



# 4 VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Vision, Goals, and Objectives establish the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan. They were shaped by recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, input from public workshops and online questionnaires, consultation with key stakeholders, and analysis by the consultant team. The result of this robust process provides the groundwork for specific actions that will shape the future of Gardner.

**The Vision Statement paints the future of Gardner, looking at what the City could be in the next 15 to 20 years.** It is written in retrospect to describe Gardner as it would appear after the adoption and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The Vision Statement is an illustrative portrayal of life in Gardner as residents, businesses, and stakeholders imagine it could be.



## VISION

### IN THE YEAR 2035...

**The City of Gardner is a thriving community that continues to grow, with a high quality of life defined by its balance of traditional character and new development that collectively meet the needs of residents and businesses.** Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, Gardner has transformed into a center for innovation industries with a highly skilled and educated work force. The City is home to many jobs and business opportunities, fostered by support from the City. With its great location, reputation as a livable community with a high quality of life, Gardner is the focus of new investment for the Kansas City region.

**Gardner's residential neighborhoods offer a broad range of housing options within the City.** Starter homes provide homeownership opportunities to young families and professionals, while higher-priced housing is well-suited for families looking to upgrade within the community. Quality multi-family and townhouse developments provide housing for young professionals, empty-nesters, and first-time home buyers, while older neighborhoods continue to attract new residents. Residents of old and new neighborhoods have a connection with and a sense of pride in where they live, and many neighborhoods have developed their own distinct identity.

**Young families continue to move to Gardner not only for the quality housing, but also for the great schools.** Gardner-Edgerton School District continues to provide excellent academic, art, and athletic programs for Gardner residents, and is consistently ranked as one of the top school districts in the State of Kansas. Partnerships between schools, the City, and local businesses prepare students for direct entry into college and local industry.

**Public safety is an important factor in why people choose to live and work in Gardner.** The City of Gardner Police Department continues to provide high quality protection and safety services throughout the City. The Department is housed in a new state-of-the-art facility, which allows for more efficient police operations and includes court services. Fire protection service is also benefiting from the addition of a new facility within the City, providing faster response times throughout Gardner's growing footprint.

**Residents and businesses in Gardner are well-served by the City and local utility providers.** The City of Gardner Public Works Department has diligently managed, maintained, and upgraded the City's expanding infrastructure. Meanwhile, the electric utility provider has expanded its facilities to ensure that residents and businesses have sufficient electric service.

**The City of Gardner is known throughout the region for its business-friendly environment, bringing jobs and a steady tax base to the community.** Light industrial developments near the intermodal facility and area airports provide steady employment opportunities with high wages. The location of both the Gardner Municipal Airport and New Century AirCenter and Executive Airport near industrial areas lessens noise and vibration impacts to the City's residential and commercial areas, which allows for a bustling air transportation industry. The expanded Gardner Municipal Airport provides additional hangar space for small commercial operations and recreational aviation enthusiasts to take to the sky.



On the ground, **Downtown Gardner serves as an example of a charming commercial district.** Local retail shops along Main Street contribute to a bustling commercial corridor, and well-timed signals manage traffic flow throughout the City, allowing easy access to commercial areas. Proactive government policies and investments have catalyzed job and business growth, while areas near the I-35 interchanges have also developed as commercial destinations and light industrial nodes, providing a range of retailers and services for the community and beyond.

In the year 2035, **Gardner continues to be a desirable place to live and work due to its location and accessibility.** The I-35 corridor provides a convenient link to the City via the US-56 interchange as well as the 191st Street/Gardner Road interchange. Gardner has worked closely with the railroads to increase safety and reduce delays for motorists at both grade-separated and at-grade railroad crossings. Residents and visitors have access to Johnson County Transit, which provides service between Downtown Gardner and the Kansas City metro area.

**The view from above Gardner shows a city that is well-served by many parks and open space areas.** The City has successfully implemented its Parks System Master Plan, providing new parks and enhancing recreational service to the City's neighborhoods. During the summer months, residents cool off at the Aquatic Center and Gardner Lake, and families enjoy a variety of sports and community activities at Celebration Park and a new community center. The City has also created a plan for the future of the Gardner Golf Course that will ensure the area is an asset for decades to come. The City's parks, recreational facilities, and residential neighborhoods are connected by an extensive greenway and trails network that allow for safe and efficient bicycling and walking. The trails connect natural areas that not only enhance the beauty of the City, but also serve as integral tools to prevent flooding.

