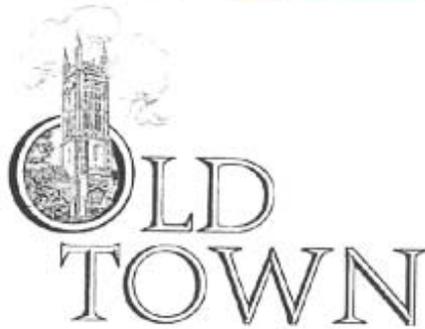


# Old Town Neighborhood Plan



Diversity, History, Promise



An Element of the Comprehensive Metropolitan Plan 2025

City of Topeka-Shawnee County, Kansas

February, 2003



# Old Town

T o p e k a , K a n s a s



## Neighborhood Plan

A Cooperative Effort By:  
*The Old Town Neighborhood Improvement Association*  
&  
*Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department*

Adopted: Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Commission, January 27, 2003

Adopted: Topeka City Council, February 11, 2003

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

**Background** In August, 1996, the Old Town Neighborhood Improvement Association (NIA) was one of 11 different neighborhoods to submit a request to the Topeka-Shawnee Metropolitan County Planning Commission for “downzoning” of their neighborhood to a primarily single-family residential classification. In September of 1997, Topeka City Council passed a resolution directing the Planning Commission and staff to prepare the necessary studies, reports, and recommendations in response to this request. The City has completed 10 neighborhood downzonings and 7 neighborhood plans since the fall of 1997. In July of 2000, City Council adopted the Neighborhood Element of the *Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Comprehensive Plan 2025* identifying Old Town as an *above average* priority neighborhood for planning and funding assistance. Planning staff began working directly with the NIA in February of 2002.

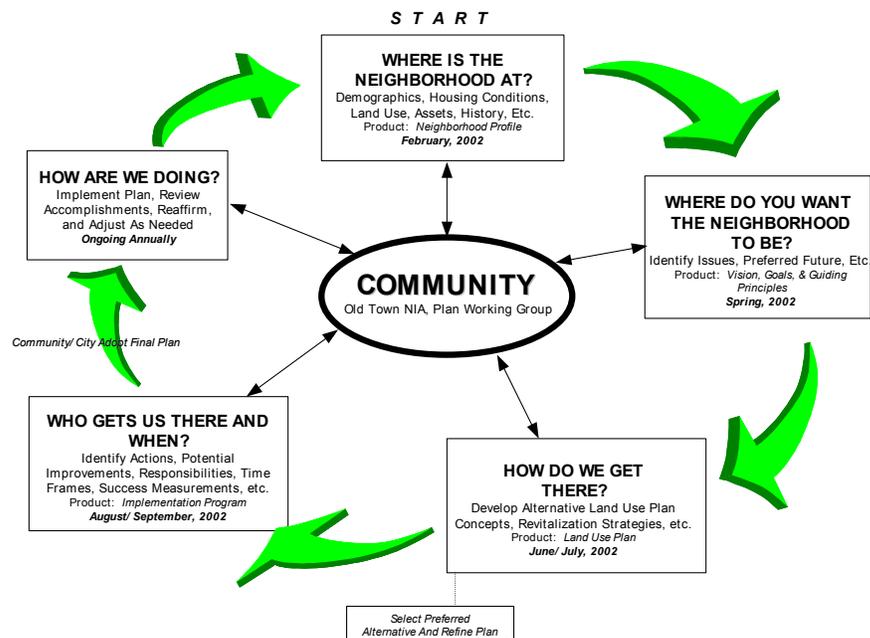
**Purpose** **The purpose of this document is to provide long-range guidance and clear direction to the City and its agencies, residents, and private/public interests for the future revitalization and development of the Old Town neighborhood.** The Plan should be fluid, not static. The scope of the Old Town Neighborhood Plan comprehensively addresses land use, housing, neighborhood character, community building, and parks and open space. It establishes a 10-year vision with supportive goals, strategies and actions. This Plan provides the policy basis from which to identify appropriate zoning, capital improvements and other initiatives for implementation.

**Relation to Other Plans** The Plan is a comprehensive community-based approach to neighborhood planning that constitutes an amendment to the Metropolitan Comprehensive Plan and is regularly monitored, reviewed, and updated as needed. It is consistent with the Neighborhood Element of the Comprehensive Plan which recommends a neighborhood plan for Old Town be developed in the year 2002. Old Town is rated primarily as an *at risk* neighborhood in the Neighborhood Element and is considered an above average priority for planning assistance and resource allocation.

**Process** *(Refer to flow chart)*  
This document has primarily been prepared in collaboration with the Old Town NIA. Beginning in the early winter of 2002 planning staff conducted a property-by-property land use/housing survey of the neighborhood and collected pertinent demographic data. The information was shared and presented during a community workshop at Topeka High School in February of 2002. Starting in March 2002, the NIA has devoted their monthly meetings to formulate the goals, guiding principles, strategies, and actions recommended in the Plan. Over the course of this 8-month period, attendance at the meetings has increased. The working group for the Plan eventually evolved into nearly 50 members. Staff also conducted a number of interviews with stakeholders located within Old Town.

On October 19, 2002 the NIA held a second community workshop to validate the Plan's recommendations. The NIA formally endorsed the Plan at this meeting. On October 21, 2002, the Planning and Policy Committee of the Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Commission voted unanimously to move the Plan on to the full Planning Commission. The full Planning Commission recommended to set a public hearing to act on the Plan and the re-zoning proposal at their November 25, 2002 meeting. On January 27, 2003 the Metropolitan Planning Commission recommended the Plan for approval. On February 11, 2003 the Topeka City Council voted to approve the Plan. Final approval of the Plan was given by the Shawnee County Commission on February 20, 2003.

## Old Town Neighborhood Plan Process

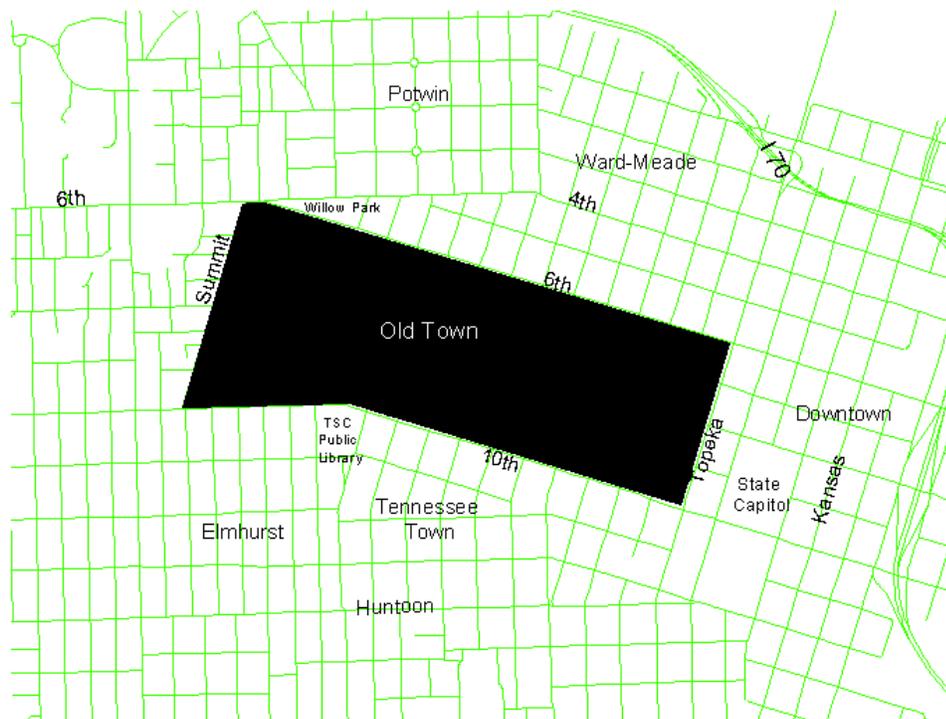


## II. NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

### A. LOCATION AND CHARACTER

**Setting** The Old Town Neighborhood under study is located just west of the State Capital building and Downtown Topeka. Old Town is bounded by SW 6<sup>th</sup> Street on the north, SW 10<sup>th</sup> Street on the south, SW Topeka Boulevard to the east and SW Summit to the west. The neighborhood comprises about 231 acres.

Old Town contains a mixture of high to low density housing, as well as a large medical services area and a number of large institutional users. The character of the abutting areas to the west, north and south includes a number of residential neighborhoods. The eastern boundary of the neighborhood includes the downtown area.



**History** As you walk through the Old Town neighborhood, you see many of the impressive properties that make up the history of the neighborhood. Bethany Place and Frost House are on the Register of Historic Kansas Places. Topeka High School is one of the most noteworthy structures in the whole city. Designed by prominent Topeka architect Thomas Williamson, Topeka High's Gothic grandeur and imposing façade lend a great deal to the character of the Old Town Neighborhood.





Since the early 1900's, the west side of the 900 block of Buchanan Street has been referred to as "Governor's Square" or "Governor's Row", in recognition of the home that stood on the southwest corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and Buchanan. This grand Victorian residence served as home for Kansas governors from 1901 to 1962. Unfortunately, that structure was demolished in 1965. South of it, however, six equally impressive mansions lined the

avenue. All six were erected in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and designed by the local firm of Holland & Squires (James C. Holland and Frank Squires). Governor's Square enjoys the honor of being the only Topeka neighborhood to be pictured in the National Geographic Magazine (August, 1937). The vitality of Governor's Row was threatened in the late sixties and early seventies by a zoning change that would have allowed an office building and parking lot to be built. The City approved the change in zoning in 1969 despite opposition from the neighborhood. The neighborhood fought back by challenging the decision in court and eventually won out when the Kansas Supreme Court upheld a lower court decision blocking the zoning change.

