals, so a good working relationship among governmental agencies, private organizations, potential developers and citizens is essential. Assigning specific responsibility for specific proposals is also crucially important—because in community-wide endeavors, "everybody's business" can easily become "nobody's business", and proposals can be forgotten.

FUNCTIONS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This Comprehensive Plan provides direction on both short-term and long range planning objectives, so it is specific in some matters and general in others. As individual planning situations are addressed over the course of the 20-year Planning Period, each will need to be considered based on conditions current at the time. Nevertheless, every decision should be rooted in the overall planning goals expressed in this Plan.

A basic purpose of planning is to **help guide land use** in an orderly manner, minimizing conflicts between various users of land. Planning also allows **community services** to be provided efficiently and economically. Compromise in the location of a community service facility affects its efficiency, and therefore its long-term costs to local taxpayers. To prevent such compromises, the process of planning is a means of **making better short-range decisions by relating them to long-range goals**.

Among other functions, this Comprehensive Plan:

- Compiles information helpful to City officials when they establish policies and make planning decisions.
- Assists potential developers to understand long-range community intentions.
- Serves as a planning rationale for administering City Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, providing a basis for making decisions that are "reasonable" under the law and therefore defensible in court, and for reviewing plats in terms of their fit with City growth policies and the capacity of existing community facilities and infrastructure.
- Is often a prerequisite for applications to state and federal grant programs which could benefit the City and the Planning Area.
- Helps to coordinate planning efforts among the City of Benton, USD 375, Butler County, the State of Kansas, and the federal government.

LEGAL BASIS

According to State statute K.S.A. 12-747, a planning commission is authorized to make a comprehensive plan for the development of a city, as well as any unincorporated territory outside the city which the planning commission believes is a constituent of the "total community of which the city is a part".

By statute, a comprehensive plan in Kansas must include information on existing conditions and trends related to land use, population, public facilities, transportation, economic conditions and natural resources, and must also include the commission's recommendations for development within the planning area. Statutes also allow for the inclusion of "any other element deemed necessary to the comprehensive plan".

Adoption & Approval Process

Adoption by the Planning Commission For a completed comprehensive plan to become effective, it must be formally adopted as a whole or in parts by a **resolution** of the Planning Commission, after a **Public Hearing** which has been properly advertised beforehand. Adoption must be based on a **majority vote of the total membership** of the Planning Commission. A certified copy of the adopted plan or part, together with a written summary of the Hearing, must then be submitted to the City's Governing Body with a recommendation for approval.

Approval by the Governing Body After receiving the certified copy of the plan or part of the plan, and a written summary of the Hearing (which can be unapproved Minutes of the Hearing), the Governing Body may choose one of three actions.

- The Governing Body may choose to **approve** the comprehensive plan as recommended by the Planning Commission, by publishing an **ordinance** of approval.
- By at least a 2/3 majority vote, the Governing Body may **override** the Planning Commission's recommendations.
- The Governing Body may **return** the Plan to the Planning Commission for further consideration, along with a statement specifying the basis for the Governing Body's failure to approve or disapprove.

After considering the returned Plan, the Planning Commission may provide its reasons and resubmit its original recommendations, or submit an amended recommendation. The Planning Commission must deliver its recommendations to the Governing Body following the Commission's next regular meeting after receipt of the Governing Body's report, or else the Governing Body must consider the Commission's inaction as a resubmission of the original recommendations and proceed accordingly. When the Governing Body receives a resubmitted Plan, it may, by a simple majority, either adopt the Plan, or revise and adopt the Plan, or it may choose to take no action.

Copies of the Plan An attested copy of an adopted and approved Comprehensive Plan, and any amendments to it, must be sent to all other taxing subdivisions in the Planning Area which request a copy of the Plan.

Annual Review & Amendments

In order to maintain the viability of the Plan under State statutes, **at least once each year the Planning Commission must review** or reconsider the Plan or any of its parts, and may propose amendments, extensions or additions to it. Amendments to the plan are made by the same procedures as required for the original adoption process, including a public hearing.