**A broad range of Gardner's citizens are well informed and engaged in the affairs of City government.** The City of Gardner has effective systems for engaging citizens. Residents and other stakeholders are well informed and a variety of citizen interests are represented in the policy and decision making process. Neighborhoods have organized themselves so that they have greater influence over everyday decision-making.

**People not only want to live in Gardner, but also come to visit its many attractions.** Visitors patronize the shops and restaurants in Gardner after following the historic Santa Fe Trail to where it splits off from the California and Oregon Trails at Gardner Junction Park. The Johnson County Fair brings thousands of people to the City annually, and provides an opportunity for Gardner to showcase its vibrant community in its newly enhanced grounds and facilities. Helpful wayfinding signage and gateways allow visitors to easily navigate the City and identify points of interest. While Gardner celebrates its history as the place "Where the Trails Divide," it has also transformed into a place where a great community comes together.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The City of Gardner Comprehensive Plan provides a road map for policies that will guide the City over the next 15-20 years. The Goals and Objectives help organize the Plan and provide the conceptual framework for more detailed recommendations.

Goals are overarching principles that outline an intended outcome; they are broad and long-range. Objectives are specific actions and policies that should be undertaken and/or adopted by the City of Gardner to help achieve its goals.

The Goals and Objectives are categorized as follows:

- Neighborhoods and Housing
- Commercial Areas
- Industrial Areas
- Growth and Annexation
- Transportation and Mobility
- Community Facilities
- Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Features
- Community Character
- Sustainability

## NEIGHBORHOODS & HOUSING

**Goal:** Provide a range of housing options to meet the needs of all income levels that foster entry and upward mobility to high end residences, while maintaining high quality construction and design throughout new and existing residential developments.

### Objectives:

- Establish land use and development controls that promote high quality residential buildings and encourage construction of single family housing options for families that want to move up, but stay in the community
- Encourage the development of housing and support services to allow seniors to age in place
- Ensure existing residential areas are well-protected from commercial and industrial land uses through the use of buffers and screening
- Preserve existing and future residential neighborhoods through active code enforcement and preventative maintenance programs
- Perform a sidewalk gap analysis to prioritize infill and improvement projects that will enhance pedestrian mobility throughout residential neighborhoods
- Promote infill residential development within incomplete subdivisions
- Ensure new residential developments are sited within close proximity and access to schools and parks
- Adopt guidelines and standards to provide appropriate buffers and streetscape along arterial and collector streets that are adjacent to residential areas to provide a more positive aesthetic

## COMMERCIAL AREAS

**Goal:** Promote the City's commercial character by supporting local businesses and creating a thriving Downtown area and commercial nodes integrating mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented design and development.

### Objectives:

- Allow for greater flexibility within the zoning and development controls to promote business growth and retention
- Promote Downtown Gardner businesses through marketing and branding strategies and local partnerships including the Chamber of Commerce and similar organizations
- Create a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented commercial district in Downtown and Main Street through streetscape, infrastructure upgrades, and economic development efforts
- Work with the Kansas Department of Transportation to redesign Main Street
- Attract hotels and hospitality-related commercial uses to support corporate and office developments
- Promote commercial growth along Main Street and at the I-35 interchanges to provide neighborhood and regional commercial areas with a diverse range of retail and commercial uses and services
- Create a specific area plan for Downtown that considers future land use and development opportunities, historic preservation, transportation, and streetscape

## INDUSTRIAL AREAS

**Goal:** Promote and support industrial development to provide employment opportunities, diversify the City's tax base, and expand economic development initiatives.

**Objectives:**

- Provide the necessary infrastructure and utility services (i.e. water, wastewater, electricity, broadband) to support industrial growth
- Review and adjust designated truck routes to provide access to industrial areas and lessen impacts to local roads as industrial development expands
- Ensure industrial areas are well-buffered and screened from adjacent residential areas
- Leverage the City's proximity and access to I-35 and the intermodal facility to recruit industrial businesses
- Establish programs and incentives to recruit and maintain new and existing industrial development
- Create guidelines to direct unified development character for industrial and office parks
- Ensure adequate land and infrastructure to support significant industrial and related growth

## GROWTH & ANNEXATION

**Goal:** Support balanced community expansion that focuses on areas surrounding the I-35 interchanges, while ensuring City funding, infrastructure, and utilities can accommodate new growth areas.

**Objectives:**

- Secure boundary agreements with neighboring municipalities to define future growth areas
- Accommodate new growth through concentrated development patterns and conservation of natural areas
- Prioritize the completion of existing subdivisions and bridging development gaps between established growth areas
- Create a development plan for the Gardner Golf Course that offers several scenarios in response to the management agreement that expires in 2018
- Coordinate with the Board of County Commissioners to coordinate and align growth management policies
- Consider the economic viability of various land uses including residential development, agriculture, and oil extraction

## TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

**Goal:** Design a transportation network that provides safe and efficient access for all modes of travel between residential areas, businesses, and civic and recreational facilities while ensuring streets, sidewalks, and trails are well-maintained.

