

Tennessee Town

Topeka, Kansas



Neighborhood Plan

An Element of the Comprehensive Metropolitan Plan 2025
City of Topeka-Shawnee County, Kansas

A Cooperative Effort By:

The Tennessee Town Neighborhood Improvement Association
&
Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Background In August, 1996, the Tennessee Town Neighborhood Improvement Association (NIA), through the Central Topeka TurnAround Team, submitted a request to the Topeka-Shawnee Metropolitan County Planning Commission for the downzoning of their neighborhood to a 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 the this request. Planning staff collected field data in 1998 and facilitated goal statements in support of the NIA's planning process. However, due to staffing commitments, a plan and downzoning proposal was not finalized at that time. The NIA did move forward with adoption of a draft strategic plan to begin addressing many of their housing needs.

Purpose In the spring and summer of 2000, the NIA and Planning staff were able to collaborate on finalizing a neighborhood plan that fully addressed land use, housing, economic development, safety, infrastructure, and neighborhood character issues. **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 of the Tennessee Town neighborhood.** It establishes a 10-year vision and appropriate policies for land use, housing, community character, and circulation for the Tennessee Town neighborhood. This Plan provides the policy basis from which to identify appropriate zoning, capital improvements and programs for implementation.

Relation to The Plan is a comprehensive community-based approach to neighborhood

Other Plans 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 Tennessee Town be developed in the year

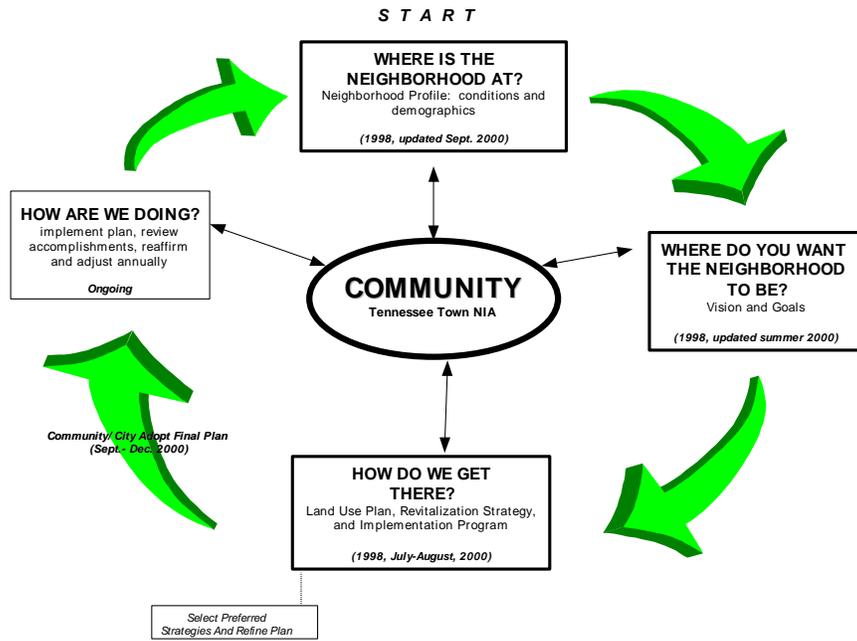
2000. Tennessee Town is rated as an *intensive care* neighborhood in the Neighborhood Element and is considered a high priority for planning assistance and resource allocation.

This plan shows consistency with two other planning efforts - the Elmhurst Neighborhood Plan and the Washburn-Lane Parkway corridor plan - that have been developed by the individual neighborhoods and that are scheduled to be adopted by the City of Topeka in the year 2000 and 2001, respectively.

Process

This document has primarily been prepared in collaboration with the Tennessee Town NIA. Beginning in the winter of 1997 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 to the NIA in 1998 and updated again in 2000. A vision, goal statements, and housing revitalization alternatives were developed over the course of 1998 culminating in the NIA's adoption of a draft strategic plan in January of 1999. The strategic plan guided the NIA in its desire to improve housing conditions in the neighborhood and develop funding proposals. Using this strategic plan as a foundation, the Planning staff worked with community stakeholders in the summer of 2000 finalizing housing/land use/zoning recommendations that would be included in a full neighborhood plan document. On September 21, 2000, the NIA endorsed the draft neighborhood plan for Planning Commission review and recommendation. The Metro Planning Commission gave unanimous approval to the plan on November 27, 2000. Unanimous City Council approval of the plan came on January 2, 2001 and the Shawnee County Commission also gave unanimous approval on January 11, 2001.

Tennessee Town Neighborhood Plan Process



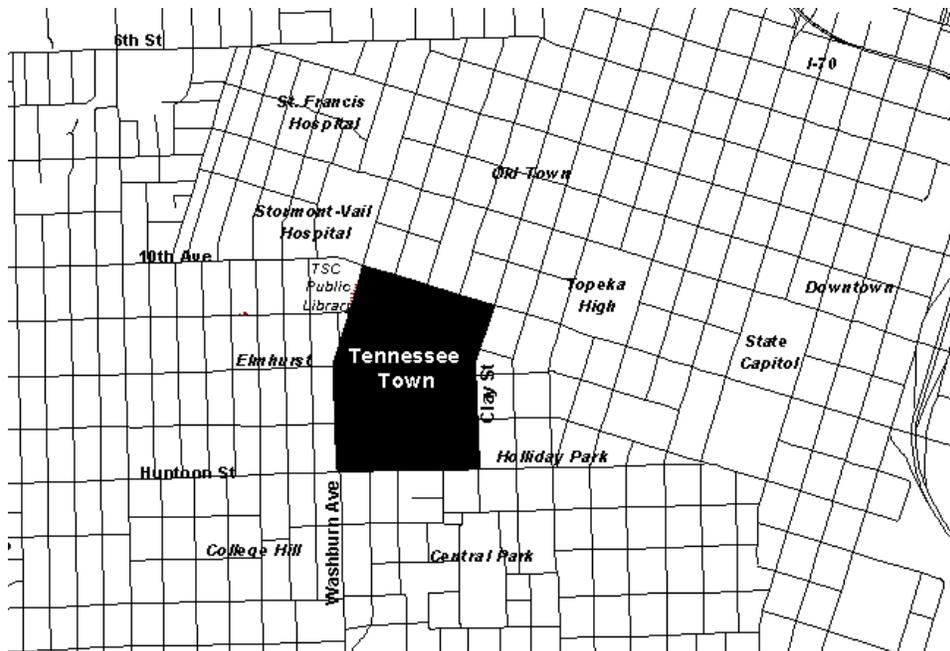
I. NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

A. Location and Character

Location The Tennessee Town Neighborhood is located in the city of Topeka, Kansas,

approximately one mile southwest of the State Capitol Building and Downtown. The neighborhood is bounded by 10th Avenue to the north, Washburn Avenue to the west, Huntoon Street to the south, and Clay Street to the east. The neighborhood comprises approximately 89 acres.

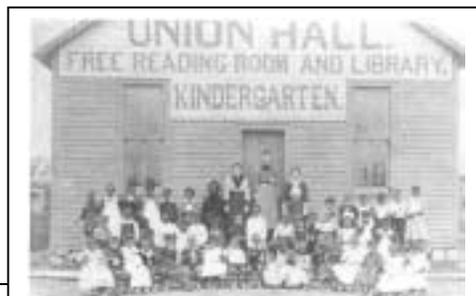
Setting Heavily traveled arterial streets, Washburn Avenue, 10th Avenue and Huntoon Street bound three sides of the neighborhood. The areas to the west, east, and south are generally residential in character with the area bordering 10th Avenue and northwest of the neighborhood being generally institutional and medical services uses. A major resource for the neighborhood is its proximity to major employers, institutions, and services, much of which is within walking distance. Topeka's Medical District is adjacent to the neighborhood, as well as the recently expanded Topeka Public Library.



History

The earliest residents of Tennessee Town were newly freed slaves who were migrating from the South to the West as part of the Exoduster Movement. Some of them, who had left plantation life behind in Tennessee, arrived in Topeka in 1879 on what was then the western edge of the city, in an area known as King's Addition. After arriving in Topeka and establishing Tennessee Town, the settlers built homes, businesses, schools and churches, making Tennessee Town one of the centers of Topeka's African-American community. The 1880 Topeka census identified 880 blacks in the city, comprising 31% of the city's population.

During the 1890's the residents of Tennessee Town began to garden and trade produce they produced for clothes and other necessities. By the first decade of the 1900s four churches had sank roots in Tennessee Town. Tennessee Town underwent a transformation during the early decades of the 20th century. While the neighborhood was established as a predominantly black neighborhood in the late 1800's, Topeka's growth



First black kindergarten west of the Mississippi, started by Rev. Charles

wrapped around this fringe area and the population has evolved into a mix of racial backgrounds (See "Vision" for detailed history).

Character Tennessee Town is comprised of five subdivisions: Kings Addition, Moffits, W.H. Brooks Jr. 2nd (Bona), Lafayette Place Addition, and Youngs Addition 3. Typical lot sizes in Tennessee Town are 25 feet wide and between 150 to 162 feet deep. North/south street widths are typically 100 feet wide, with the typical east/west street width being 75 to 80 feet.

Single story structures dominate the architectural style of the neighborhood. Homes in this neighborhood are typically small to accommodate the small lot size common throughout the neighborhood. Other characteristics of the architecture in this Tennessee Town include porches, raised foundation, brick column bases, and horizontal siding.

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. Tennessee Town is designated as *intensive care* - neighborhoods with the most seriously distressed conditions. The area is declining, but with high revitalization potential, and therefore is considered a high priority for re-investment.



Land Use The neighborhood is predominately residential, with 71% of all parcels being devoted to residential uses. 61% of all parcels and 45% of the land area is single-family residential, including a high number of vacant parcels - 18% (see Table 1). At least 28% of the

land area is in the following land use categories: commercial – office, commercial – retail/service, institutional, parking/other, and recreation/open space. Due to the diversity of land uses in Tennessee Town, conflicts between adjacent incompatible land uses frequently occur.

Map #1 illustrates the existing land use in the neighborhood. Several areas in the interior of the neighborhood have high concentrations of two- and multi-family residential structures. These areas of medium/high density residential development are generally located where high intensity uses are encroaching upon older single-family residential neighborhoods. 22 former single-family homes, which have been converted to two and multi-family homes, are scattered throughout the neighborhood. Office uses are generally located on the perimeter of the neighborhood along 10th Avenue. Commercial uses are also generally located on the perimeter of the neighborhood, along Huntoon Street. Only 1 parcel is committed to public open space.