By statute, an approved plan or part of the plan "*... shall constitute the basis or guide for public action to insure a coordinated and harmonious development or redevelopment which will best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare as well as a wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.*"

Although the Kansas Supreme Court views the adoption and annual review of a comprehensive plan as a "legislative function", note that a plan is still a "guide", and **actual implementation must take place within the democratic processes of local government and other agencies.**

On a nationwide scale, comprehensive plans are assuming **an increasingly important role in land use litigation.**

A comprehensive plan must be consistent with the regulatory tools for its implementation, especially zoning and subdivision regulations. That consistence, or its lack, is often the crux of land use lawsuit decisions.

Planning Commission Responsibilities

The Benton City Planning Commission was originally created in 1977, under Ordinance No. 212. According to City Code, the Commission must have seven members. Of those members, five must be residents of the City of Benton, and two must reside outside of the City but within the Planning Area. Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor, with the consent of the City Council.

Planning Commission members serve three-year staggered terms. The Commission operates under its adopted Bylaws, which have been approved by the Governing Body.

As the authorized agency under State statutes, the Planning Commission's major responsibility is to **prepare, adopt and maintain the Comprehensive Plan.** The Commission should also undertake various responsibilities in implementing the Plan, including:

- **Review the Comprehensive Plan annually, as required by State statute**, and report its status to the Governing Body. Such annual reviews often result in only minor changes to the Plan, but it is recommended that a major review should be conducted at least once every five years, to update and revise goals and priorities.
[K.S.A. 12-747(d)]
- As required by K.S.A. 12-748, review public improvement, facility and utility projects to determine their **conformance to the Comprehensive Plan.**
- Prepare, adopt and maintain **Zoning Regulations** and **Subdivision Regulations** for the City, by holding public hearings and making recommendations to the Governing Body.

- Hold hearings on proposed **vacations** of rights-of-way and easements, and make recommendations to the Governing Body.
- Review proposed **annexations**, and make recommendations to the Governing Body.
- Undertake development of **neighborhood or project plans**, to provide more detailed plans to develop new neighborhoods or rehabilitate older neighborhoods, or for special projects in the Planning Area.
- Assist the Governing Body on **special planning projects**, including economic development efforts, capital improvement planning, and grant applications.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Public engagement in the planning process—not only by officials, but by individuals and groups of citizens, civic organizations and potential developers—is essential for a successful outcome.

Public participation should go beyond simply informing the public of planning activities. **Encourage feedback** from the public, so people can readily communicate their ideas about the kind of community they want to live in, and actively participate in the development and review of planning proposals.

Since plans and their implementation affect people and their property, it is extremely important that the planning process be conducted within an open democratic framework. To successfully implement Comprehensive Plan goals, pursue a variety of strategies to encourage public engagement, including:

- Conduct business and hearings in **open meetings**. Give adequate notice, and provide agendas. Encourage the public to voice their opinions and contribute their ideas. Take minutes, and make them available to the public.

- When preparing plans and considering regulatory decisions, specifically **involve affected individuals**, including residents and business owners.
- Make planning proposals, plans, reports, maps and regulations available on the City website. For people without internet access, printed planning documents should be available for review at City Hall.

NEIGHBORHOOD & PROJECT PLANS

Due to their large scale and long-range perspective, comprehensive plans are necessarily generalized. As specific areas approach the point of active development, the Planning Commission may require individualized neighborhood and project plans based on more current and specific information.

Neighborhood and project plans may serve simply as policy guidelines for future decisions, or they may be formally adopted and approved as an element of the Comprehensive Plan.

A **neighborhood plan** typically analyzes in detail the land use, transportation, and public facility needs of a part of the Planning Area which poses unusual, difficult or new conditions. A neighborhood plan might deal with an area as small as a block or as large as a major segment of the Planning Area. They are often the first step taken in efforts to rehabilitate older neighborhoods.

Neighborhood plans can aid in making decisions on current and future land use proposals, capital improvement projects, and applications for zoning, subdivision plats, and annexations. They can also help facilitate a good working relationship between developers and area residents.