Coleman Hawkins, the man who introduced the saxophone to jazz, attended Topeka High School in the early 1920's and is believed to have spent his teen years at 603 SW 8<sup>th</sup> Street honing his saxophone skills. Thankfully, Topeka Friends Meeting, who owns the building now, saved it from potential demolition when they acquired the property. Coleman Hawkins not only is an important person in Topeka, but in American history with his music.

## B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

**Health** The Neighborhood Element of the Comprehensive Plan establishes a neighborhood health rating system for all neighborhoods in Topeka to prioritize planning assistance and resource allocation. Most of Old Town is designated as *at risk* - neighborhoods with areas with emerging/existing negative conditions that need attention before they succumb to seriously distressed conditions – and considered an above average priority for re-investment due to the high revitalization potential of its historic character that is largely still intact. The northern edge and eastern portion of the neighborhood are rated as *intensive care* – areas with the most seriously distressed conditions.

**Land Use** The neighborhood is predominately residential with 69% of all parcels and nearly 40% of all land area devoted to residential uses (see Table 1 and Map #1). 52% of all parcels are Single-Family Residential. Most single-family uses occur within the central and western portions of the neighborhood. Residential Two/Multi-Family, which represents former single-family homes that were converted to apartments, makes up 12% of the residential parcels. There are very few two or multi-family structures that were built intentionally for that use. Only a moderate number of parcels are Vacant (9%). As expected, land intensive Medical Services parcels comprise a more

proportionate share of land area (23%) than they do with the number of parcels (4%). These land uses are primarily located between Washburn and College Streets.

**Table 1  
Existing Land Use – Old Town**

Land Use Category	Parcels	Percent	Acres	Percent
Residential - Single Family	451	52%	60.4	26%
Residential - Two Family	5	1%	0.6	0%
Residential - Multi Family	38	4%	15.5	7%
Residential – Two/Multi Family	103	12%	14.2	6%
Commercial	55	6%	14.7	6%
Office	28	3%	10.7	5%
Medical Services	31	4%	53.6	23%
Institutional	25	3%	27.8	12%
Parking/Utilities	53	6%	22.1	10%
Vacant	77	9%	11.0	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>230.6</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Right-of-way</b>			<b>110.4</b>	
<b>Total Area</b>			<b>341</b>	

Source: Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Dept. & Shawnee County Appraisers Office (2002)

**Zoning** Zoning patterns within the residential portions of the neighborhood have not appreciably changed since 1939. However, there are some properties east of Western that have seen an increase in the intensity of the multiple family zoning over the years. For the most part, the central portion of the neighborhood has consisted of two-family zoning west of Western Avenue and multi-family zoning east of Western Avenue. The existing zoning pattern (Map #2) shows this pattern continuing with the most intensive multi-family zoning (M-3 and M-2) occurring closest to Downtown. The only single-family zoning occurs in the western portion of the neighborhood west of College Street. Office and institutional zoning and medical services zoning appears within the medical services district and the pattern there seems to suggest this will continue. The most intensive commercial zoning (C-4) covers all of 6<sup>th</sup> Street, while some office/institutional zoning begins to show up on Topeka Boulevard.

**Housing Density**

The housing density of 6.7 units/acre found in *Old Town* can be credited to the high number of housing units within multiple family structures. 52% of the housing units in the neighborhood are within multiple family structures while single family structures account for only 29% of the housing units. If the neighborhood were built out under permitted zoning, the overall density would double to 13.4 units/acre. The potential build-out density greatly exceeds a



traditional single-family neighborhood density range of 5-7 units per acre for low-density residential land uses and would transform major portions of Old Town to a predominantly multi-family neighborhood.

**Table 2  
Housing Density – Old Town**

Housing Type	Units	Percent	Acres	Units/Acre
Multiple Family	813	52%	15.5	52.5
Single Family	451	29%	60.4	7.5
Two/Multi Family	282	18%	14.2	19.9
Two Family	10	1%	.6	16.6
<b>Net Density Residential</b>	<b>1556</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>90.7</b>	<b>17.2</b>
<b>Net Density All</b>	<b>1556</b>		<b>230.6</b>	<b>6.7</b>
<b>Gross Density (w/ ROW)</b>	<b>1556</b>		<b>341</b>	<b>4.6</b>

Source: Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department (2002)

**Table 3  
Housing Conditions – Old Town**

Housing Type	Minor Deficiencies		Intermediate Deficiencies		Major Deficiencies		Total
	Prop.	%	Prop.	%	Prop.	%	Prop.
Multi Family	26	68%	11	29%	1	3%	38
Single Family	257	57%	181	40%	12	3%	450
Two Family	1	25%	2	50%	1	25%	4
Two/Multi Family	24	23%	69	67%	10	10%	103
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>595</b>

Source: Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department (2002)

**Housing Conditions**

Housing conditions in Old Town feature an average rating, with only slightly more than half of the residential structures having minor deficiencies, as seen in [Table #3](#). Single-family structures exhibited the best conditions with 83% of the structures showing only minor deficiencies. [Map #3](#) shows that housing conditions are most sound in the western and southern portions of then neighborhood and generally declines north of 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Tenure**

Old Town has considerably more renter-occupied housing units than owner-occupied housing units (see [Table #4](#)). This can be attributed to the large amount of multiple family housing units in the neighborhood. Of the single-family housing units, 68% are owner-occupied. The overall homeownership rate of 26% falls well below the city’s homeownership rate of 61%. Areas with the highest concentrations of homeownership also generally correspond to areas with high concentrations of single-family dwellings, as is illustrated by [Map #4](#). The highest levels of owner occupancy can be found in the western portion of the neighborhood. The lowest

owner occupancy levels can be found in the multiple family area west of Topeka Boulevard.

The estimated vacancy level for the neighborhood is relatively low at 2% of all housing units and is lower than expected for single-family homes. Vacancy estimates are considered to be conservative because the survey was limited to the exterior of the structure.

**Table 4  
Housing Tenure – Old Town**

Housing Types	Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied		Vacant		Total
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	Units
Multi Family	43	5%	652	80%	118	15%	813
Single Family	275	61%	166	37%	10	2%	451
Two/Multi Family	86	31%	174	63%	18	6%	278
Two Family	0	0%	6	75%	2	25%	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>1550</b>

Source: Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department (2002)

**Values and Age**

According to data gathered by the Shawnee County Appraiser, the mean value of single-family homes is \$37,167 which is slightly higher than two/multi-family residences (see [Table #5](#)). The housing stock in Old Town is relatively old. According to the 1990 census, approximately 46% of all housing in the neighborhood was built prior to 1940. While these older and larger houses are more costly to maintain, they contribute to the historic character of the neighborhood.

**Table 5  
Property Values – Old Town**

	Median	Mean	Maximum
Single-family	\$36,400	\$37,167	\$183,800
Two Family	\$27,400	\$24,025	\$32,300
Two/Multi-family	\$32,600	\$36,148	\$206,000
Multi-family	\$218,615	\$298,279	\$950,000
Vacant Land	\$1,960	\$20,089	\$157,500

Source: Shawnee County Appraiser (2002)

**Public Safety** [Map #5](#) illustrates the number of reported major crimes committed by block according to crime statistics provided by the Topeka Police Department for 2001. Criminal activity was dispersed throughout the neighborhood. The highest concentrations of reported major crimes occurred between Western and Tyler Streets between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets. The lowest number of crimes reported occurred in the blocks generally west of Lincoln Street. Major crimes are defined as Part 1 crimes – murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, and theft.

**Development** Much of the development activity in the 1990s and early has been either demolitions or new construction of medical services uses. Pioneer Olde Town was a significant project that saw the construction of 24 townhomes and the renovation of the other multiple family buildings that are part of the complex. Building permits tracked are for new construction or whole demolitions and do not include rehabilitation or additions.

**Circulation** As identified by the Topeka-Shawnee County Transportation Plan – 2015, the neighborhood contains four major arterials – Washburn Street, Lane Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Topeka Boulevard. The traffic on 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Topeka Boulevard does not normally disrupt residential blocks since it occurs on the perimeter of the area. In addition, the traffic on Washburn and Lane occurs in a part of the neighborhood that is transitioning to medical services uses and does not impact much residential. The residential blocks experience their heaviest interior traffic on the collector streets – 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Western Street. Table 6 summarizes the annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes for those intersections in the neighborhood that City reviews in respect to traffic volume. Old Town is serviced by 5 bus lines running along 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, Washburn, and Lane Streets.

**Table 6**  
**Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) – Old Town**

<b>Intersection</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>AADT</b>
6 <sup>th</sup> , west of Washburn	Arterial	13890
Western, south of 8th	Collector	1245
10 <sup>th</sup> , west of Western	Arterial	14245
Lane, south of 6th	Arterial	8195

Source: Topeka City Engineer (1998)

### C. SOCIOECONOMIC TRENDS

Information from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census is summarized in the tables below.