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

Land Use Category	Parcels	Percent	Acres	Percent
Residential - Single Family	182	61%	26	45%
Residential - Two Family	4	1%	.66	1%
Residential - Multi Family	5	2%	2.6	5%
Residential - Two/Multi Family	22	7%	3.3	6%
Commercial	6	2%	4.5	8%
Office	8	3%	2.4	4%
Institutional	10	3%	4.8	8%
Open Space	1	1%	.1	0%
Other	4	2%	4.68	8%
Vacant	55	18%	8.54	15%
Subtotal	299	100.0%	57.58	100%
Public R-O-W			31.02	
Total Area With R-O-W			88.6	

Source: Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Dept. & Shawnee County Appraisers Office (2000)

Zoning Historically, the neighborhood was zoned for single-family uses since at least 1939. Gradually, the neighborhood began to experience more intensive residential zoning with Clay Street, and the northern portions of Buchanan and Lincoln being zoned for two-family residential around the mid-1940s. From the mid-1940s until around 1956, the zoning in the neighborhood changed roughly splitting the area between two-family and multi-family. Map 2 illustrates the current zoning for Tennessee Town and reflects the two-family/multi-family pattern.

Housing Density The housing density of 5.4 units/acre found in *Tennessee Town* can be attributed to the high number of single family housing units with a few multiple-family structures. 60% of the housing units in the neighborhood are single-family structures while multiple-family structures account for only 21% of the housing units. Present densities are low considering the amount of vacant land. If the neighborhood were built out at permitted densities, the overall density would double to 10.8 units/acre. Both the existing density and the potential built-out density exceed the Metropolitan Plan's defined density range of 1-5 units per acre for low-density residential land uses.

Table 2
Housing Density – Tennessee Town

Housing Type	Units	Percent	Acres	Units/Acre
Multiple Family	67	21%	2.6	26
Single Family	187	60%	26	7.2
Two/Multi Family	53	17%	3.3	16
Two Family	7	2%	.66	10.6

Net Density Residential	314	100.0%	32.56	9.6
Net Density All	314		58	5.4
Gross Density (w/ ROW)	314		88.6	6.1

Source: Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department (2000)

Table 3
Housing Density – Tennessee Town (At Build Out)

Housing Type	Units	Percent	Acres	Units/Acre
Multiple Family	691	72%		
Two Family	274	28%		
Total Area w/ ROW	965		88.6	10.8

Source: Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department (2000)

**Housing
Conditions**

Housing conditions in Tennessee Town exhibit a below-average rating, with only slightly more than a third of residential structures having minor deficiencies, as seen in Table #4 (*housing conditions and ratings are defined in Appendix "A"*).

The highest concentration of blocks with intermediate or major deterioration can be found in the southern half of the neighborhood, (see on Map #3). Blocks south of Munson contain the highest concentrations of deteriorated housing, particularly in the 1200 block of Lincoln Street, and the second 1100 block of Clay and Lane Streets. (*NOTE: Average block conditions are relative to the neighborhood and should not be compared to other neighborhoods. Refer to Appendix "A" for specific definitions of conditions*)

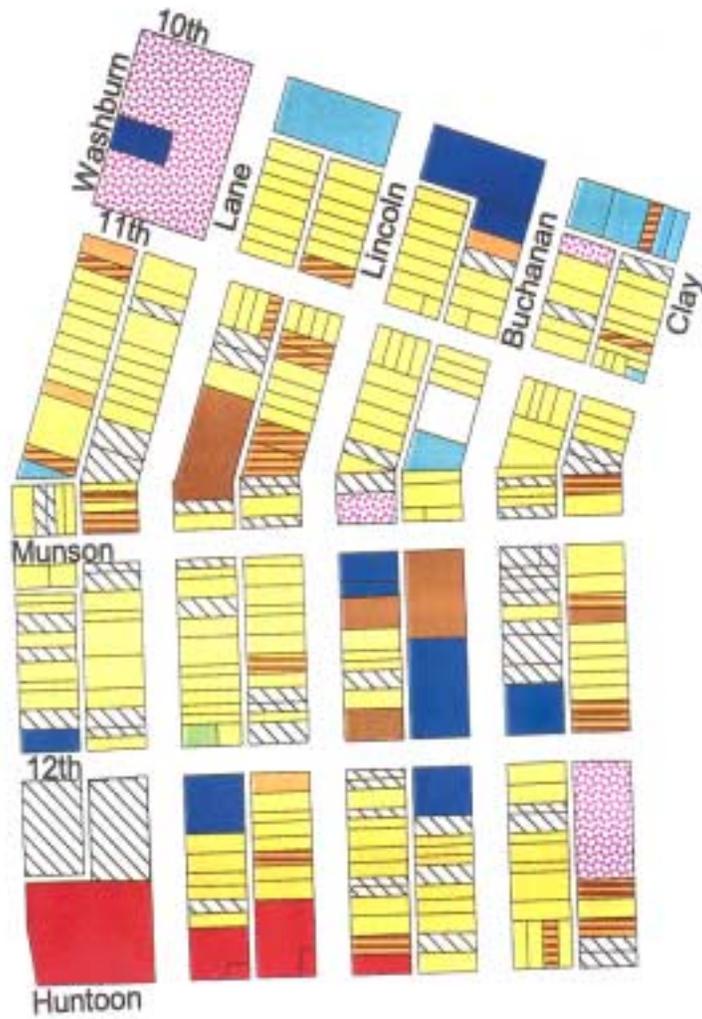
Table 4
Housing Conditions – Tennessee Town

Housing Type	Minor Deficiencies		Intermediate Deficiencies		Major Deficiencies		Total
	Prop.	%	Prop.	%	Prop.	%	Prop.
Multi Family	5	100%	0	0%	0	0%	5

Single Family	64	35%	53	29%	65	36%	182
Two/Multi Family	7	27%	10	38%	9	35%	26
TOTAL	76	36%	63	30%	74	35%	213

Source: Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department (2000)

Tennessee Town Existing Land Use

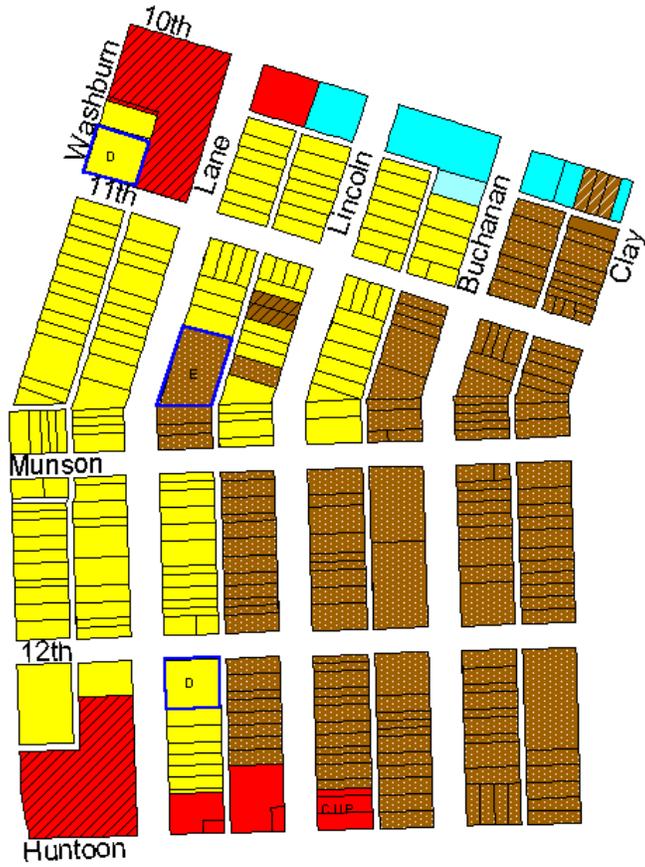


- Existing Land Use**
- Commercial
 - Industrial
 - Institutional
 - Office
 - Open Space
 - Parking/Utility
 - Residential - Multi Family
 - Residential - Single Family
 - Residential - Two Family
 - Residential - Two/Multi Family
 - Vacant



Map #1	Existing Land Use Tennessee Town
Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Dept. 8/16/00	

Tennessee Town Existing Zoning

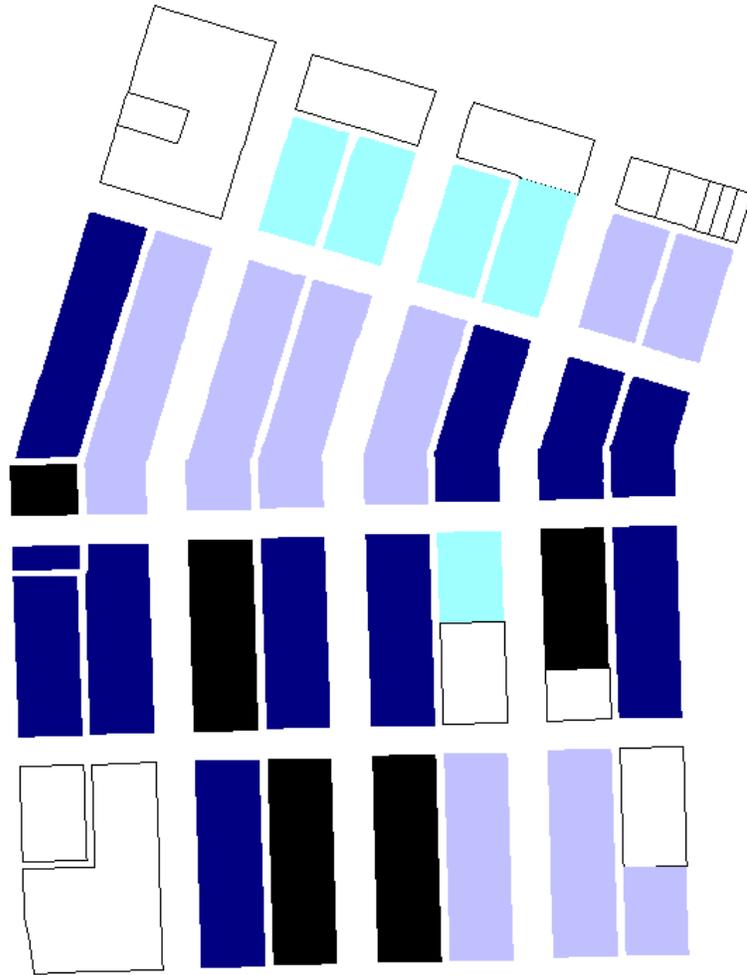


- Existing Zoning
- C2-Commercial
 - C4-Commercial
 - E-Multiple Family
 - M1-Two Family
 - M2-Multiple Family
 - M3-Multiple Family
 - O1-Office and Institutional
 - O2-Office and Institutional
 - PUD-Planned Unit Development
 - Resolution of Intent



