



IMAGE & IDENTITY

The long-term success of Gardner will be dependent upon the quality of life that it provides for residents and businesses. Local image and identity play a significant role in this by projecting a reputation to the rest of the region that will encourage people to invest in the community, supporting a local aesthetic that is attractive and unique to Gardner, and instilling pride for citizens that fosters a high level of maintenance. Creating this sense of image and identity is a responsibility that falls on City government, residents, businesses, and all local stakeholders. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan includes recommendations that aim to strengthen and celebrate the image of the City.



COMMUNITY CULTURE & HISTORY

Gardner's culture, defined by beliefs, customs, and history contributes to the overall identity of the City. Throughout the Comprehensive Plan process, a noted asset of Gardner is its family-oriented community feel. This is due largely to its history and strong faith-based community as well as through local events, art, and entertainment that demonstrate the community's connection to its past.

GARDNER HISTORICAL MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Located along Main Street in Downtown, the Gardner Historical Museum provides a glimpse into the City's past. Visitors can visit the Museum for free, view monthly rotating exhibits and learn about the founding of Gardner along the confluence of the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails. The Museum also owns the historical Bray House, which it uses as an administrative, archive, and research facility. In order to take advantage of Gardner's history and integrate it into the City's identity, the City should work with the Gardner Historical Society to implement the following:

- Work with the Parks and Recreation Department to create a community open space and/or a prominent place marker that designates the point at which the Santa Fe Trail divides
- Install trail markers and informational placards throughout the City that delineate the original path of the Santa Fe Trail
- Commission public art installations that follow the theme "Where the Trails Divide"

FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY

Gardner's religious institutions serve as vital community resources, providing neighborhood gathering space, social networks, and support. Several churches have expressed interest in increasing their impact on the community through social service assistance. In order to support the culture of faith and community service, the City should consider the following actions:

- Engage church leaders as a valuable resource to inform the City about public issues and concerns
- Support collaboration among religious institutions and other local service providers in terms of shared facilities, programs, and activities



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The availability of visual and performing arts and entertainment venues not only provide all-age activities, but also serve as a reflection of a City's culture, enhancing the development of creativity and interpretive thinking. Gardner, although well-served with community amenities, is lacking in cultural arts facilities and entertainment options. The City should consider implementing the following actions to expand the arts and entertainment culture in Gardner:

- Use City Hall and other public facilities as visual art galleries and performance venues
- Assess the viability of integrating a performing arts center within a future Parks and Recreation Department community center
- Identify opportunities to support public art through public/private partnerships, including installations as a part of new development, donations or grants for the purchase of art, and sponsored rotating collections
- Partner with the Gardner-Edgerton School District to display student art throughout the community

STREETSCAPE & BUILT FORM

There are several portions of Gardner where the character of the built environment reflects the traditional heritage of the community. This is the result of efforts to preserve important structures and invest in the public realm through streetscape and civic spaces. The design of private development – building placement, materials, architectural massing and detail, landscaping, and signage – can be used to create a sense of enclosure for the public realm, and can create an attractive and inviting environment. Streetscape elements such as lighting, landscaping, street furniture, and sidewalk design can be used to create a unique sense of place. In order to maximize the benefits of investment in private development and public spaces, the City should implement the following actions:

- Continue to implement the Gardner Design Standards through development review and approval
- Establish a comprehensive streetscape master plan that identifies priority streetscape corridors, illustrates desired streetscape elements, includes standards for design and installation, and considers opportunities to collaborate with private development to extend the streetscape beyond the public realm. This streetscape master plan should include recommendations and illustrations related to typical streetscape elements that are appropriate for various environments, civic spaces, gateways, and wayfinding

- Install gateways at prominent entry points to Gardner. The I-35 interchanges and several at-grade streets represent the primary means of entry into Gardner. The City should commission the design and installation of substantial gateway markers and entry points from US 56 and Gardner Road, while more modest gateway elements could announce entry
- Use streetscape design as a way to call attention to Gardner's varying commercial environments. Gardner's commercial areas vary in terms of function, level of visibility, and intended character. For example, the US-56/I-35 interchange area is auto-oriented and could include large areas of landscaping and decorative detention. However, the Downtown is pedestrian-oriented and would benefit from safe sidewalk zones, buffers from vehicular traffic, sidewalk café seating and street furniture that encourages strolling and staying. The City should utilize streetscape to call attention to and differentiate these important areas. Contrasting lighting elements, landscaping, signage, and hardscape can create this effect
- Place attractive wayfinding signs in commercial areas and along major corridors. Signs should be located in key commercial locations in the City, such as Main Street, as well as along arterial corridors to direct motorists and pedestrians to destinations such as City Hall, the Johnson County Fairgrounds, and Celebration Park. The scale of the signs should be appropriately sized based on location, but all should have a similar design to unify and define the City's brand and identity



EVENTS & PROMOTION

BRANDING & MARKETING

A strong and identifiable brand will be the basis for the successful promotion of Gardner. The City's logo and motto, "Where the trails divide," distinguishes it from surrounding communities. In addition to the overall Gardner brand, specific areas throughout the City can benefit from having a unique identity. Through strategic marketing efforts and partnerships, the City's brand can be used to capture local and regional audiences, as well as more specific target markets.