**Objectives:**

- Work with the Kansas Department of Transportation to assess the viability of redesigning and/or rerouting US-56 to a location outside of Downtown
- Implement a Safe Routes to School Program that allows children to safely travel to local schools by foot or bicycle
- Adopt a Complete Streets policy so future growth and development is safe and accessible for all users
- Make critical pedestrian connections to community facility destinations, including the integration of trails as outlined in the Parks System Master Plan
- Require full sidewalk build-out within a reasonable amount of time (e.g. 2 years) after the beginning of new development
- Develop a strategy to improve existing pedestrian facilities to be compliant with ADA guidelines
- Work with the railroad to improve rail crossing delays throughout the City using improved signalization
- Work with Johnson County to improve access to local and regional public transportation
- Coordinate responsiveness with the Gardner Police Department and local fire protection agencies as new growth and development occurs
- Review potential growth areas for new, rerouted, or reclassified roads

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

**Goal:** Ensure high quality and dependable public services and facilities including the Public Works and Parks and Recreation Departments, police and fire protection, Gardner-Edgerton Unified School District, Johnson County Library, and other community-based facilities.

### Objectives:

- Develop a new Gardner Police and court services facility to support staff and operations, and service the growing and evolving population throughout the community
- As growth occurs, ensure that police staffing adequately serves the needs of the community
- Work in partnership with local fire protection agencies to ensure that existing and growth areas are adequately serviced including the availability of water for fire suppression
- Establish a community center to provide a central location for meetings and events particularly for youth and senior programs
- Foster increased communication and trust building with residents and businesses through a multi-media campaign that includes outreach to faith-based organizations
- Support the Gardner-Edgerton Unified School District in their ongoing efforts to monitor enrollment rates to plan for potential growth and facility expansion
- Consider alternative locations for new infrastructure that would allow for the planting of trees within the parkway to enhance the public streetscape

## OPEN SPACE, RECREATION & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

**Goal:** Create a balanced park system that provides neighborhood, community, and regional parks that are connected through an extensive trail and greenway network.

### Objectives:

- Ensure that all residential areas are adequately served by neighborhood and community parks through easements or subdivision regulations
- Assess the viability of a new community center based on the recommendation of the 2009 Park System Master Plan, taking into consideration locational needs, access, cost, and local programming and facility needs
- Use cluster development and conservation design techniques to conserve natural and open space areas for passive recreation and stormwater management
- Update and continue to implement the 2009 Park System Master Plan, acquiring additional parkland and installing new recreational facilities as needed and feasible
- Increase public bicycle and pedestrian access to community facilities through connections to the local trail system
- Maintain the joint use agreements with the Gardner-Edgerton School District to provide additional recreational facilities for residents

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER

**Goal:** Maintain and enhance the traditional character of Gardner while strengthening the regional image of the community.

### Objectives:

- Promote Gardner through a multi-faceted branding and marketing strategy
- Partner with the Gardner Historical Society to promote the community's heritage
- Install gateway and wayfinding signage at key locations to help define the City's brand and identity
- Implement a streetscape improvement program to provide a sense of place and identity within key commercial areas, specifically along Main Street, the I-35 interchanges, and the west end of Downtown
- Promote and require landscaping within commercial areas and require the maintenance and screening of parking lots, service areas, and incompatible uses
- Enhance the Johnson County Fairgrounds, including exploring alternative sites, to ensure that the fair continues to be an important part of the City's identity and is compatible with surrounding development
- Continue to host and support the Johnson County Fair as well as additional events and festivals throughout the year

## SUSTAINABILITY

**Goal:** Integrate sustainability measures throughout the City to protect and enhance the natural environment, lower energy demand, and increase healthy living.

**Objectives:**

- Review building codes and amend as needed to incorporate green building design and construction techniques to better manage energy use, stormwater runoff, and other impacts of development
- Encourage energy conservation by residents and businesses to provide individual cost savings and reduce demand on the City's electrical grid
- Require the use of stormwater best management practices (BMPs) for all new development projects while encouraging similar strategies for existing developments
- Preserve and enhance the City's natural assets such as greenways, wooded areas, Gardner Lake, and the KCPL Prairie Wetland
- Ensure oil extraction processes follow applicable federal, state, and local regulations to protect the health of the natural environment