Map #2	Existing Zoning Tennessee Town
Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Dept. 8/16/00	

Tennessee Town Housing Conditions



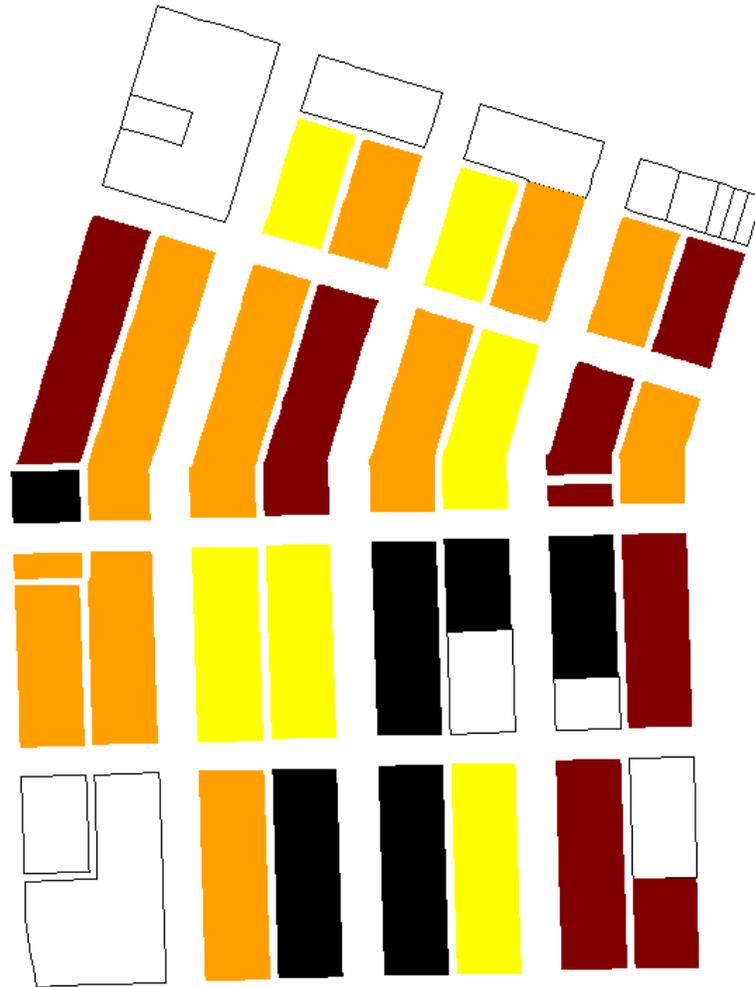
Exterior Housing Conditions (by block)

- Major Deterioration
- Intermediate Deterioration
- Minor Deterioration
- Sound
- Not Surveyed

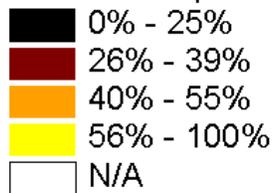


Map #3	Housing Conditions (by block) Tennessee Town
Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Dept. 8/16/00	

Tennessee Town Housing Tenure

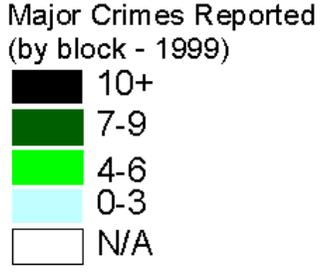


Owner-Occupied %



Map #4	Housing Tenure (by block)
	Tennessee Town
Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Dept.	
8/16/00	

Tennessee Town Public Safety



Map #5	Public Safety
Tennessee Town	
Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Dept.	
8/30/00	

Tenure *Tennessee Town* has almost double the number of renter-occupied housing units compared to the number of owner-occupied housing units (see Table 5). Single-family structures account for 86% of all housing units, of which 45% are owner occupied.

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. A slightly higher concentration of blocks with high levels of owner occupancy can be found in the northern portion of the neighborhood than in the southern section of the neighborhood. The lowest owner occupancy levels can be found along the southern most portion of Lincoln Street.

The estimated vacancy level for the neighborhood is relatively high at 12% of all housing units. Vacancy levels are particularly high in single-family and two-family structures. Vacancy estimates are considered to be conservative because the survey was limited to the exterior of the structure.

Table 5
Housing Tenure – Tennessee Town

Housing Types	Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied		Vacant		Total Units
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	
Multi Family	1	1%	66	99%	0	0%	67
Single Family	84	45%	75	40%	28	15%	187
Two/Multi Family	13	22%	37	57%	10	17%	60
TOTAL	98	31%	178	57%	38	12%	314

Source: Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department (2000)

Property Values and Age According to data gathered by the Shawnee County Appraiser, the mean value of single-family homes is \$19,082. The mean value of two/multi-family residences is \$42,240. The mean value of multi-family structures is nearly five times as much at

\$190,180, which can be attributed to the presence of several large-scale apartment buildings. The housing stock in *Tennessee Town* is relatively old. According to the 1990 census, approximately 46% of all housing in the neighborhood was built prior to 1940 and only 5% was built after 1985. While these older and larger houses are more costly to maintain, they contribute to the historic character of the neighborhood.

Table 6
Property Values

	Median	Mean	Maximum
Residential - Single-family	\$16,950	\$19,082	\$60,400
Residential - Two/Multi-family	\$9,625	\$42,240	\$324,140
Residential - Multi-family	\$148,600	\$190,180	\$335,300
Vacant	\$1,010	\$1,657	\$10,110

Source: Shawnee County Appraiser (2000)

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 1999. Criminal activity was dispersed throughout the neighborhood. Although blocks with high levels of crime can be found throughout the community, high concentrations of reported major crimes occurred on Lane and Washburn between 11th and Munson Streets, and on Lincoln Street between Huntoon and 12th. Major crimes are defined as Part 1 crimes – murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, and theft.

Development Development activity in the neighborhood between 1990 and 1997

Activity has been limited almost entirely to demolitions. No building permits were issued for new construction during that time period. The 12 building permits issued for that time period were for

demolitions. 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 is bound to the west by the minor arterials SW Washburn Avenue and SW Lane Street, to the north and south and by minor arterials 10th Ave and Munson Street and to the east by the collector Clay Street. The neighborhood also experiences heavy traffic as one minor arterial street, 12th Street, runs through the interior of the neighborhood. Table 7 summarizes the annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes for those intersections in the neighborhood that rate in the top 100 intersections in the city with respect to traffic volume.

Tennessee Town is well served by the City's bus service with bus lines running on 10th, Washburn, Lane, Huntoon, and 12th.

Table 7
Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT)

Intersection	Classification	AADT	Rank	Accidents
10 th & Washburn	Min. Arterials	22,614	61	11
Huntoon & Lane	Min. Arterials	16,410	92	1
Lane & 12 th	Min. Arterials	16,252	93	8
12 th & Washburn	Min. Arterials	15,839	95	2

Source: Topeka City Engineer (1995)

C. Socioeconomic Trends

Tennessee Town is located within parts of census tracts 1, 3, 4, and 5. Information from the US Census on population, age, households and income are summarized in Tables #8-10.

The neighborhood population declined by 18% during the 1980's. The largest decrease was seen in the 45-54 year old cohort, accounting for 11% of the population in 1990 as opposed to 5% in 1980. The 35-44 year old cohort, accounting for 6% of the 1980 population as opposed to 10% of the 1990 population experienced the largest increase in population. The number of households also decreased, while the average household size increased. The percentage of female headed households with a child under 18 years of age also increased, representing 100% of the households in 1990 as opposed to 40% of the households in 1980. Incomes in the neighborhood decreased in real terms during the 1980's. The number of persons below poverty level increased significantly, representing 49.4% of the population in 1990 compared to 19.4% in 1980.

The population can therefore be described as a declining population with larger household sizes, residing in an aging housing stock. It is an aging population with lower incomes, who are generally short-term residents of the neighborhood (less than 5 years). All of these factors may contribute to decreasing stability in the neighborhood. The combination of low incomes, large household sizes, aging housing, and the large percentage of short-term/renter households can lead to diminished housing conditions and homeowner investment.

Table 8

Population

	1990	Percent	1980	Percent	Change
POPULATION	605	100%	737	100%	-18%
Female	330	55%	401	54%	-18%
Male	275	45%	336	46%	-18%
Black	413	68%	478	65%	-14%
White	156	26%	240	33%	-35%
Other	36	6%	15	2%	140%
Hispanic Origin	0	0%	19	3%	-100%
Under 5 years	85	14%	74	10%	15%
5 to 9 years	61	10%	42	6%	45%
10 to 14 years	44	7%	41	6%	7%
15 to 19 years	27	4%	69	9%	-61%
20 to 24 years	50	8%	96	13%	-48%
25 to 34 years	129	21%	106	14%	22%
35 to 44 years	58	10%	43	6%	35%
45 to 54 years	31	5%	81	11%	-62%
55 to 64 years	41	7%	66	9%	-38%
65 and over	79	13%	119	16%	-34%
Median Age	27.0		28.4		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 1980 & 1997

Table 9
Households

	1990	Percent	1980	Percent	Change
HOUSEHOLDS	229	100%	315	100%	-27%
Families	131	57%	200	63%	-35%
W/ children <18	99	76%	99	50%	0%
Husband- Wife	64	28%	105	33%	-39%
Female-Headed (no husband)	48	21%	83	26%	-42%

	1990	Percent 1980	Percent	Change
w/ child. <18	48	100%	33	40%
Persons per Household	2.64		2.34	
Persons per Family	3.49		3.11	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 1980 & 1990

Table 10
Income and Work

	1990*	1980**	Change
INCOMES			
Household Median Income	\$ 10,774	\$ 11,745	-8%
Family Median Income	\$ 11,563	\$ 16,875	-31%
Per Capita Income	\$ 6,373	\$ 5,997	6%
<u>Below Poverty Level</u>			
% Persons	49.4%	19.4%	155%
% Children <18	61.2%	27.4%	123%
WORK			
Persons (25+ yrs.)	338	462	-27%
College Graduates	7.0%	9.5%	-26%
Unemployment	12.0%	10.8%	11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 1980 & 1990

*1989 dollars

**1979 dollars converted to 1989 dollars

D. PROFILE SUMMARY: Needs and Constraints

The Tennessee Town Neighborhood is a proud neighborhood rooted in its single-family development. Its character gave way somewhat to high-density



development as a result of the urban migration patterns in from the 1930's to the 1950's. The resulting conditions and aging population have left the neighborhood in a precarious situation, as summarized by the following constraints:

Needs/Constraints

- 61% of the children under 18 live in poverty
- ½ of all blocks average intermediate to major housing deterioration
- 15% of the single-family housing units are vacant
- Only 31% of the housing units are owner-occupied
- 15% of all parcels in the neighborhood is vacant land
- Residential demolition permits outnumber new construction permits 12 to 0 since 1990.

