

# Existing Issues

## INTRODUCTION

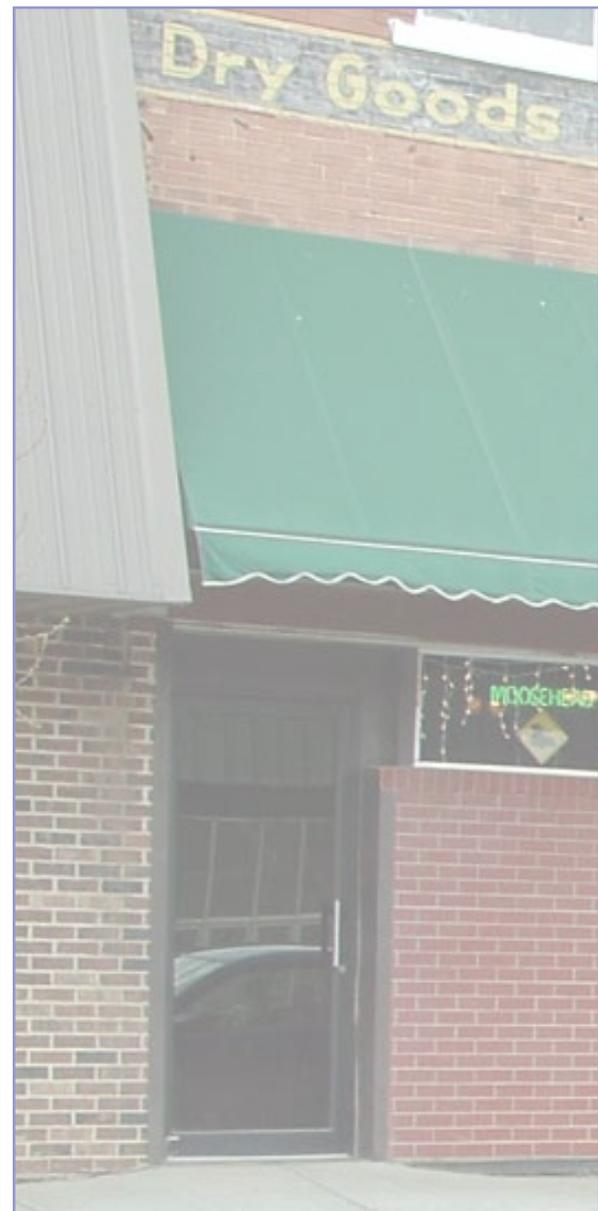
The City of Tonganoxie has an opportunity—and an obligation—to set its course for growth in southern Leavenworth County and within the Kansas City metropolitan area marketplace. In the *Tonganoxie Retail-Commercial Development Plan 2020* the City is examining opportunities and pressures for retail-commercial development and employment centers in response to changing demand in a new economic climate.

The plan studies Tonganoxie commercial development in two perspectives:

- commercial development citywide, and
- the City's historic commercial core—the Downtown.

The downtown is evolving over time, becoming less of a retail-commercial hub and more of a service/specialty-commercial area. But all of Tonganoxie is changing, given new regional travel patterns in southern Leavenworth County along U.S. Highway 24/40 and County Rd. 1, which will become the primary link to the future KTA interchange in 2009.

To prepare the plan, an economic market study of business development demand, by sector, was conducted by the Subconsultant and BWR (**Ref. Chapter 2**). The study quantifies local and regional market absorption rates and demand for commercial growth in general for Tonganoxie (**Ref Chapter 3**), and for the downtown as a niche local market sector (**Ref Chapter 4**). Public participation is another critical aspect of the community's planning process.





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BWR conducted a citywide public opinion survey to test the issues that were discussed at the public workshops (**Ref. Chapter 5**). The public workshops facilitated by BWR addressed the following key issues:

- Identify and validate primary issues;
- Affirm study findings;
- Develop real-world solutions;
- Draft clear and workable strategies based on community input; and
- Adopt the new plan.

