

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045



Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045

adopted by the
Abilene City Planning Commission
on January 16, 2024

approved by the
Abilene Governing Body
on January 22, 2024

technical assistance by



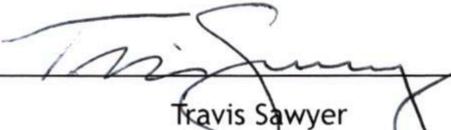
and
Abilene City Staff

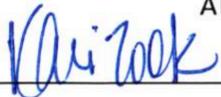
OFFICIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN APPROVAL

This document, entitled
Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045
is an official Plan of the City of Abilene, Kansas, for the Planning Period 2024-2045.
The Planning Area comprises the City of Abilene plus a certain surrounding area
in Dickinson County, Kansas, which is all within 3 miles of the City.

In accordance with K.S.A. 12-747, an officially advertised public hearing was held on January 16, 2024,
and this document was adopted by Resolution #012224-1 of the Abilene City Planning Commission
on January 16, 2024.

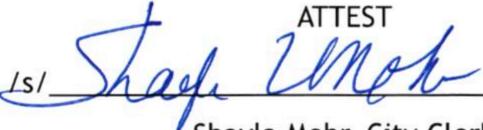
A certified copy of the *Comprehensive Plan*,
together with a copy of the adoption Resolution and a summary of the hearing,
were then submitted to the Abilene Governing Body.

/s/ 
Travis Sawyer
Chairperson, Abilene City Planning Commission

ATTEST
/s/ 
Kari Zook
Secretary, Abilene City Planning Commission

This document, entitled *Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045*
was **APPROVED** by the Abilene Governing Body on January 22, 2024 by Ordinance No. 24-3443,
which was published on January 25, 2024 in the *Abilene Reflector-Chronicle*.

/s/ 
Brandon Rein, Mayor

ATTEST
/s/ 
Shayla Mohr, City Clerk

Acknowledgments

This *Comprehensive Plan* was prepared under the supervision and with the aid of the Abilene City Planning Commission and City staff, with technical assistance by planning consultants Foster Design Associates LLC of Wichita, and with the invaluable help of community volunteers on the Steering Committee.

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CHAPTER 1. Planning— Process, Parameters, & Principles

There are many good reasons to have a comprehensive plan. If a city wants to have subdivision regulations, State statutes require that a Comprehensive Plan be adopted first. The land use component of a Plan ensures efficient, balanced, and compatible land development, and provides a legal foundation for the judicial review of zoning cases. A Plan is often a prerequisite for grant applications, to win outside funding for City projects.

But the most important purpose of a comprehensive plan is this: **it is a leadership tool, intended to guide public policy decisions in directions that will accomplish long-term community planning goals.**

This document provides a foundation of background data, including an overview of City facilities and systems. It offers a review of regulatory tools and other resources available to support the *Plan's* implementation. But the core of this *Plan* is the **community goals**, which incorporate fundamental planning principles, express Abilene's community values, and provide both current and future City leaders with a vision of Abilene's future that should inform and help shape their policy-making decisions.

Planning Process

By State statute, the City Planning Commission is responsible for preparing, adopting and maintaining a city's Comprehensive Plan. When a Plan is completed to the satisfaction of the Planning Commission members, the Planning Commission must hold a **public hearing**, and formally **adopt** the Plan by resolution. They then send the Plan to the Governing Body, with a recommendation that the City Commission **approve** the Plan by ordinance.

When this *Plan* is adopted and approved, it will become the official comprehensive development plan for Abilene, Kansas, and its Planning Area, for the Planning Period from 2024 through 2045. It will replace any previous Comprehensive Plans prepared for the City of Abilene.

After the *Plan* is approved, Planning Commission members, the Mayor and City Commission members, and City staff are responsible for understanding the approved *Plan* in detail, and for determining the best methods to implement policies and procedures to achieve the community goals expressed in this *Comprehensive Plan*.

PUBLIC INPUT

As part of this planning process, **public meetings** were held, which provided a forum for members of the community to express their ideas and comment on the proposed plan. A **Steering Committee** of community stakeholders provided input throughout the planning process, and the Planning Commission and City Commissioners held discussions of planning goals.

In addition, a **Community Questionnaire** was conducted in June and July of 2023. Distributed both inside and outside the city limits, it was available in both paper and digital versions. A total of **108 responses** were received from Abilene community members.

The table on the following page shows some of the characteristics of the people who completed the Questionnaire. Note, every person did not necessarily answer every single question, so sometimes the total answers to a particular question don't add up to the total number of Questionnaires returned.

Community Questionnaire Respondents		
Male	48	40%
Female	71	60%
Under 19 years old	0	0%
19 to 29 years old	8	7%
30 to 45 years old	43	35%
46 to 65 years old	49	40%
66 to 75 years old	21	17%
Over 75 years old	2	2%
Inside City	88	69%
Live outside City & own property inside	8	6%
Outside City	32	25%
Less than 5 years	12	9%
5 to 10 years	21	16%
More than 10 years	95	74%

This is a fairly typical response profile for such surveys—more women than men completed the Questionnaire, and few young people expressed an opinion. Responses from those inside the city limits and those outside are well balanced to provide both perspectives on community issues.

Nearly three quarters of those who responded have lived in Abilene for more than a decade; 22% have lived in the area for their entire lives. People have made a positive choice to live in Abilene, and few have any intention of leaving.

Periodically in this document, references will be made to the results of the Community Questionnaire. The tabulated results of the Questionnaire are available to the public from the office of the City Clerk at Abilene City Hall.

Plan Parameters

This *Comprehensive Plan* addresses planning issues within a specific span of time (the *Planning Period*), and within a specific geographic area (the *Planning Area*).

PLANNING PERIOD

The Planning Period for this *Plan* is the twenty-two-year time span from its adoption in 2024 through 2045. For this type of plan, twenty years or so is typically the practical limit for useful forecasting of local needs and resources.

PLANNING AREA

The designation of a Planning Area recognizes that the City's activities both affect and are affected by the surrounding region. Delineating a Planning Area **does not create a regulatory boundary** as such, but instead identifies an area which has an influence on the planning and development of the City, and which therefore should be studied as part of what State statute refers to as the "total community of which the City is a part".

The only effect that a Planning Area has on regulations is indirect. By statute, any **extraterritorial jurisdiction** for Subdivision Regulations or Zoning Regulations around a city **cannot exceed its delineated Planning Area**—nor extend more than three miles from the city limits, nor extend more than one half the distance to another city, nor extend into another county. So a Planning Area should always extend far enough to encompass any likely extraterritorial jurisdiction that the City might choose to pursue at any time within the Planning Period.

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045

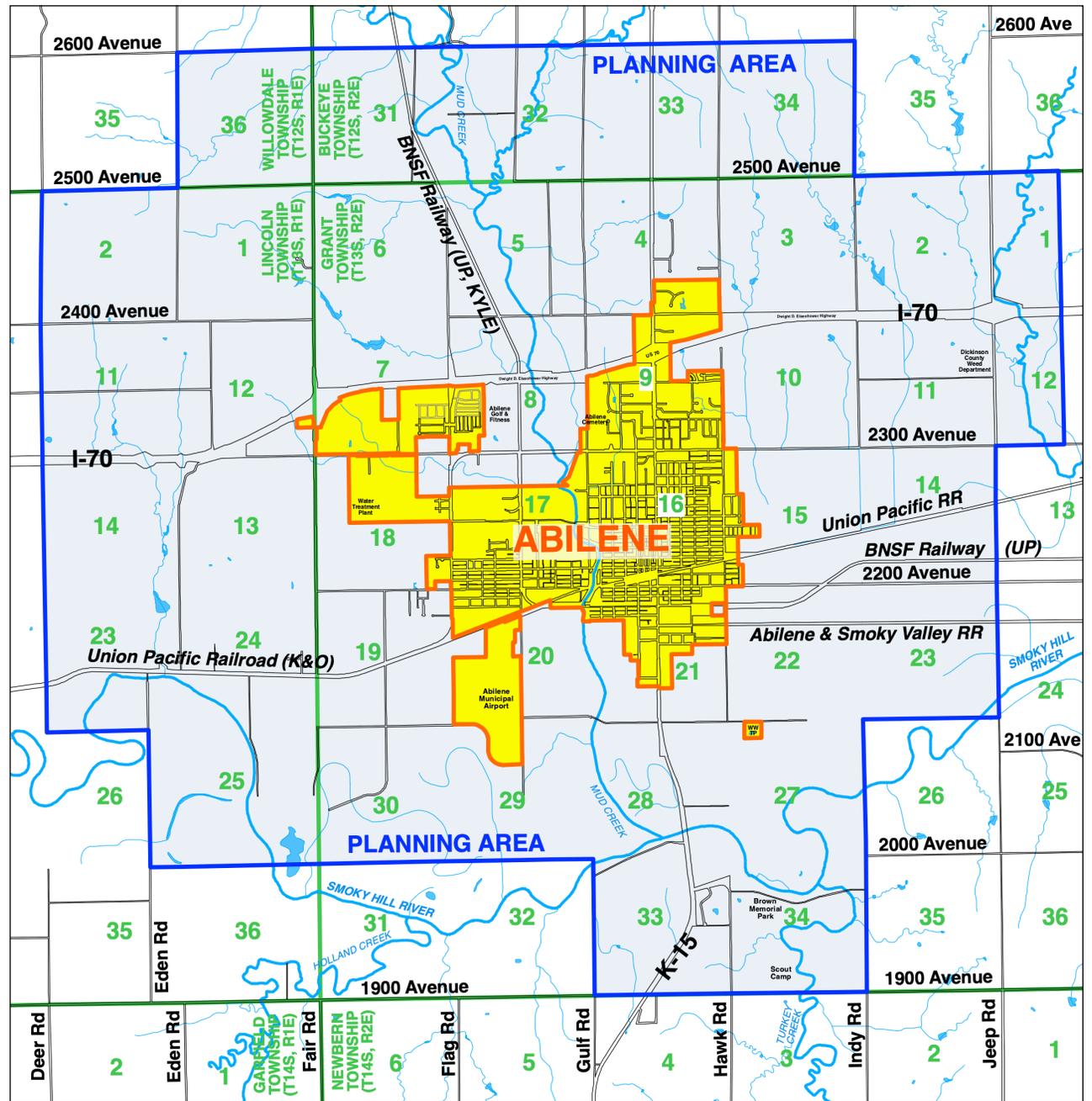
As defined for this *Plan*, the Abilene Planning Area is composed of the following land in Dickinson County, Kansas:

- In Willowdale Township (T12S, R1E)
 - Section 36
- In Buckeye Township (T12S, R2E)
 - Sections 31 through 34
- In Lincoln Township (T13S, R1E)
 - Sections 1 and 2
 - Sections 11 through 14
 - Sections 23 through 25
 - East quarter of Section 26
- In Grant Township (T13S, R2E)
 - West halves of Sections 1 and 12
 - Sections 2 through 11
 - Sections 14 through 23
 - Sections 27 through 30
 - Sections 33 and 34

Each Section covers approximately, though not necessarily exactly, one square mile.

Shown on the adjacent diagram, Abilene's Planning Area covers 41.65 square miles, extending a maximum of seven miles north-to-south and seven and a half miles east-to-west. It encompasses areas of existing and likely future development near Abilene.

Abilene Planning Area



URBAN FRINGE AREA

In 2022, Dickinson County adopted its own updated Plan, the *Dickinson County Comprehensive Plan, 2050*. The *County Plan* incorporated policies for managing growth on the fringe of cities within the county, and along primary transportation corridors such as I-70.

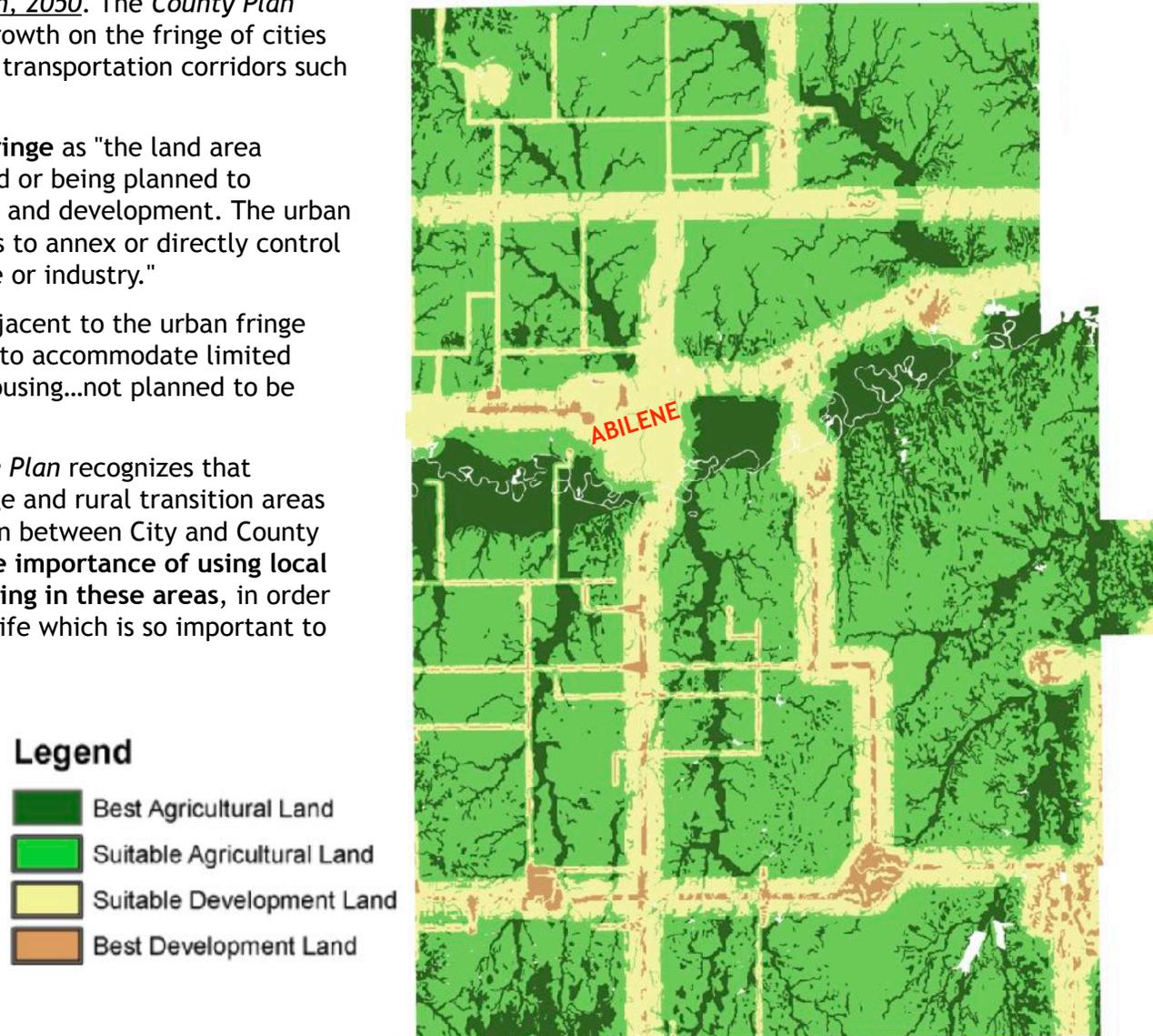
The *County Plan* defines the **urban fringe** as "the land area located around a city that is expected or being planned to accommodate eventual urban growth and development. The urban fringe is the land a municipality plans to annex or directly control to promote urban housing, commerce or industry."

The *County Plan* also defines land adjacent to the urban fringe as a **rural transition area**, "intended to accommodate limited suburban and non-farm residential housing...not planned to be served by municipal infrastructure".

The *Dickinson County Comprehensive Plan* recognizes that managing development in urban fringe and rural transition areas requires coordination and cooperation between City and County governments. It specifically notes **the importance of using local zoning to implement land use planning in these areas**, in order to protect the small town quality of life which is so important to residents of Dickinson County.

The adjacent map shows land identified in the *Dickinson County Comprehensive Plan* as most suitable for development, with the goal of bringing economic and social benefits to the county without compromising the area's natural resources. Much of the land in the area of Abilene is recognized as suitable for development, particularly along I-70 and K-15.

Suitable Development Land In Dickinson County
(Map is from the Dickinson County Comprehensive Plan, 2050)



Planning Principles

Good planning is a way to correct the mistakes of the past, preserve the best of the present, and deal with the challenges of the future. Effective planning should be farsighted, realistic in terms of existing resources and potential capabilities, and adaptable to changing community needs and opportunities.

Three fundamental guiding principles provide a framework to support and guide all such planning decisions—**quality of life**, **community health**, and **sustainability**. In addition, planners must always be aware of fundamental **demographic trends**.

Quality of Life

Every city competing for economic advantage understands that good public infrastructure, a trained labor force, reasonable taxes, and available land are all necessary to attract economic activity—so most viable competitors already have those assets in place. According to the American Economic Development Commission, **it is quality of life that makes a community a successful economic competitor.**

In this highly mobile era, an excellent quality of life is essential both for retaining current residents, and for attracting new residents and new businesses to a community. But what does "quality of life" actually mean? And how do planning decisions affect this nebulous but essential community characteristic?