A **project plan** is a detailed description of the proposed development of a specific site for a particular purpose, such as a park, recreation area, public building, or industrial tract. They are often prepared as part of a grant application or bond issue, or as a result of funding becoming available from such sources.

Neighborhood and project plans often focus on a community's historic downtown, on specific business districts or residential neighborhoods, or on areas being considered for annexation. In their simplest form, they may consist of simply a drawing and a short explanatory report. More complex issues or areas, however, may require a more complex plan.

Property owners and potential developers who may be affected by such plans should always be invited to participate in their preparation.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN (CIP)

Financing and constructing public improvement projects is a complex process. A Capital Improvement Plan is a long-range fiscal management tool which is used to establish the priority, timing, cost estimates and funding sources for public physical improvements, typically covering a period of four to six years.

A CIP does not deal with annually recurring **operating expenses**, except to note the effect which a new facility or improvement may have on future operating budgets. The current year of a CIP is the most detailed, and is often adopted as the City's capital improvements budget along with the City's annual operating budget.

A CIP is an essential tool for coordinating the sequence of financing and construction for any project involving joint funding, including public-private partnerships. Projects which incorporate funding from county, state or federal sources may require **scheduling at least several years in advance**.

A CIP is also an effective way to guide the direction and timing of **subdivision development**. This is particularly important in areas that have been unilaterally annexed by the City, where there are **stringent legal requirements for the timing of the installation of public improvements**.

Benton has a Capital Improvements Plan. While Planning Commission members would not be directly involved with its preparation, they should understand how a CIP can support the implementation of a Comprehensive Plan and the community goals expressed in it.

PROJECT REVIEW

Once a Comprehensive Plan has been approved by the Governing Body, and its effectuating ordinance is published, K.S.A. 12-748 establishes a procedure for Planning Commission review of any public projects proposed in the Plan.

Any public improvement, public facility or public utility project recommended in the Plan **must be submitted to the Planning Commission for review**. Before the Governing Body may proceed with construction of the project, the Planning Commission must determine that the proposed project **conforms with the Comprehensive Plan**. The Commission must make a determination **within 60 days**, or the project is automatically deemed to have been approved.

In the event the Planning Commission finds that the proposed project **does not conform** to the Plan, the Planning Commission is required to submit their findings in writing to the Governing Body. The Governing Body may, by a majority vote, choose to override the findings of the Planning Commission and proceed with the project. In this event, the statute states that the Comprehensive Plan *"...for the area concerned shall be deemed to have been amended"*. The Planning Commission should then proceed to revise and **formally amend the Comprehensive Plan**, so that the Plan conforms with the approved project.

Zoning cases and plats should be reviewed by the Planning Commission to determine their conformance to the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, as should **projects in a city's capital improvement plan**. K.S.A. 12-748(b) provides that if a project in a capital improvement plan is reviewed by the Planning Commission and found to be in conformance to the Comprehensive Plan, then no further Planning Commission review is necessary, except as may be required by zoning and subdivision regulations.

The Planning Commission's recommendations on zoning cases, plats and public projects are intended to enable the Governing Body to make **decisions that support long-range planning goals**, while retaining their final decision-making authority.

STATUTORY DEBT LIMITATION

Typically, under Kansas law, the bonded debt limitation for a city may be calculated by taking 30% of the total of a city's tangible assessed valuation, including its motor vehicle valuations. The combination of a city's general obligation and its special assessment debt may not exceed this number. Bonds issued for general sewer and water work, and revenue bonds, are not included in the debt limitation.

Good municipal management maintains a continuing effort to keep public facilities up-to-date, while not allowing the mill levy for indebtedness to fluctuate too greatly. Prudent financial planning will enhance Benton's ability to reach the goals established in this Comprehensive Plan.

Taking Action

A number of planning goals for Benton were established during the process of developing this Comprehensive Plan. Community leaders should **regularly review goals and priorities, and revise them as necessary**, based on their urgency and the availability of resources. This process is often incorporated into the Planning Commission's required annual review of the Comprehensive Plan, and the Governing Body's annual budgeting process.