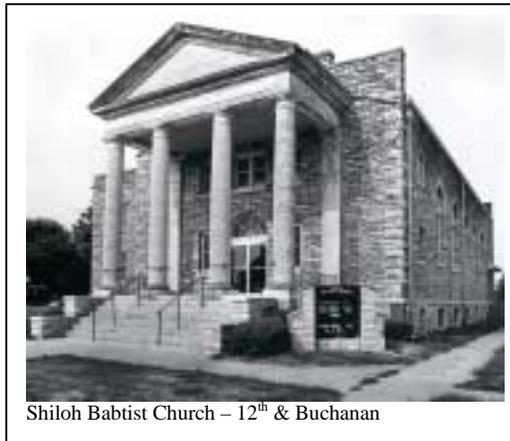
On the other hand, many of these problems can also viewed as opportunities that can help overcome impediments within the neighborhood:

Opportunities

- Diversity of land uses and proximity to downtown typifies strength of traditional neighborhood: living, working, shopping, recreating, and schooling within walking distance.
- The neighborhood is adjacent to the Medical District, a Dillons grocery store, and Lowman Hill Elementary school.
- Vacant land in the neighborhood provides opportunities for redevelopment.
- 60% of the housing units in the neighborhood are single family structures.
- A concentration of churches and the Buchanan Center provide community anchors and quality of life amenities for the neighborhood.
- The Tennessee Town Plaza elderly housing complex is the Topeka Housing Authority's most successful elderly

complex development as evidenced by a substantial waiting list.

The Tennessee Town Neighborhood is a unique area that is one of the most diverse residential neighborhoods in Topeka. This area saw its character altered by unfortunate land use practices in the past. Now the neighborhood is anxious to move forward and recapture the spirit of a solid, healthy, and diverse neighborhood. Sustaining this energy will depend on the neighborhood defining where it wants to go from here.



III. VISION AND GOALS

A. Vision

"The History of Tennessee Town Will Live On"

The sweet smells of home cooking waft through the screen door like ambrosia. Soft voices of sweet souls inside blend in with the food smells to create a symphony of delights auditory and olfactory.

A voice calls out to children seated on the porch outside: only a few more minutes of cool breezes before bedtime. Elders chat and laugh in cool, relaxing voices as they play dominos. Smaller children play games of "hide and seek" and "red light, green light" on the front lawn; one of them yawns a child's yawn of exhaustion after a long summer's day of play. Soon the children's bedrooms will be cool enough for sleep.

Neighbors call out from their porch across the street. Yes, it *was* hot today. Yes, we will see you at church tomorrow. We'll call Mrs. Johnson in the morning to see if she needs a ride to church. You sleep well, too.

As the children tire of their yard games, they gather on the porch to listen to adult conversations about which they know little but know that those conversations carry a serious tone. The children know instinctively that the stories told that night will define them as adults.

The eldest of the elders, 85 years young and full of vim and vigor, tells the story of how her neighborhood -- their neighborhood -- came to be.

"In the 1870s, after the Civil War had divided this country north and south, black and white, newly freed slaves began to leave the South to start new lives in the West," she said.

"That migration became known as the Exoduster Movement," she said. "They went west in Conestoga wagons under the big, broad sky of hope. They crossed the Mississippi, mindful of its breadth and of the oppression its mighty waters would lead to as it meandered south.

"They arrived in this part of Kansas in the late 1870s. Some of them, who had left Tennessee behind, arrived in Topeka in 1879 and founded Tennessee Town on the southwestern edge of our city in what was known then as King's Addition. The Tennessee Town settlement was a result of the Compromise of 1877, which ended Reconstruction and led to the Exoduster Movement. That initial settlement included about 3,000 settlers.

"Unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, many Topekans weren't thrilled with their new neighbors of southern and African ancestry, with their tattered clothes, educations and finances. In fact, Topeka's Mayor at the time, Michael C. Case, said that, instead of providing assistance to the immigrants to facilitate their efforts to settle, the city should provide assistance through distributing

road maps with the routes back to Tennessee highlighted! (He didn't quite put it that way, but that was his message.)

"Relatively undaunted, the settlers built two- and three-room houses to deal with the cold Kansas winters. Help came later in 1879 when a conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church decided to address the settlers' situation. The First Congregational Church also assisted, including underwriting the construction of the Tennessee Town Congregational Church with the understanding that it would be a relief center as well as a church.

"After the settlers built homes, other edifices that housed businesses, schools and churches began to dot the Tennessee Town landscape. In the 1880 Topeka census 880 blacks were found to comprise 31 percent of the city's population.

"Of course, lacking finances and city support for their efforts to settle here, living conditions were less than those of the rest of the city. The local press, mistakenly but not surprisingly, attributed the 'substandard' living conditions to the incompetence of the settlers. That bigotry remains a problem to this day.

"During the 1890s our predecessors began to garden and trade produce they produced for clothes and other necessities, thereby refuting the contention and the bigotry of the press.

"Wherever there is new development there will be old problems. In the 1890s Jordan Hall was the center of gambling and other activities of an unsavory nature. Andrew Jordan founded the building, which also doubled as a dance hall. It was located just down the street from us, at Lincoln and Munson Streets. Munson Street was then called King Street.

"Also during the 1890s the first white man to show any real interest in Tennessee Town, Dr. Charles Sheldon, came into the settlement from his post as pastor of Central Congregational Church, which still stands at Huntoon and Buchanan Streets. He spent three weeks in Tennessee Town surveying the people and conditions. He found that there were about 800 people who had migrated here directly after leaving behind plantation life in the South, 100 children between the ages of three and seven who might be considered kindergarten age, and four black churches.

"Sheldon thought that Jordan Hall would be a good place to start a kindergarten, and by the spring of 1893 the first black kindergarten west of the Mississippi River was opened. There were three teachers, a principal (Carrie Roberts), and two assistants (Jeanette Miller and Margaret Adams). Mrs. Jane

Chapman was instrumental in helping in several projects, including organizing a PTA for the children's mothers.

"Two years later new quarters were found for the kindergarten; it had been such a success that it had outgrown its confines at Jordan Hall! The new kindergarten was housed at the Tennessee Town Congregational Church. The kindergarten, at its new location, taught our children until 1910 when the city - better late than never -- decided to support it and relocated it at the Buchanan School, now known as the Buchanan Center, at 12th and Buchanan Streets.

"The most prominent graduate of the Tennessee Town kindergarten was the attorney Elisha Scott. Scott's two sons, John and Charles, both became attorneys also and argued the Kansas portion of the landmark *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* case that outlawed segregation in public schools. One of the other graduates of the kindergarten was a long-time neighbor of ours, Minus Gentry. He lived at 1191 Lincoln until his death in 1991 at the age of 95.

"After the success of the kindergarten a library was established in Tennessee Town; Rev. B.C. Duke was its first librarian.

"By the first decade of the 1900s four churches had sank roots in Tennessee Town: Shiloh Baptist (still on the southwest corner of 12th and Buchanan Streets), Mt. Olive Episcopal (now Asbury-Mt. Olive United Methodist Church, on the northeast corner of 12th and Buchanan Streets), The Church of God (now Lane Chapel, at 12th and Lane Streets), and the Christian Church (now Dovetail, at 12th and Washburn Streets).

"The Colored Women's Club was also founded at about that time. It still stands in the first 1100 block of Lincoln Street.

"Tribute was paid to Charles Sheldon for his 13 years of work in Tennessee Town. Sheldon put his memories of his service in Tennessee Town into book form: 'In His Steps,' which at one time was the most widely read book in the world next to the Bible, was the result. Looking back on Sheldon's time in Tennessee Town, I must say it was a mixed blessing. Undoubtedly conditions improved because he was able to bridge the gap between the needs of the new settlers and a reticent city. However, the condescending tone he took towards the 'heathens' in Tennessee Town who needed to be 'Christianized' in 'In His Steps' was unforgivable. The only unassailable thing we had then was our dignity, and his words attempted to take that away from us.

"Many community leaders emerged in the early 1900s. Mother Emma Gaines, along with Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gaines and Robert Baker, founded Gaines Funeral Home. The shell of the funeral home still

stands in the second 1100 block of Buchanan Street. Other community leaders included Betty Patterson, Sally Oglesvie, Annie Gentry, Henry Williams, Andrew Jordan, Rilda Preer, Mrs. Louis Knott, Mrs. Ed Link, Andrew Ferguson, Rev. and Mrs. B.C. Duke, H.I. Monroe and George Graham.

"Throughout the next several decades businesses sprang up along Huntoon Street, including the Caravan Club, which was the favored watering hole for our state legislators for years. Silver's Furs occupied a storefront along Huntoon for years, too. The *Brown v. Board* case ended school segregation, but it also ended the existence of Topeka's historically black schools, including Buchanan School. Bobo's Drive In, at Huntoon and Lincoln Streets, was a neighborhood restaurant for years, but most of our neighborhood residents were served in brown-paper bags until the 1960s. Dibble's Grocery Store was located in a lovely Tudor-style building at Huntoon and Lane Streets until the late 1970s; Dillon's is there now. Plaza Amoco, across the street, has been at its current location for decades, as has First Impressions Printing. The Topeka and Shawnee County Library, as it's now called, has been at our northwestern border since its inception, as has Stormont-Vail Hospital.