Definitions of the term "quality of life" vary by perspective and incorporate a wide variety of factors, including housing, neighborhood, schools, physical and mental health, family life, safety and security, the built environment, education, leisure time, recreational options, culture, values, social belonging, spirituality, employment, job satisfaction, and financial security—among others. In short, "quality of life" is a highly subjective way of describing the overall happiness and well-being of a person or a community.

The fact that quality of life is subjective and difficult to measure makes it no less important. Even without a precise definition, most people readily recognize the importance of the idea, and have a strong opinion about whether their personal quality of life is good or not.

Planning decisions affect housing, the local economy, transportation, safety, parks, health, and many other factors, which in turn profoundly affect the community's long-term quality of life. Maintaining and enhancing Abilene's quality of life should be a primary focus of the community's planning goals. Investments in quality of life should be regarded as investments in Abilene's future.



Community Questionnaire When asked which things contributed to their quality of life in Abilene, participants in the Questionnaire placed the greatest emphasis on **parks and recreational opportunities, walkable neighborhoods, participation in local groups and activities, and community celebrations.**



Community Health

One of the most important factors in quality of life is health. Public planning policies and decisions impact both personal and community health.

In the last few generations, unintended consequences of planning decisions have had a dire effect on American health. Starting in the 1950s, the availability of cars and the development of interstate highways seemed to offer people the benefits of cheap land out in the country, privacy from close neighbors, wide open spaces, and personally controlled transportation. However, unintended side effects include suburban sprawl, social isolation, long commutes and their associated air pollution, and car-dependence—which are now considered major contributing factors to the current obesity epidemic in America.

In 1950, approximately 10% of American adults were obese, with a body mass index (BMI) equal to or greater than 30. By 2015, that number was four times higher. According to a [2016 report from the CDC](#), nearly two thirds (66.0%) of Kansas adults were either overweight or obese, with a BMI of 25 or above.

Obesity is not simply a harmless expression of human diversity. It is a significant public and personal health problem, related to a number of serious chronic diseases—including diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, heart disease, and a variety of cancers.

Building physical activity back into people's daily routines is one of the best ways to combat obesity, and all its associated health risks. Levels of activity are strongly influenced by the design of the neighborhoods in which people live, work, learn, and play.

Planning policies and decisions shape our neighborhoods and our community, and should always be made with an eye toward crafting **places that encourage physical activity, nurture social connections, and promote good health**—not just for children, but for all ages.

Aim to increase opportunities for residents to engage in healthy lifestyle options. Possibilities include:

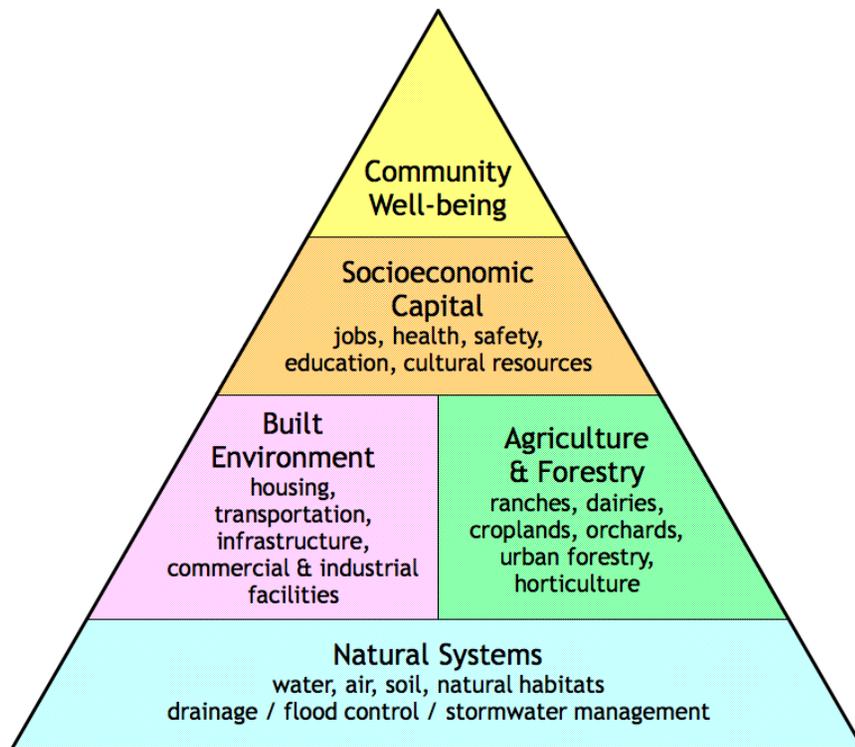
- Provide options for **walking and biking**, by supporting a community-wide network of well-maintained sidewalks, and bicycle paths, lanes, and routes. Connect residential neighborhoods with workplaces, schools, retail, parks, the Iron Horse Trail, and other destinations.
- Design new developments to **maximize connectivity and walkability**, and pursue options to connect existing platted but undeveloped neighborhoods. In general, encourage traditional gridiron street networks, and discourage disconnected and car-dependent cul-de-sac development. Any cul-de-sacs that are developed should retain a pedestrian right-of-way or easement.
- **Continue to activate downtown as a walkable destination**, with shared on-street public parking, good lighting, bike racks, public art, street trees, and creative signage. Strive for a balance of workplaces, restaurants, services and retail.
- **Develop public gathering spaces** flexible enough to support community events and celebrations, which strengthen community ties.
- Develop park facilities that offer **opportunities for on-demand exercise**, such as dog parks or outdoor exercise zones, which encourage frequent use and enhance social connections.

Resources

- Urban Land Institute – [*Building Healthy Places Toolkit*](#)
- [*Healthy Places By Design*](#)
- National Association of County and City Health Officials – [*Healthy Community Design*](#)
- American Public Health Association – [*Healthy Community Design*](#)

Sustainability

Sustainable development is defined as development that meets a community's present needs—environmental, social and economic—without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Development that is *not* sustainable forecloses a community's future.



This diagram shows some of the key elements of sustainable planning, with each layer providing a foundation for the layers above.

Environmental sustainability for a community starts with leadership decisions that preserve clean air and water, protect the soil that supports agriculture, safeguard natural habitats and wildlife to maintain ecological diversity, and manage stormwater runoff to control flooding.

Social sustainability requires leadership decisions that recognize the relationship between planning and quality of life. Everyday choices made by Planning Commission and City Commission members accumulate over time to have a profound affect on how the people of Abilene can live their lives.

A community that is socially sustainable has high-quality **housing** options at a range of price points, a variety of types of **neighborhoods** (including ones that are **walkable**), and a **transportation** system that serves everyone (including people who don't drive). It has an **education** system that prepares the community's young people for a responsible and successful future, and access to a **health care system** that meets the needs of residents of all ages. It provides opportunities for people to **celebrate and enjoy life** in Abilene.

Economic sustainability is also essential, supporting social and environmental resources which in turn support the local economy. Cooperative **economic development** efforts, both public and private, contribute to economic success.

- Continued cooperation between the City and County in the pursuit of local **economic development** will be instrumental in sustaining the area's economic success. Over the twenty-two-year span of this *Plan*, a sustainable supply of reasonably low-cost **energy** and high-speed, high-capacity **communications infrastructure** will become more and more important for economic success.

Demographic Trends

Certain nationwide demographic trends have significant impacts on a host of planning decisions. Over the course of this *Plan's* twenty-two-year Planning Period, expect the population to become **older**, to live in **smaller households** or **multi-generation households**, and to have continually rising expectations for **community amenities**.

American family and household sizes have been trending smaller for decades. A growing majority of U.S. households have only one or two people. Young adults often postpone marriage and child-bearing. More and more people choose to remain single their whole lives. Many find themselves single as a result of divorce.

The exception to the shift toward smaller households is the increasing number of **multi-generation family households**, often supported by an **accessory dwelling unit** on the same lot as a single-family home. Common historically, the percentage of multi-generation households in the U.S. started to decline in the 1950s, bottomed out in the 1980s, and has since—driven by both social trends and economic pressure—continued to rise.

People are living longer. Healthy seniors are likely to live **long active lives after traditional retirement age**, and want access to flexible employment opportunities, and to services that will help them **age in place** close to family and friends.

More and more people, of all age groups, want to live in **walkable neighborhoods**, which have good sidewalks and a good bike network, and options for living, working, learning, and playing all within a 15 to 30-minute walk of home.

Together, these trends signal a need for:

- **Walkable neighborhoods near a vibrant downtown core**
- **Down-sized housing options**
- **Accessible, low-maintenance housing options**
- **Housing options designed for multiple independent adults in one household, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs)**
- **Opportunities for part-time and flex-time employment**
- **Excellent internet service**
- **Access to good local health care services**
- **Transportation options that don't require driving**



CHAPTER 2. History & Environment

Planning decisions are built on a foundation of both local history and environmental context. In this chapter, a general picture of Abilene's historical development is presented, as well as information on its geography, climate, soils, topography and drainage, floodplains, and community woodlands.

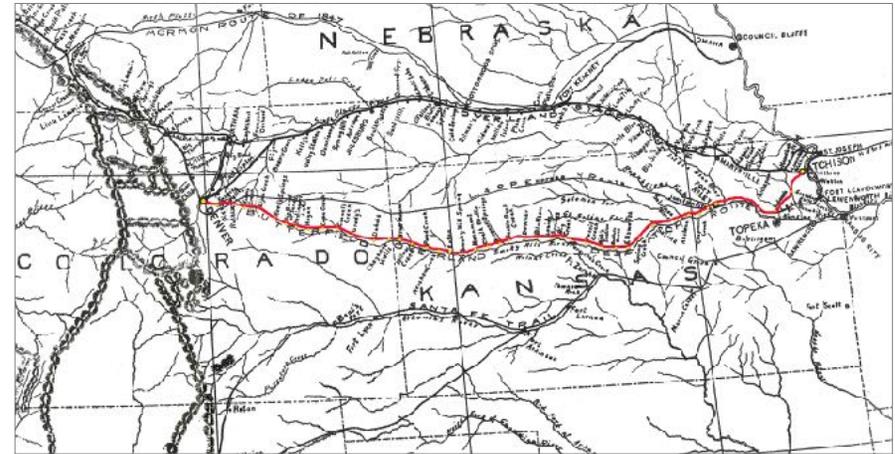
History

In 1803, the United States bought most of what is now Kansas from France, through the Louisiana Purchase. Kansas became a U.S. Territory in 1854, and the 34th state in 1861. After the Civil War ended in 1865, the U.S. Army was available to drive Native Americans out of the Great Plains, and railroads were extended rapidly into the American west. Settlers then arrived in numbers.

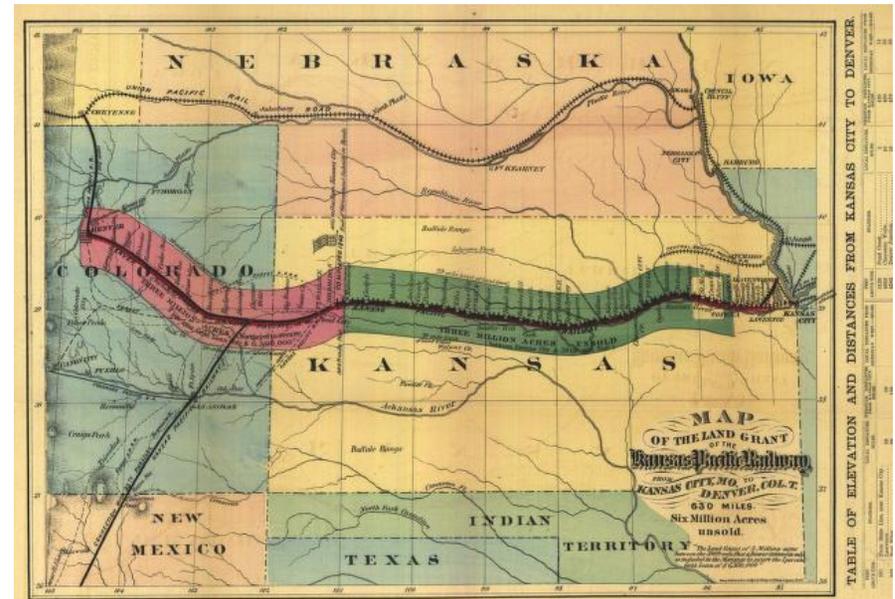
The first settlers in the area that would become Abilene were Timothy Hersey and his family, in 1856. Hersey filed a claim for land on the west bank of Mud Creek, and established a way station for the Butterfield Overland Despatch stage line, which carried mail and passengers from the Missouri River port of Atchison, Kansas, to Denver and the Colorado gold fields.

Though Kansas had become a state in January of 1861, there were still fewer than 400 people in Dickinson County—some of them in a cluster of log cabins called Abilene. Nevertheless, in the spring of 1861, Abilene won the election to be named the County seat.

Very little else of import happened in the area until March of 1867, when the Union Pacific Eastern Division Railroad (later renamed the Kansas Pacific Railway) was extended through Abilene from points east. Then the area, which had been home to bands of the Kaw, Sioux, Pawnee and Cheyenne, was rapidly settled by immigrants mostly from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Illinois.



Butterfield Overland Despatch stage route



Kansas Pacific Railway route

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Cow Town In the years immediately following the Civil War, millions of longhorn cattle roaming the Texas plains were worth ten times the price in eastern cities as they were in Texas. Joseph McCoy responded to this economic incentive with an idea—herd the cattle north along the Chisholm Trail from Texas to the nearest railhead, then ship them by train to the profitable eastern markets.

In 1867, as the railhead reached Abilene, McCoy bought 250 acres near the settlement, and built a hotel, stockyards, and a stable. By September of that year, the first cattle were shipped from Abilene to Chicago; by the end of the year he had shipped 35,000 head.



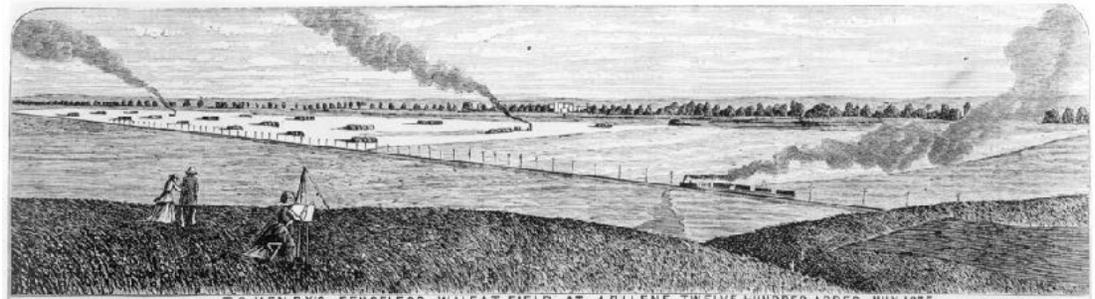
For less than four wild years, from late 1867 to 1871, the Chisholm Trail ended in Abilene, the first cow town of the American west. During that short period, Abilene stockyards shipped nearly half a million head of cattle.

But as the rail lines were extended farther west and south, and homesteaders fenced off the land around Abilene, the end point of the Chisholm Trail gradually shifted, relocating over the following years to Ellsworth, Hays City, Newton, Wichita, and Dodge City. The entire trail herd era lasted just 17 years, ending in 1884, when railroads reached Texas.

Wheat In 1869 Abilene was incorporated as a City of the Third Class. As the cow town years ended, Abilene's economy shifted to agriculture, and began an era of steady growth.

New arrivals to the Great Plains typically sought land alongside rivers or streams, to be near water and timber. Upland prairie was considered useless for crops, and good only for grazing. Then in 1870, Abilene's T.C. Henry sowed five acres of plowed prairie with winter wheat. This agricultural experiment was so successful that by 1875 he was planting 5,000 acres east of Abilene in wheat.

Other homesteaders began to seek out prairie land to plow for wheat fields. Starting in 1879, flour mills were constructed in Abilene, to process the wheat being produced so abundantly.

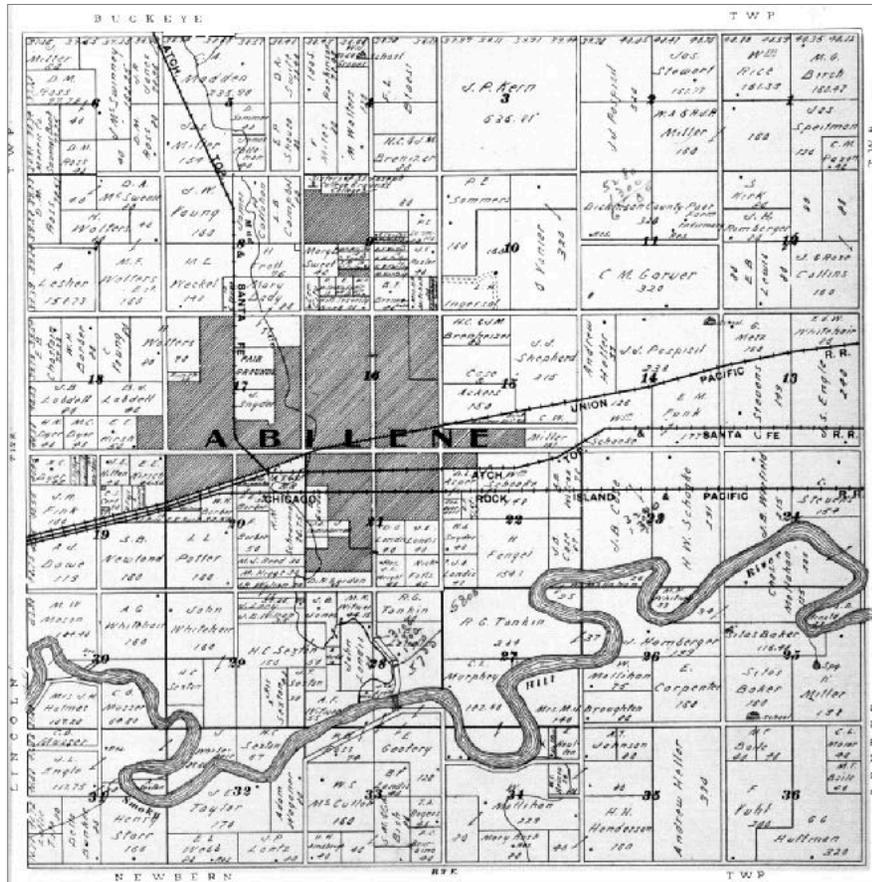


T.C. HENRY'S FENCELESS WHEAT FIELD AT ABILENE, TWELVE HUNDRED ACRES, JULY 1876.