As each goal is addressed, an action program will need to be developed for its implementation. An **action program** is a way to make sure that goals turn into reality, by describing specific tasks that must be achieved in order to reach each goal. To be effective, an action program must include clear-cut implementation information for each goal:

- **Define the tasks** necessary to achieve the goal
- Determine **who is responsible** for making sure each task is achieved
- Set a **schedule** and a **deadline**
- Assign **resources** (funding, staff, etc.) sufficient to achieve each task
- Establish **communication** hierarchies (Who needs to know what, how soon?)

For significant public projects, be willing to **spend time and effort on the early stages of the planning process**—it will pay off later in community satisfaction with the overall success of the final project. Making good decisions at each step in a logical process of design helps prevent costly revisions later, during construction. Engaging the services of design professionals to help throughout the planning process, as opposed to waiting until you are ready for construction drawings, is recommended.

CHAPTER 10.

Benton's Planning Goals

This chapter provides an overview of Benton's comprehensive planning goals. It is intended as an aid to the City leaders and municipal staff who will be primarily responsible for seeing that these goals are implemented.

Planning goals must take into account the physical, social, economic and governmental needs of a community. Goals which are reasonable and well grounded, yet also purposeful and ambitious, can **help frame policies and focus decision-making**.

Meaningful goals will help Benton hone its unique identity, which in turn will distinguish it from other communities, and enhance its ability to compete for residents, resources, and economic development.

While Benton is a rural services and employment center,
it also serves as a bedroom community
for larger cities nearby—primarily Wichita and Andover.
It attracts families seeking small town ambience
and good schools for their kids.

Once people live in Benton,
they tend to stay.

More than working here,
living in Benton is the main goal of its residents.
Therefore, **housing** and **quality of life**
must be our highest priorities.

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

PLANNING GOALS — QUALITY OF LIFE	Priority (years)		
	<5	5-10	10-20
• Support existing community celebrations , and explore options to create additional opportunities for more local events.	ongoing		
• Support establishment of more child care options in Benton.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Support improved senior citizen programs & activities in Benton.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Plan for an outdoor public gathering space in Benton, flexible enough to support community events and celebrations which strengthen community ties.			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Environmental sustainability: Make leadership decisions that preserve clean air and water, protect the soil that supports agriculture, safeguard natural habitats and wildlife to maintain ecological diversity, and manage stormwater runoff to control flooding.	ongoing		
• Work to sustain and improve walkable neighborhoods , with a well-maintained sidewalk network linking residential neighborhoods to workplaces, schools, retail, parks, and other destinations.	ongoing		
• Work to activate downtown as a walkable destination , with shared on-street public parking, good lighting, bike racks, public art, street trees, and creative signage. Strive for a balance of workplaces, restaurants, services and retail.	ongoing		
• Design new developments to maximize connectivity and walkability , and pursue options to connect existing platted but undeveloped neighborhoods. In general, encourage traditional gridiron street networks, and discourage disconnected and car-dependent cul-de-sac development. Any cul-de-sacs that are developed should retain a pedestrian right-of-way or easement.	ongoing		

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

PLANNING GOALS – HOUSING	Priority (years)		
	<5	5-10	10-20
• Encourage development of quality rental housing .	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Encourage higher standards for existing rental housing .	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Plan to provide diverse housing options for one- or two-person households .		<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Support both renovation of existing homes and development of new housing, to create a range of housing options that will respond to changing population trends in Benton.	ongoing		
• In addition to development of single-family homes, support development of down-sized and accessible housing options, as well as housing options designed for multiple independent adults in one household .	ongoing		
• Encourage updating of Benton's smaller homes for use by one- or two- person households, especially young adults and down-sizing empty-nesters.	ongoing		
• Encourage development of various types of housing , including low-maintenance and accessible patio homes and small apartments, and duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes.	ongoing		
• Encourage platted rural subdivisions, as opposed to scattered large-lot residential development.	ongoing		
ZONING & CODE ENFORCEMENT			
• To prevent blight and preserve property values, continue to invest City resources and target code enforcement efforts to eliminate dilapidated houses, manufactured homes, garages, sheds & other outbuildings.	ongoing		
• To maintain high-quality residential neighborhoods, augment City efforts to encourage homeowners, including landlords, to maintain their property .	ongoing		
• To support multi-generational households, encourage development of accessory dwelling units on single-family lots in appropriate locations – such as above-garage apartments, separate-access lower-level suites, or backyard cottages.	<input type="checkbox"/>		