**Table 7  
Population – Old Town**

	1990	Percent	2000	Percent	Change
<b>POPULATION</b>	<b>3064</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2798</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Female	1623	53%	1359	49%	-4%
Male	1441	47%	1439	51%	+4%
Black	588	19%	748	27%	+8%
White	2315	76%	1765	63%	-13%
Other	72	2%	74	3%	+1%
Hispanic Origin	145	5%	228	8%	+3%
Under 5 years	202	7%	274	10%	+3%
5 to 9 years	152	5%	139	5%	0%
10 to 14 years	165	5%	157	6%	+1%
15 to 19 years	180	6%	166	6%	0%
20 to 24 years	395	13%	336	12%	-1%
25 to 34 years	702	23%	419	15%	-8%
35 to 44 years	360	12%	572	20%	+8%
45 to 54 years	195	6%	271	10%	+4%
55 to 64 years	249	8%	150	5%	-3%
65 and Over	466	15%	315	11%	-4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 1990 & 2000

**Table 8  
Households –Old Town**

	1990	Percent	2000	Percent	Change
<b>HOUSEHOLDS</b>	<b>1443</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1302</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Families</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>+8%</b>
w/ children <18	42	8%	132	10%	+2%
Husband-Wife	413	29%	274	21%	-8%
Female-Headed (no husband)	297	21%	226	17%	-4%
w/ child. <18	35	12%	162	12%	0%
Persons per Household	1.91		2.15		
Persons per Family	2.90		4.62		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 1990 & 2000

**Table 9**  
**Income and Work – Old Town**

	1990*	2000	Change
<b>INCOMES</b>			
Household Median	\$ 18,585	\$ 21,299	+15%
Family Median**	\$ 23,767	\$ 26,829	+13%
Per Capita Income	\$ 6,523	\$ 13,154	+100%
<i>*1989 dollars</i>			
<b>Below Poverty Level</b>			
% Persons	19.6%	23.6%	+4%
% Children <18	6.5%	5.5%	-1%
<b>WORK</b>			
Persons (16+ years)	67%	67%	0%
College Graduates	12%	18%	+6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 1990 & 2000

## D. PROFILE SUMMARY

Conditions of the Old Town Neighborhood tell a few different stories: (1) a stable portion west of the medical services area, (2) the core portion of the neighborhood is between Lincoln and Western Streets is relatively stable, but shows signs that it could get worse, and (3) an unstable area east of Taylor and north of 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Clearly, there are pockets of transition, and decline within its 280 acres that are impediments to re-investment:

### Needs/Constraints

- The percentage of children under the age 18 in poverty increased between 1990 and 2000.
- Many of the blocks north of 8<sup>th</sup> Street and east of Lincoln show intermediate to major housing deterioration.
- Housing block conditions north of 7<sup>th</sup> Street, between Taylor and Tyler show major deterioration.
- There are more than twice as many renter-occupied housing units than owner-occupied housing units.
- Residential demolition permits outnumber new construction permits from 1990-1998.
- Prostitution, while limited to a certain area, attracts crime that spreads throughout the neighborhood and brings down property values.
- No neighborhood park space is allocated within the interior of the neighborhood to serve the nearly 3,000 residents.

On the other hand, there are many strengths and opportunities that can be seized upon to overcome these constraints and better address the neighborhood's needs:

### Strengths/Opportunities

- Diversity of land uses, population, housing, and proximity to downtown businesses typifies strength of traditional neighborhood.
- Excellent access to public transportation.
- The neighborhood contains several major institutions –Topeka High School, Cair Paravel School, and a number of churches – that provide community anchors and quality of life amenities for the neighborhood.
- The medical services district contains two hospitals – Stormont Vail and St. Francis – and a number of medical clinics and other medical related uses that provide a tremendous asset not only to the neighborhood, but also to the City, County, and northeast Kansas.
- Historic turn-of-the-century housing stock is relatively intact leaving many “rough diamonds” for investment by new owners.
- Homeownership is very high within the western residential area with all but a few blocks having more than 50% owner-occupancy.
- 47% of the housing units in the neighborhood are single-family structures (includes those single family structures that have been converted to multiple family use).

### III. VISION AND GOALS

#### A VISION

In the year 2012 a new family has purchased a home in Old Town. This family is motivated to move here because the neighborhood is very well established and the older home they purchased is in sound condition and was affordable to them. They simply were not able to find anything of this character in the suburbs and are happy they were able to have such an option like the Old Town Neighborhood while deciding where to begin their new future together.

Bob and Pat are so happy to see their new neighbors moving in across the street. They have been watching their block change over the last few years. So many people have taken advantage of the new residential façade program to improve their older homes. Bob and Pat have decided to retire in the home they have lived in for the last 40 years. They don't see much reason to move. The kids are gone, but the grandkids will be starting at Topeka High School over the next few years. They are close to downtown and the library is just a few blocks away. It's also such a treat to be able to walk to church every Sunday morning. They are looking forward to the annual Old Town block party. It has become *the* event in Central Topeka.

John has worked at Stormont Vail for 20 years. John's wife Sarah has worked for the State of Kansas in Downtown Topeka for just as long. John and Sarah are empty nesters and their boring suburban home just wasn't doing it for them any longer. They wanted to be able to walk to work and live in house with character. They remembered how interesting the area around Cair Paravel was when they dropped their children off to school a few years ago. They went back to look around again and came across this beautiful older home in Old Town that has a ballroom on the third floor. They've been renovating that house since they moved in and are almost done. The suburbs were never this much fun!!

## B. GOALS and GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### Land Use

**Goal - Protect single family residential blocks from higher intensity and/or incompatible land uses; allow for viable medical services expansion and healthy downtown/multiple family development.**

#### **Guiding Principles**

- Return the “core” area of the neighborhood to owner-occupied single-family dwellings and prevent the expansion of multiple family buildings into the “core” area.
- Protect the viability of the single-family residential area west of the medical district.
- Recognize that each of the various areas of the neighborhood have a specific intensity of use; encroachment of higher intensity uses into lower intensity areas is not encouraged.
- Redevelopment of multiple family housing consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood is encouraged.
- Recognize a medical services district that allows for proper expansion.
- Balance the needs of the institutional users with the needs of the neighborhood to maintain a viable residential community.
- Limit commercial/retail uses to established areas.
- Improve the accessibility of open space for the residents of the neighborhood.

### Neighborhood Character

**Goal - Preserve and restore the architectural and cultural significance of the neighborhood, establish a sense of pride in the built environment, and promote the neighborhood as a traditional historic urban neighborhood.**

#### **Guiding Principles**

- Brick streets, sidewalks, and stone curbs should be maintained and/or restored.
- Create design standards for rehabilitation and infill development/redevelopment that respects the historic character of the neighborhood.

- Use the historic character of the neighborhood and homes as a marketing tool to attract new homeowners.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Street is an important corridor through the neighborhood; support efforts to preserve its character and improve the streetscape.
- Increase funding for programs that target rehabilitation of historically contributing homes.
- Demolition of contributing structures is the option of last resort; adaptive re-use is a preferred alternative.

## **Housing**

**Goal - Increase homeownership levels and improve the overall condition of the housing stock in the neighborhood.**

### **Guiding Principles**

- Return the “core” area of the neighborhood to owner occupied housing.
- Encourage homeowners to participate in the housing rehabilitation activities.
- Stimulate rehabilitation of both owner-occupied and renter occupied housing.
- Institutions are encouraged to participate in improving the neighborhood by purchasing and rehabbing houses to be used by their faculty, parishioners, etc.
- The hospitals and other medical related uses are encouraged to help employees find housing in the neighborhood.

## **Public Safety**

**Goal – Create a safe and clean environment for all those in Old Town to live, learn, work and play.**

### **Guiding Principles**

- Organize volunteer resources to take a more organized and proactive role in safety protection
- Create volunteer “neighbor to neighbor” programs that can address smaller housing maintenance issues – painting, porches, gutters, etc. – that prolong the life of existing housing stock and prevent the “broken window” cycle.
- Promote educational efforts to know “what to look for” in detecting/preventing crime.

## IV. LAND USE PLAN

The Old Town Neighborhood planning area contains a fairly predictable pattern of land uses ranging from single-family residential to medical services uses. The Old Town Land Use Plan (Map #6) graphically illustrates a conceptual guide for future development of the neighborhood that embodies the vision and goals presented in Section III. The map depicts preferred land use concepts and is explained more fully in the following descriptions below.

The following land uses, zoning districts, and densities are the “maximum recommended” and do not preclude lower-intensity land uses, zoning districts, or densities from being appropriate.

### A. Land Use Definitions

#### **Residential – Low Density (Historic Urban Core):**

This category is characterized by large homes built in the early 1900’s. This area is anchored by a number of institutional uses (e.g. Topeka High School, Holy Name Catholic Church, Trinity Lutheran, and Cair Paravel School). Much of the historic character of the neighborhood is owed to this area. Many of these larger homes have been converted from single family to multiple family usage over the years. As such, homeownership levels have declined, as has the condition of many of the properties. Rehabilitation and conversion of multiple family properties back to single family is a priority. Adaptive re-use of properties in this area as low intensity commercial and institutional uses (e.g. bed and breakfast and non-profit headquarters) is preferred over conversion to multiple family. Demolition of contributing structures is discouraged.

**Primary Uses:** *single family dwellings and institutional uses*

**Zoning Districts:** *R-2 (Single Family)*

**Density:** *5-7 units/acre (net)*



#### **Residential – Low Density (Urban):**

This category applies to the blocks on the western edge of the neighborhood between Summit Avenue and College Street. This is an area whose original development was single-family and where the realistic potential exists to sustain this as the predominate character. New development in the area should be compatible with the existing single-family character.

**Primary Uses:** *single family dwellings*

**Zoning Districts:** *R-2 (Single Family)*

**Density:** *5-7 units/acre (net)*



**Residential – Medium Density:**

This category is applied to the multi-family residential blocks that are comprised of existing apartment complexes, as well as single-family homes that have been converted to multi-family use. Design of the multi-family in this area is not consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood. Future redevelopment in this area should be of a similar density but should be consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood. Redevelopment of this area will be aided by the fact this is a mixed-use area with retail and employment located within walking distance.