T.C. Henry's fenceless wheat field at Abilene — 1200 acres — July 1876

City Services During the 1880s, city services were introduced, including police and fire protection, and limited phone and electric service. Mule-drawn streetcars provided public transit. In 1881 the first County Courthouse was built. A branch line of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway was built through Abilene in 1887, and the City continued to grow.

In 1903, pipes were installed to carry fresh water from Sand Springs to Abilene. Installation of the first sewer system began in 1906, and curb and gutter street improvements were started. Ordinances requiring sidewalks and public water fountains were passed.



1909 plat of Grant Township, Kansas

Greyhounds Abilene held its first greyhound races in 1901, which eventually led to the development of a major local industry. The National Greyhound Association moved its headquarters from Kansas City to Abilene in 1945, and the Greyhound Hall of Fame opened in Abilene in 1973.

Central Kansas Free Fair In 1887, the Central Kansas Free Fair Association held its first Fair, in Hope. In 1906 the Dickinson County Fair Association purchased 30 acres in Abilene, built an Agriculture Hall and a 1500 seat Stadium, and held a Fair that featured a trotting ostrich, horse racing, and a balloon ascension. The City of Abilene eventually purchased the property, which is now Eisenhower Park and the Fairgrounds.

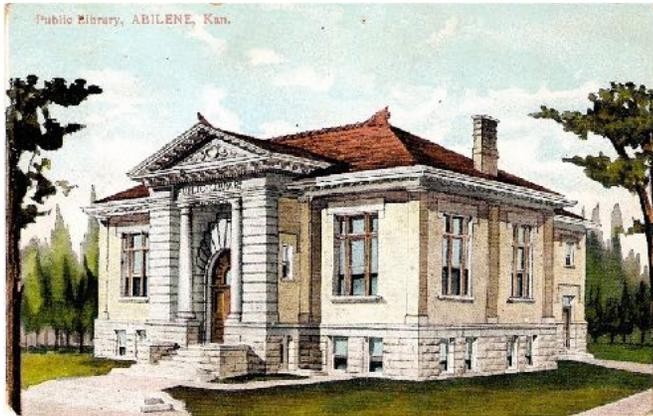
First organized in 1924, the **Central Kansas Free Fair** was incorporated in 1928. In 1938, the Works Progress Administration replaced the old Grandstand. Sterl Hall was first used in 1950, though it was not completed until the next year; it was completely renovated in 1996.

The Swine Show Barn was built in 1990, and a 40 stall Horse Barn in 1998. Showers and restrooms were installed in the north end of Barn #9 in 2000. The Poultry Coops were updated in 2001, and the Rabbit pens were built in 2003. In 2007, 32 new electrical pedestals were installed at the edge of the grass south of Sterl Hall, to allow RV camper hookups.

The Rodeo Committee has continued to improve the rodeo facilities, adding a new restroom/ rodeo office, concession stand, and electrical hookups for campers and trailers, as well as a new press stand in 2003, and a permanent hospitality shelter in 2008.



Library Just before Christmas in 1900, the Ladies Literary Club of Abilene met to organize a library association. They began raising money, operating the Library out of rented rooms. A Carnegie grant allowed construction of a dedicated Library building, which opened in 1908. Major additions, constructed with funding from the Public Works Administration, opened in 1934.



Abilene's original Carnegie Library

In 1977, another addition connected the Carnegie Library and the City building, providing more space for the Library, as well as new facilities for the Police and Fire Departments.

A renovation to make the Library handicapped accessible and add yet more needed space was completed in 2010. The project was funded by a \$1.6 million sales tax increase—approved by Abilene voters by a three to one margin.

Ike Dwight Eisenhower was Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe in World War II, and from 1953 to 1961 served as the 34th President of the United States. Born in Texas, his family moved to Abilene in 1872. Eisenhower spent his school years in Abilene, graduating in 1909. The house where he grew up is now part of the *Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum* in Abilene.

Municipal Airport The City of Abilene acquired land for the development of a Municipal Airport in 1944, and by 1948 had constructed landing strips, taxiways and a paved 50 foot wide by 2100 foot long runway. In 1953 a conventional hangar building was built.

On May 4, 2020, the Airport's only large 10-unit hangar was destroyed in a windstorm. The City has been working with the FAA to rebuild these desperately needed hangars.

Highways The 20-mile stretch of Interstate 70 from I-77 at Junction City to the new Abilene interchange was dedicated in October of 1959, with construction west to Salina scheduled to follow in short order. Four concrete lanes with wide shoulders, divided by a 60-foot median, would significantly change Abilene's future. Highway 15 was expanded to 4 lanes in the 1960s.

Mud Creek Flood Control The Mud Creek flood control project was completed in December of 1959, eight years after two devastating floods in Abilene had damaged over 700 homes and 128 businesses. Funding for the project came from a \$150,000 bond issue passed by Abilene voters, and more than a million dollars in federal funding. Two years of construction resulted in a widened channel with riprap-stabilized banks, running from 14th Street to the Smoky Hill River. The project also involved lengthening the First Street bridge, elevating the Union Pacific railroad bridge, building a new bridge for the Santa Fe Railroad, and relocating numerous utilities.

Kirby House Fire In 2013, Abilene lost the 128 year old Kirby House to fire. This 1885 residence at 205 NE Third Street had long been a local landmark. Originally a residence, it was later the meeting place of the Abilene Commercial Club, an apartment complex, and starting in 1987 a popular restaurant.



Kirby House

Economy By 1910, Abilene had a population of over 4,000 people, and a diversified economy—including flour mills, creameries, foundries, an organ factory, planing mills, a cigar manufacturer, a carriage manufacturer, ice factories, and more. Located at the junction of the Union Pacific, the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroads, it was an important shipping point for grain and livestock.

In 1993, the City of Abilene’s Economic Development Committee successfully recruited a \$30 million Russell Stover plant and distribution facility.

Alco, a company which had been founded in Abilene in 1901, had grown to a national chain of about 200 retail department stores across the midwest. In 2014, Abilene’s economy suffered a significant loss when Alco relocated its corporate headquarters from Abilene to a suburb of Dallas, Texas. The company’s 352,000-square-foot distribution center remained in Abilene, but the company filed for bankruptcy in October of 2014 and had closed all of its stores by March 2015.

In 2018 the Love’s Travel Stop opened, and Great Plains Manufacturing’s Land Pride Division significantly expanded its facilities. The subsequent \$2 million expansion of 8th Street from Washington to Van Buren in 2019 provided a better connection between the west side’s major industrial nodes.

Today, the City of Abilene still has a diversified economy with a strong agricultural component. It now has a population of some 6,500 people, and remains the county seat of Dickinson County.

GOVERNMENT

In its early years, Abilene had a Mayor-Commission form of government. Eventually, though, administrative duties became a full-time job, and the City began employing a professional City Manager in April of 1939.

Abilene is governed by five City Commission members, who are elected at-large by the citizens of Abilene. City Commission members then select one of their own to serve as Mayor for a one-year term. The Mayor presides at Commission meetings, and serves as the official representative of the City. The Commission as a whole supervises city government, makes general policies, passes laws, and appropriates funds as necessary to meet municipal needs.

Abilene also has a number of **City Boards and Commissions**, including the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Airport Advisory Board, the Building Standards Board, the Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Heritage Commission, the Library Board, the Recreation Commission, the Tree Board, and the Sister City Committee. Citizen volunteers who offer to be appointed to these boards contribute their time and expertise to help make Abilene a better place to live.

Historic Preservation

Abilene has a remarkable inventory of historic public and commercial buildings in the downtown area, as well as a large number of lovely old homes, ranging from stately mansions to charming bungalows. Such structures help give Abilene character and a sense of place.

The National Register of Historic Places maintains the official list of America's historically significant buildings, districts, structures, sites, and objects. There are also State Registers in each state. They work to coordinate and support efforts to identify and evaluate historic and archeological resources that are worthy of preservation, and protect them.

In Kansas, the State Register of Historic Places is maintained in the *Kansas Historic Resources Inventory* database.

Using the *Kansas Historic Resources Inventory*

Click on the "Search" tab,
type in "Abilene" in the City field,
click Yes in the "Listed in National Register" field,
then click the Search button at the bottom.

A list of listed historic structures in Abilene will pop up;
clicking on any item in the list will produce a complete report
on that particular building, including photographs
and a link to its detailed Historic Register Nomination form.

Kansas statute K.S.A. 75-2724 provides protection for properties listed on either the National or State Historic Register, and their environs. In a city, environs are defined as anything within 500 feet of the boundary of a registered site; in unincorporated areas, environs are defined as anything within 1000 feet.

If the State Historic Preservation Officer finds that a development project would encroach upon, damage or destroy any State or National historic site or its environs, the project may not proceed, unless the local governing body determines "that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the proposal and that the program includes all possible planning to minimize harm" to the historic site.

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045

Abilene's Heritage Commission administers the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, and makes many decisions about local historic structures. Their duties include:

- Maintaining a local historic resources inventory.
- Educating the public on wise preservation practices, available programs and incentives for preservation, and the economic benefits of historic preservation.
- Reviewing and making recommendations on applications from landowners who want their property to be designated as an historic landmark.
- Determining whether any proposed renovations to landmark properties are historically appropriate, and therefore permitted.
- Reviewing properties listed on the State or National Register on behalf of the State of Kansas, and reporting violations of the State's legal requirements for listed properties.

Thirteen houses in Abilene are listed on both the National Register of Historic Places and the Kansas State Register of Historic Places. The Hazlett-Hurd House, currently in use as a bed-and-breakfast, is listed in the Kansas State Register, though not in the National Register.

- Berger House
- John W. Birchmore House
- Emerson Coulson House
- Dwight D. Eisenhower House
- Jacob S. Engle House
- David Ross Gorden House
- John & Hettie Johntz House
- Gustave A. Kubach House
- Conrad H. Lebold House
- Litts-Dieter House
- Mead-Rogers House
- A.B. Seelye House
- Versteeg-Swisher House

Twelve commercial, public and railroad structures in the Abilene area are listed on both the National Register of Historic Places and the Kansas State Register of Historic Places. In addition, a locomotive and a carousel are on the Register.

- D.G. Smith Building
- Elms Hotel
- United Building
- Union Electric Warehouse
- Perring Building; Post Office Block; Wyandt Building
- Garfield Elementary School
- Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
- St. John's Episcopal Church
- Rock Island Depot (Relocated)
- Union Pacific Railroad Freight Depot
- Union Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot
- ATSF Steam Locomotive #3415
- Parker Carousel

Abilene also has four historic districts on the National Register.

- Abilene Downtown Historic District
- Abilene City Park Historic District
- Vine Street Historic District
- Naroma Court Historic District

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045



Lebold House



Johntz House



Seelye House



Birchmore House



ATSF Steam Locomotive #3415



St. John's Episcopal Church



Kobach House



Eisenhower House



United Building



Smith Building



Perring Building; Post Office Block; Wyandt Building



Union Pacific Freight Warehouse

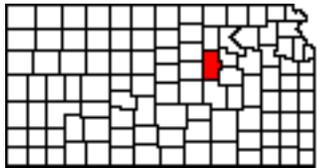


Garfield Elementary School

Geography

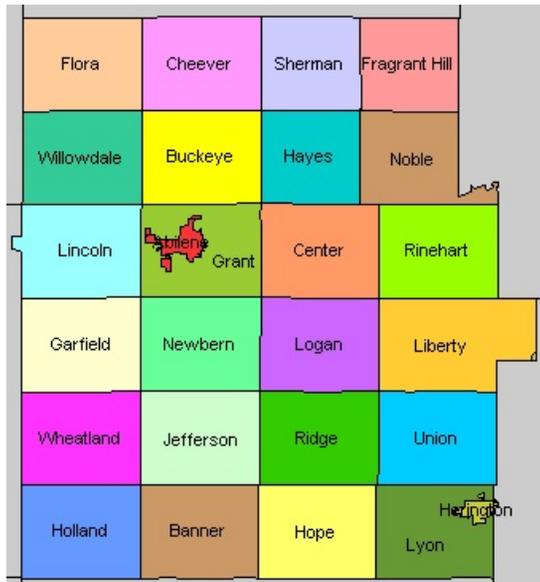
Land use patterns within a community are influenced by its location, and the natural resources, physical features, and regional destinations in its vicinity. Both natural and man-made features may positively support particular land uses, or they may restrict development possibilities and limit the directions available for urban growth.

Strive to establish development policies which maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of a planning area's location and physical characteristics, guiding development that is both economically efficient and esthetically pleasing.



Location of Dickinson County in the state of Kansas

Dickinson County is in the northeast quadrant of Kansas. The City of Abilene is in Dickinson County's Grant Township, and the Abilene Planning Area is contained within Willowdale, Buckeye, Lincoln and Grant Townships.



Townships in Dickinson County

Abilene is located in the Great Plains, in the western edge of the northern end of the beautiful Flint Hills region.

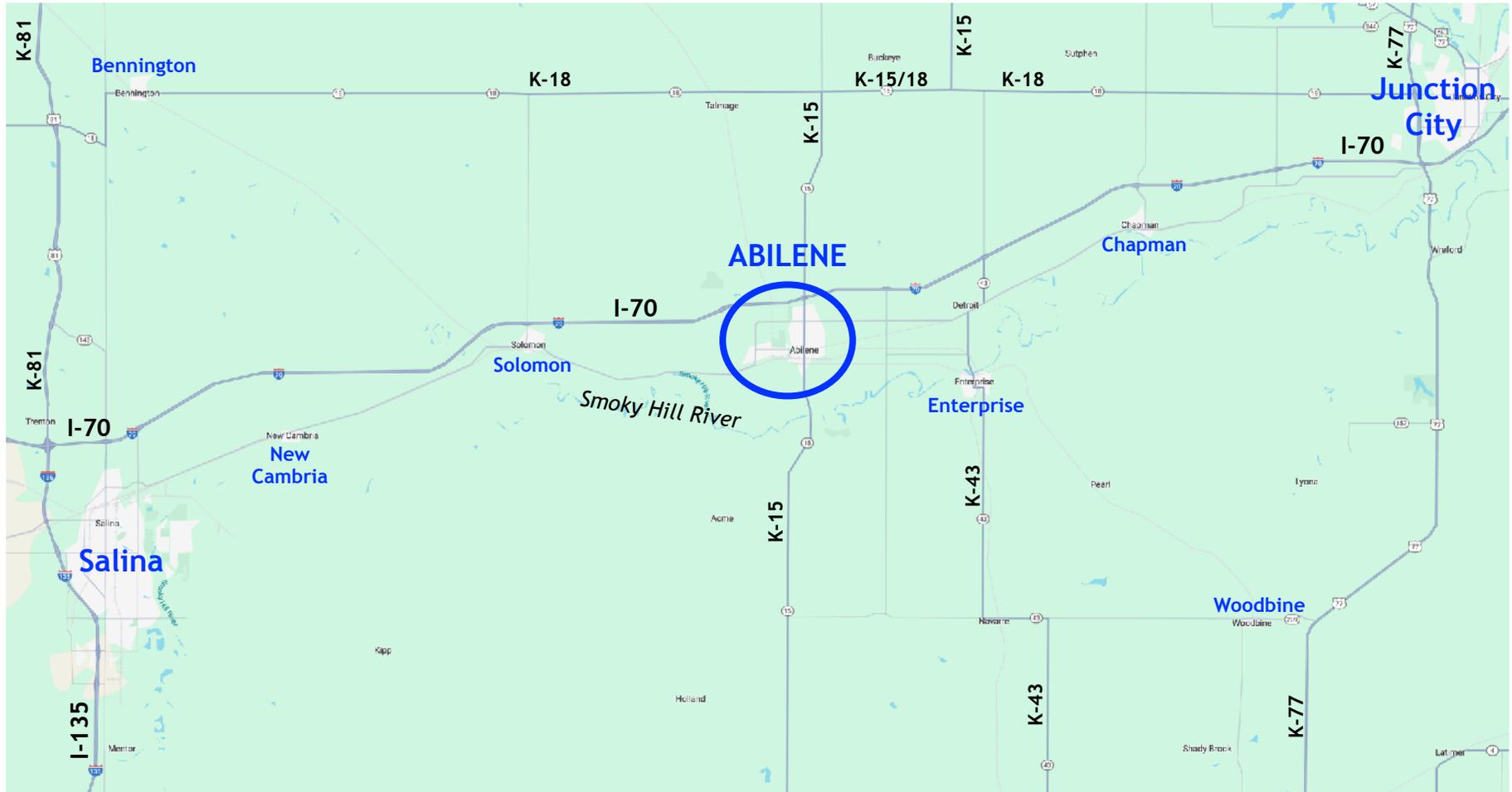


The Smoky Hill River passes by Abilene just south of the city, flowing roughly west to east. The Smoky Hill River flows into the Kansas (Kaw) River, which flows into the Missouri River, which flows into the Mississippi River which eventually flows into the Gulf of Mexico. Mud Creek, a tributary of the Smoky Hill River, flows north to south through Abilene.

