

CITY OF GARDNER STRATEGIC PLAN

Revised October 2023

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Mission, Vision & Core Values



VISION

We are recognized as a high-performing, progressive organization setting the bar for excellence in service delivery.

MISSION

To provide exceptional services to benefit and enrich the community.

CORE VALUES

We are passionate about the services we provide. We are loyal to our employees, dedicated to our customers, and steadfast about accomplishing the vision and mission of the organization and community.

We are ethical, honest and transparent in our communications and actions.

We incorporate industry best practices, achieve desired results and foster respectful relationships.

We responsibly plan, manage, care for and enhance the community's resources.

Commitment

Integrity

Professionalism

Stewardship

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT Analysis is an analysis and evaluation of internal conditions and external factors that affect the organization. The purpose of this analysis is to identify factors influencing the organization and understand the broader context in which the city is working. This allows the city to identify challenges and opportunities and evaluate political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, environmental and legal factors.

STRENGTHS

Location: The community is located next to high-growth employment areas such as New Century Air & Commerce Center, the Logistics Park Kansas City/BNSF Intermodal Facility, and the new Astra Industrial Park. Additionally, growth in Johnson County has historically occurred along primary transportation/roadway corridors, meaning the city's two I-35 interchanges are currently well-positioned for commercial development in the future.

Financial Capacity: The city ended 2022 with a General Fund balance of over 53% of all General Fund expenditures. The combined tax levy funds can support an additional \$10 million in tax-supported debt and the Special Highway Fund can support an additional \$3.5 million in debt. The city has strong fund balances in the Electric Fund, Water Fund, and Wastewater Fund, which can be used to help maintain infrastructure and help mitigate rate increases to support new infrastructure.

Full-Service City: Gardner has three municipal utilities that assist in supporting growth and development. The city provides electric, water, and wastewater services for the community and is in a unique position to offer utility incentives to developers.

WEAKNESSES

Competing demand for capital improvement dollars: Significant investment is needed for the upkeep of major infrastructure elements such as sanitary sewer, roadway, pedestrian and stormwater networks/systems. Proper maintenance and necessary upgrades to existing elements of these systems are growing more costly and the monetary demand to support existing infrastructure is growing at the same time that these physical infrastructure items are expanding to support new and future growth and development.

Transportation Issues: The city has several areas in its transportation network that impede development opportunities and cause traffic safety issues. Two major areas that need to be addressed are the I-35 and Gardner Road Interchange and the I-35 and 175th Street Interchange. Improvements to these areas can improve safety and improve access to accommodate new growth.

Sales Tax Leakage: The city is primarily a bedroom community. Gardner has an income-adjusted trade pull factor of 0.74, which means that residents are traveling outside the community to do most of their shopping.

Cost of Utility Infrastructure: Further water and wastewater rate increases are necessary to support anticipated debt service payments and future infrastructure investment.

SWOT ANALYSIS

OPPORTUNITIES

Annexation: The city has the opportunity to annex additional adjacent land areas that could be developed into residential and commercial properties that would diversify the tax base.

Regional Industrial Growth: Gardner is strategically located between multiple large scale industrial developments that will create thousands of new jobs. The city is well-positioned for additional residential and commercial growth to serve this employment growth due to an abundance of developable land and our proactive approach to infrastructure development in those areas. Additionally, the city can afford to be strategic about pursuing employment-based development opportunities.

Public-Private Partnerships: In conjunction with the annexation of target land areas, the city has the opportunity to partner with private entities to spur new development. Public-Private Partnerships could provide assistance with capital investment and the development of key infrastructure.

Partner with Regional Utilities: Gardner could collaborate with regional utilities to help cover capacity issues and to prevent/delay the need to build new water, sewer and electric plants. The city could also enter agreements to acquire or transfer service areas to benefit all stakeholders.

Destination Downtown Plan/Main Street Corridor Study: Implementing the Destination Downtown Plan and Main Street Corridor Study could revitalize the city's core and help create a unique sense of place for the community. This could improve the quality of life for residents and visitors, while enhancing the community's regional image and expanding the tax base.

THREATS

State Legislation: The state legislature has enacted legislation in recent years making it more difficult for cities to have "home-rule" control over their finances. Property tax lid and the subsequent revenue neutral rate legislation was designed to make it more difficult for cities to capture increased valuations of real property within their cities. There were multiple bills introduced in the 2023 legislative session to further dilute the concept of "home rule." A bill targeting city sales tax on groceries poses a serious threat to Gardner's financial health, as our two largest sales tax generators are grocery providers.

An additional impact is decreased revenue diversification for local governments. With the potential stagnation or decrease in property tax revenues, cities and counties would typically rely more heavily on volatile sales tax revenues or increasing fees for services. However, as noted, sales tax revenues are also being targeted at the state level.

Neighboring Jurisdiction's Annexations: Due to the Kansas Supreme Court's 2022 invalidation of existing annexation agreements with neighboring jurisdictions, those cities are annexing property previously within those agreement boundaries. The city needs to continue to target strategic land areas for future annexation.