The workshops created a mechanism for a public involvement process to educate participants and build support for strategic implementation. In addition to the two workshops a citizen survey and one on one interviews were conducted to ensure a high level of public input. Based on the input from the survey, interviews and workshops a final plan will be prepared for adoption and implementation.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Retail-Commercial Development Plan has been supported with quality public input from committed business owners and residents. That communitywide support has revealed many strengths in Tonganoxie, including citizen pride—in Downtown and the City in general—and enthusiasm for Tonganoxie as a special place to live. Tonganoxie has retained its small town sense of place, and residents want to build on that value.

The public is excited about reinvestment in Tonganoxie. Citywide, the plan strategies call for:

- Citywide Business Development Organization
- Citywide Retail Development Efforts
- Financing Retail Development Efforts
- Branding Retail Development in Tonganoxie
- Beautification and Retail Development
- Housing and Retail Development: Commercial follows Residential



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As for Downtown development, the public expects clean up of the intersection of 4th Street and US 24/40 Highway to make the most of improvements to CR1 and the future KTA interchange at I-70. This and other gateways to town need reinvestment. Downtown should be the heart of attractions for visitors, benefiting from new “wayfinding” to bring visitors Downtown. The plan strategies for Downtown are divided into three principal strategies:

- Downtown Business District Organization
- Downtown Streetscape Improvements
- Downtown Mobility Improvements

In summary, there is a “Confidence to Invest” in Tonganoxie. The plan calls for the City and private sector to initiate business recruitment:

- Existing Business Expansion,
- Recruitment of Business Expansion from Leavenworth County and Douglas County-based Businesses, and
- Recruitment of Regional and National Chains.

Specifically, the report proposes four strategies to expand Tonganoxie’s retail-commercial market (**Ref. Chapter 2**). The four types of retail ownership / expansion / recruitment approaches include:

1. New Home Grown Business – This involves support to existing residents to open a new retail-commercial business.
2. Existing Business Expansion – There are successful local retail-commercial businesses that may be able to or should be encouraged to expand within Tonganoxie.
3. Recruit Leavenworth and/or Douglas County-based Business – Lawrence and Leavenworth have stable retail-commercial environments with a wide array of locally owned businesses.
4. Recruit Regional and National Chains – Regional and national chains are routinely looking for thriving and growing small communities like Tonganoxie.

Finally, the public expects the community to initiate special projects through a new Business Development Organization., such as hanging a Tonganoxie Days banner across 4th Street and on US 24/40 Highway and many other initiatives spelled out in this plan—a plan that leads to a Confidence to Invest.

**Appendix A** of the report is a summary of key findings from the *US 24/40 Highway Corridor Study*, which was adopted by the City of Tonganoxie in cooperation with Leavenworth County, the City of Basehor, the Kansas Department of Transportation, and the Mid-America Regional Council (the regional planning organization).

**Appendix B** is a reproduction of the existing “Implementation Strategies” in the City of Tonganoxie Comprehensive Plan, which sets forth goals, objectives, and strategies for near-term and long-term development policy. The reader of this plan is encouraged to consult the City’s existing strategies for long range planning, as they are intended to inform and support each other.



*While the focus of the Retail-Commercial Development Plan 2020 is on business issues, quality of life in Tonganoxie was considered by the study committees as an important factor.*

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## Existing Trends and Conditions

Conducting a planning study for the City of Tonganoxie and its "Planning Area" requires assessment of existing conditions. The Tonganoxie Retail-Commercial Development Plan Area consists of the following:

- South of city limits 3.5 miles along CR 1
- The 24/40 Highway Corridor in the City
- The Downtown District
- Other commercial districts identified during the study

## Identification of Issues

As part of the study the City is compiling information and data on the current level of services available in the City, market trends as perceived by key persons from the business community, and other planning partners. The perceptions are taken from public, semi-public and private stakeholders, and are summarized below. Perceptions from the citizen survey and workshops are summarized in **Chapter 5**.