State highway K-15 bisects Abilene north-to-south, and Interstate Highway I-70 provides a major east-west route which passes just north of the city. The Abilene interchange offers easy access to I-70.

Abilene is not directly bordered by any other cities, but it is within a half-hour's drive of both Junction City and Salina via I-70. This increases options for both employers and employees in the Abilene area, as well as making services and amenities available that otherwise could not be supported by Abilene's population alone. Abilene is approximately 93 miles north of Wichita, and 150 miles west of Kansas City.

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045



Geographic Location of Abilene, Kansas

Climate

Climate significantly affects agricultural, economic, and construction activities. Abilene's Planning Area has a continental climate, characterized by frequent and abrupt weather changes, with wide daily and annual temperature variations, a great deal of sunshine, occasional high winds, and abundant spring rainfall.

While Abilene's climate is notably variable, it is generally beneficial. Its long growing season offers temperatures and sunshine conducive to agricultural production. Total precipitation is adequate for principal crops, though in some years its timing and distribution can cause problems. High winds or hail may occasionally damage crops or structures, sometimes catastrophically.

In Abilene, a typical summer is hot, humid, wet, and mostly clear and a typical winter is cold, snowy, windy, and partly cloudy. Fahrenheit temperatures over the course of a year generally range between 23 and 94 degrees, rarely falling below 7 or rising above 103.

Winters are usually mild enough to allow various outdoor recreational activities to be sustained almost all year round. Only during the coldest weeks of the year is construction restricted, or construction methods constrained. However, recurring abrupt temperature swings, and frequent, often daily, freeze-thaw cycles in winter profoundly affect the durability of road surfaces and some other building materials.

A number of internet sources offer weather and climate information for Abilene.

- WeatherSpark.com
- USClimateData.com
- WeatherBase.com

Soils

Soil is a valuable resource, which should be protected. Some soil types are suitable for certain land uses, but not for others; when an inappropriate land use is imposed on an unsuitable soil type, both the land use and the soil are compromised.

Official soil survey information, which is fundamental to many planning decisions, is provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on their website *Web Soil Survey*. Maps of soil types in any selected area are provided, as well as information on the characteristics of the soils themselves, including their suitability for various uses.

Using the *Web Soil Survey* (WSS)

Go to the [Web Soil Survey](#) and click on the green "Start WSS" button to begin.

Area of Interest (AOI) Simply zoom in on the aerial map until you find the property you are looking for, and draw your "Area of Interest" with the AOI tool. After you have drawn your AOI, you can save the web page as a link in your web browser, so you can easily return to it.

Map & Data After your AOI is defined, click on the "Soil Map" tab to see a soils map and a table showing the percentages of all the soil types in your area of interest.

Click on the "Soil Data Explorer" tab to find information related to your soils, in hundreds of categories—from soil chemistry, erosion factors, or depth of the water table, to its suitability for building basements or a septic field, to its probable yield of corn silage when irrigated.

Soils in the Abilene Planning Area are typically silty loams, clay loams, or sandy loams. In general, Abilene's soils are well suited to both agriculture and urban development.

Topography & Drainage

The topography of local landforms, and the drainage patterns which result, have a significant impact on potential land uses. The location and design of some facilities—such as cell towers, water towers, sewage treatment plants, stormwater management structures, and wind turbines—are strongly influenced by relative land elevations.

Though overall quite flat, the Abilene Planning Area drains generally to the south, toward the Smoky Hill River.

Topographic maps from the U.S. Geological Survey are available for viewing or download from the [TopoQuest](#) website.

Floodplains

Historically, people were attracted to relatively flat land near waterways as a place to settle and build. While such land typically has rich soils and easy access to water, it is also prone to high-water flooding, making it potentially dangerous for both people and structures.

In the United States, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is responsible for mapping floodplains. The **Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs)** produced and updated by FEMA classify floodplains into various Special Flood Hazard Areas, based on degree of risk.

The three broadest categories of floodplain designation are floodway, 1% annual chance floodplain, and moderate flood hazard areas.

- **Floodway:** The channel of a river or stream.
- **1% Annual Chance Floodplain:** Areas that will be inundated by a flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. Also referred to as the **base flood area** or **100-year floodplain**.
- **Moderate Flood Hazard Area:** Areas between the limits of the 1% annual chance floodplain and the area that will be inundated by a flood event having a 0.2-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. Also referred to as the **500-year floodplain**.

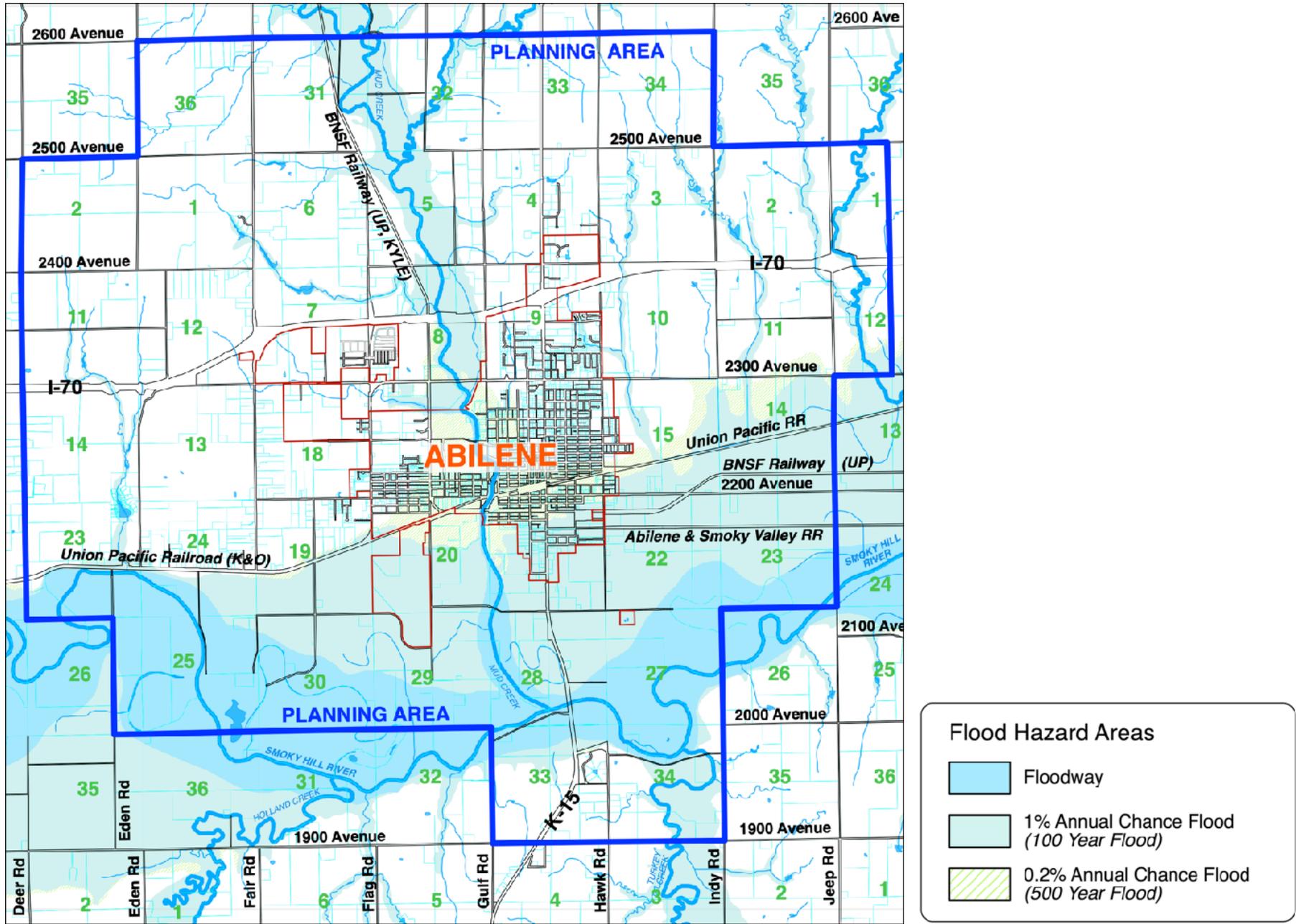
When any major change occurs to a floodplain—for example, when a road is redesigned or a significant development project occurs—a **Letter of Map Revision** is required from the developer, in order to allow FEMA to keep its Flood Insurance Rate Maps up to date.

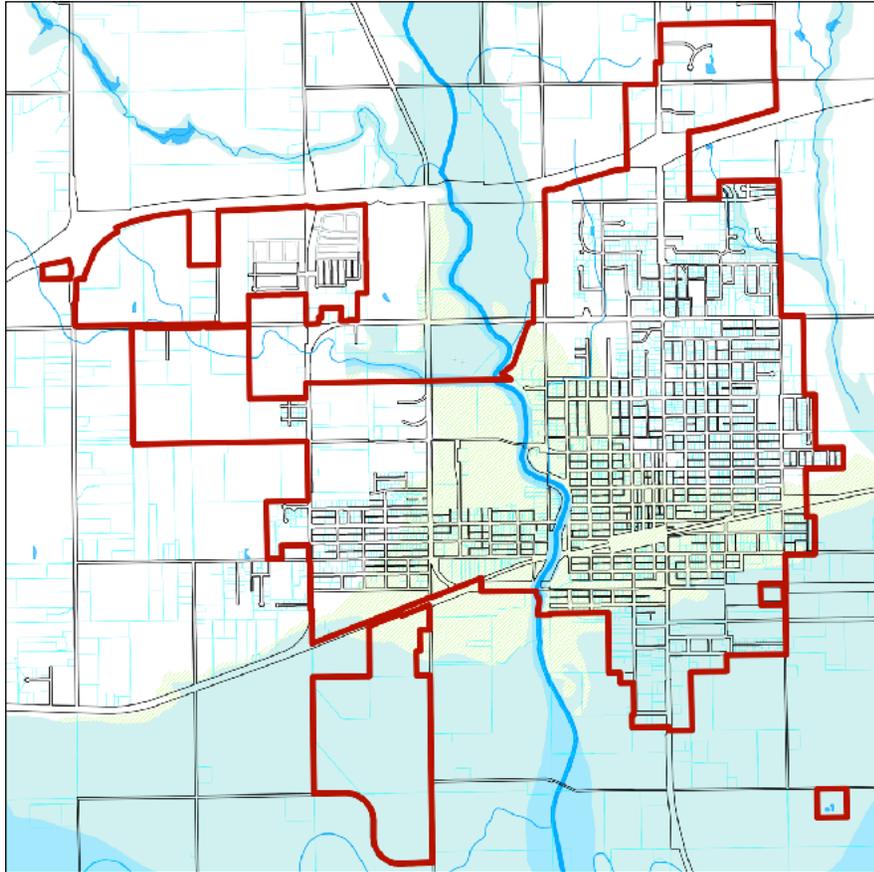
The map on the next page shows flood hazard areas for the Abilene Planning Area. Floodplain information is from the following Flood Insurance Rate Maps from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), all of them effective on December 16, 1988:

- 20041C0065C
- 20041C0070C
- 20041C0075C
- 20041C0080C
- 20041C0090C
- 20041C0105C
- 20041C0110C

Updated Abilene FIRMs Abilene's Flood Insurance Rate Maps are currently in the process of being updated. Once adopted by ordinance, they will become effective as of March 13, 2024.

More information is available from the [FEMA Flood Map Service Center](#).





Almost 44% of land within the City of Abilene is within a designated Flood Hazard Area. Of the 3,041 acres inside the city limits, 47 acres (1.5%) are in the floodway, 462 acres (15.2%) are in the 100-year floodplain, and 786 acres (25.8%) are in the 500-year floodplain.

Nevertheless, there is ample land which is not in floodplains, both within and adjacent to Abilene, sufficient in area to meet the City's potential development needs over the course of the Planning Period.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Historically, private insurers were generally unwilling to provide insurance for structures in floodplains, so in 1968 Congress created the **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**, to help floodplain property owners protect themselves financially against property losses due to flooding. Communities participating in the NFIP agreed to adopt and enforce ordinances which meet or exceed FEMA requirements, to reduce the risks of flooding. In return, the NFIP subsidized flood insurance to local landowners, with rates based on degree of risk, as determined by the Flood Hazard Area in which their property was located.

One of the inadvertent side-effects of this law was to facilitate construction in floodplains, increasing the number and value of structures at risk. Over the ensuing decades, numerous major floods across the nation resulted in extraordinarily high costs to federal taxpayers. Various revisions of the NFIP resulted, in attempts to bring insurance rates into alignment with actual risk, and to more strongly discourage people from building in floodplains.

Properties in flood zones are eligible for mortgages backed by federal guarantees, such as VA and FHA loans, only if their community participates in the NFIP.

Development in floodplains is almost always undesirable. Nevertheless, for communities where such development has already occurred, NFIP participation is necessary.

Abilene participates in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Consider incorporating higher standards in the City's Floodplain Regulations, to reduce flood insurance costs and provide greater flood protection.

Woodlands

When individual trees in yards, in parks, and along streets are considered collectively, they form an urban forest. The benefits of urban trees are well documented, and include providing shade, reducing noise levels, decreasing air and water pollution, sequestering carbon, diminishing summertime energy use, furnishing wildlife habitat, screening undesirable views, serving as buffers between land uses, and raising property values. A well-maintained and well-planned urban forest enhances the community's livability, its character, and its quality of life.

Under Kansas statute K.S.A. 12-3201 et seq., cities are authorized to regulate the planting, maintenance, treatment, and removal of trees and shrubbery on all street and alley rights-of-way. Abutting property owners hold "title to and property in" any trees and shrubbery in the planting strip between the property line (which is typically along the back edge of the sidewalk) and the back-of-curb line. Property owners can recover damages to such trees, and initiate actions to prevent their destruction. Cities can designate allowable street trees in the planting strip. Some cities conduct periodic stump removal programs.

Through their Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, cities can require new developments to include trees. Public trees in Abilene are addressed in [Chapter VI, Article 7](#) of the City's Zoning Regulations. Abilene has a City Forester (Chapter 6, Article 7, 6-701) and a Tree Board ([Chapter 1, Article 9, 1-911](#)).

The majority of Abilene's urban street trees are mature, but still in good condition, and likely to remain so during the 22-year span of this *Plan*. Nevertheless, the City should plant some new street trees each year, to maintain a healthy age spread in Abilene's urban forest. The goal is to make sure that in future, there will never be a neighborhood where *all* the street trees reach senescence at the same time.

Shelter belts are an essential safeguard for farming on the prairie, yet throughout Kansas they are showing a decline in vigor due to the advanced average age of the trees.

Although woodlands in Abilene's Planning Area cover a relatively small acreage, they are very important to the long-term health of the soil and water on which much of the Abilene area economy depends. Every effort should be made to sustain and enhance these woodlands, and to **reinvigorate shelter belts**.

Information on government conservation programs that can help landowners both plan and pay for shelter belt renovation is available on the [Kansas Forest Service](#) website.

Trees in Kansas come under extraordinary stress, from ice storms, drought, severe hot and cold spells, and insect and disease outbreaks—in recent years, diseases particularly affecting pines and ash trees. Also, many of the wonderful mature trees that were planted along streets and in parks during the early years of development in Kansas cities are now nearing the ends of their lives.

Maintaining a healthy community forest over the long-term requires expertise and ongoing efforts by City staff, a commitment by City officials to dedicate necessary resources to the task, and broad public support and understanding of the value of trees to the community's quality of life.

For information on helpful organizations, and on funding programs that can help improve your community forest, see the [Kansas Forest Service](#) website.

TREE CITY USA

The Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program was established in 1976, as an initiative intended to inspire change on a nationwide level. Today, more than 3,600 communities in all 50 states participate.

The Tree City USA program provides communities with a four-step framework to maintain and celebrate their urban forest.

- Maintain a tree board or department
- Have a community tree ordinance
- Spend at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry
- Celebrate Arbor Day

Abilene has participated in the Tree City USA program since 1992.

The **Abilene Tree Board** was established under Abilene's Zoning Regulations (Chapter 1, Article 9, 1-911) in 1992. The Tree Board consists of five members, who are appointed by the City Commission to 3-year terms. A majority of Tree Board members, though not necessarily all of them, must reside inside the city limits.

One of the Tree Board's first tasks was to approve Chapter 6, Article 7 of the City Code--the 1996 City Forestry Standards and Specifications. This is the Abilene community **tree ordinance**, which is enforced by the City Forester.