**Primary Uses:** *Multiple Family Dwellings*  
**Zoning Districts:** *M-2, M-3 (Multiple Family)*  
**Density:** *25 units/acre*

**Institutional**

Schools, churches and other institutional uses are recognized by this designation. Major expansion of existing institutional sites should be reflected on the map. Anticipated expansions are within areas that balance the needs of the institutions and the needs of the residential neighborhood. The map takes into consideration expansion that won't adversely impact whole contiguous blocks. This designation supports options for Topeka High's future expansion as reflected by their facility priorities (see Alternative B in Appendix).

**Primary Uses:** *Schools, churches, etc.*  
**Zoning Districts:** *Primarily R-2 (Single Family)*  
**Intensity:** *Medium*



Cair Paravel School

**Commercial**

This Plan recognizes this category along 6<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as select nodes on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The location of all commercial activity currently resides on the edges of the Neighborhood. While no interior commercial activity is available to the neighborhood, access to the existing commercial on the edges is well within proximity to pedestrians in the neighborhood. Housing units above retail will contribute to the mixed-use nature of the Neighborhood and is not precluded by this designation. Expansion of commercial uses into the interior portion of the neighborhood is discouraged.

**Primary Uses:** *Commercial, services and retail*  
**Zoning Districts:** *C-2 (Commercial) west of the hospitals along 10<sup>th</sup> Street, C-4 (Commercial) along 6<sup>th</sup> Street*  
**Intensity:** *Medium - High*

**Downtown**

This designation recognizes the mixed-use nature and higher intensity of the area between Tyler Street and Topeka Boulevard. Topeka Boulevard, as described in the Downtown Topeka Redevelopment Plan, is envisioned to return as the classic urban "address" for office space and downtown dwellers alike. A planned interchange connection with I-70 within the next 15 years will create a much greater attraction for a Topeka Boulevard "address". To

that end, this classification should promote taller office buildings, new apartment/condominium houses, pedestrian-oriented retail, etc. as part of a high density mixed-use corridor. Parking should be hidden from Topeka Boulevard and elegant streetscapes incorporated into this new gateway to Downtown. Parking for this district also should not be located outside the Downtown designation. Design guidelines and performance standards should follow recommendations found with the Downtown Plan.

**Primary Uses:** *mixed*

**Zoning Districts:** *Downtown Mixed Use (new)*

**Density/Intensity:** *High*

### **Office**

This category generally applies to those office buildings located on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. On the block between Lincoln and Buchanan, this designation encourages office-type uses willing to locate within a setting that preserves the existing structure. Adaptive re-use is the key objective in this block. Additional expansion of office uses into the residential portion of the neighborhood is discouraged.

**Primary Uses:** *Office*

**Zoning Districts:** *O&I-1, (Office and Institutional)*

**Density/Intensity:** *Medium*

### **Medical Services**

This classification is reserved for the area commonly referred to as the “Medical District”. This District encompasses Stormont-Vail and St. Francis Hospitals, doctor offices, medical clinics, various additional medical related uses, and surface parking lots. The District is currently well established between the west side of Mulvane Avenue and the west side of Washburn Avenue. The area between Washburn and the alley east of Lane is in transition and anticipated to be converting to medical related uses. It is understood that this District may not entirely consist of medical related uses. Uses such as multiple family residential, neighborhood commercial, and office are also anticipated to make up the District.



Stormont Vail Hospital

A thriving medical district is an essential ingredient in our regional economy that depends very much on a healthy surrounding neighborhood. In many ways the medical district is a “community within a community” that needs a high level of supportive services such as adequate housing, recreation, circulation, childcare, infrastructure, and security to sustain its success into the future. Without an adequate facilities master plan and public input, it is very difficult to project where and how this can best happen. It is recommended a master facilities plan be completed by the medical service providers in order to review and update the District’s boundaries within the next 5 years.

Expansion of Medical Services uses should occur first and foremost within the boundary of the District as designated on the Plan. This area still has approximately 12-acres of land (currently single family residential or vacant) available for expansion (see Appendix for specific research). Another reasonable option for expansion can be found in the

approximate 19 acres surface parking lots located within the District, and just outside the neighborhood. Displacing the parking will ultimately require construction of another parking garage within the District. Additional expansion options can be found with redevelopment of the approximate 14 acres of existing multiple family, commercial and office uses within the District and outside the neighborhood. This Plan highly encourages the medical services providers to consider upward, as opposed to outward, expansion in the future. Expansion into the residential neighborhood is the option of last resort and should not occur in a manner that de-stabilizes viable residential blocks (i.e. lowers property values, splits blocks, crosses alleys).

A **transition area** is provided on the map to address concerns of the neighborhood regarding the intensity of the District as it adjoins established residential areas. It is preferred that the intensity of the land uses should be mitigated as they are nearer to residential land uses. For example, building heights should “step down” from the interior of the District to the edges that adjoin residential districts. Also, in those instances when an office building abuts a residential district, the parking for the building should be placed closest to the residential to help minimize the impact. Open space (landscape buffers, pocket parks, etc.) should be encouraged where appropriate within new development in the transition area.

**Primary Uses:** *Medical services, office and institutional, neighborhood commercial, residential*

**Zoning Districts:** *MS (Medical Services), M-2 (Multiple Family), C-2 (Commercial), O&I-1, O&I-2 (Office and Institutional)*

**Intensity:** *Medium to High*

### **Preservation Overlay District**

This overlay district is intended to recognize the special character of structures within certain districts and protect their viability. Within the multiple family district, the preservation overlay is applied to those multiple family buildings that have historic character. These buildings represent what was probably the original character of the multiple family district in Old Town. Preserving these buildings will help preserve the character of Old Town. Also within the multiple family district, this overlay recognizes that many of the single-family structures, whether they currently are in use as single family or multiple family, also contribute to the character of Old Town. Preserving the viability of these structures is important for the overall character of Old Town.



The overlay district also applies to the large single-family structures along 10<sup>th</sup> Street between Lincoln and Buchanan. Whether in use as office or residential, these structures must be preserved. These structures are a key element of the overall image of the 10<sup>th</sup> Street corridor of Old Town.

+

This designation applies to the node located at Southeast corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and Clay Streets. This property formerly housed a number of different uses including residential, a hardware store, and most recently an annuities business. This designation recognizes the mixed-use nature of this property throughout the years. The current office use is appropriate, as would be a change in use to a restaurant or to residential. If a change in zoning is required for this property in the future it is recommended that a PUD designation be required in order to minimize the impacts on the surrounding residential properties and keep the design consistent with the rest of the neighborhood.



## V. REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

### A. Revitalization Principles

- ✓ **“Promote the New Old Town”** – The Old Town neighborhood is one of the best kept secrets in Topeka. The neighborhood has a great historic character and is home to major anchors – Stormont Vail, St. Francis, Topeka High School, Cair Paravel. The neighborhood must find ways to promote its historic character while enhancing its livability.
- ✓ **“Make an Impact”** – Concentrate improvements in a 1-2 block area to create momentum and synergy.
- ✓ **“Organize”** – The NIA must champion the implementation of this Plan, take the lead on what happens in the neighborhood, re-energize its volunteer system, and provide clear direction/input to decision-makers on how to realize neighborhood goals. No greater impact will be felt than if the NIA can stay committed and organized.
- ✓ **“Think Outside the City’s Box”** – The NIA and the stakeholders in the neighborhood should not rely solely on the City for the neighborhood’s successful revitalization. There simply are not enough resources available from the City. The NIA must find ways to raise its own money and develop its own programs independent of City support.
- ✓ **“Housing and Livability”** – The most profound effect on the neighborhood’s health will be felt in its ability to address both the supply side (housing quality) and the demand side (neighborhood livability) of housing. Because of the historic character of so many of the homes and relative lack of vacant land, repair of the existing housing stock must be emphasized. To that end, several strategies are outlined below to support the **housing** goals and guiding principles of the Plan. However just as importantly, several non-housing strategies (e.g., infrastructure, neighborhood character) will also follow later in this section that add value to the “demand” side of housing or the **livability** of the neighborhood. Enhancing the **livability** of the neighborhood will help attract more homeowners to the “core” portion of the neighborhood.
- ✓ **“Institutional Partners”** – Old Town contains many important institutions that add stability to the neighborhood. Partnering with those institutions on various projects will create strength and energy in revitalization and should be a priority for the neighborhood.

## B. Community Building

Community building is a key part of a neighborhood revitalization strategy because its focus is on making the neighborhood a stronger advocate for itself. Empowering the residents and institutions of a neighborhood with the notion they can foster change that impacts the neighborhood in a positive manner is one of the goals of community building. Some of the principles of community building are:

- ◆ Build on community strengths
- ◆ Support families and children
- ◆ Foster broad community participation
- ◆ Forge partnerships through collaboration
- ◆ Value cultural strengths

### **Capacity**

Successful organizations have the wherewithal to succeed. A neighborhood's ability to complete a competitive grant application, run successful meetings that are open to all citizens of the neighborhood, and complete projects in a timely manner demonstrates to decision makers and funding organizations that the neighborhood is serious about getting things done. Ideally, the neighborhood should function like a business. Below are strategies to increase organizational capacity.

- **Non-profit status:** The neighborhood should secure non-profit status. By organizing as a 501 (c) (3) the neighborhood will open many doors to additional funding sources that aren't currently available. 501 (c) (3) groups are eligible to receive public and private grants. Individual donors to 501 (c) (3) groups can claim a federal income tax reduction of up to 50%.
- **Neighborhood Assistant Consultant:** Housing and Neighborhood Development has hired a Neighborhood Assistant Consultant. The Neighborhood Assistant Consultant is available to help NIA's recognize their organizational strengths and weaknesses. Old Town is taking advantage of this resource as a means to building organizational capacity.
- **Education and Training:** NIA leaders should consider attending seminars and conferences that deal with community building, neighborhood revitalization, and other neighborhood issues. As an example, the Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute puts on a number of excellent training conferences each year. It is recommended that the NIA and the City explore ways to encourage neighborhood leaders to attend these conferences.