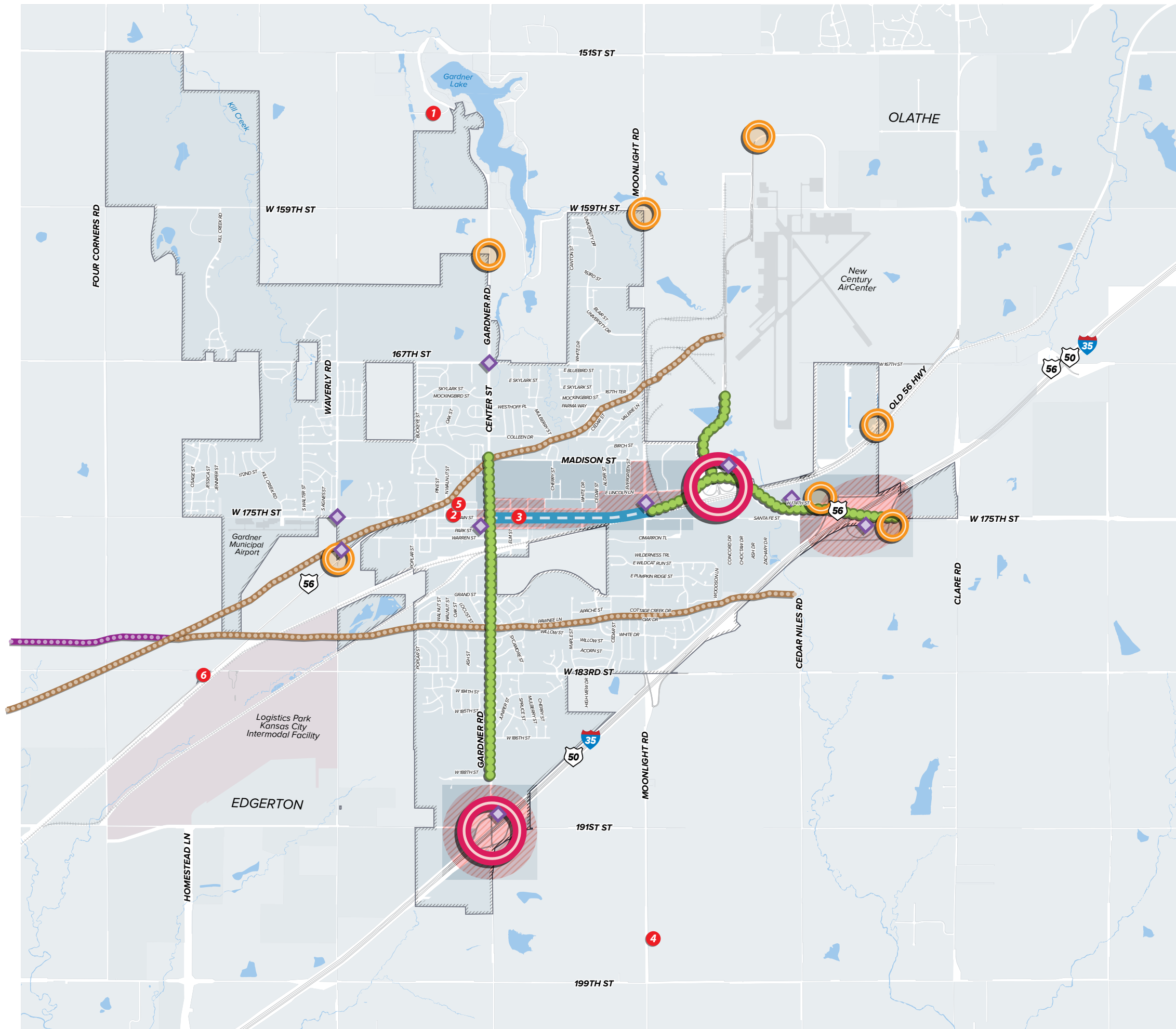
In order to promote Gardner and its unique commercial areas, industrial districts, and neighborhoods, the City should implement the following actions:

- Incorporate the Gardner logo and motto in all City-related media, promotional material, and signage to further strengthen the City's brand, making it highly recognizable and strongly tied to the City
- Work with the Gardner Area Chamber of Commerce and the Southwest Johnson County Economic Development Corporation to promote Gardner through a multi-faceted marketing strategy
- Promote Downtown Gardner businesses through a unique marketing and branding strategy
- Utilize the Johnson County Fair and other events that attract a regional audience as a way to create exposure for local history, commerce, housing, and other characteristics that may encourage future investment

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Festivals and events provide unique activities for residents and visitors while simultaneously instilling local pride. These events also strengthen the image of the City as well provide economic benefits to local businesses. Existing events include the Johnson County Fair, Festival on the Trails, and various programs through the Parks and Recreation Department and other community groups. To ensure the success of existing and future events and foster local pride in Gardner, the City should implement the following actions:

- Work with the Johnson County Fair Association to simultaneously promote the annual fair as well as the City of Gardner
- Continue to host and support community-wide events, ensuring they have adequate health and safety staff and facilities to accommodate all attendees
- Utilize existing community networks such as neighborhood associations, faith-based congregations, schools, and others to encourage unique festivals or events that celebrate Gardner's local heritage and culture
- Create a master calendar that details events throughout the community, which can be viewed online and at public facilities
- Facilitate neighborhood-based events, such as block parties
- Utilize public facilities as event venues



CITY OF GARDNER COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Streetscape Corridors
- Main Street Reconfiguration
- Character Commercial Areas
- Primary Gateway
- Secondary Gateway
- Wayfinding
- Santa Fe Trail
- Oregon Trail

Cultural & Historic Places

- 1 WPA Beach House at Gardner Lake
- 2 Herman D. Foster House/Gardner Historical Museum
- 3 William C. Harkey House
- 4 Turner Barn
- 5 Bray House
- 6 Junction Park