Duties of the Tree Board Board members make recommendations to the City Commission on the management and development of trees and landscape on all public lands in the city, including street rights-of-way and parks. The Board is charged with the following duties:

- Educating the public on the value and maintenance of trees
- Promote plantings on public lands and rights-of-way
- Assist the City Forester with the administration of the tree maintenance ordinance
- Hold Arbor Day programs
- Assist in the administration of the Tree Cost Share Program.

Fall Cost Share Program Under this City program, the City will pay 50% of the cost of a tree planting, up to \$75 per tree, provided the tree is planted as a street tree in the right-of-way. (A street right-of-way generally extends to the edge of the sidewalk farthest from the road.)

Arbor Day Program The Tree Board conducts an Arbor Day presentation and tree planting at the local elementary schools to teach children about the benefits of trees, tree planting and tree care. Since 2010, the Tree Board has given a Norway Spruce seedling to local 4th Grade students during the 4th Grade Forester Program to take home and plant. Since 2016, the Tree Board has promoted the Kansas Arbor Day Poster Contest. The Kansas Forest Service contest is for 5th Grade Students only. Abilene has had district winners in 2017, 2018 and 2022.

Arbor Day Proclamation The Mayor reads and signs an annual Arbor Day Proclamation to recognize the Tree Board's efforts and the value of trees.

COMMUNITY GOALS

Historic Preservation

- Continue to **preserve and creatively utilize Abilene's historic buildings**, and to **protect the character of the city's Historic Districts**.
- Apply for **grants to complete an official survey of Abilene's historic districts and properties**.
- Develop a **Preservation Plan** for Abilene's historic districts and properties.

Floodplain Regulations

- Continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program, and support regulations to **discourage inappropriate development in floodplains**.
- Update the City's Floodplain Regulations, incorporating higher standards to reduce flood insurance costs and provide greater flood protection.

Trees

- Continue to **plant new public trees** strategically to benefit the urban forest.
- Review and **update** the 1996 City Forestry Standards and Specifications. Add a policy addressing Memorial Trees, update the list of disease and insect problems, update the list of approved tree species to reflect current conditions, and revise curb and setback standards to allow street trees in the downtown area.
- Create a plan to **encourage trees in the downtown area**, particularly on any new curb extensions.
- As the City's public trees age, support a program of **regular maintenance pruning** to keep them healthy and safe for as long as possible.
- **Promptly** remove hazardous or diseased public trees, particularly **pin**es and **ash trees**.
- To prevent the spread of Pine Wilt, annually **remove symptomatic pine trees by March 1st** and maintain a **public awareness campaign** on this issue.
- Maintain a program to discover and treat **bagworm infestations** on particularly vulnerable and valuable public trees.
- Revise the City Subdivision Regulations to **require trees in new developments**.

CHAPTER 3. Background Data

Data in this chapter is from the *2020 Census* and the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (ACS)*.

The ACS has replaced the Census long form. Also administered by the Census Bureau, it provides more detailed and more current information than the decennial census. However, since the ACS is based on a smaller sample size, if at any point there is a discrepancy between the two sources, information from the Census is regarded as the official data.

Demographic, social, housing and economic information is available in more detail from the [U.S. Census Bureau Explore Census Data](#) website, where typing in the name of a city, county, or state in the search bar brings up an overview of available data for that location. On the list of available data tables that then pops up, click on the table code number to link to the complete data table.

More detailed Kansas information, including historical demographic data, is available from the [University of Kansas Institute for Policy & Social Research](#).

Census Definitions Certain terms used in this chapter are defined precisely by the Census Bureau, with differences from standard usage which have significant implications for correctly understanding the data.

Housing Unit: A house, apartment, mobile home, a group of rooms, a single room occupied as a separate living quarter, or vacant units intended for occupancy.

Family: A family consists of two or more people who are related by blood or marriage residing in the same housing unit.

Household: A household consists of all people who occupy a housing unit regardless of relationship, and may refer to a person living alone.

Median / Mean: A *median* is the middle number in a distribution of numbers, such that there is an equal probability of being above it or below it. A *mean* is generally understood as the "average" of a set of numbers, calculated by adding all the numbers in a set and then dividing by the total number of numbers. While a mean may be skewed by a single out-of-the-norm number in the set, a median typically gives a fairly accurate picture of "normal".

Demographics

This section includes information on national demographic trends, as well as on Abilene's demographic and social characteristics. Historical census data is noted by year. More recent data is from the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*.

Understanding the characteristics of people in Abilene helps community leaders develop policies to effectively meet residents' current and future needs.

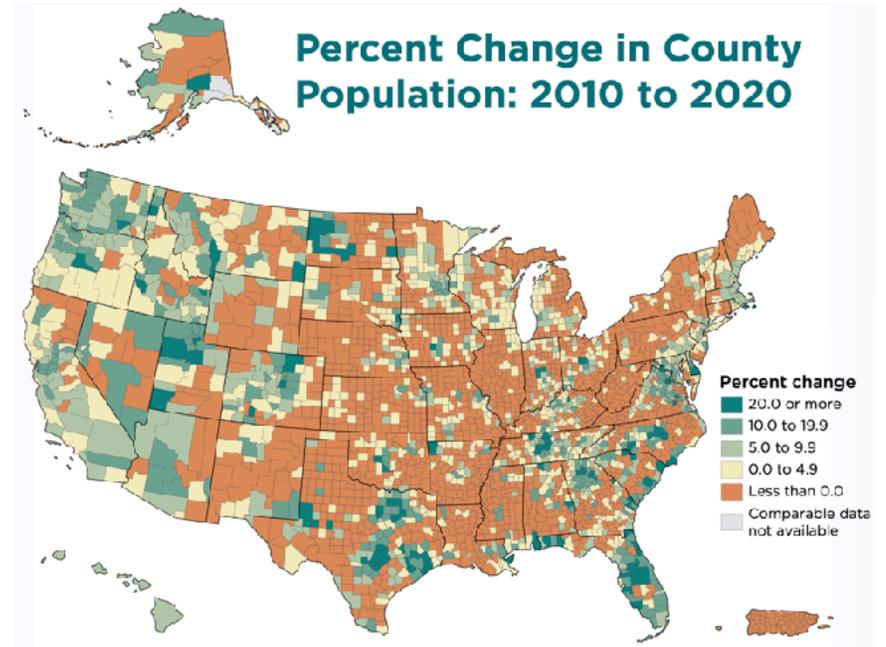
Population Trends

As detailed in the following table, the population of the United States grew during the fifty years leading up to 2020 by an average of about 8.8% per decade, while Kansas grew by only about 4.9% per decade—a little over half the national rate. During that same time frame, Dickinson County's population decreased by an average of 1.6% per decade—notably losing 6.8% of its population in the decade between 2010 and 2020.

	U.S.		Kansas		Dickinson County	
	Population	% Change	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1970	203,211,926	—	2,246,578	—	19,993	—
1980	226,545,805	11.5%	2,363,679	5.2%	20,175	0.9%
1990	248,709,873	9.8%	2,477,574	4.8%	18,958	-6.0%
2000	281,421,906	13.2%	2,688,418	8.5%	19,344	2.0%
2010	308,745,538	9.7%	2,853,118	6.1%	19,754	2.1%
2020	331,449,281	7.4%	2,937,880	3.0%	18,402	-6.8%
AVG	—	8.8%	—	4.9%	—	-1.6%

National Population Trends Recent national population trends show people moving from rural areas to cities, and from the northeastern and central parts of the nation to the south and west. The Great Plains region in particular is losing population to other parts of the country.

The following map shows the percentage of population change between 2010 and 2020, for each county in the country. Green shades indicate growth—the darker the green, the more intense the growth. Tan indicates stability or minor growth, and orange indicates population loss.



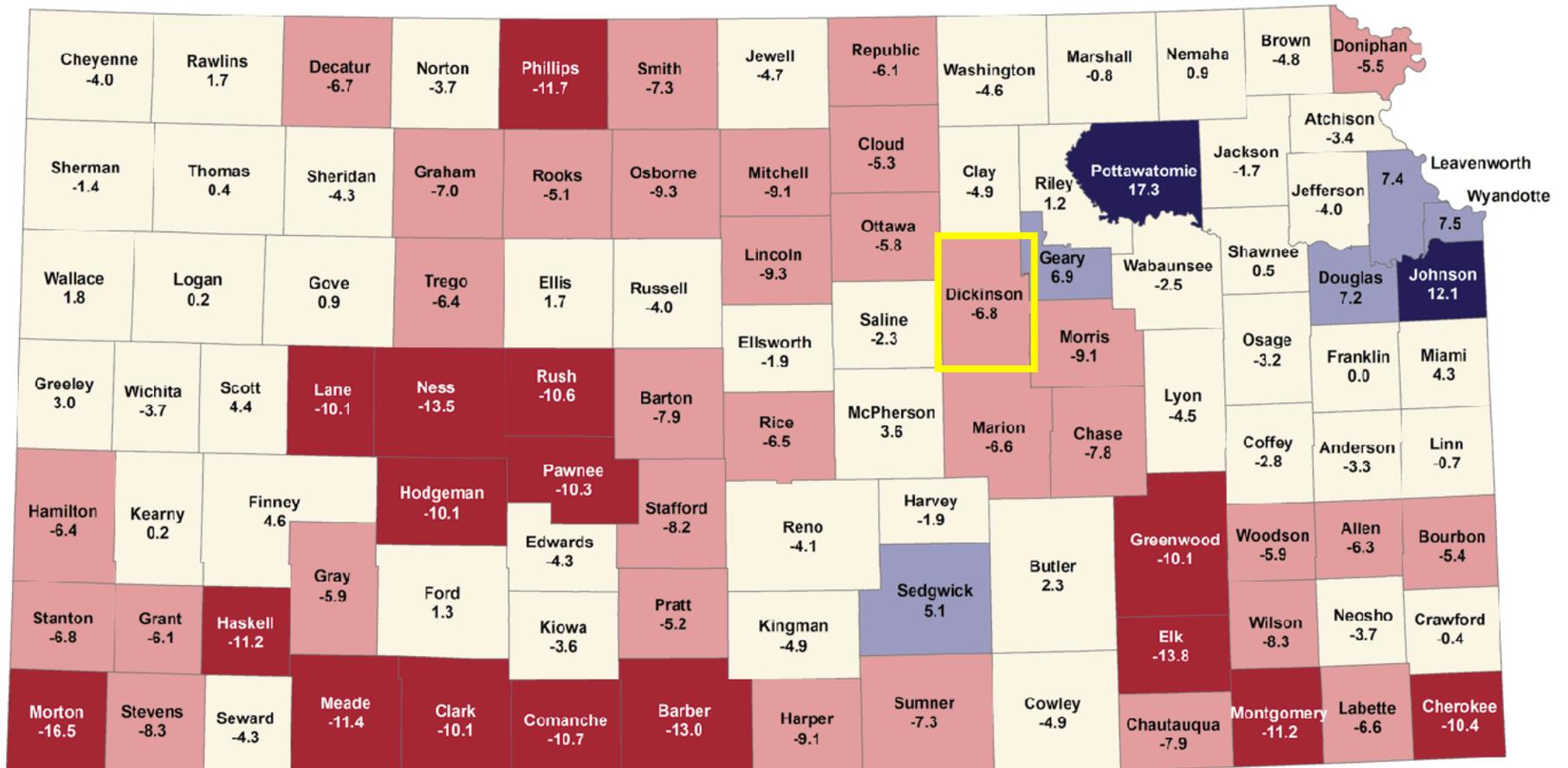
Kansas Population Trends A more detailed map for each county in the state of Kansas, which follows, is from the University of Kansas *Institute for Policy & Social Research*.

It is color coded to show population growth in blue, stability in tan, and loss in red. The more intense the color, the more intense the change in population.

This map shows that in Kansas in the last decade, most population growth has taken place around Wichita, and in the northeastern part of the state—in the Kansas City suburbs, and around the university town of Manhattan. Many rural Kansas counties, including Dickinson County, are losing population.

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Percent Population Change

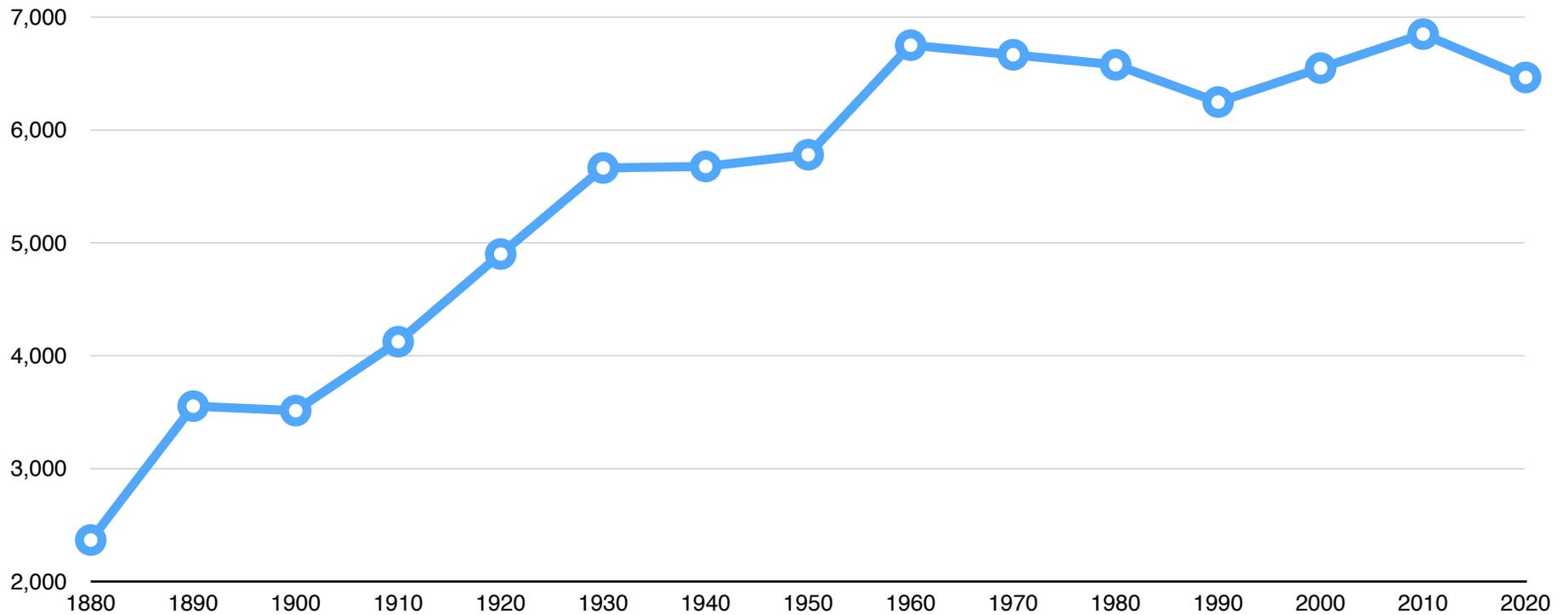


Abilene's Population History

Abilene				
Census	Population	Census	Population	% Change
1880	2,360	1960	6,746	—
1890	3,547	1970	6,661	—
1900	3,507	1980	6,572	-1.3%
1910	4,118	1990	6,242	-5.0%
1920	4,895	2000	6,543	4.8%
1930	5,658	2010	6,844	4.6%
1940	5,671	2020	6,460	-5.6%
1950	5,775	<i>Average per decade</i>		-0.5%

During the fifty year period leading up to 2020, Abilene's population fell by an average of 0.5% per decade. This is not unusual for small cities in the Great Plains during recent decades, but it is a trend that city leaders are working to reverse.

The 2020 Census found Abilene's population to be 6,460 people. In the 2017-2021 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*, Abilene's population was estimated to be 6,507 people.



Future Population

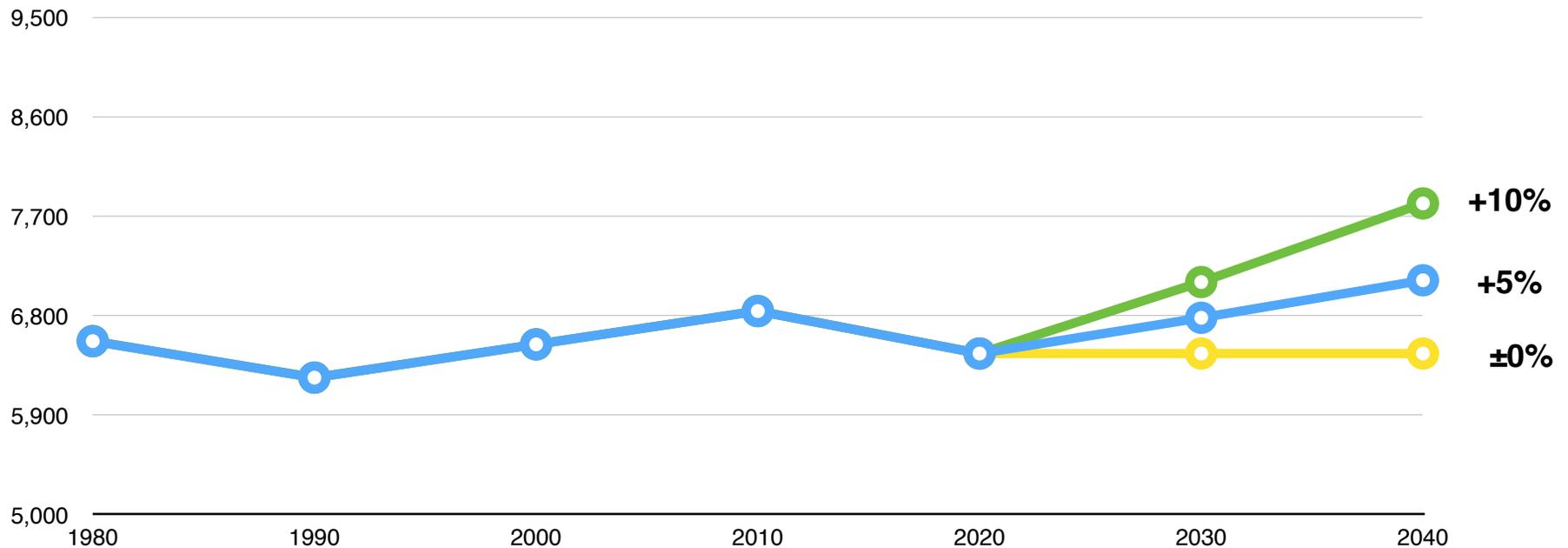
Many social and economic variables can affect the patterns of change over time in a community's population. Nevertheless, a reasonably accurate idea of a community's future population is an essential foundation for making planning decisions, because changes in population affect requirements for everything from police services to housing construction to sewage treatment capacity.