During the 1970s Tennessee Town experienced the first rumblings of a renaissance. The Community Development Block Grant Program, through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, began in Topeka in 1974. CDBG funds began to come to Topeka as an entitlement to poor neighborhoods like ours. In 1976, Tennessee Town became the first Neighborhood Improvement Association in the city. Mrs. Lillian Bennett was our first president. She served in that capacity for 10 years.

"A group of Kansas State University architecture students came into our neighborhood in about 1980 to conduct a semester-long inventory of housing. The results of their work were impressive, including recommendations for in-fill housing that included actual prototypes! At about that same time the neighborhood began working with Metropolitan Planning on a comprehensive look at Tennessee Town, including housing, infrastructure and safety issues. A big manual was compiled, along with an executive summary. Those two efforts to ready our neighborhood for revitalization inspired hope.

"The 1980s began the downward spiral of Tennessee Town. Once a proud, vibrant neighborhood inhabited by low- to middle-class folks who often worked two jobs to support their families, lived in modest but well-kept homes and interacted with their neighbors on a daily basis, Tennessee Town became older, less vibrant, more lower-class socioeconomically and less interactive.

However, the one constant throughout this period was the pride that the elder residents still felt for their neighborhood.

"As our senior neighbors began to die, the neighborhood did, too. Homes that were formerly owned became rentals, and *some* of the landlords and renters weren't too concerned about maintaining their homes. Stable families were often replaced with people who tended to only live here for several months. Older homes were razed, creating vacant lots, but new homes were never built in their places.

"The commercial strip along Huntoon deteriorated even faster than the housing here did. Silver's Furs suffered a fire in the 1970s and closed. Bobo's closed in the 1980s, as did the Caravan Club. A number of businesses have been in and out of this strip. The only business that has spanned the entire period of the 1970s and 1980s is Lewis Liquors, at the corner of Huntoon and Lincoln.

"Dillon's, a central commercial player in our neighborhood since the late 1970s, has, from time to time, even suggested that it might move because the Huntoon and Lane store is a 'marginal.' money maker."

"The churches, once the backbone of life in Tennessee Town, have become less willing to help the neighborhood. Their congregations, once filled with neighborhood residents, now increasingly contain faces from other areas of Topeka.

"Our people began to lose faith in the proposition that, if we remained vigilant, the city would eventually get to us. Except for sidewalks, through CDBG funds, the city didn't seem to care.

"But, and this is important, *our people never lost faith in each other.*

"And, of course, your family has lived in Tennessee Town for the past 70 years. Your mothers and fathers for five generations have loved this neighborhood for what it was and will be: a stable, working-class, low- to moderate-income, family-oriented residential area where people know one another, visit with one another on our porches, pray together at our five churches, meet as a unit to plot a future that is carefully considered and completely inclusive, and preserve the lore and history of the neighborhood so that it may be treasured and passed on to successors yet unknown. You and your successors must fight to preserve this neighborhood, because I only plan on being here another 30 years or so!"

A laugh from her daughter ended the conversation. The children, with eyelids heavy from impending slumber, went to their cooled bedrooms with the story of their ancestors still fresh in their minds.

Back on the porch the woman who had just woven the incredible story of her neighborhood -- indeed, her life -- rocked back and forth in her chair.

A twinkle could be detected in her eyes. She knew that the next caretakers of her neighborhood were now ready to do right by it.

She smiled.

Fifteen years later the eldest of the elders and her family gathered for her 100th birthday. The Lillian H. Bennett Black History Museum's conference room was filled with five generations of the elder's family. Neighborhood friends attended, also. The five churches also were represented by their respective pastors, something that wouldn't have happened 15 years earlier. The Mayor and three city council members also took time to pay tribute to Tennessee Town's Miss Jane Pittman.

The elder's daughter, the one who laughed at her mother's prediction of life-long service to her neighborhood, had assumed her mother's position as leader. The daughter gathered everyone around the day's honoree and said:

"On this day, the 100th birthday of my mother, let us rejoice. Let us rejoice that we are all here to give thanks and praise to her and her many accomplishments and sacrifices for this neighborhood. Let us rejoice that her many years of service have resulted in many improvements here, including new and rehabilitated housing and an absence of vacant lots.

"Let us rejoice that we have a thriving senior and physically challenged apartment complex that respects our neighbors who are aged and handicapped.

"Let us rejoice that we have a youth outreach program that has placed many of our young at Washburn University and in other positions from which they could succeed.

"Let us rejoice that we have a community center and commons area for our neighbors to gather for special, or everyday, occasions.

"Let us rejoice that we have a burgeoning commercial strip to the north of Dillon's where specialty shops bring in patrons from across the city.

"Let us rejoice that we have lush, tranquil greenspaces scattered about our neighborhood, where our children can play and their parents can relax.

"Let us rejoice that we have lighting and infrastructure improvements to streets and alleys that have made travel, both by car and by foot, safer.

"Let us rejoice and praise God for the reinvolvement of our five churches in the affairs of the neighborhood in which they reside.

"Let us rejoice that we have this Black history museum, the Lillian H. Bennett Black History Museum, which pays tribute on a daily basis to the struggles and successes of predecessors and shines light on what successors must never forget -- that is, if they hope to succeed in the future.

"And let us certainly rejoice that what was once a neighborhood on the brink of extinction 15 years earlier has rebounded and become, once again, a haven for diversity, respect, spirituality, culture and education.

"And now, a few words from our guest of honor. Mama..."

The elder, still walking on her own and with most of her vim and vigor still intact, looked around the room at all of the warm, familiar faces -- and at the warm but unfamiliar faces, too -- and smiled. She drew in a breath and said:

"The baton has been passed. You have done magnificently, but the race is not over. It will never be. The history and lore of this neighborhood and, by extension, yourselves, must be watered and weeded. You must remain vigilant, because no one else will care about us unless *we* care about us. I am very grateful that I have been allowed to see the changes here. They are wonderful! I am satisfied, and you should be, too."

Later that fall the eldest of the elder's went home to God. It was as if she had hung in there long enough to see her work, as well as the work of others, rewarded. Her neighborhood was poorer because of her absence there.

But Heaven was much richer because of her presence there.

Her picture hangs in the entry way of the Bennett Black History Museum as a constant reminder that dreams *can* come true.

**dedicated to the memory of Lillian H. Bennett, Tennessee Town's first NIA President, to Emogene Shepard, the current NIA President, and to all those men, women and children who have helped, and will help, to make Tennessee Town the special place it was -- and will be.*

B. Goal Statements

Housing

- ◆ Support the improvement of housing conditions in the neighborhood as the top priority for the revitalization of Tennessee Town.
- ◆ Maximize the conservation of existing housing, thereby contributing to the historical character of the neighborhood.
- ◆ Stimulate rehabilitation of both owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing.
- ◆ Promote new housing development primarily for homeownership and maintain its *affordability*.
- ◆ Strive to achieve a neighborhood of no abandoned homes and no vacant lots.
- ◆ Balance the need to develop quality in-fill housing with the need to compliment the economic, social, and architectural fabric of the neighborhood.
- ◆ Encourage, as much as possible, homeowners to participate in housing rehabilitation activities through volunteer labor.

Land Use

- ◆ Single-family residential land uses should be viable and the predominate land use of the neighborhood.
- ◆ Define the neighborhood's "center", or focal point, that can serve as a mixed-use *commons* for community activities, events, and uses.
- ◆ Increase the amount of usable community greenspace accessible to residents.
- ◆ Encourage clustering of commercial land uses in a more unified development or location that avoids commercial strip development.
- ◆ Balance the land-use needs of institutional users with the needs of the neighborhood to maintain a viable residential community.
- ◆ Encourage neighborhood involvement in all aspects of the establishment of "halfway houses" in Tennessee Town.

Youth and Education

- ◆ Tennessee Town should be “kid-friendly” and desirous for families to raise their children.
- ◆ Help develop linkages to educational/cultural/recreational assets within the community -- schools, churches, library, etc. -- that will enable youth to enhance their academic and life skills.
- ◆ Encourage quality pre-school programs that target children at their most developmental stages.
- ◆ Include youth and their families, to the greatest extent possible, in the decision-making processes of the neighborhood.

Economic Development & Employment

- ◆ Develop and maintain active partnerships with the community’s businesses and employers.
- ◆ Support the retention/expansion of the Dillon’s block as the neighborhood’s primary retail employer and amenity.
- ◆ Utilize loan and incubator programs to stimulate entrepreneurial businesses either within the neighborhood or for residents.
- ◆ Work to provide child care and transportation opportunities to enable residents to accomplish employment or educational objectives.

Historical Character

- ◆ Identify, preserve, and promote the heritage of Tennessee Town.
- ◆ Create a cultural heritage center that documents the neighborhood’s history and linkages to Black history in Topeka.
- ◆ Apply traditional neighborhood design standards for new development that respects Tennessee Town’s scale and character.
- ◆ Increase participation and investment of local churches in neighborhood revitalization activities.
- ◆ Welcome and support a diversity of peoples.
- ◆ Identify neighborhood gateways and work to enhance and beautify their image.

Safety, Infrastructure, & Transportation

- ◆ Strengthen the relationship between police and community residents.
- ◆ Increase effectiveness of public and private lighting in order to reduce incidents of crime.
- ◆ Create a more “walkable” community, particularly along major trafficways, which promotes pedestrian safety for all residents; initiate traffic calming techniques where appropriate.
- ◆ Reconnect the neighborhood in a more pedestrian-friendly manner to local businesses and institutions.
- ◆ Improve the conditions of alleys so as to make them more useable for residents.

IV. LAND USE PLAN



The Tennessee Town Neighborhood planning area currently contains a diverse mix of land uses, including residential, commercial, office, institutional, retail, and open space. The Tennessee Town Land Use Plan ([Map 6](#)) graphically illustrates a

conceptual guide for land-use development of the neighborhood that embodies the vision and goals presented in Section III. The map depicts preferred land-use categories and is intended to be more conceptual than explicit in terms of land use boundaries. This section describes the land use categories in greater detail.

A. Land Use Categories

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

Residential – Low Density (Urban):

This category comprises the areas of Tennessee Town that front on “local” low volume streets: Lincoln, Buchanan, and Clay. These areas are where the highest concentrations of single-family uses exist without a significant mixing of originally built two/multiple-family uses or major frontage along arterial streets. These are areas whose original development was single-family and where a realistic potential exists to sustain this as the predominate character. New development in this area should be compatible with the existing single-family character, which could include such new uses as church-related uses and small-scale daycare.