PLANNING GOALS — DOWNTOWN	Priority (years)		
	<5	5-10	10-20
• Improve sidewalks downtown .	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Pursue strategies to reduce industrial uses and encourage more commercial uses for downtown buildings . Focus on attracting businesses which thrive in a walkable neighborhood, such as restaurants, small retail shops, service businesses, or professional offices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Encourage a local entrepreneur to open a restaurant/deli/marketplace downtown — a local option, rather than pursuing a fast food chain restaurant.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Pursue strategies to improve the general appearance of building facades downtown .		<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Consider pursuing a downtown concept plan for a downtown streetscape & future downtown development. Consider adding curb extensions at the intersections of Main and Henrie, and Main and Benton Street landscaped with street trees, benches and bike racks. Consider ornamental lighting.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Consider options for infill development downtown .			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Consider street trees downtown for a better pedestrian experience.			<input type="checkbox"/>
ZONING & CODE ENFORCEMENT			
• Consider adopting an ordinance that prohibits the use of downtown commercial properties for ground floor storage.	<input type="checkbox"/>		

PLANNING GOALS — PARKS	Priority (years)		
	<5	5-10	10-20
• Develop a new Splashpad in Benton.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Plant shade trees along Two Angels Trail at Benton Prairie Park.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Name the new Park located on City property between 20th Street & K-254, where the Bike Track was installed in 2022.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Install basic Dog Park fencing in the new Park located on City property between 20th Street & K-254 (by spring of 2024).	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Add amenities to the Dog Park , starting with shade trees and seating. Consider starting a volunteer group to help with ongoing maintenance, funding, and organizing special events.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Replace the gravel path at Prairie Park with concrete.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Develop a new recreational Park in Benton, with Ballfields .		<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Establish a stocking program at Prairie Park pond. Eventually, consider adding a small fishing dock , with a designated ADA parking space and an accessible sidewalk connecting it to the parking area.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Improve ADA access to all park facilities . Where necessary, add accessible routes linking facilities to ADA parking .	ongoing		
• Provide accessible furnishings and equipment , such as ADA-compliant picnic tables and play structures.	ongoing		
• Continue to maintain a cooperative working relationship between the City and the School District regarding recreational facilities and programs.	ongoing		

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

PLANNING GOALS — SIDEWALKS & BIKE RACKS	Priority (years)		
	<5	5-10	10-20
• Identify and repair or remove deteriorated sidewalks that are in such poor condition as to be a liability risk for the City.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Select a bike rack design for Benton that provides two-point support, is lockable, made of low maintenance materials, and ADA compliant.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Consider instituting a Bicycle Rack installation program , through the City or volunteer efforts, or both. Determine locations where racks are needed, looking particularly at schools, parks, downtown, and similar destinations.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Develop a plan and a financial strategy to repair or replace sidewalks as needed, in targeted locations intended to create a walkable network connecting adjacent neighborhoods to downtown, schools, and parks.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Develop a Sidewalk System Expansion Plan , prioritizing new sidewalk installation to: 1) fill in gaps in the existing system; 2) link destinations such as schools, parks, and retail areas; and 3) expand the sidewalk system in residential neighborhoods.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Consider establishing an ongoing Sidewalk Maintenance Program where the adjacent property owner pays for the concrete for sidewalk replacement, and the City provides the labor to demolish the old sidewalk and install the new sidewalk.			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Pursue funding from KDOT's School Zone Program to install new and better crosswalks around the schools.	ongoing		
ZONING & CODE ENFORCEMENT			
• Adopt a municipal sidewalk policy that: 1) Stipulates an ongoing maintenance program for existing sidewalks. 2) Provides a means to retrofit new sidewalks into existing neighborhoods. 3) Addresses sidewalk construction in both new development and remodeling projects and 4) Defines funding methods	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Allocate a regular annual budget line item to fund sidewalk improvement & expansion projects .	<input type="checkbox"/>		