Making an accurate estimate for the future population of a small city is especially difficult, since a small change in absolute numbers can represent a substantial percentage of population change.

Over this *Plan's* 22-year period, City leaders will work toward reversing the 2010-2020 trend of population loss in Abilene, and return to the 1990-2010 rate of 4 to 5 percent per decade population increase. To achieve this goal, community leaders will need to understand the changing dynamics that result from regional population shifts.

The following table and graph show what Abilene's population could be in 2040 under various potential rates of population change—stability with no gain or loss, or gains of 5% or 10% per decade.

Future Population at Various Rates of Change			
Year	+0%	+5%	+10%
2020	6,460	6,460	6,460
2030	6,460	6,783	7,106
2040	6,460	7,122	7,817



A city has three basic strategic options for maintaining and increasing its population, all of which should be pursued as appropriate: **retain existing residents, attract new residents, and annex additional residents** as the city grows geographically.

Important factors that allow a community to attract and retain residents include good-quality housing at a variety of price points and in a variety of types, reliable utilities services, good schools, and community amenities that enhance quality of life—especially good parks, sufficient child-care options, business creation opportunities, and employment opportunities.

The overall appearance of a community also has a profound affect on both the quality of life for its people, and on a city's ability to attract new businesses, visitors and new residents. The impression of a community's quality, character and vitality are all established by a variety of sensory cues, mostly visual—from building exteriors, streets, and public spaces, in commercial districts, residential neighborhoods, and downtown. A 2019 study found that attractive communities are more economically successful.

Demographic Characteristics

The following table contains information which is useful primarily when viewed in comparison to the same data from other geographic areas. For instance, Abilene has an unusually high percentage of households with elders, and unusually low racial and ethnic diversity.

- **Disability** Of the total civilian non-institutionalized population in Abilene (6,424 individuals), 980 people have a disability. Of those 980 disabled people, 54 (5.5%) are under 18 years of age, 392 (40.0%) are between 18 and 64 years in age, and 534 (54.5%) are 65 years of age or older.

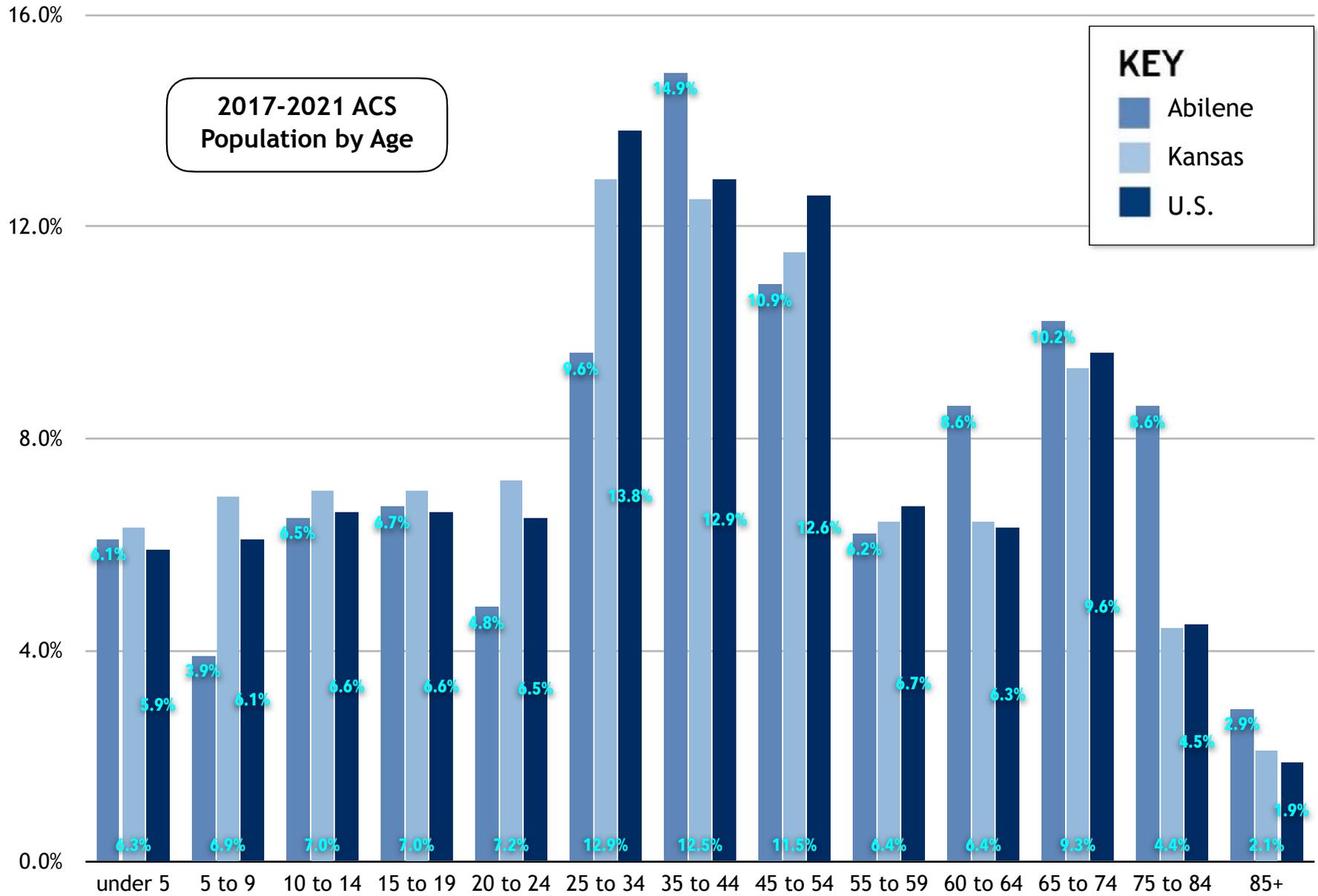
	Abilene	Kansas	U.S.
Median Age (in years)	42.1	37.0	38.4
Average Household Size	2.22	2.51	2.60
Average Family Size	2.91	3.12	3.20
Households with 1 or more people under 18 years	26.0%	30.8%	30.6%
Households with 1 or more people 65 years and over	36.3%	28.9%	30.2%
% White	95.3%	87.2%	74.5%
% Hispanic or Latino	4.1%	12.3%	18.4%
% Disabled (civilian, non-institutionalized)	15.3%	13.2%	12.6%

Population by Age / Age Distribution The chart on the following page shows the percentage of each age category for Abilene residents, compared to figures for Kansas and the United States.

Abilene's population has unusually high percentages of people that are 35 to 44 years of age, 60 to 64, and 75 to 84. The city has unusually low percentages of children 5 to 9 years of age, and young adults 20 to 34 years old.

This pattern is typical for communities whose young people go away to college or to find a first career-track job, and **can't afford to return and purchase a home** until they are well established in their careers. It also indicates that once people do live in Abilene, they are inclined to stay there throughout retirement.

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045



Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045

Household Types in Abilene		
Households with Children		
<i>Married couple, with own children under 18</i>	478	16.5%
<i>Male householder with no spouse present, with own children under 18</i>	16	0.6%
<i>Female householder with no spouse present, with own children under 18</i>	138	4.8%
<i>Cohabiting couple household, with own children under 18</i>	87	3.0%
Single-person Households		
<i>Male Householder living alone (under 65 years)</i>	376	13.0%
<i>Male Householder living alone (65 years and over)</i>	167	5.8%
<i>Female Householder living alone (under 65 years)</i>	130	4.5%
<i>Female Householder living alone (65 years and over)</i>	424	14.7%
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	2,890	—

- **Children / Seniors** Out of 2,890 households in Abilene, 751 (26.0%) had at least one child under 18 years of age in the household; 1,049 (36.3%) had at least one person 65 years of age or older in the household; and 1,090 (37.7%) had neither.
- **Parents** Out of 719 family households where adults are living with their own children under 18 years of age, 478 households (66.5%) are married couples, 138 (19.2%) are female single parents, 87 (12.1%) are cohabiting couples, and 16 (2.2 %) are male single parents.

- **Single-person Households** Out of 2,890 households in Abilene, 1,097 (38.0%) are single-person households— 506 (17.5%) with a householder under 65 years of age, and 591 (20.5%) with a householder 65 years of age or older.

These figures have significant planning implications for both housing needs and social services.

Abilene Educational Attainment (25 years old and over)		
Less than 9th grade	138	2.9%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	251	5.4%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	1,350	28.8%
Some college, no degree	1,121	23.9%
Associate's degree	523	11.2%
Bachelor's degree	993	21.2%
Graduate or professional degree	311	6.6%
Total	4,687	100.0%

- Of people in Abilene 25 years old or older, 91.7% had a **high school degree or higher**, compared to 91.6% in Kansas, and 88.9% nationally.
- Of people in Abilene 25 years old or older, 27.8% had a **bachelor's degree or higher**, compared to 34.4% in Kansas, and 33.7% nationally.

Demographic Data from the Community Questionnaire

On the Community Questionnaire, several questions were asked to help community leaders understand why people choose to move to Abilene, and why they choose to stay.

- **How long have you lived in or near Abilene?**

- Less than 5 years: 9%

- 5 to 10 years: 16%

- More than 10 years: 74%

- **Where did you live before moving here?**

- Not applicable—I have lived here all my life: 22%

- Elsewhere in Dickinson County: 10%

- Elsewhere in Kansas: 36%

- Outside Kansas: 32%

- **If you moved to Abilene within the last 10 years, what were the major reasons you moved here?**

- N/A—I have lived here longer than 10 years: 54%

- To be close to family and friends: 12%

- For an economical place to live: 10%

- To be closer to work: 8%

- To live in a smaller city: 7%

- For the good schools: 3%

- For the good housing: 3%

- To retire: 2%

- To live in a larger city: 0%

- **If you are planning to leave the Abilene area, what are your reasons for leaving?**

- N/A—I am not planning to leave: 69%

- Retirement: 8%

- To be closer to family: 5%

- Better-quality or different kind of housing: 4%

- Job change: 3%

- Personal reasons: 3%

- Need lower-cost housing: 2%

- My children are graduating: 2%

- To be closer to work: 1%

- Health reasons: 1%

- Want to own a home rather than rent: 1%

- For better schools: 1%

- Want a better neighborhood: 1%

- I am graduating: 0%

- **Do you plan to stay in the Abilene area only until your child or children graduate from high school?**

- Yes: 10%

- No: 25%

- Undecided: 6%

- N/A—No kids in school: 59%

- **Do you plan to stay in the Abilene area after you retire?**

- Yes: 50%

- No: 13%

- Undecided: 26%

- N/A— Already retired: 11%

Housing

The variety and quality of housing options available in Abilene impacts both the community's quality of life, and whether or not homeowners choose to move to or remain in the city. Residential properties are a major source for the City's tax revenues, and a healthy housing market benefits many businesses as well. A sufficient, diverse, and high-quality housing supply also increases the opportunity to attract new businesses and their employees.

A house is usually the largest single investment for a family or individual, and a home and its neighborhood are a source of great influence on household satisfaction. While a nice house does not guarantee a happy home life, a house which is unsuitable or which does not function properly for its residents can certainly increase chronic stress levels. Houses that are difficult to maintain can generate financial concerns and physical discomfort.

Young adults, families with children, singles, couples, empty nesters and retirees all need housing suited to their particular requirements—and if it is not available locally, they will often consider moving to another community to find it.

This section gives an overall picture of the housing situation in the City of Abilene, based primarily on information from the *2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Housing information from the 2020 Census is also included; though very limited, it is the official data on the few points of information which were counted.

Housing Units: The Census count of housing units includes both occupied and vacant residential buildings. Recreational vehicles and the like are included only if they are occupied as someone's usual place of residence. Vacant mobile homes are included provided they are intended for occupancy on the site where they stand, but if they are on sales lots or in storage yards they are not counted as housing units.

Persons per Household	Owner-occupied Housing Units	Renter-occupied Housing Units	All Occupied Housing Units
1-person	532	565	1,097
2-person	821	203	1,024
3-person	224	49	273
4 or more-person	442	54	496
TOTAL	2,019	871	2,890

- **Household Size** The average household size of owner-occupied units in Abilene was 2.61 persons. The average household size of renter-occupied units in Abilene was 2.25 persons.
- **Occupancy** Out of 3,372 housing units in Abilene, 2,890 (85.7%) were occupied and 482 (14.3%) were vacant. Of the 2,890 occupied units, 2,019 (69.9%) were owner-occupied, and 871 (30.1%) were renter-occupied.

Planning for Smaller Households The share of people living alone in the United States has increased every decade since 1940. In 2020, over a quarter (27.6%) of all occupied households in the U.S. were one-person households—up from just 7.7% in 1940.

Over 73% of Abilene's occupied housing units contain one- or two-person households. **Plan to provide a wide array of housing options to accommodate these smaller households.**

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045

Housing Types	Number	Percentage
Single, detached	2,614	77.5%
Single, attached	18	0.5%
2 Units	115	3.4%
3 or 4 Units	186	5.5%
5 to 9 Units	73	2.2%
10 to 19 Units	52	1.5%
20 or more Units	275	8.2%
Mobile Home	39	1.2%
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	3,372	100.0%

Housing Types The majority (77.5%) of Abilene's housing stock is single-family detached homes, yet the community also has a wide array of other housing type options.

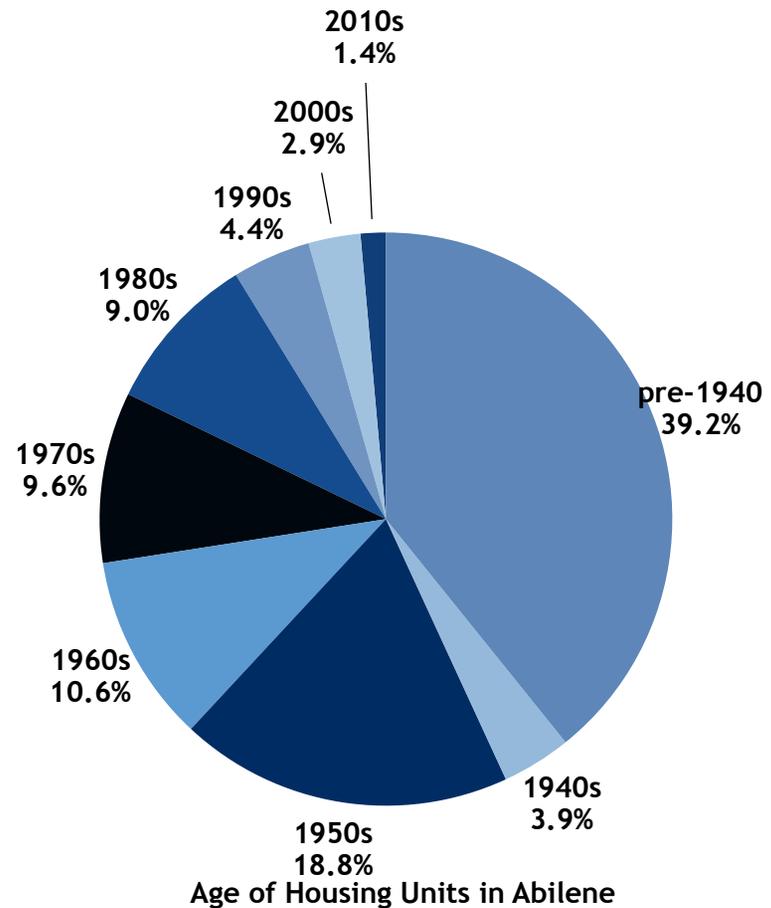
Bedrooms per Housing Unit	number	percent
0	109	3.2%
1	437	13.0%
2	1,008	29.9%
3	1,139	33.8%
4	469	13.9%
5 or more	210	6.2%
TOTALS	3,372	100%

Bedrooms For many years, the real estate industry has used the number of bedrooms per house as a key factor in marketing homes. A 3-bedroom house has been considered the standard starter home for a typical family; about a third of Abilene's housing stock falls into this category.

However, as household sizes continue to fall, and one- or two-person households become the norm, smaller houses are becoming more and more marketable, especially in walkable neighborhoods.