## **Organizing**

An organized neighborhood can be a strong advocate for itself. A neighborhood that can show it is willing to stand up for itself is a neighborhood that can be a force for change. Bringing more people into the NIA is a key step toward successful revitalization. Listed below are a number of strategies for building organization within the neighborhood.

- **Strength in numbers:** When opportunities present themselves for the neighborhood to appear before decision makers, the neighborhood must be able to demonstrate a unified voice with a large number of people. The impact of this demonstration is very difficult for decision makers to ignore.
- **Social Activities:** Fun activities that bring neighbors together are an important element of a strong neighborhood. Old Town should revive block parties as a means to get neighbors together. The NIA has recently formed a Community Building Committee that will address this very issue.
- **Christmas in April:** The NIA should petition the Christmas in April organization to focus on a part of Old town each year to do an all-out housing rehabilitation blitz. This volunteer effort will demonstrate pride in the neighborhood and will encourage others to take ownership in their neighborhood.
- **Collaborate to form partnerships:** Building community requires work by all sectors – local residents, community-based organizations, businesses, schools, religious institutions, health and social service agencies – in an atmosphere of trust, cooperation and respect. It will take time and committed work to make this collaboration more than rhetoric.

## **Public Safety**

A major goal of this Plan is to: *create a safe and clean environment for all those in Old Town to live, learn, work, and play.* A crime problem is a multifaceted problem. There is no magic solution that is going to erase a crime problem. There are things, however, that people can do to reverse the negative cycle and begin to reclaim their neighborhood. Foremost among those is getting people to take ownership in their neighborhood. This will go a long way towards making an area unattractive for criminals.

- **Neighborhood Patrols:** The neighborhood should contact Safe Streets to help them set up a neighborhood patrol program. Stroll Patrols put people out walking the neighborhood. Neighborhood activity by residents discourages criminal activity.
- **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED):** Safe Streets and the Police Department can help the neighborhood determine which property layouts in the neighborhood encourage crime. There are ways to design property and neighborhood layouts to help prevent criminal activity. For instance, the “5 & 2 rule” states that trees should be trimmed to at least 5 feet high and bushes should be trimmed to be no higher than 2 feet. Support adoption of Unified Development Code requiring CPTED principles be enforced for new development.

- **Neighbor to Neighbor:** The “broken windows” theory explains that little things such as a broken window or a unkempt porch at one property can leach out to other properties as people begin to feel that no one cares about what’s going on. The problem will continue to grow block by block, street by street, until it “tips” and the whole neighborhood is suffering from an epidemic of decline. This “tipping point” can be avoided if attention is paid to the details. Volunteer “neighbor to neighbor” programs can address smaller housing maintenance issues – painting, porches, gutters, etc. – that prolong life of existing housing stock and prevent the “broken window” cycle.
- **Crime Free Multi-Housing Program:** The Topeka Police Department, Safe Streets, and the City’s code compliance program have teamed up to provide landlords with a free education in keeping their tenants safe and preventing crimes against their properties. The program uses a three-step process to help landlords and property managers make their properties secure, prevent and identify drug operators, screen tenants and learn about liability laws. The three steps landlords must take to earn certification as a Crime Free Multi-Housing property are to complete the eight-hour class, have a property inspection by code compliance services and police, and conduct a “Safety Social” for residents of the rental property at least once a year.



## C. Housing

### **Target Blocks**

Targeting blocks for housing improvements is the first step in an overall housing strategy. The idea is to concentrate a critical mass of improvements in a 1-2 block area so that it stimulates additional investment by adjacent property owners, increases property values, and leaves behind a visible transformation of the area. Fixing houses in a randomly dispersed pattern only dilutes the impact upon the neighborhood and does not lead to any significant spin-off effect on the block or neighborhood. If the improvements are not visible or concentrated enough, then the stabilization of that 1-2 block area is marginalized and future investments to the area are not leveraged.

### **Recommendations:**

In general, the housing conditions north of 8<sup>th</sup> Street, between Lincoln and Tyler, exhibit the most deterioration. The area south of 8<sup>th</sup> Street is relatively sound, with pockets of minor deterioration. The most impact from a rehabilitation program will be felt if the majority of the work focuses on the area north of 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Minor rehabilitation work south of 8<sup>th</sup> Street will prevent the further deterioration of a sound area.

The area west of College Street is in very sound condition. Activity in this area should focus on minor repair activities. Catching problems and addressing them immediately will be important to keep this area sound. Below are specific recommendations for targeting improvements in Old Town.

- Lincoln Street, 8<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> – These blocks show intermediate deterioration in exterior housing conditions. South of 8<sup>th</sup> Street, the housing conditions are sound. Improving this area will shore up the entire street.
- Buchanan Street, 8<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> – These blocks also show intermediate deterioration. Addressing these blocks will help improve the immediate area around Cair Paravel.
- Fillmore Street, 8<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> – These blocks show intermediate deterioration in exterior housing conditions, but surrounding blocks exhibit the most stable conditions. Addressing these two blocks will create a much larger area of sound housing.
- Polk Street, 8<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> – Housing conditions on these blocks show intermediate to major deterioration. Crime is also an issue in this area. Improving the housing conditions in these blocks should help improve the crime problem.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Western to Fillmore and Clay to Buchanan – Housing conditions along 8<sup>th</sup> Street in these blocks show minor deterioration. Major rehab is not necessary here. Work to fix minor problems will keep these blocks from deteriorating further.
- Clay Street, 9<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> – Housing conditions in this block show minor deterioration. Minor rehabilitation will prevent further deterioration.

## **Housing Improvements**

Once specific blocks are targeted for improvement, what type of improvements would be appropriate? The primary approach for Old Town should be through rehabilitation of existing housing. The housing stock is of unique character and vacant lots are few to warrant any great emphasis on new construction of in-fill housing. Several approaches to affordable housing are available for property owners to stimulate renovation of the existing housing supply.

## **Rehabilitation**

- **Non-Profits** – **Cornerstone** operates a lease purchase program for households who demonstrate an interest and ability in becoming future homeowners. Low/moderate-income families are placed in rehabilitated single-family units and gain necessary credit-worthiness in a couple of years to eventually become homeowners. Cornerstone funds rehabilitation of the property and manages it until they are ready. **Topeka City Homes** currently renovates and manages single-family rental units. These programs should be targeted on the key improvement blocks using a scattered-site approach.
- **City-Sponsored** – The City of Topeka in cooperation with Housing and Credit Counseling, Inc (HCCI) and participating lenders offer the **TOTO II** (Topeka Opportunity to Own) program for new homebuyers. The TOTO II program now offers up to \$65,000 for acquisition and rehab including a \$5,000 weatherization allowance for low/moderate-income homebuyer renovations in Old Town. These added incentives should enable more homebuyers to utilize the program in Old Town's larger, older, and needier homes. Other rehab incentives offered to income eligible homeowners by the City's Housing and Neighborhood Development Department include forgivable loans for **major rehab, emergency repair, and accessibility modifications**. These programs should be targeted on the key improvement blocks.
- **Institution Initiative** – In conversations with Cair Paravel School and Holy Name Catholic Church, it was discovered that these two institutions are working to better the neighborhood by purchasing and rehabbing homes in their immediate area. The homes are then rented or sold, in the case of Cair Paravel, to faculty and low-income families. These actions by neighborhood institutions, working without the help of the City, is a tremendous example for other institutions to follow and is something Old Town and the City should fully support. This is an example of "*thinking outside the City's box*" as housing rehab is not part of Cair Paravel's everyday operations. It has been successful for the school because it has helped reduce crime in its immediate area.

Increasing home ownership within the "core" portion of the neighborhood is a goal of this plan. This Plan also recommends that the hospitals and other medical related uses provide down payment assistance or some other type of program that would make it even a little easier for an employee to find a home that is near to work.

- **Volunteers** – Prolonging the life of turn-of-the-century housing doesn't always need to involve major restoration. Many of the homes are in decent enough shape, but their owners may have fallen behind in preventive maintenance such as painting,

drainage (gutters), porches, etc. that can really extend the life/look of a house and avoid costly major repairs in the future. These simpler yet critical home improvement needs can be easily met by a dedicated group of volunteers. It is recommended that the NIA seek sponsorship to help organize volunteer rehab “parties” each year that will assist 2-3 elderly homeowners. They also could utilize existing volunteer rehab programs like **Christmas in April** to accomplish the same purpose. These initiatives may or may not be targeted on the key improvement blocks.

### **New Construction**

- Infill Housing – If any new in-fill housing is going to take place, it is important that the design of the home be consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood. Placing a home of inconsistent character in a traditional historic neighborhood will not benefit the neighborhood.
- Redevelopment – Redevelopment of the multiple family area of the neighborhood is something that could occur in the future. Once again, design will be a critical component of any future multiple family redevelopment. The townhome project developed by Pioneer Olde Town is an example of how good design can help a project fit into an established traditional urban neighborhood. New projects should be of a similar density to the existing area. A well designed multiple family project could effectively support the housing needs of the medical district and downtown.

### **Moving Houses**

Where feasible, it is recommended that contributing structures located within the neighborhood that are slated for demolition be relocated to vacant lots within the neighborhood. This will help save the overall character of the neighborhood and solidify existing residential blocks.