PLANNING GOALS – CITY FACILITIES	Priority (years)		
	<5	5-10	10-20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider acquiring land or an easement to allow a monumental wayfinding sign to be installed near the intersection of K-254 and Main Street, preferably on the south side of K-254 and west of the intersection. 	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design & construct a monumental wayfinding sign, to be installed near the intersection of K-254 and Main Street, on the south side of K-254 and west of the intersection. The sign should help define Benton's identity, as well as helping to guide visitors from the Wichita area to downtown. 		<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design & construct a new & larger City Maintenance Shop and Garage at the City Storage Yard site.. 		<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once the new City Maintenance Shop & Garage is operational, demolish the old City Storage Garage at 223 South Main. Consider options for re-use of the site, including the possibility of an urban pocket park for downtown. 		<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once the new City Maintenance Shop & Garage is operational, develop a plan and renovate the old Maintenance Shop space in City Hall for additional staff offices, adding central heat and air conditioning. 		<input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider constructing a covered outdoor equipment storage area to help protect large equipment that is parked outdoors. 			<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify unpaved streets in the City, and develop a plan to eventually pave them. 			<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over time, implement complete streets principles to make Benton more walkable and bikeable. 	ongoing		

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

PLANNING GOALS – CITY UTILITIES	Priority (years)		
	<5	5-10	10-20
• Develop a Wastewater Collection and Treatment System Facilities Plan , to establish recommendations, a timetable, and an estimated budget for meeting the community's future sewage collection and treatment needs.			<input type="checkbox"/>
• If conditions warrant, add an additional lagoon to the Wastewater Treatment Facility .			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Establish a maintenance and upgrade program for aging sewer pipes in Benton. As funds are available, reline sewer pipes and rehabilitate manholes.			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Consider establishing a capital improvement line item to budget for replacing a certain percentage of outworn water lines each year.			<input type="checkbox"/>
• Pursue opportunities to transition City facilities to use of sustainable energy .	ongoing		
• Regularly review and update standards and procedures for installation and maintenance of utilities, to reflect changes in technology and in environmental expectations.	ongoing		
• Regularly review and rigorously enforce policies on the placement of structures, fences and vegetation in utility and drainage easements .	ongoing		
ZONING & CODE ENFORCEMENT			
• Adopt a policy or revise the City's Zoning & Subdivision Regulations to require new development in Benton to have utility lines buried underground .	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Develop a plan to put existing overhead utility lines in Benton underground , at least in the downtown area.			<input type="checkbox"/>

Benton Comprehensive Plan 2023-2043

PLANNING GOALS — PLANNING, ZONING & CODE ENFORCEMENT	Priority (years)		
	<5	5-10	10-20
ANNEXATION			
• Extend city limits westward, to establish the City's ability to influence future development at the K-254 / Andover Road intersection.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Pursue annexation of the portions of SW 20th Street that separate island annexations from the core of the City.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• As appropriate, annex residential development that is adjacent to or quite near the city limits.	ongoing		
TREES			
• Revise the City's Zoning & Subdivision Regulations to require trees in new developments.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Develop a municipal tree policy, including a section that addresses memorial trees.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
ZONING & SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS			
• Consider revising Benton's Subdivision Regulations so all new developments require either basements, individual residential tornado shelters, or community tornado shelters which meet FEMA standards.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
PLANNING GOALS — ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Priority (years)		
	<5	5-10	10-20
• Pursue new light industrial development.	<input type="checkbox"/>		
• Be economically proactive, versus reactive — contact, inform, and make businesses welcome, maintaining contact after they open.	ongoing		
• Collect information on resource availability for potential businesses and regularly post it to the City's website and Facebook page.	ongoing		
• Partner with SCKEDD to seek out grants for municipal projects in a systematic manner.	ongoing		