Age of Housing Units Abilene had fairly steady residential development over much of its history, up until the 1990s. Less than 9% of the city's housing units have been constructed in the last thirty years. Over 39% of Abilene's housing units were built prior to 1940.

When they are well maintained, older homes can help give a community continuity and character, but if they are allowed to fall into disrepair, they can become a source of blight.



Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045

Value of Owner-occupied Housing Units	Number	Percentage
Less than \$50,000	77	3.8%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	760	37.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	546	27.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	319	15.8%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	186	9.2%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	101	5.0%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	30	1.5%
\$1,000,000 or more	0	0.0%
TOTAL OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS	2,019	100.0%

Value Nearly 65% of Abilene's owner-occupied housing units are between \$50,000 and \$150,000 in value.

- **Median Value** The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Abilene was \$114,100.

Note, much of this data on housing values and costs was collected before the notable rise in housing costs that occurred as a result of the economic disruption caused by the Covid pandemic.

Selected Monthly Owner Costs – Housing Units WITH a Mortgage		
	number	percent
Less than \$500	5	0.4%
\$500 to \$999	351	31.6%
\$1000 to \$1499	578	52.0%
\$1500 to \$1999	110	9.9%
\$2000 to \$2499	17	1.5%
\$2500 to \$2999	25	2.2%
\$3000 or more	26	2.3%
TOTALS	1,112	100%

Selected Monthly Owner Costs – Housing Units WITHOUT a Mortgage		
	number	percent
Less than \$250	18	2.0%
\$250 to \$399	337	37.2%
\$400 to \$599	338	37.3%
\$600 to \$799	113	12.5%
\$800 to \$999	57	6.3%
\$1000 or more	44	4.9%
TOTALS	907	100%

Housing Costs The cost of owning a house varies significantly between those paying a mortgage, and those who do not have a mortgage to pay.

- **Mortgages** Out of the 2,019 owner-occupied housing units in Abilene, 1,112 (55.1%) had a mortgage, and 907 (44.9%) did not.
- **Monthly Cost** The median monthly owner cost for housing units with a mortgage was \$1,183, and for housing units without a mortgage was \$449.

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Housing Costs as a Percent of Income People paying a very high percentage of their income in housing costs are often people with a very low household income, such as students, or elderly people on a fixed income.

Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income				
Percentage of Income	Housing Units WITH a Mortgage		Housing Units WITHOUT a Mortgage	
	number	percent	number	percent
less than 10%	—	—	395	43.8%
10 to 14.9%	—	—	163	18.1%
15 to 19.9%	—	—	75	8.3%
less than 20%	583	52.4%	—	—
20% to 24.9%	204	18.3%	141	15.6%
25% to 29.9%	171	15.4%	41	4.6%
30% to 34.9%	44	4.0%	21	2.3%
35% or more	110	9.9%	65	7.2%
Not computed	0	—	6	—
TOTALS	1,112	100%	901	100%

The following tables show information on rent in occupied rental units in which rent was paid; the tables do not include 14 rental units in which no rent was paid.

Gross Rent in Occupied Units	Number	Percentage
Less than \$500	169	19.7%
\$500 to \$999	568	66.3%
\$1000 to \$1499	108	12.6%
\$1500 to \$1999	0	0.0%
\$2000 to \$2499	12	1.4%
TOTAL OCCUPIED RENTAL UNITS	857	100.0%

- **Median Rent** The median rental rate of Abilene's occupied rental units was \$672 per month.

Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income		
Percentage of Income	Households	
	number	percent
less than 15%	55	6.4%
15% to 19.9%	201	23.5%
20% to 24.9%	213	24.9%
25% to 29.9%	55	6.4%
30% to 34.9%	93	10.9%
35% or more	240	28.0%
TOTALS	857	100%

Rental Costs as a Percent of Income About 55% of renters in Abilene paid less than 25% of their household income per month in housing costs. The 28% of Abilene tenants that are paying more than 35% of their income on rent are likely people with a very low household income, such as students, or elderly people on a fixed income.

Economy

Census information in this section applies only to people living *inside* the city limits of Abilene, and does not include data on those living in the Abilene Planning Area. Therefore, the extensive agricultural component of the local economy may not appear proportionately in the data shown for the City, but may be inferred from the data for Dickinson County.

Annual Per Capita Income

"Income" includes not just earnings, but also income from other sources, such as investments, Social Security or Supplemental Security, retirement accounts, or public assistance.

The per capita income figure is a mean, derived by dividing the total income of every person 16 years old and over in a geographic area by the total population in that area. This figure is most useful when compared to the same datum for other places, and should not be construed as an accurate representation of actual income for a typical Abilene wage or salary earner.

Annual Per Capita Income	
United States	\$37,638
Kansas	\$34,968
Dickinson County	\$33,081
Abilene	\$33,318

The annual per capita income for the City of Abilene is lower than comparable figures for the state and nation, but a bit higher than that for Dickinson County as a whole.

Median Earnings

	Median Earnings					
	(full-time, year-round workers)				(also part-time)	
	Male Workers		Female Workers		All Workers	
	amount	% of US	amount	% of US	amount	% of US
USA	\$57,803	—	\$46,823	—	\$38,732	—
Kansas	\$54,631	94.5%	\$42,859	91.5%	\$36,603	94.5%
Dickinson County	\$48,904	84.6%	\$40,653	86.8%	\$35,197	90.9%
Abilene	\$50,357	87.1%	\$38,560	82.4%	\$33,969	87.7%

Gender Wage Gap This country, along with most of the world, has long had a significant gap between what males earn versus what females earn. Some of the wage gap is accounted for by factors such as differences in educational attainment, work experience, and family caregiver responsibilities. However, gender discrimination is also still a major factor, including segregation of women into lower-paying jobs, and outright wage discrimination.

The 2017-2021 ACS data in the table above shows that nationally, the wage gap between men and women was 19%—that is, on average, full-time working women earned 81% of what full-time working men earned. In Kansas, the gap was three points worse at 22%, notably better in Dickinson County at 17%, and in Abilene it was four points worse at 23%. **A typical full-time working woman in Abilene earns about 76.6% of what a typical full-time working man earns.**

Retaining young talent is one of the most important ways a community can secure its economic future, and aggressively attacking the wage gap is one of the best ways to hang on to young educated workers. Young college-educated women in particular are inclined to leave places where the wage gap is notably high.

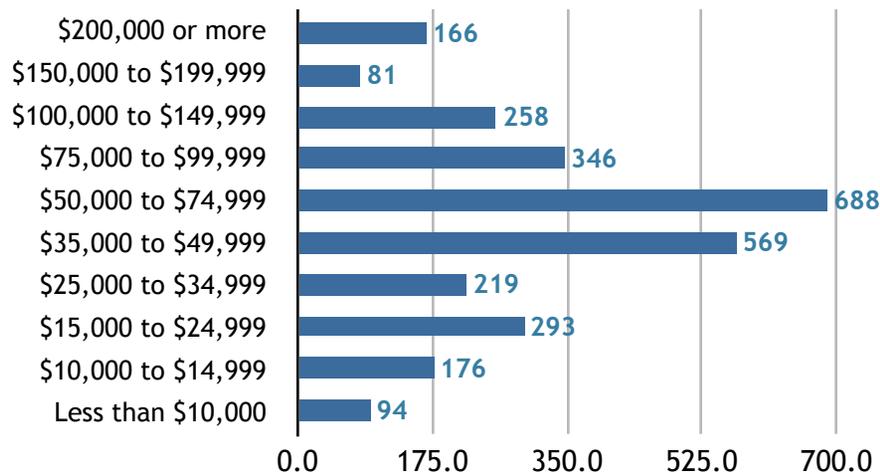
Median Household Income

Non-family households include persons living alone, while family households often have more than one income earner.

	Median Household Income		
	Family	Non-family	All Households
United States	\$85,028	\$41,394	\$69,021
Kansas	\$82,260	\$37,451	\$64,521
Dickinson County	\$71,895	\$33,631	\$59,400
Abilene	\$68,711	\$32,708	\$52,423

Annual Household Income & Benefits

Out of 2,890 households in Abilene, annual household income and benefits were distributed as shown in the graph below. The bars indicate the number of households in each income range, with incomes shown in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars.



Types of Employment

Out of an estimated 2021 population of 6,507 persons in the City of Abilene, there were 5,308 people who were 16 years of age and older. Of those 16 and up, 3,389 were in the labor force (63.8%), including 3,316 (62.5%) employed civilians, and 73 (1.4%) who were unemployed. According to the Census Bureau's 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, no members of the armed forces live in Abilene.

The following three tables show data from the 2017-2021 ACS for Abilene's 3,316 employed civilians 16 years of age and older—by occupational category, by the class of worker, and by the industry in which they were employed.

Occupational Category	Persons	%
Management, business, science, and arts	1,081	32.6%
Sales and office	658	19.8%
Service	628	18.9%
Production, transportation, & material moving	507	15.3%
Natural resources, construction, & maintenance	442	13.3%

Class of Worker	Persons	%
Private wage, salary, and commission	2,506	75.6%
Government workers (working for federal, foreign, international, tribal, state or local government)	504	15.2%
Self-employed (in own not-incorporated business)	306	9.2%
Unpaid family workers	0	0.0%

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Industry in which Employed	Persons	%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1,054	31.8%
Manufacturing	523	15.8%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	302	9.1%
Retail trade	298	9.0%
Construction	231	7.0%
Public administration	225	6.8%
Other services, except public administration	175	5.3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	120	3.6%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	109	3.3%
Information	77	2.3%
Wholesale trade	76	2.3%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	65	2.0%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	61	1.8%

Major local employers in the Abilene area are shown in the following table, along with the approximate number of local employees as of the spring of 2023.

Major Local Employers	Product or Activity	Estimated Number of Employees (as of 2023)
Great Plains Manufacturing	Manufacturing	1,500
Russell Stover Chocolates	Manufacturing	1,200
Sunbelt Solomon*	Manufacturing	500
USD 435	Education	360
Memorial Health System	Hospital	320
Dickinson County	Government / Municipal Services	140
West's Plaza Country Mart	Grocery Store	130
U.S. Stone Industries LLC*	Manufacturing	94
Holm Automotive Center	Sales & Service	75
USD 397*	Education	75
City of Abilene	Government / Municipal Services	68
ADM Milling Company & ADM Animal Nutrition	Manufacturing	54
Abilene Machine*	Manufacturing	50
Lumber House True Value	Retail	37
PrairieLand Partners	Sales & Service	30

* Located outside of Abilene city limits

Many other employment opportunities are provided in Abilene by a wide variety of smaller businesses and organizations.

Unemployment

The Census defines the **labor force** as those civilians, 16 years old or older, who are employed or seeking employment. The **unemployment rate** is the percent of people *in the labor force* who are unemployed—a ratio which only includes those working or *actively looking* for work; it excludes retirees, full-time homemakers, and full-time students, among others.

Unemployment Rate (2017-2021 ACS)			
United States	5.5%	Dickinson County	3.0%
Kansas	4.1%	Abilene	2.2%

According to the 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Abilene's unemployment rate is extraordinarily low—much better than that of the County, state, or nation.

The percentages of "unemployed civilians" shown in the table below include people who are *not* actively looking for work, such as students, homemakers and retirees.

Employment	Abilene		Dickinson County		Kansas	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
Population 16 years of age and over	5,308	100.0%	14,732	100.0%	2,299,477	100.0%
• Civilian labor force	3,389	63.8%	9,416	63.9%	1,530,430	66.6%
<i>Employed / civilian</i>	3,316	62.5%	9,073	61.6%	1,450,216	63.1%
<i>Unemployed civilians</i>	73	1.4%	280	1.9%	61,847	2.7%
• Military labor force	0	0.00%	63	0.43%	18,367	0.80%
• Not in labor force	1,919	36.2%	5,316	36.1%	769,047	33.4%

Out of the 5,308 people in the City of Abilene who were 16 years old or older, **36.2% were not in the labor force**, compared to **33.4% in Kansas**. People in this category are typically retired, disabled, full-time students, or full-time homemakers.

Poverty

The Census uses federal poverty guidelines to determine poverty levels. Another indicator often used to estimate the degree of poverty in a community is the rate of health insurance coverage. As with many such indicators, the numbers are most useful when compared to similar data for other geographic areas.

The following table shows percentages of people whose income in the previous 12 months was below the federal poverty level, as well as rates of health insurance coverage for the civilian non-institutionalized population. Information is from the 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

	Poverty Rates		Health Insurance Coverage (% of civilian non-institutionalized population)	
	All Families	All People	With	Without
United States	8.9%	12.6%	91.2%	8.8%
Kansas	7.6%	11.5%	91.1%	8.9%
Dickinson County	5.4%	8.7%	90.4%	9.6%
Abilene	5.3%	8.2%	91.8%	8.2%

Abilene's poverty rates for both all families and for all people are lower than those for the nation, state, or county. People living outside a family support structure typically endure higher rates of poverty than people living within a family, and that is also the case in Abilene.

The percentage of Abilene's population that has **health insurance coverage** is slightly higher than that for the nation, state, or county.

Commuting

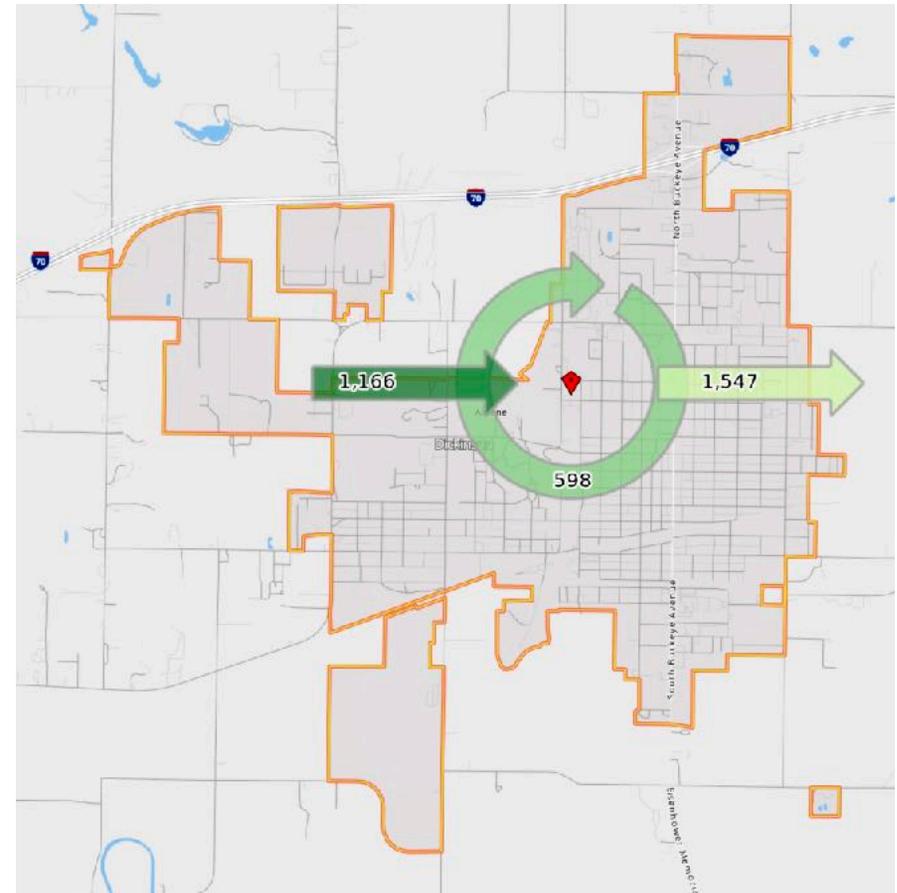
The 3,294 workers living in Abilene, who are 16 years old or older, commuted to work as shown in the following table. The **mean travel time to work** for them was **16.4 minutes**.

Commuting	Persons	%
Drove in car, truck or van—alone	2,307	70.0%
Drove in car, truck or van—carpooled	481	14.6%
Worked from home	300	9.1%
Walked	117	3.6%
Other means	57	1.7%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	32	1.0%

As is typical for rural Kansas communities, most people commute by vehicle, alone. Note, this information was collected during the peak of the 2020 pandemic lockdown, resulting in far more people working from home than had previously been common.

Inflow / Outflow Job Counts Based on 2020 Census data on private primary jobs, 1,764 people are employed within the city limits of Abilene. Of those, 598 (33.9%) people both live and work in the city, and 1,166 (66.1%) commute into the city from elsewhere.

Out of the 2,145 *employed people living* in Abilene, 598 (27.9%) both live and work inside the city, while 1,547 (72.1%) commute out of the city to work elsewhere.



This pattern reflects Abilene's status as a rural city which functions both as a local employment center, and as a bedroom community for the larger area economy.

Economic Data from the Community Questionnaire

Location of Employment Responses received from the Community Questionnaire indicated that respondents worked in the following locations:

- 64% of respondents worked in Abilene
- 22% were retired or working from home
- 4% worked in Salina
- 2% worked in each of these locations: Manhattan, Fort Riley, Junction City, & in unincorporated areas of the county
- 1% worked in each of these locations: Chapman, Herington & Clay Center

Incentives On the Community Questionnaire, a couple of questions were asked to help community leaders understand how people would like to see their tax dollars spent.

- Do you think the City should encourage economic growth by providing **property tax exemptions or other incentives to new or expanding businesses?**

Yes: 67%
 No: 21%
 I Don't Know: 12%

- Do you think the City should **encourage housing development by subsidizing infrastructure** (streets, water lines, sewer lines, electric lines) to new subdivisions?