## D. Neighborhood Character

Several livability strategies can be utilized that add significant value to the “demand-side” of the neighborhood. The quality of housing stock is but one facet of Old Town’s re-investment strategy. Non-housing strategies related to neighborhood character, infrastructure, parks and open space, appearance, and safety are critical in creating an overall environment of livability emphasizing a traditional neighborhood quality of life. Safety was discussed in the Community Building section. Additional livability strategies are in this section and the following sections.

Preservation and restoration of the housing stock in Old Town is a high priority to maintain a competitive advantage for housing demand. Promoting the historic character of the neighborhood is a major guiding principle of revitalization. Two structures in Old Town are currently on the National Register and several other areas should be more fully explored for preservation and restoration incentives.



Topeka High School

**Design Guidelines** – Given the historic character of the housing stock in the “core” area of the neighborhood, it is important that rehabilitation activities don’t do things to harm the uniqueness of the homes. Design guidelines should be developed that will assist efforts to correctly rehab the housing stock. The design examples provided in this Plan are a basic start, and the NIA should support efforts by the Topeka-Shawnee County Landmarks Commission and/or the Metro Planning Department to develop comprehensive historic sensitive design guidelines for rehabilitation. As an effort to simplify the process, design guidelines could be developed that work for many of our Central Topeka neighborhoods that have historic character (Old Town, Ward-Meade, Historic Holliday Park).

A set of design guidelines are important to ensure that new houses and rehabilitation of existing houses are comparable to the integrity of the original houses in size, scale, form, and detail so that they fit well with their surroundings. An insensitive exterior rehabilitation is as much a detraction from the neighborhood’s value as a neglected yet intact historic house. Inherent historic features of the existing housing stock should dictate such guidelines. The following are examples of design characteristics found in the Old Town neighborhood:

	Housing Type	Characteristics
	<b>Prairie/Craftsman (1900-20)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two-story front gable built to fit narrow lot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High pitched roof</li> <li>▪ Front porch</li> <li>▪ Stone or brick column bases</li> <li>▪ Raised stone or brick foundations</li> <li>▪ Horizontal lap siding</li> <li>▪ Extended eaves</li> <li>▪ Flattened gable roof edges</li> <li>▪ Proportionate window sizes</li> </ul>
	<b>Folk Victorian (1870-1910)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two-story gable front on narrow lot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Front porch</li> <li>▪ Decorative wood porch supports</li> <li>▪ Raised foundation</li> <li>▪ Multiple roof lines</li> <li>▪ Trim detailing</li> <li>▪ Bay windows</li> </ul>
	<b>Victorian Queen Anne (1880-1910)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two-story cross gable front</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Front porch</li> <li>▪ Textured shingle siding</li> <li>▪ Raised foundation</li> <li>▪ Multiple roof lines</li> <li>▪ Trim detailing</li> <li>▪ Detailed spindle work</li> </ul>
	<b>Colonial Revival (1880 – 1930)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two-story symmetric façade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Front porch</li> <li>▪ Multiple paned upper window sash over a single lower sash</li> <li>▪ Doors feature sidelight windows</li> <li>▪ Raised foundation</li> </ul>

The four most important design features of a traditional design would include **raised foundations, trim detailing, proportionate window openings,** and **pitch of the roof.** The following examples are types of new housing that fit the design guidelines for Old Town. These examples are to be used as a guide and do not necessarily reflect specifically the types of homes that should be built in the neighborhood.

## Single-family homes

Detached



Attached



How do design guidelines work? They can have various applications involving either voluntary compliance, mandatory compliance, or as an incentive. Some possible applications are discussed below:

- Technical Assistance/Rehab Manual – Most basic in their application, design guidelines educate and assist property owners in understanding historically appropriate design that will ultimately increase the value of their property and neighborhood. Most insensitive rehabilitation jobs are done due to lack of knowledge of appropriate methods or materials on older homes. Good design does not necessarily equate to higher renovation costs. For example, some old home renovations replace original sash cord windows with smaller windows never thinking that they could save money through replacement of sash cords, weather-stripping, glazing, and insulation around window frames (all do-it-yourself-type jobs). Attention to historic details almost always equates to higher re-sale values.
- Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) Overlay Zoning District - Implementation of a TND overlay zoning district would be applied primarily to new construction of infill development to ensure it blends in with the surrounding homes. A TND district would require the massing, orientation, setbacks, form, access, etc. be consistent for new construction with what is already in the neighborhood which is enforced through the building permit process. A TND district could also permit other types of traditional development like an accessory dwelling unit that is subordinate in size and nature to the single-family house (e.g., garlow, granny flat, above garage, attic, basement,

etc.) intended for extended families or to subsidize larger house improvements. New or rehabilitated commercial buildings could also take on the look of a house so that structure has flexible use depending on the tenants yet it still blends in with the surrounding character.

- Residential Façade Improvement Program - The rehab programs mentioned in the housing section have income restrictions and, in general, cannot support rehabilitation that is driven by historic character. A new program needs to be created to help people interested in fixing up their historic home, but cannot because they lack the technical know-how or perhaps are a few thousand dollars short of making a good impact. As an added financial incentive, a program could be created that matches dollar for dollar exterior renovations of older homes to be consistent with the City's adopted design guidelines. Patterned after the City's commercial storefront façade program, free design assistance could be combined with rehab match grants up to \$5,000 to encourage an owner to go the extra step towards sensitive design.

The NIA should consider establishing this program itself. By organizing as a non-profit, the NIA could pursue funding to establish this type of program. The NIA could then administer the program to benefit the properties in Old Town.

- Historic Districts – Design guidelines may also be used as part of a designated historic district (see Historic Preservation below).
- Neighborhood Revitalization Program – The City offers tax rebates for home improvements that increase the value of the property by more than 5%. They currently show no preference to design consistent or inconsistent with design guidelines. Greater tax rebate rewards should be given to those who tie their improvements to the design guidelines.

**Historic Preservation** - In addition to taking greater pride in neighborhood's history, establishment of a state/national district adds various incentives for housing rehabilitation. Historic districts have been proven to increase property values through maintaining the architectural integrity of a significant grouping of historic structures. Economic incentives in the way of federal/state income tax credits help stimulate investment in restoration. Recent legislation approved by the state establishes a state income tax credit on 25% of the qualified costs (minimum \$5,000) on improving an historic structure or contributing structure within an historic district. If it costs \$20,000 to rehab consistent with preservation guidelines, a \$5,000 credit can be taken on your state income taxes. A federal tax credit program also works in a similar fashion except it is only applied to income-producing properties. Districts would need to be surveyed, inventoried, and approved by a large majority of the property owners within its boundaries. Two potential districts could include:



- Governor’s Square Historic District – Located in the area of the Governor’s Row House are many significant homes. A potential district exists on Buchanan between 10<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets and also on Lincoln between 10<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets.
- Bethany Place Historic District – This district would include two properties – Bethany Place (833 Polk) and the Frost House (935 Western) – which are designated on the Register of Historic Kansas Places. The district could build off these two properties and include those properties on the west side of Western between 10<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets and also Topeka High School.

Historic preservation activities the neighborhood can pursue right away include:

- Historic Reconnaissance Survey – The Landmarks Commission has completed two historic reconnaissance surveys (Collins Park and North Topeka) and also recently was awarded two new grants to complete surveys in Ward Meade and Original Town. The Kansas State Historical Society administers this grant program to local governments. A reconnaissance survey should be undertaken in Old Town as a first step towards determining historic districts within the neighborhood.
- Local Landmark Designation – A new program started by the Landmarks Commission recognizes local landmarks (individual properties and district). This voluntary designation protects the integrity of the historic property. To the property owner, historic landmark designation is a matter of pride and carries a mark of distinction and a demonstrated commitment to historic preservation. The local landmark designation also contributes to the vitality of neighborhoods because properties designated as local landmarks must maintain those properties to historic standards and prevent them from deteriorating. The NIA should encourage property owners within the “core” area to pursue the local designation.

### **Market the Neighborhood**

Keys to successfully marketing a neighborhood’s assets lie within implementing many of the above strategies already mentioned. However, once you have assets or potential assets to show off, you still have to let others know about it.

- Neighborhood Brochure – Old Town has many older historic homes that are hidden opportunities. The NIA should develop a brochure that touts the many reasons why people should discover one of those hidden opportunities within the neighborhood. The brochure could be used to communicate with realtors that may not understand the value of the homes in the neighborhood. A brochure can communicate to prospective homebuyers the benefits of living in an established neighborhood and also show them that there is another choice in homeownership besides the suburbs.
- Homeowner and Landowner Recognition & Appreciation – The NIA was recently awarded grant money to develop a program to recognize those property owners within the Weed & Seed Target Area (area between 6<sup>th</sup> Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Washburn Street, and Topeka Boulevard) that improve their properties. The project will create “before – after” images of properties in the neighborhood. One form of

recognition will be placement of the images of improved properties on the City of Topeka's web page.

- Holiday Home Walking Tour – Hosting a holiday home tour would be a good way for the NIA to draw people from outside the neighborhood. A specific walking tour showing off the distinctive character of Old Town and show that the NIA is active.
- Brown v. Board and Sumner School – The Old Town NIA should support efforts to create a walking trail between Sumner School and the Brown v. Board National Park Service site. A walking trail between the two schools could go down Western Street and take people past Topeka High School. A walking trail of this sort would bring people into the neighborhood and bring some positive exposure.