Primary Uses: single-family dwellings

Zoning Districts: R-2 (Single Family)

Density: 5-7 units/acre (net)

Residential – Low Density (Urban/PD): This category comprises the single-family areas of Tennessee Town that front on higher-volume arterial streets: Washburn, Lane, and Huntoon. This category differs from the *residential – low-density* (urban) category by providing more flexibility on appropriate housing types in a planned development (PD) setting that fits the scale and character of the neighborhood. This category applies in the event of future development of vacant lots in order to give the area flexibility to redevelop more creatively with attached/detached residential units in a unified development. Existing residential uses are appropriate for two-family dwellings given their lot size and frontage along arterial streets.

Primary Uses: single-family and two-family

Zoning Districts: M-1, M-1A (Two Family), PUD (Planned Unit Development)

Density: 7-10 units/acre (net)



Neighborhood Mixed-Use Commons:

This land-use category comprises the area of Tennessee Town that lies in the second 1100 block of Buchanan Street, in the center of the neighborhood, with the potential for expansion into the southern portion of Clay Street. The Buchanan Center and adjoining

grounds are the focal point of this land-use category. Inter-generational community space and uses include: public greenspace, elderly housing, single-family housing, social service agencies, faith-based institutions, children's uses, heritage collections, etc. Another characteristic of this category is that all uses would be within a 10-minute walk of neighborhood residents.

Zoning Districts: O&I 1-2 (Office and Institutional), PUD (Planned Unit Development) residential multi-family senior housing

Density: 14-16 units/acre (net)

Professional Services/Residential:

This land-use designation comprises the area of Tennessee Town that fronts a primary image corridor (10th Avenue). This also serves as a frontage buffer between Dillons and the low-density residential neighborhood



on Lane Street. Mixed uses, which could include neighborhood commercial, professional office/services, institutional, and residential, should maintain a respectful character at a neighborhood scale. Adaptive reuse of existing residential buildings is highly encouraged so as not to promote strip commercial development.

Primary Uses: neighborhood residential, professional office/services, and institutional.

Zoning Districts: O&I 1-2 (Office and Institutional), C-1 (Commercial), M-1, M-1A (Two Family), X-1 (Mixed Use)



Commercial Retail: This designation comprises the southern half of the “Dillons block” and is surrounded by four minor or principal arterials: Washburn, Lane, Huntoon, and 12th. This is a highly visible and prominent location in which high- quality design standards should be taken into consideration for new development.

Primary Uses: grocery store and retail anchor

Zoning Districts: C-2 (Commercial), PUD (Planned Unit Development) commercial use

Tennessee Town Future Land Use Plan



- Future Land Use Plan**
- Residential - Low Density (Urban)
 - Residential - Low Density (Urban/PD)
 - Neighborhood Mixed-Use Commons
 - Professional Services/Residential
 - Commercial - Neighborhood
 - Medical Services
 - Open Space
 - Utility
 - Parcels



Map #6	Future Land Use Plan
Tennessee Town	
Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Dept.	
8/19/00	

Medical Services: This designation comprises the block surrounded by three minor or principal arterials: Washburn, Lane, and 10th. The potential exists that this block could serve future expansion of medical service facilities in the area. The types of uses that characterize this category include: health care facility, health service facility, hospital, health care office/clinic, public health agency, and professional office/services. Given this block's location along Washburn/Lane and 10th Avenue, new development should follow high-quality design guidelines for these corridors. In addition, rather than being developed in a piecemeal fashion, this block should be a unified planned development.

Primary Uses: medical facilities and supporting ancillary services.

Zoning Districts: M-S (Medical Services), O&I-3 (Office and Institutional)

Open Space: The open space designation is located at the intersection of 12th and Lane. Lane Garden is a small pocket park currently located at the northeast corner. This open space area should act as a neighborhood gateway with passive open space, landscaping, and monument signage. Future open space development could occur within the northern half of the "Dillons block". This open space should also be passive, visual, and functional for community-wide gatherings. As a secondary alternative, retail expansion and the establishment of social service organizations is also appropriate in this location to provide viable neighborhood services. Again, this is a highly visible and prominent location in which high quality design standards should be taken into consideration for new development.

Primary Use: Park, Retail/Social Service District

Zoning District: OS (Open Space), PUD (Planned Unit Development)

V. REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

A. Revitalization Principles

- ✓ **"Stop the Bleeding"** – Address greatest concentrations of blight first to remove major impediments to outside investment and repair image.
- ✓ **"Make an Impact"** – Concentrate improvements in a 1-2 block area to create momentum and synergy. Build off other major investments (e.g., Library expansion).
- ✓ **"Fortify the Center"** – Protect and strengthen historic core of community; churches, Tennessee Town Plaza, and Buchanan Center anchor revitalization efforts.

- ✓ **"Pursue Partnerships"** – Continue to develop and maintain ongoing relationships with all potential housing providers – public and private – to realize neighborhood goals.
- ✓ **"Let History Be Your Future"** – New development must fit the character of the neighborhood. If new development is not respectful of historic character, the neighborhood will not maintain its unique identity.
- ✓ **"Fill in the Gaps"** – Once major impediments and risk have been addressed, target individual vacant lots for spot infill housing or pocket parks as opportunities arise.
- ✓ **"Take Ownership"** – The NIA must claim the lead in what happens in the neighborhood and provide clear direction/input to public and private stakeholders to realize neighborhood goals.

B. Sub-Area Strategies

The Tennessee Town Revitalization Plan focuses on the areas of the neighborhood that have the greatest concentration of blight as a first priority. This "stop the bleeding" strategy is the most effective way to begin to stabilize the neighborhood and prevent additional decline. Giving priority to these areas will show greater overall benefit to the neighborhood and allow Tennessee Town to reach its revitalization potential quicker. Refer to Map #7-Improvement Areas for the following Sub-Areas and Improvement Areas.

Sub-Area #1 – Neighborhood Historic Core

An element of the following strategies includes the idea that the neighborhood will collaborate with the Holliday Park Neighborhood in regards to activities along the Clay and Huntoon Corridors.

Improvement Area #1 – 1200 Block of Lincoln

Conditions/Approach:

This block has the highest percentage of major deterioration of exterior housing conditions, very low homeownership, and a high number of major crimes reported. The blighted "Caravan Club",

drive-through liquor store, known drug houses, and exposure to commuter traffic along 12th and Huntoon make this block a primary symbol of neighborhood neglect. A major redevelopment approach emphasizing new-infill housing for homeowners should be taken. This approach is a longer term effort due to the need to purchase and assemble property for development. Work on Improvement Area #6 should be undertaken concurrently.

Improvements:

- Single family in-fill housing redevelopment (16 new dwelling units)
- Rehabilitation of existing homes (4 existing dwelling units)
- Repaired curbs/sidewalks

Improvement Area #2 – Asbury Mt. Olive block

Conditions/Approach:

The area north of the church is largely vacant land as a result of acquisition by Asbury Mt. Olive. This area has been cleared for new development and could take place relatively quickly depending on funding. Should be coordinated with Improvement Area #3 to provide necessary parking for Church.

Improvements:

- Elderly multi family in-fill housing redevelopment (12-14 new elderly dwelling units)
- Church expansion of community center.
- Repaired curb/sidewalks

Improvement Area #3 – 12th & Clay

Conditions/Approach:

The homes in this area show either major or intermediate deterioration of the exterior housing conditions. This area is in close proximity to Asbury Mt. Olive United Methodist Church and would be appropriate for parking expansion and a transitional house.

Improvements:

- Rehabilitation of existing housing stock for church-related uses, and/or demolition of homes for church parking.

Improvement Area #4 – Tennessee Town Plaza

Conditions/Approach:

The single-family housing on Lincoln is showing major deterioration, which is exacerbated by the fact that the successful Tennessee Town Plaza surrounds it. Completing the Tennessee Town Plaza elderly apartment complex will help this block reach its full potential and eliminate a major impediment to investment.

Improvements:

- In-fill elderly housing expansion to complete Lincoln block (replace 4 dwelling units with 10 new elderly dwelling units)
- Buchanan Center passive commons area, tot lot, restoration of brick streets on Buchanan, decorative lighting, and heritage center/collections (e.g. shotgun style house refurbished ala Ward-Meade Park)
- Repaired curbs/sidewalks.

Improvement Area #5 – Lincoln Street North

Conditions/Approach:

There are a few vacant lots and intermediate-to-major deteriorated housing in the southern half of the block that might work well for infill housing. Conditions in the northern half of this block are suited for minor rehab. On balance, this area's potential would be greatly improved by first addressing the blight across Lincoln in Improvement Area #4.

Improvements:

- Homeowner rehabilitation program (2 minor-inter/2 major rehabs for homeowners)
- Spot in-fill housing redevelopment (3 new dwelling units)

Improvement Area #6 – Buchanan Street South

Conditions/Approach:

The blocks in this area show minor deterioration and decent homeownership levels. Shiloh Baptist Church anchors this block. Modest expansion of their parking would alleviate some of the seriously neglected housing while opening up opportunities for some spot infill housing. Housing efforts should be done concurrently while undertaking work in Improvement Area #1.

Improvements:

- Single family in-fill housing redevelopment (3 new dwelling units)
- Homeowner or rental rehabilitation (1 major rehab, 2 minor rehab)

Sub-Area #2 – Washburn/Lane Corridor

An element of the following strategies includes the idea that the neighborhood will collaborate with the Elmhurst Neighborhood in regards to activities along the Washburn Corridor.

Improvement Area #7 – Washburn/Lane North

Conditions/Approach:

Homeowner rehabilitation will improve this area along Washburn that shows intermediate deterioration in exterior housing conditions. Solid conditions and homeownership along Lane except for a concentration of vacant lots. Conservation of most existing homes should be pursued along with new construction of single-family homeowner units on west-side of Lane. This area should receive a high priority to build off of the Library and pedestrian lighting improvements that are taking place.

Improvements:

- Homeowner rehabilitation program (5 minor-inter/3 major rehabs)
- Single family in-fill housing (replace/relocate 2-3 dwelling units with 6-7 new dwelling units)
- Pedestrian lighting, future bikeway, sidewalks, landscaping
- Enforce zoning of any illegal non-conforming commercial uses at 1150 Washburn.