Economic Conditions: The threat posed by the recession and inflation on our economic growth is ongoing. The cost of goods and services, as well as employee wage pressures, will continue to impact our financial capacity to provide quality services and amenities while maintaining Gardner as an affordable place to live.

Strategic Priorities & Top Goals



Promote Economic Development



Diversify the tax base

Improve Quality of Life



Strengthen regional image

Increase Infrastructure and Asset Management



Provide safe, efficient, well-maintained
public infrastructures

Fiscal Stewardship



Promote fiscal sustainability

Promote Economic Development



Diversify the tax base

Annex Target Growth Areas

- Work with property owners in target growth areas to request voluntary annexation
- Annex property to facilitate commercial growth
- Annex land on the east side and south side of I-35 to allow for balanced growth across the interstate
- Annex enclaves within the community and encourage infill development

Strengthen and Expand Business Clusters

- Attract businesses that invest in the community and provide incentives when justified by a “but for” analysis of the project
- Partner with regional stakeholders to attract businesses
- Coordinate economic development standards and processes for expedient and efficient customer service
- Purchase property to facilitate development

Encourage Recreation and Special Event Participation

- Attract more visitors to the community through recreation programs and special events
- Identify potential areas for park land and new recreation facilities in newly annexed areas

Measures of Success

- ✓ Percent of target growth areas annexed
 - ✓ Total city sales tax collections
- ✓ Major revenue sources as a percentage of General Fund revenues
 - ✓ Commercial to residential ratio for property valuation
 - ✓ Dollars of private investment

Improve Quality of Life



Strengthen the city's regional image

Develop a Messaging Strategy

- Raise awareness of the leisure activities and events occurring in Gardner using various communication vehicles
- Promote Gardner as a safe, livable city with a wide range of housing options
- Explore opportunities with stakeholders

Create High-Performing Public Spaces

- Provide attractive and functional public facilities and parks
- Provide attractive signage and wayfinding
- Maintain existing facilities

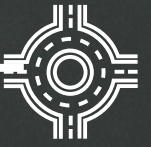
Provide a Safe Community

- Improve traffic safety by deploying dedicated traffic officers
- Promote public outreach initiatives to improve public engagement
- Utilize RMS system to perform comprehensive crime analysis
- Provide training to staff to ensure successful interactions between officers and persons with mental illness
- Work closely with the Johnson County Co-responder program to provide increased support to citizens suffering from mental illness concerns
- Dedicate Detective to combat violence against women through Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant allowing for more dedicated service to victims through follow-up contacts and increased support
- Increase the percentage of officers annually who are Critical Incident Team trained

Measures of Success

- ✓ Traffic collisions per 1,000 residents
- ✓ Violent/property crimes per 1,000 residents
- ✓ Percentage of Critical Incident Team trained officers

Increase Infrastructure & Asset Management



Provide safe, efficient, well-maintained public infrastructures

Increase Modes of Transportation (hike, bike, etc.)

- Continue to develop and maintain the trail system
- Improve access to public spaces and market centers
- Plan to connect community trails to the regional and historic trail systems
- Complete identified ADA improvements

Maintain Infrastructure at High Level

- Continue to monitor and maintain the condition of street, water, wastewater, electric and stormwater infrastructure systems through annual management/maintenance/upgrade programs
- Continue to implement and update the Pavement Management Program
- Focus on preventative maintenance programs to reduce costs and prolong asset life

Develop Long-Term Infrastructure

- Provide training to staff and adhere to engineering best practices
- Work with regional partners on infrastructure planning and funding
- Develop a Stormwater Master Plan

Measures of Success

- ✓ Percent of roads rated as fair or better in the Pavement Management Program
- ✓ Percent of neighborhoods connected to the pedestrian/biking trail system
 - ✓ Ensure utility systems capacity does not exceed 80%
- ✓ Number of utility infrastructure projects completed per Capital Improvement Plan

Fiscal Stewardship

Promote fiscal sustainability



Develop Cost Recovery Programs

- Leverage city resources with grants to offset program costs
- Conduct research on best practices for cost sharing and recovery

Develop Asset Replacement Plans

- Develop building replacement strategies
- Continue to implement Vehicle and Equipment Replacement Program (VERP)

Enhance Performance Management

- Implement process improvement initiatives
- Maintain a trained workforce
- Communicate and celebrate success

Measures of Success

- ✓ Fund balance as a percent of total expenditures
- ✓ Grant and other intergovernmental revenue
- ✓ Percent of vehicles and equipment that exceed replacement criteria
 - ✓ Employee turnover rate
 - ✓ Mill rate comparison and value of a mill

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mayor	Todd Winters
Council President	Mark Baldwin
Council Vice President	Steve Shute
Councilmember	Kacy Deaton
Councilmember	Tory Roberts
Councilmember	Mark Wiehn
City Administrator	Jim Pruetting
Finance Director	Matthew Wolff
Public Works Director	Kellen Headlee
Police	Pam Waldeck
Utilities Director	Gonzalo Garcia
Parks and Recreation Director	Jason Bruce
Community Development Director	David Knopick
Communications Manager	Daneeka Marshall-Oquendo



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