### **Beautification/Image**

8<sup>th</sup> Street is a busy internal corridor through the neighborhood. Western Street also carries a significant amount of traffic. As people pass through the neighborhood, the impression they get from their surroundings is very important. One recommended way to increase the positive reinforcement of a welcoming image is to target streetscape and home improvements along the busiest internal corridors. 6<sup>th</sup> Street is not really appropriate as a desirous front door for Old Town. Even though some streetscape work was done on 6<sup>th</sup> Street in the early 1990s, the overall image of mostly strip commercial development is not overly pleasant or reflective of the neighborhood behind it. Several options to be considered for enhancing the image and historic character of the neighborhood include:

- 8<sup>th</sup> Street Streetscape – 8<sup>th</sup> Street is the primary east/west street bisecting the “core” part of the neighborhood. Driving down 8<sup>th</sup> Street provides one with a sense that this roadway could be much more. In fact, the street at one point did carry trolley traffic and it is suspected that the tracks are still buried beneath the center of the street. Much of the street is lined with stately older homes and large mature trees. Adding a raised landscaped median to 8<sup>th</sup> Street will help create a grand boulevard effect and will represent a significant investment in the neighborhood. Adding decorative lighting along the corridor is also an option.

Pedestrians will benefit from the construction of a raised landscaped median along 8<sup>th</sup> Street. A raised median will provide a refuge for pedestrians trying to cross busy 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

- Neighborhood Signage – Central Approach – Employ a centralized signage approach instead of a gateway approach. Use a central intersection to place signage on all four corners angled towards the intersection. Location options include 8<sup>th</sup> & Western, 8<sup>th</sup> & Lincoln, and 8<sup>th</sup> & College.
- Neighborhood Signage – Gateway Approach – Employ a gateway signage approach instead of a centralized approach. Use a “gateway” to place signage on one or two corners angled towards the intersection. Location options Topeka Boulevard entrances into the neighborhood, 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> & Western, 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> & Lindenwood, 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> & College, and 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> and Buchanan.

- Brick streets/sidewalks and stone curbs – Removal of asphalt patching and restoration of brick streets in the neighborhood is a priority. Brick sidewalks should be restored along key improvement routes and around historic structures or future districts. ADA ramps should include brick inlays. If stone curbs are disrupted by construction, they should be replaced with stone, not concrete.
- Neighborhood Clean-ups – The NIA should continue its neighborhood/alley clean-up program. These clean-ups by the NIA are vital to avoiding environmental code problems.
- Street Tree Replacement – Old Town is a mature neighborhood that was developed at a time when trees were planted along streets as a matter of course. These trees have matured over time and are now a tremendous asset for the neighborhood. Trees have a number of benefits including saving energy, improving air quality, and creating wildlife diversity. Occasionally, a street will lose a mature tree. It's important to replace this tree to help preserve the character of the street. This Plan recommends that the City create a street tree replacement program.

## **E. Parks and Open Space**

The Old Town Neighborhood is woefully lacking in access to parks and open space. In fact, there are no parks in the neighborhood. Quality parks and open space are a key component to any healthy neighborhood. According to the National Recreation and Parks Administrators, Old Town should have 15 acres of neighborhood-sized parks (5 acres/1,000 population). Unfortunately, the neighborhood has a ways to go to meet this standard.

A bright spot with regards to open space in Old Town is the track at Topeka High School. The track is open to the public and serves walkers and joggers looking for a little exercise. This de-facto neighborhood open space, although limited, does serve some segment of the neighborhood. Below are recommendations for adding other parks and open space opportunities to the neighborhood.

- Community Gardens – Many cities around the country have developed community gardens as a means of dealing with a lack of park space in neighborhoods. The vast majority of these community gardens are located on unused public land, usually on a vacant parcel that has little development potential. Community gardens are used as gardens, playgrounds, classrooms, picnic sites, etc. Community gardens create beauty, security and neighborliness.
- Washburn-Lane Parkway – This Plan supports the continued implementation of the streetscape improvements to the Washburn-Lane corridor. Extending the green space and pedestrian lighting through Old Town will benefit the neighborhood.
- Sumner School – The City is currently working on proposals to re-use Sumner School. The school is located in adjacent Ward-Meade Neighborhood. One of the proposals will turn the school into a community center and provide some open space. Although not in the neighborhood, Sumner School is destined to become a tremendous asset that residents of Old Town will have access to.
- Park Acquisition – The NIA should explore opportunities to develop a large park for the neighborhood. Perhaps partnerships could be developed with the institutions or hospitals that will allow the acquisition of a large amount of land that could be used for a park or parks.

## V. IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of this section is to provide a “framework for action” that outlines how the vision, goals, policies, and land use recommendations can be realized over the next ten years. It should be used by stakeholders and decision-makers to guide the next steps of the neighborhood revitalization process in terms of priorities, responsibilities, and feasibility. The cost estimates below should not be construed to imply actual funding approval by the City. These estimates are intended to guide the City's future resource allocation as projects are implemented in the Old Town neighborhood.

### A. Key Action Priorities

The community was surveyed at an October 19, 2002 Plan validation meeting to determine their priorities for implementing specific strategies and actions of this plan. The action below are organized based on the ranking received at the meeting (87 votes) as well as the stakeholder meetings held since February 2002. They are not necessarily inclusive of all potential actions, but a checklist of some of the more major actions that should be undertaken. Votes are listed in parentheses.

#### Priority “A” Activities (*Address these before others*)

- ✓ **“Downzone” single-family areas from multi-family zoning (M-1, M-2) to single-family zoning (R-2)**  
Development policies of the Metropolitan Comprehensive Plan are legally implemented through the practice of zoning to reflect the desired land use and intensity patterns for an area. As documented in this plan, higher intensity zoning districts established more than a half-century ago are at the root of many problems facing Old Town today. The NIA recognized this issue in 1996 when they petitioned the Metropolitan Planning Commission to “downzone” their neighborhood to single-family residential. The Land Use Plan contained herein should be used as the guide to a neighborhood-wide re-zoning as initiated by the Metropolitan Planning Commission. Map #8 illustrates the specific zoning districts (per the Land Use Plan to protect the neighborhood from insensitive higher intensity development. Changes to a higher intensity zoning district should be reviewed on a case by case basis to determine their consistency with the Plan's goals.  
**Who:** Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Commission; City Council  
**When:** 2003
  
- ✓ **Implement Homeowner & Landowner Recognition & Appreciation Program.** Weed and Seed funding has been secured to begin this program. Additional funding will need to be obtained for future years.  
**Who:** Old Town NIA, Weed and Seed  
**When:** Fall, 2002

- ✓ **Home rehabilitation program (9%).** Begin targeting blocks for rehabilitation. Focusing on rehabilitation will improve the housing conditions in the neighborhood and make a big impact on overall revitalization.  
*Who: Old Town NIA, HND*  
*When: 2003*
  
- ✓ **Provide design guideline manual to residents and businesses (9%).**  
This could likely be done in conjunction with other traditional neighborhoods by the architectural/historic preservation community.  
*Who: Metro Planning, Landmarks Commission*
  
- ✓ **Repair and Restore brick streets in the Neighborhood (8%).**  
The NIA must contact the Public Works Department to initiate brick street restoration work during their next available time frame. The labor is provided by the Bureau of Correction's female prisoners in East Topeka.  
*Who: Public Works*  
*When: Ongoing*
  
- ✓ **Create voluntary "neighbor-to-neighbor" rehab programs (8%).**  
*Who: Old Town NIA, Housing and Neighborhood Development, Christmas in April*
  
- ✓ **Install neighborhood signs/markers at gateways into neighborhood (7%).**  
The NIA should finalize the location and design concept with an appropriate sign/installation company as referred to in this plan and submit to Metro Planning for the City's review and approval. Likely funding must either be applied for during the Consolidated Plan RFP process or raised privately.  
*Who: Old Town NIA*  
*When: 2003*
  
- ✓ **Apply for 501 (c) (3) non-profit status (7%).** Non-profit status will allow the Neighborhood to become more independent of the City. Non-profit status will increase the Neighborhood's capacity and make more funding available.  
*Who: Old Town NIA, Neighborhood Assistant Consultant*
  
- ✓ **Start a neighborhood watch program (7%).** Safe Streets can help the neighborhood develop an effective neighborhood watch program.  
*Who: Old Town NIA, Safe Streets*
  
- ✓ **Explore historic district designations in the Neighborhood (7%).** A historic resource inventory should be completed to assess the viability of these areas for local or national historic district designation. The survey itself would help create a greater awareness of the historic assets in these areas thus generating even more interest to live in the area.  
*Who: Landmarks Commission*

**Priority “B” Activities** (*Secondary, but can still be worked on*)

- ✓ **8<sup>th</sup> Street Streetscape Improvements (6%).**  
This project should be put into the City’s CIP budget. The NIA should work closely with Public Works, Metro Planning, and adjacent property owners.  
**Who:** *Public Works, City Council*  
**When:** *5-10 years*  
**Cost:** *\$2.6 million*
  
- ✓ **Develop a brochure of the neighborhood for realtors and new residents (6%).**  
**Who:** *Old Town NIA*
  
- ✓ **Create residential façade improvement program (6%).**  
The program should be marketed to existing or potential historic district areas and buildings.  
**Who:** *Landmarks Commission, Old Town NIA*
  
- ✓ **Start a holiday home tour or historic walking tour (5%).**  
**Who:** *Old Town NIA*
  
- ✓ **Encourage property owners to pursue local landmark designation (5%).** A local landmark designation on a property means that the property owner must maintain the property. This benefits the neighborhood.  
**Who:** *Old Town NIA, Landmarks Commission*
  
- ✓ **Organize yearly neighborhood block parties (3%).** Neighborhood block parties are a good way to bring the neighborhood together.  
**Who:** *Old Town NIA*  
**When:** *Each year*
  
- ✓ **Begin the development of community gardens (3%).** Community gardens are a way to add open space to the neighborhood. Vacant lots need to be purchased by the City and the NIA must work to develop the gardens.  
**Who:** *HND, Old Town NIA*  
**When:** *Ongoing*
  
- ✓ **Adopt traditional design overlay zoning district (3%).**  
This will likely be done in conjunction with all traditional neighborhoods during development of the unified development code by Metro Planning staff.  
**Who:** *Metro Planning, Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Commission; City Council*  
**When:** *2003*
  
- ✓ **Develop park space (1%).**  
A difficult proposition considering the lack of vacant ground in the neighborhood. Partnering with private entities could make the development of park space in the neighborhood a reality.  
**Who:** *NIA*

## V. Appendix

### Medical Services District Research

As a result of issues raised throughout the planning process regarding the Medical Services District, Planning staff performed research that examined the build-out capacity of the District as shown on the draft Old Town Neighborhood Land Use Plan, as well as the surrounding area. Staff was able to use current aerial photos and GIS to determine the location of buildings, parking lots, and vacant ground. A summary, along with a map of the analysis is provided.