Improvement Area #8 – Lane Street East

Conditions/Approach:

This area shows a high percentage of homeownership, but major exterior deterioration of housing. A conservation approach should be pursued except the possible relocation of the historic shotgun-style house to Improvement Area #4.

Improvements:

- Homeowner rehabilitation program (4 major rehabs) and relocation of historic shotgun style house to Commons.

Improvement Area #9 – Washburn/Lane South

Conditions/Approach:

This area is susceptible to housing redevelopment in the long term due to intermediate housing deterioration and a high number of vacant lots. Crimes reported are also very high along Washburn. The Elmhurst Neighborhood is working on creating a greenway on the west-side of Washburn and eliminating much of the blighting and crime influences that exist. This area will become more enticing for private investment (in-fill and rehab) if this happens.

Improvements:

- Landbanking for future redevelopment and in-fill
- Homeowner rehabilitation as needed.
- Pedestrian lighting, future bikeway, sidewalks, landscaping.

Sub-Area #3 – Tennessee Town North

An element of the following strategy includes the idea that the neighborhood will collaborate with the Holliday Park Neighborhood in regards to activities along the Clay and Huntoon Corridors.

Conditions/Approach:

Sound to minor deterioration of housing conditions and above average homeownership levels. Prevention of any further deterioration should be a high priority.

Improvements:

- Homeowner rehab and rental rehab (11th Street)
- Potential adaptive reuse of the ice house

Improvement Area #10 – Munson Block

Conditions/Approach:

Major deterioration and vacant/boarded housing on the edge of Tennessee Town Plaza. Undersized corner lots limit infill potential.

Improvements:

- Spot infill (1 house and 3 demolitions) (Munson and 1/3 block north)

Tennessee Town Improvement Areas



Legend

	Sub-Area 1 - Historic Core
	Sub-Area 2 - Washburn-Lane Corridor
	Sub-Area 3 - Tennessee Town North
	Improvement Areas



Map #7	Improvement Areas Tennessee Town
Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Dept. 7/28/00	

C. Design Guidelines

The purpose of the following design guidelines are to ensure the new in-fill housing development blends with the existing character of Tennessee Town. Design guidelines are important to ensure that new houses in a neighborhood are comparable to the existing houses in size, scale, form, and design so that they fit well with their surroundings. The inherent historic features of the existing housing of the neighborhood should be the keys to the design of any new development. New housing should not contradict or overwhelm the neighborhood, which can take away from the area's unique identity. Incompatible in-fill housing will undermine the effectiveness of the revitalization strategy making it all the more important to integrate the new buildings to the neighborhood.

The following pictures are examples of the design elements or 'the soul of the place' in the Tennessee Town Neighborhood:



It is recommended that all new in-fill housing be designed in a manner that reflects the architectural character of the neighborhood and traditional neighborhood design elements. These general characteristics include:

- 1) multiple pitched roof lines (7/12),
- 2) narrower width than depth and building orientation that is consistent with the lot configuration,
- 3) porches,
- 4) proportional window openings,
- 5) raised foundations,
- 6) building orientations close to the sidewalk (the street is the focus),
- 7) brick column bases,
- 8) horizontal siding (e.g. wood or hardi-plank with 4¼-inch exposure).

The following examples are types of new housing that fit the design guidelines for Tennessee 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-story single-family homes



Two-story single family home

Multi-family

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of the Implementation 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.

A. Activities/Programs

Neighborhood Downzoning - 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 the profile section of this plan, inappropriate zoning districts established more than a half-century ago are at the root of many problems facing Tennessee Town today. While these past actions regrettably altered the intended character of parts of the neighborhood, some areas of the neighborhood remain relatively strong. These areas should be rezoned to a lower density district under a City-initiated “downzoning” process (see Map #8). It is also recommended that the Planning Commission initiate a traditional re-zoning process for those individual over-zoned properties indicated on Map #8.

Housing In-fill and Rehabilitation - Less than one-third of the housing units in Tennessee Town are owner-occupied. Many impediments remain to housing rehabilitation for owners and renters which suppresses housing values and discourages investment in the neighborhood’s housing stock. Several strategies are recommended to alleviate these constraints and encourage greater re-investment and homeownership. It is important to note that the recommended strategies must be viewed not as stand alone activities, but in a comprehensive package of strategies that will overcome impediments:

- ❖ **Promote affordable homeownership** – Affordable homeownership should be used as the first step in the process of achieving long-term market-rate attractiveness in the neighborhood. Affordable homeownership can help stabilize a neighborhood by bringing people to the neighborhood that will take pride in their homes and contribute to the neighborhood. Tools that can be used to achieve

affordable homeownership include: first-time homeowner programs, lease/purchase programs, manufactured off-site homes, sweat equity and volunteer labor, Habitat for Humanity, etc. Existing, well-managed rental rehabilitation programs, such as Topeka City Homes, should also be utilized on a selective basis as an alternative to letting vacant houses become a blighting influence that deter future homeowners.

- ❖ **Initiate and sustain marketing efforts** – According to residents, the mainstream real estate community does not have a good image of the overall Tennessee Town neighborhood. This, in turn, hurts prospective buyers who do not become acquainted with the neighborhood through their realtor. It is recommended that the NIA “adopt” a realtor(s) interested in doing business in the neighborhood, provide “get-to-know” letters to realtors who do have properties for sale, and initiate a face-to-face campaign to qualify/help existing residents for homeownership.
- ❖ **Ensure zoning regulations encourage compatible in-fill development** – Current zoning standards establish a minimum lot size of 50 feet for new development. Most of the current single and two family properties in Tennessee Town are less than 50 feet. The zoning regulations do provide for the “grandfathering” of the existing 25’ wide lots, but it is not clear in the development community that these single lots or lot-and-a-half properties are buildable or that there are designs available to fit these lots. It is recommended that the Planning Department revise or promote the zoning regulations accordingly to encourage housing be built on <50’ wide lots in appropriate blocks of older neighborhoods and promote compatible housing designs.
- ❖ **Identify “improvement areas” for in-fill** – The most prominent of the in-fill areas is the 1200 block of Lincoln in the Historic Core sub-area. This and other smaller strategic “improvement areas” are identified in Section B of the Revitalization Strategy.
- ❖ **Enable land acquisition and control** – Larger in-fill opportunity areas, such as in the 1200 block of Lincoln, will ultimately require

land assemblage or control to secure development rights to the area. Single ownership through a private/non-profit entity with support from the City's acquisition or funding authority needs to be explored. This and other smaller in-fill opportunity areas may require "landbanking" through tax-delinquent property sales or other means. The land could then be held, assembled, or marketed for development at a future date that adheres to the objective of the Plan.

- ❖ **Combine with rehabilitation efforts** – In-fill housing will only be feasible once a block or target area is stabilized with rehabilitated structures and reasonable elimination of blighting influences. This would provide a synergistic effect that spins-off additional investments in an area.

Halfway House Ordinance – A halfway house for purposes of this Plan is defined as a facility for individuals or offenders that provides residential and/or rehabilitation services for those who reside or have been placed in such facilities due to any one of the following situations: (1) prior to, or instead of, being sent to prison; (2) received a conditional release prior to a hearing; (3) as part of a local sentence of not more than one year; (4) at or near the end of a prison sentence, such as a state-operated or franchised work-release program, or a privately operated facility housing parolees; (5) received a deferred sentence and placed in facilities operated by community corrections; (6) require court-ordered guidance services for alcohol or chemical dependence.

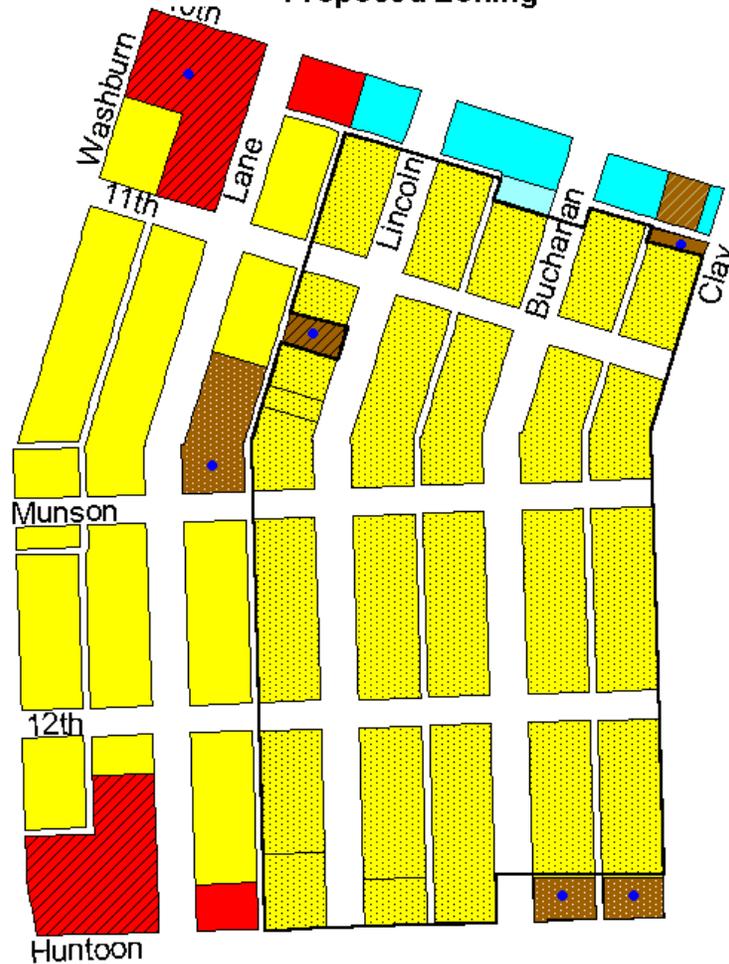
As it stands currently, there are no regulations covering halfway houses in Topeka. Because of this lack of oversight and particularly because of the recent location of two halfway houses in the neighborhood, the Tennessee Town neighborhood has concerns. There is a real fear among neighborhood residences about the safety of the neighborhood as a result of the concentration of unregulated halfway houses.

Given the nature of halfway houses, it does not make sense to locate them in close proximity to one another where they could feed off each other and create crime problems. Nor does it make sense to locate

these halfway houses in areas that already have a crime problem and may contain drug houses, liquor stores, etc.