## Transportation links

The City has transportation strengths:

- a) County Road 1 will bring I-70 traffic to and through Tonganoxie. Given the large acreage sites, this is where large acreage commercial growth may occur during the timeframe of the study.
- b) Cut through traffic from Jefferson County (McClouth and Oskaloosa) adds to average daily traffic (ADT); however, this may change



*Downtown Tonganoxie is changing from primarily retail-commercial to service-commercial.*



*County Road 1 will be improved to accommodate traffic from a new KTA interchange at I-70.*

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*Though residential development was not a focus of the study, housing in Tonganoxie was discussed since "retail-commercial follows rooftops."*

as the flow through traffic may flow more to the new I-70 interchange.

- c) CR1 to south Tonganoxie onto U.S. Highway 24/40 will create traffic counts for commercial development on west side of the highway.
- d) Connection from CR1 to CR5 (to Leavenworth north of 24/40) is reached via 4<sup>th</sup> Street. This has big implications for Downtown.
- e) A future Tonganoxie "Parkway" from south of the City northeast to 206<sup>th</sup> Street and the highway will have a future impact on traffic flow through the core of Tonganoxie; but, that impact is beyond the term of this study.
- f) Key will be plans for U.S. Highway 24/40 as it extends north along the east city limits; and west through the highway business district.
  - Local streets are needed to parallel the highway, and
  - Local access needs to be amended (to comply with state KDOT access management requirements over time) and improved (to serve local needs).

## Residential Development

- a) Development within the City's boundaries and adjacent land in the planning area.
- b) As "rooftops drive retail," the City of Tonganoxie is studying how to attract a wider choice and range of housing; where as recent housing has been moderate cost.
- c) The absolute number of rooftops in the City is not enough for some corporate retail development formulae: still below 10,000 population threshold.
- d) To the west and south of the City of Tonganoxie there are several semi-rural developments on large 3- to 5-acre lots.
- e) It is served by city water and the City maintains the street which is West Street. The City of Tonganoxie has discussed policies for urban fringe development as it relates to the

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extension of municipal services.

- f) Lower/moderate cost housing market area is largely on the north end of Tonganoxie.
- g) Downtown housing could command \$500-650 per month rental rates; yet \$800 would be needed to build new multifamily housing and finish out upper floors; yet, rental rates citywide have fallen from \$850 to \$700. There are 15 units in downtown; and only two of those units are vacant.
- h) Residential growth must be based on intangible qualities given that housing costs are not appreciably lower than nearby housing markets:
  - A family atmosphere;
  - Small city atmosphere;
  - A high quality of life;
  - Opportunities to work in Tonganoxie rather than commute to other parts of Leavenworth County, KCK and Johnson County on a daily basis; and
  - Mid-point location for households with two or more wage earners.

## Non-residential Development

Development within the City's boundaries and adjacent land in the planning area.

- a) Large acreage sites under single ownership exist in few locations other than along U.S. Highway 24/40 and County Road 1.
- b) Vacant lots are available in platted commercial/industrial subdivisions within the City along U.S. Highway 24/40.



*Vintage Soap and Bath is one of several locally-owned, niche commercial businesses that are supported partly by local trade and partly by internet trade.*



*The mural on 4th Street is a much appreciated piece of public art, which the plan participants would like to see replicated in other parts of downtown and citywide.*

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- c) Few infill parcels of greater than 1-2 acres are available for non-residential development on major thoroughfares in built-up areas of the City.
- d) A hardware store may open in the Highland Ridge Business Park as well.
- e) The downtown lumber yard is contemplating a business shift to more retail consumer products and service, including hardware, and away from builder supply as its focus.
- f) There are an estimated 50 businesses in Downtown.
- g) Façade improvement money may be a big boost.
- h) Rental is at \$0.50 per sq ft. Could triple if traffic increased and infrastructure improved.

We need:

- # of businesses in Downtown,
- Revenues and sales of Downtown businesses, based on sales tax revenue, over time, and
- # of leasable sq ft.

## Extent of Impacts from Existing Developments

- a) The City needs to solve the problem of land use obsolescence at 4<sup>th</sup> Street and U.S. Highway 24/40. Abandoned gas stations dot three corners; and the fourth corner is vacant; and the public agrees these are eyesores that must be abated and redeveloped.