Existing medical buildings/parking	<u>Acres (approximate)</u> 46 (Old Town) <u>2</u> (Outside Old Town)
<b>Total</b>	<b>48 acres</b>

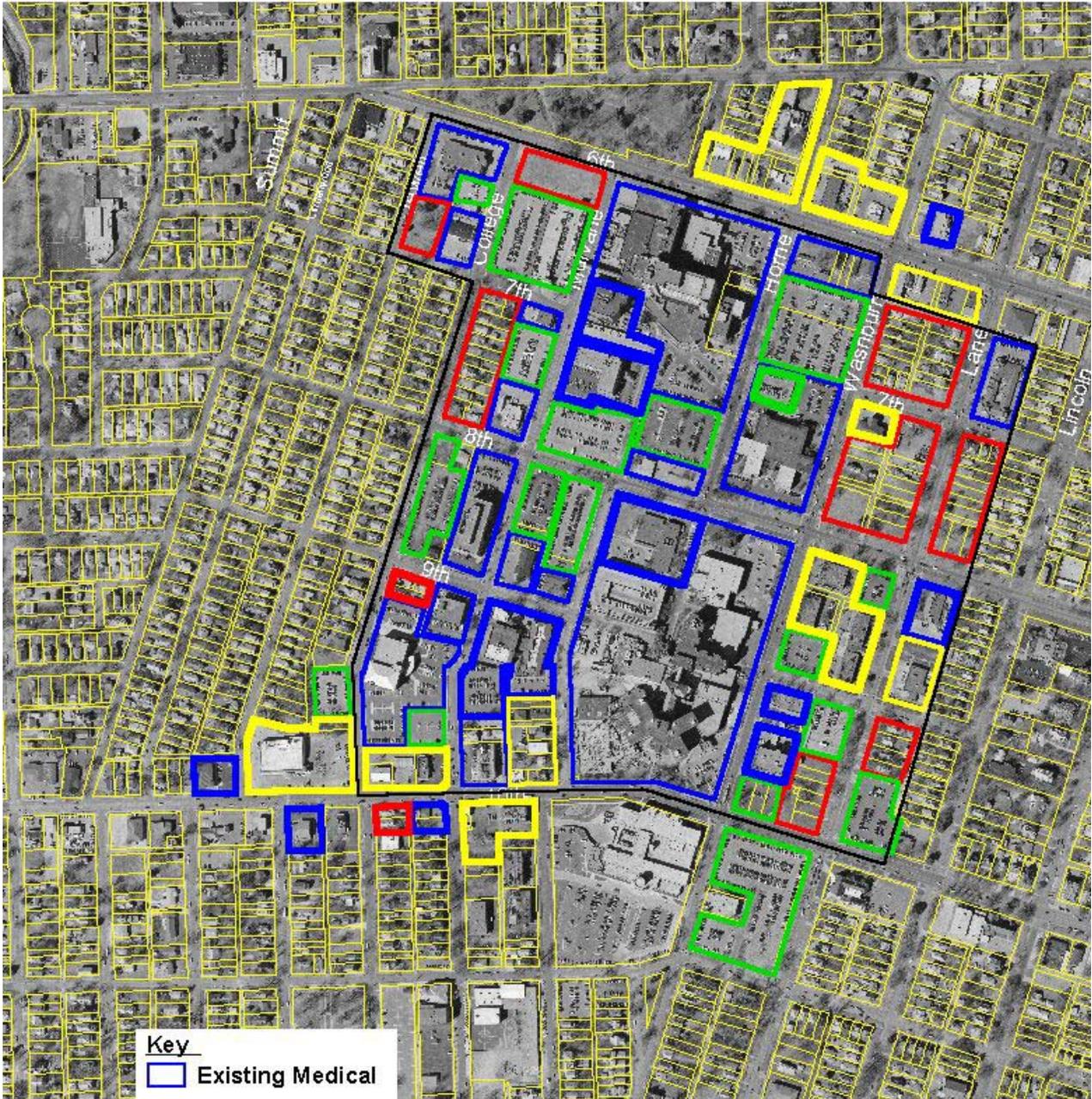
<u>Expansion Possibilities</u>	<u>Acres (approximate)</u>
<b>High Probability</b>	12
<b>Medium Probability</b>	20
<b>Low Probability</b>	<u>13</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>45 acres</b>

**High Probability** – Includes single-family residential and vacant land within the existing medical services area boundary. It is assumed these areas will be the easiest to expand into given their location within the medical services area, readiness, and lower acquisition costs.

**Medium Probability** – Includes existing surface parking lots located within and adjacent to the Medical District. These parking lots will be more difficult to fully develop as medical buildings because of the displaced parking that will result. Displaced parking will eventually require a parking garage to be built to serve patients and employees more efficiently.

**Low Probability** – Includes the redevelopment of existing multiple family and office located within the District, as well as the redevelopment of existing commercial and office located outside the boundary. These areas are most difficult because of higher acquisition costs and/or relocations.

### Medical District Vicinity



**Key**  
  Existing Medical

**Expansion Possibilities**  
  High Probability  
  Medium Probability  
  Low Probability

  Medical District Boundary

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## Topeka High School Expansion

The Topeka High School Master Plan of 1988 recognized the desire to expand the parking and athletic facilities currently serving Topeka High School. This urban school seriously lacks many of the on-campus athletic and parking facilities enjoyed by its sister schools located in more suburban environments. National standards recognize a school of this size needs at least a 30-acre campus compared to Topeka High's current 13-acre campus. Although it would seem that the construction of the new 501 School District Sports Park on the former State Hospital grounds has solved a few of Topeka High's needs for the time being, there still remains a strong need for more parking, a new gymnasium, and more recreational open space. A new gym has become an even higher priority with Topeka High's changing league affiliations. In order to accommodate this growth, two alternatives were looked at below.

### Alternative A

The Topeka High School Master Plan of 1988 represents a full build-out option for a campus-like setting that would accommodate those facilities needs recognized in 1988. The Master Plan includes parking for 450 cars, a second gym, a new competition-level track, a new competition-level football field, a natatorium, an industrial arts building, and an activities area that is the size of a soccer field. The Master Plan also calls for closing Western Avenue and 9<sup>th</sup> Street. (See attached map)

Alternative A recognized a need for 450 parking spaces to serve the school.

- Cut-back parking                      209 spaces
- Off- street parking                      121 spaces
- 10<sup>th</sup> Street south lot                      120 spaces
- Total                                      450 spaces**

### Alternative B

This option represents an expansion that takes into consideration the protection of the "core" residential neighborhood of Old Town and also the construction of the new Sports Park. It would accommodate a second gymnasium, a new soccer/football field, a wider track, preservation of the current soccer/activities field, and structured parking. Alternative B leaves Western and 9<sup>th</sup> open for better circulation, although some vacation of right-of-way along Western would be required (see attached map).

Alternative B provides two parking scenarios.

- All surface parking
  - Cut-back parking                      255 spaces
  - Off-street parking                      176 spaces
  - 10<sup>th</sup> Street south lot                      120 spaces
  - Total                                      521 spaces**
  
- Parking with wider track and garage on Western or Polk
  - Cut-back parking                      185 spaces
  - Parking Garage                              200 spaces
  - Off-street parking                      96 spaces
  - 10<sup>th</sup> Street south lot                      120 spaces
  - Total                                      601 spaces**

### Alternative A (1988 Plan)



#### Map Key

- A – New tennis courts (Robinson School)
- B – New Parking lot and parking for auto shop.
- C – New industrial arts building.
- D – New gymnasium.
- E – New natatorium (501 Sports Complex)
- F – New competition-level track and football field. (501 Sports Complex)
- G – New activities area - soccer size. (Soccer field at 501 Sports Complex).
- H – Adult education building remains.
- I – Frost House remains
- J – Optional parking garage
- K – Parking lot.

\*White lines on streets represent new cutback parking.

\*\* Close Western Avenue and 9<sup>th</sup> Street.

## Alternative B



### Map Key

**A** – Eliminate cutback parking along Western to allow for enlarging of the current track; preserve existing soccer/activities field.

**B** – Relocate Frost House from corner of 10<sup>th</sup> & Western.

**C** – Eliminate surface parking lot and build new gymnasium.

**D** – Eliminate existing building and construct parking.

**E** – Eliminate existing building on corner of 10<sup>th</sup> & Fillmore, move Frost House, and eliminate existing parking. Construct new soccer field which will also function as open space for the school and neighborhood.

**F** – Eliminate existing homes and construct parking or tennis courts.

**G** – Eliminate existing building and finish parking lot.

\*White lines on streets represent new cutback parking.