Why are halfway houses choosing to locate in Tennessee Town? Land is cheap. In addition, there is a perception that the project won't get held up because the neighborhood isn't organized and won't care. While that certainly is not the case with Tennessee Town, the neighborhood, in fact, did not even have the opportunity to voice input to these projects because they were not notified about them. No regulation exists

Tennessee Town Proposed Zoning



Proposed Zoning

- R2 - Single Family Residential
- M1 - Two Family
- M2 - Multiple Family
- M3 - Multiple Family
- E - Multiple Family
- PUD - Planned Unit Development
- C2 - Commercial
- C4 - Commercial
- OI1 - Office and Institutional
- OI2 - Office and Institutional
- Recommended Future Conventional Re-Zone

Downzoning Area



Map #8	Proposed Zoning Tennessee Town
Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Dept. 10/25/00	

for neighborhood notification of these projects. Another reason is that there is no provision in the City's zoning code to address the proximity of halfway houses to one another.

The City of Wichita and Sedgwick County experienced this problem in the early 1990's and took action by developing an ordinance to regulate halfway houses in that area. The ordinance also created a board charged with licensing halfway houses.

It is the recommendation of this plan that the City of Topeka and Shawnee County, at the very least, develop regulations concerning neighborhood notification of these projects. Ideally the neighborhood would like to see the City and the County move forward in developing an ordinance that regulates the activities, personnel, and policies of halfway houses in the Region.

Washburn/Lane Parkway Lighting - The TurnAround Team has secured \$200,000 in funding for the initial phase of decorative pedestrian lighting along Washburn Avenue from 10th Street to Munson Street which should be completed in 2000. This will be a significant improvement to the image of Tennessee Town and provide a more comfortable pathway for pedestrians going to and from the Library. Additional local CIP funds are being used as to leverage federal funding at this time to complete the pedestrian lighting project on Washburn and Lane from 6th to 17th Streets.

Signage - To implement a positive appearance and identity, neighborhood identification markers should be made more prominent along the visible residential edges such as at Huntoon and Washburn at a minimum. Consistent with the Washburn/Lane design guidelines, Elmhurst banners should adorn the pedestrian lighting fixtures along Washburn with monument-type markers placed within open space settings or appropriate right-of-way locations.

African-American Heritage Improvements - Recognition of Topeka's African-American heritage should include a major emphasis within

Tennessee Town. Spurred by investment in the Monroe School's *Brown vs. Board of Education* National Historic Site by the National Park Service and the restoration of the John Ritchie pro-abolitionist house in Downtown, Topeka will have a greater attraction to tell the larger national civil rights story as played out on a local scale. Tennessee Town NIA has shown interest in becoming a link in that "story" by potentially using the Buchanan Center as part of an African-American heritage museum collections and exhibits. Potential relocation and period restoration of a shotgun-style house to the Buchanan Center grounds (ala Ward-Meade Park) could be part of the overall attraction. To enhance this appeal, restoration of brick streets on Buchanan, a landscaped commons space, period lighting, and signage should be pursued. From the Colored Women's Club on Lincoln Street to the many churches of African-American heritage, Tennessee Town has the potential to benefit economically and socially from its prominent role in African-American and Topeka history.

Neighborhood Patrol – The NIA should continue to maintain its volunteer riding neighborhood patrol system in good working order to compliment on-going community policing bicycle patrol efforts. These visible efforts are aimed at deterring criminal actions and making existing and future residents feel safer in their community.

Sidewalks and Infrastructure – Capital improvements for the neighborhood should primarily consist of upgrading deteriorated sidewalk and curb/gutter conditions in conjunction with housing improvement areas as identified in the Plan. Other right-of-way upgrades such as street and alley resurfacing should be coordinated with housing improvements.

Design Overlay – A zoning overlay district that incorporates traditional neighborhood design elements should be established for Tennessee Town in order to implement the desired in-fill housing design guidelines outlined in this Plan.

B. Implementation Schedule

The following table serves as a guide to the prioritization, phasing, and cost estimates associated with the implementation of activities outlined in the previous section. The cost estimates associated with housing improvements are for anticipated public subsidies only. They do not include anticipated private/non-profit dollars that would be leveraged with this money. The cost estimates associated with any large capital improvement projects are assumed to be the total of the neighborhood's share of that project.

Appendix A

Criteria Used to Evaluate Structural Defects

Minor Defects - deficiencies corrected during the course of regular maintenance.

- Missing shrubbery or bare spots on lawn, trash and garbage accumulation.
- Deteriorated or lacking window screens.
- Weathered paint, minor painting needed.
- Cracked window panes, loose putty.
- Wear on or light damage to steps, window and door sills, frames and porches.
- Weathering of mortar and small amounts of loose, missing material between bricks.
- Handrails deteriorated or missing.
- Missing splash blocks at foot of down spouts.
- Lacking porch lights.

Intermediate Defects - deficiencies serious enough to require more extensive repair than required by regular maintenance.

- Gutters or drain spouts rotten or parts missing.
- Sagging, cracked, rotted or missing roofing, overhang or lattice work.
- Foundation or bearing walls cracked or sagging or with loose, missing material.
- Erosion of landscape due to improper drainage, abandoned vehicle, cracked or uneven sidewalks.
- Deteriorated fencing with loose or missing material.
- Rotted, cracked or sagging porches, columns, door frames and stairways.
- Cracked or missing material from chimney.
- Broken or missing window panes and/or rotted window sills.
- Peeling or cracked paint, complete painting needed.
- Damaged or missing air vents in foundation.

Major Defects - condition of structural components which can be corrected only by major repairs.

- Holes, open cracks, rotted or missing material in foundations, walls, roofing, porches, columns, etc.
- Sagging or leaning of any portion of house indicating insufficient load bearing capacity: foundation, walls, porches, chimneys.
- Defective conditions caused by storms, fires, floods, or land settlements.
- Inadequate or poor quality material not used in permanent construction.
- Inadequate conversion for use involved.
- Major deteriorated or dilapidated out building or garage.
- Evidence of a lack of, or inadequate, indoor plumbing such as no roof vents.

Category

Definition

Buildings/Properties

Minor Deficiencies

(Sound)

No major defects with no more than 1 intermediate defect and less than 5 minor defects. (3 points)

Intermediate Deficiencies

No major defects with 2 or more intermediate

(Fair) defects; no major defects with 1 intermediate defect and 5 or more minor defects. (2 points)

Major Deficiencies (Disrepair or Dilapidated) 1 to 4 (5+ is 'dilapidated') major defects in combination with intermediate or minor defects. (1 point)

Blocks

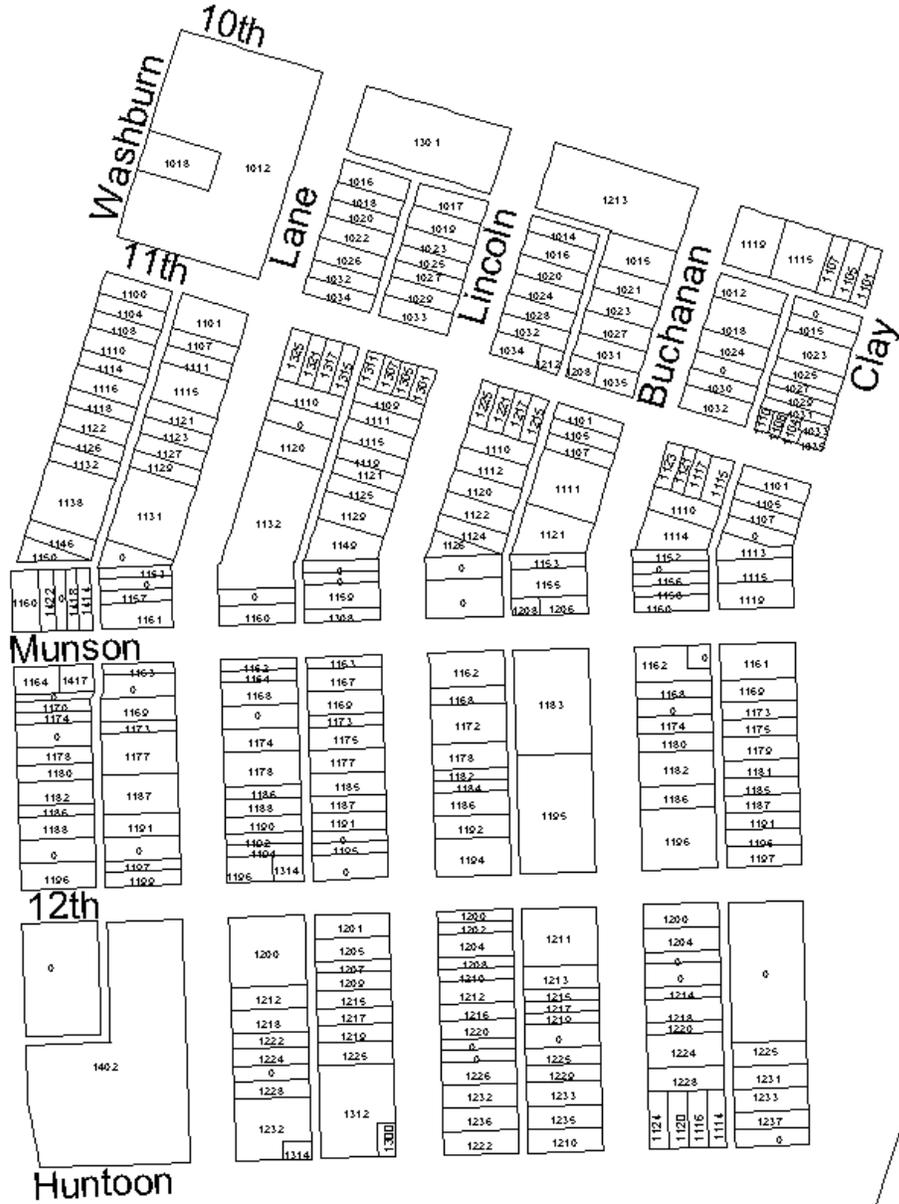
Sound Average 3.0 – 2.3 points per block

Minor Deterioration Average 2.2 – 2.0 points per block

Intermediate Deterioration Average 1.9 – 1.7 points per block

Major Deterioration Average less than 1.6 points per block

Appendix B Addresses



Appendix B Addresses
 Tennessee Town
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Appendix C
Aerial



Appendix C	Aerial Tennessee Town
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