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- b) Several other properties along U.S. 24/40 Highway north of 4<sup>th</sup> Street need upgraded.
- c) A plan for future annexation is needed so the City does not get locked in and future growth is stymied. An example of this problem is the semi-rural, large lot development on 3- to 5-acre lots west of the City of Tonganoxie.
- d) Existing commercial mixed use parks have extensive land available north of U.S. Highway 24/40. Urban Hess has 15 lots available and Highland Ridge Business Park has lots available.
- e) The Saturday night Jubilee is used by Bichelmeyer's with a 10% discount on the ticket stub to dine at the steakhouse. Parking is on-street up and down 4<sup>th</sup> Street as spill over from off-street lots on Saturday night.
- f) Parking is a perceived problem during week-day mornings around the post office, which is moving to Highland Ridge Business Park, but otherwise, parking is not significant concern.

- g) Timber Hills is an example of a platted subdivision with available lots.

## Intangible Factors

- a) A strength in Tonganoxie is having a "pool of people who could provide enough support to achieve whatever goal is approved." On the flip side the community needs to become more organized to take advantage of the citizen's energy and willingness to help.
- b) A need to involve people in "helping define the future" and get them to understand that there is a future and we need to get ready for it (help decide who we are).
- c) The City and larger Tonganoxie Community should consider the merit to the larger idea of establishing a "Brand" for Tonganoxie for future community marketing efforts.
- d) There is somewhat of a disconnected community impression of Downtown conditions. Some see the Downtown as



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growing in new uses, transforming from a retail-commercial center to a new and stronger service-commercial area. But others see the Downtown withering and not vital.

- e) Design standards: The community supports reinvestment and there is a community-wide sense of pride in Downtown Tonganoxie.
- f) Sales tax at 8.05% may hurt big ticket sales, but not basic consumer goods. There is no statutory room to increase it.
- g) Labor:
  - Problem attracting enough skilled employees, given Legends development
  - With the proximity to urban employment centers there is a good base of personnel should they choose to give up commuting.
  - Is there enough skilled labor to fill skilled positions if they grow?
- h) Likelihood of **significant growth** during the next five years to ten years would occur at:
  - I-70 interchange
  - Legends/Speedway Area

## Quality of Life in Tonganoxie

### Strengths:

- Location relative to the Kansas City Metropolitan Area; and to Lawrence/Topeka,
- Style of living/small city place,



*Parking for locally-owned entertainment venues is accommodated on 4th Street without creating the need for large off-street parking lots.*

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- Minimal crime compared to metro areas,
- School system (especially K-8),
- Long term family owned businesses in town you can't find everywhere else,
- Downtown has existing, successful entertainment venues,
- Sense of Place: it is a "stand alone" city with a history and town square, not simply a suburb,
- Quality municipal services: the police and fire departments, and
- Recreation: parks and water park.

## Challenges:

- Lack of a "choice" in shopping and dining
- Institutions: no hospital, large institutions,
- Bedroom community,
- Creating better paying jobs,
- Long term maintenance of infrastructure,
- More/better sidewalks—especially in older sections of town.

## TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Transportation improvements in the City of Tonganoxie need to resolve issues with U.S. Highway 24/40. The City cooperated with Leavenworth County and the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) in a successful study of US Highway 24/40 (**Ref. Appendix A**). The traffic counts and accident counts need to be examined. A traffic study was done for the north/south movement on CR1 after completion of the interchange.

Additional data is needed for further study of traffic flow on the highway as it connects to local streets, and for how to implement access management standards:

- a) Major arterials in the area

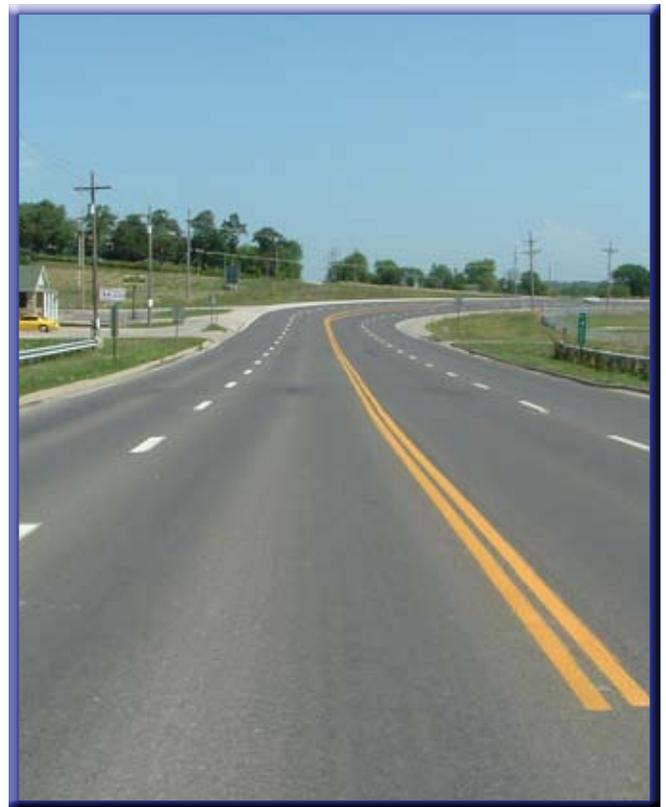
- Current traffic counts
- Projected Increase after I-70 interchange
- U.S. Highway 24/40 upgrades: Cost? Funding? Timing?

## b) Local streets

- Projected Increase after I-70 interchange?
- Parallel streets to U.S. Highway 24/40.
- Sidewalks, streetlights, curbs, gutters

## Kansas Department of Transportation

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT)—is conducting a \$1 million transportation study of transportation needs of the five-county area including Leavenworth, Douglas, Wyandotte, Johnson and Miami counties. With the current KDOT



*The Retail-Commercial Development Plan was developed with access management constraints in mind as they apply to US 24/40 Highway, plans for which are summarized in Appendix A.*

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Comprehensive transportation plan expiring in 2009, the agency is studying regional transportation needs due to significant developments in the western portions of the Kansas City metropolitan area, among them:

- The BNSF intermodal rail-truck facility approved for development in 2009-2010 at Gardner, Kansas on I-35 in south Johnson County. Reportedly, the BNSF facility will result in a demand for an additional 12 million square feet of industrial building, predominantly warehouse, resulting in 12,000 additional jobs, and entail 10,000 trucks entering and departing the facility each day.
- Growth in western Wyandotte County/Unified Government from the Speedway and the Legends commercial area, including a casino now approved by the State of Kansas Gaming Commission.
- Longer-term developments at the former Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant on K-10 south of De Soto in Johnson County, with 10,000 – 20,000 residential units planned; 3,000 acres (of the 10,000-acre site) designated for regional park and open space; and, retail-commercial, service-commercial/office, and industrial.

Additionally, there are requests to take a look at requests by the cities of Leavenworth & Lansing for improved access to KCI airport, moving truck freight between the Gardner intermodal facility and a similar facility being planned for Richards Gebauer AFB, a south metro connection connecting Johnson, Miami and Cass counties and the concept of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parkway or southwest bypass in the metropolitan area outside of I-435. It is reasonable to assume that the KDOT study will consider a new freeway connection from southern I-35 north to K-10 and on across the Kaw River to the new Leavenworth County Rt. 1/KTA interchange.

In addition to the US Highway 24/40 Corridor Study with KDOT, the City of Tonganoxie has coordinated with the County and the Kansas Turnpike Authority (KTA) to plan for a new interchange of I-70 and County Rt. 1 (south of Tonganoxie—the first KTA interchange in Leavenworth County).

## LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

The City has been the lead behind the development planning and is quietly appreciated for it. The Chamber is playing a support role. Some think local institutions can make a difference if more coordination is possible:

- The City,
- Library board,
- Recreation commission,
- The school district, and
- The Chamber of Commerce.

### Chamber of Commerce

The chamber membership has not grown in the current decade. The chamber supports several multi-day events. The largest of which is a Tonganoxie Days celebration in June. There may be a need for a stronger Chamber presence in both the downtown and along the highways. ■