Yes: 48%
 No: 32%
 I Don't Know: 20%

Local Debt

As of June 30, 2022, the City of Abilene had \$9,295,000 in outstanding debt. Under the state debt limitation statutes governed by K.S.A. 10-309, bonds dedicated to certain utilities projects such as water, sewer, storm sewer, or electrical improvements, are exempt from being included in calculations of the City's debt limitation.

Using the City's 2022 estimated total tangible assessed valuation, including that for motor vehicles, of \$61,326,310, and exempting the 2019 bonds for utilities, the City is currently using just 20.0% of the amount within its 30% debt limitation. This leaves \$14,712,893 for future bonded indebtedness under the statutory limitation, to carry out the growth policies of the City.

City of Abilene Bond Indebtedness		
Bond	Amount of Bond as of 6/30/2022	Retirement
2013 Series A—Fire Truck	\$100,000	9/1/2023
2015 Series A—Dawson Cottage Addition	\$100,000	9/1/2025
2017 Series B—Highlands Addition	\$3,485,000	9/1/2040
2019 Series A—Sewer / 8th Street to Wastewater Treatment Plant	\$2,725,000	9/1/2039
2019 Series B—Wastewater Treatment Plant	\$2,885,000	3/1/2028
TOTAL BOND DEBT	\$9,295,000	—

Local Tax Levies

Property tax rates are expressed in mills, or tax dollars due per one thousand dollars of the assessed valuation of property. Assessed value is substantially lower than market value. In Dickinson County, half of the taxes levied on an assessment made in one year is due in December of that year, and half is due the following May.

The amount of taxes paid should always be judged against the value received.

- The property tax levy to the **State** pays for educational and institutional building funds.
- **Dickinson County** taxes pay for county government and facilities, elections, courts, the Sheriff’s Department, Fire District/EMS services, emergency management, environmental services, road and bridge maintenance, noxious weed control, and health services, among other purposes.

Dickinson County funding also helps support the Extension Service, the Conservation District, the Historical Society, and the Central Kansas Free Fair, as well as area agencies that provide economic development, senior citizen services, mental health services, and disability support services.

- Property tax levies also support public schools, the Recreation Commission, library services, and cemeteries.
- **City of Abilene** property taxes pay for city government and facilities, municipal utilities (water, sewer, the recycling center and compost facility), police, parks, building inspections and code enforcement.

The following table shows the official 2022 ad valorem tax levies for property owners in the City of Abilene. [Tax levy information](#) for Dickinson County is available online.

2022 Property Tax Levy	in mills
State of Kansas	1.500
Dickinson County	54.967
Abilene USD 435	55.183
Abilene Cemetery District	1.603
Chisholm Trail Extension District #20	1.705
Memorial Hospital #1	2.001
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>116.959</i>
City of Abilene	—
General	32.809
Library	8.221
Fire	1.917
Bond & Interest	5.530
Capital Improvements	1.685
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>50.162</i>
2022 Total Mill Levy	167.121

The 2023 City of Abilene total tax levy of 47.356 is 2.806 mills lower than the 2022 rate of 50.162.

The 2022 assessed valuation of property in Abilene was \$61,326,310. Applying the 2022 total mill levy of 167.121 would produce total property taxes of \$10,248,914, to be paid from Abilene property owners in late 2022 and early 2023, to the State of Kansas, Dickinson County, USD 435, the Cemetery District, Chisholm Trail Extension, Memorial Hospital, and the City of Abilene.

Tax Rates of Comparable Cities

The following table compares Abilene's city property tax rate to those of other Kansas cities with a similar population, and which are also not suburbs of a large metropolitan area. The most recent data available for this comparison is from 2022, for taxes collected in 2023.

In the chart below, cities are listed in order of the size of their 2022 population, from largest to smallest (shown in blue).

Comparable Kansas Cities	2022 Population	Assessed Tangible Valuation	Total City Levy in mills
Independence	8,464	\$51,256,662	54.515
Wellington	7,664	\$45,561,311	60.968
Pratt	6,573	\$45,309,295	53.140
Abilene	6,468	\$61,326,310	50.162
Eudora	6,449	\$62,959,098	39.001
Paola	5,786	\$71,192,792	42.255
Ulysses	5,770	\$36,073,902	43.827
Tonganoxie	5,702	\$62,032,833	44.695

In relation to these comparable Kansas cities, Abilene had the fourth highest population, the fourth highest assessed valuation, and the fourth highest mill levy. In short, Abilene's city property taxes appear to be pretty average compared to those of similar cities, neither unusually high nor unusually low.

Public Perception of Tax Rates

When asked on the Community Questionnaire what they thought of various City, County and School District tax rates, respondents answered as follows:

Do you think the following tax rates are:								
	High		Reasonable		Low		Don't know	
City of Abilene Sales Tax	34	31%	66	61%	5	5%	3	3%
Dickinson County Sales Tax	32	30%	65	60%	2	2%	9	8%
School District Property Tax	36	33%	54	50%	2	2%	16	15%
City of Abilene Property Tax	47	44%	48	44%	1	1%	12	11%
Dickinson County Property Tax	54	50%	45	42%	1	1%	8	7%

Most people believe that their taxes are too high more as a matter of tradition, rather than any actual calculation of cost versus benefit. Compared to typical responses to this question, a fairly high percentage of Abilene residents think their taxes are reasonable—perhaps indicating local recognition of the value of the variety of governmental services they receive.

CHAPTER 4. Transportation & Utilities

This chapter provides an overview of transportation options and utility services in Abilene.

Transportation

A good transportation system impacts other community goals, including economic vitality and overall quality of life. A transportation system should serve community facilities, respond to both existing and future land use patterns, and support desired development.

STREETS—FEDERAL FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

The roads in the Abilene Planning Area are part of a nationwide system of federal street classifications, which are reviewed periodically, and revised as necessary to reflect changing conditions. Changes in a street's federal classification must be approved by the local County Commission.

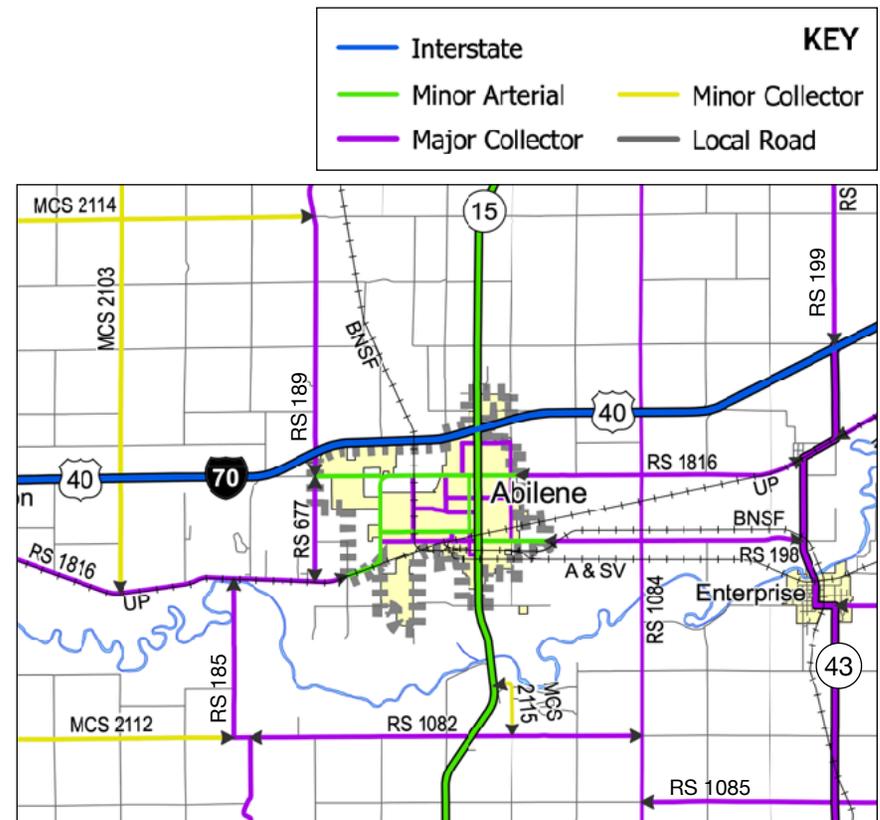
Federal street classifications affect funding for road improvements. A street must be in the approved federally classified roadway system before projects on that roadway can receive federal transportation funding.

Streets are classified into a function-based hierarchy depending on how they balance traffic volume and speed against access to adjacent land uses. **Freeways and Expressways** are dedicated to high-speed traffic, typically providing no access at all to adjacent properties. **Arterials** maximize traffic flow and speed, but provide limited access to adjacent properties. **Collectors** balance traffic with access, and **Local Roads** reduce speed and traffic volume in order to maximize access.

More information on the federal functional street classifications can be found in the 2013 Federal Highway Administration report *Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria and Procedures*.

Maps showing federal functional street classifications for each county in Kansas are maintained by the state Department of Transportation (KDOT), available online at KDOT's *County Roadway Functional Classification Maps*.

The map below shows the Federal Highway Administration's 5- to 10-year future functional classifications for the Abilene area, as of May 2023.



In the Abilene Planning Area, the only street with a federal classification as an **Interstate** is I-70. [KDOT traffic count maps](#) for 2023 show that about 20,000 vehicles pass through Dickinson County each day on Interstate 70.

In the Abilene Planning Area, streets with federal classifications as **Minor Arterials** include:

- K-15 / Buckeye Avenue
- Cedar Street, from NW 3rd Street to NW 14th Street
- Old Highway 40 / S Van Buren Street, from Fawn Road to NW 14th Street
- 14th Street, from Fair Road to 1/16th of a mile east of Brady Street
- NW 3rd Street, from Van Buren Street to Buckeye Avenue
- E 1st Street, from Buckeye Avenue east about one mile

In the Abilene Planning Area, north-to-south streets with federal classifications as **Major Collectors** include:

- Eden Road, from Old Highway 40 south (RS 185)
- Fair Road, north from Old Highway 40 to NW 14th Street / 2300 Avenue (RS 677)
- Fair Road, north from NW 14th Street / 2300 Avenue (RS 189)
- N Washington Street, from W 1st Street to NW 14th Street
- N Vine Street, from NW 7th Street to NW 14th Street
- N Elm Street, from W 1st Street to NW 3rd Street
- N Mulberry Street, from NW 14th Street to NW 21st Street
- N Cedar Street, from SW 4th Street to NW 3rd Street
- N Brady Street, from E 1st Street to NE 21st Street
- Jeep Road

In the Abilene Planning Area, east-to-west streets with federal classifications as **Major Collectors** include:

- 21st Street, from Mulberry Street to Brady Street
- NE 14th Street / 2300 Avenue, east from 1/16th of a mile east of Brady Street (RS 1816)
- 10th Street, from Vine Street to Brady Street
- NW 8th Street / NW 7th Street, from Washington Street to Buckeye Avenue
- W 1st Street, from S Van Buren Street to Buckeye Avenue
- E 1st Street / 2200 Avenue, east from about one mile east of Buckeye Avenue (RS 198)
- SW 4th Street, from S Cedar Street to Buckeye Avenue
- Old Highway 40, from Fawn Road west (RS 1816)
- 1900 Avenue, between Eden Road and Eden Road (RS 185)
- 1900 Avenue, from eastern Eden Road to Jeep Road (RS 1082)

In the Abilene Planning Area, the only street with a federal classification as a **Minor Collector** is:

- Hawk Road, from 1900 Avenue to K-15 (MCS 2115)

On the KDOT map, any street which is not classified in one of the federal functional street categories is considered a **local street**.

PARKING

A vehicular circulation system must accommodate vehicles not only when they are traveling, but also when they are parked. Census data from the 2021 *American Community Survey* indicates that, for a population of 6,507 people, there are **currently at least 5,594 vehicles based in Abilene**—an average of more than six vehicles for every seven people.

- **Vehicles** Of the 2,890 occupied housing units in Abilene, 144 (5.0%) had no vehicles available; 768 (26.6%) had one vehicle available; 1,108 (38.3%) had two; and 870 (30.1%) had three or more.

In older neighborhoods, streets were expected to support both traffic flow and shared on-street parking. Modern suburban developments often require off-street parking, and so devote less land to paved streets but more to driveways and garages.

Commercial Parking It is important to have adequate parking to support local businesses, but it is also important not to *overbuild* parking facilities. Too much land devoted to storing cars makes a neighborhood less walkable. Parking spaces and their associated aisles are surprisingly expensive to construct, and they generate runoff which adds significant load to stormwater management systems. Requiring every business to have its own dedicated parking spaces can exacerbate these costs, while shared public parking reduces them.

American small town main streets were traditionally designed to support shared on-street public parking. Though out of fashion in recent decades, this parking solution is now being recognized again as a valuable and cost-effective parking strategy.

New downtown streetscapes often include diagonal or parallel on-street parking with ADA spaces, bike lanes, wide sidewalks with ADA curb ramps and well defined crosswalks, curb extensions with street trees, attractive street and pedestrian lighting, benches, bike racks and public art.



2023 Aerial of downtown Abilene

Abilene's downtown area has numerous parking lots as well as on-street diagonal parking along the full length of all of its downtown streets. The rest of the community is served by off-street parking.

A **parking study** may be in order, to determine whether Abilene's downtown may actually have too much parking, relative to its realistic needs. By reducing the amount of space dedicated to vehicle storage, more space could be dedicated to creating a pedestrian-friendly environment that could increase the economic vitality of downtown Abilene, and provide more return on investment than unneeded parking spaces do.

COMPLETE STREETS

Abilene's rural location means its people will always be primarily dependent on vehicular transportation. Nevertheless, the city itself should still offer residents at least some neighborhoods that also support additional means of transport.

Such neighborhoods have streets based on the principles of **complete streets**—a design philosophy which calls for utilizing the public rights-of-way to support safe and comfortable travel by *all* users, of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

Complete streets include sidewalks with curb ramps, and good crosswalks. In downtown areas, streets may also have curb extensions, crosswalk medians for pedestrian refuge, and shared on-street parking. Amenities might include shade and benches for pedestrians, and bike racks. Where appropriate, streets may include bike lanes or bike routes.

For more information on complete streets, see:

- [National Complete Streets Coalition](#).
- USDOT's [Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center](#), for links to more resources on complete streets, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, e-scooters, e-bikes, and bike share programs.

Whenever the design or renovation of a right-of-way is part of a planning project, Planning Commission and City Commission members have the opportunity to incorporate complete streets principles. Each small project may allow only an incremental change in the City's overall transportation network—but over time, such incremental changes can accumulate, and have a profound effect on Abilene's quality of life.

*"The role of streets is to build communities,
not the other way around."*

Gary Toth — Project for Public Spaces

WALKABILITY

Walkability is an important asset for enhancing quality of life and improving community health. Abilene has the size, compactness, grid-type street layout, and block size that give it great potential as a very walkable community.

For people to *want* to walk, they need a safe surface to walk on, a comfortable environment to walk in, and destinations to walk to. Pedestrian pathway systems are most successful as a viable transportation option when they **connect residential neighborhoods to community destinations**, including schools, parks, churches, and downtown businesses.

Urban residential streets can be categorized as either gridiron or subdivision types. The **type of street** impacts the character of the neighborhood, the efficiency of traffic patterns, the provision of utilities, and how people live.

Gridiron streets form a grid of 90-degree intersections, creating rectilinear blocks, with **alleys** for utility and garage access.

Subdivision streets usually occur in neighborhoods platted in the 1950s or later. They typically incorporate a maze of curvilinear streets, T-intersections, and cul-de-sacs, while minimizing connections to the main street network. Rather than public alleys, they use a system of **easements** across private property to allow utility access. This street pattern creates neighborhoods that are extremely car-dependent, and are now becoming less desirable as more and more Americans recognize the value of walkable neighborhoods.

Abilene's older neighborhoods have gridiron pattern streets. Only the Golden Belt Heights subdivision northwest of town, and a scattering of cul-de-sacs in some of the newer neighborhoods mostly in the northeast quadrant of town, are designed with subdivision-style streets.

To improve future walkability in Abilene, consider requiring any new **cul-de-sac streets to be platted in such a way that they allow for direct pedestrian and bicycle connections** linking cul-de-sacs to each other, and to the street grid.

Information on Walkability

These are links to two 2013 TED Talks by architect and urban planner Jeff Speck:

- [The Walkable City](#) offers economic, health and environmental reasons for building walkable communities.
- [Four Ways to Make a City More Walkable](#) discusses the four things a City needs to do to make people prefer walking over driving: a reason to walk, a safe place to walk, comfortable conditions to walk in, and things that make a walk interesting.

ABILENE'S SIDEWALKS

Abilene has sidewalks in its downtown commercial district, which typically extend from building face to back of curb. Most of the city's older residential neighborhoods also have sidewalks, three to four feet wide, built back when children regularly walked to school. Occasionally a segment is missing, and in need of replacement to fill in the gap. Some areas on the outer edges of the city, typically constructed after the 1950s, lack sidewalks entirely.

Some of Abilene's older sidewalks are in need of maintenance or replacement, but they are a resource well worth the investment to sustain. They form the core of a pedestrian network that helps make Abilene a fundamentally walkable city.

Cultural changes are making walkable neighborhoods more and more desirable, increasing the potential value of both residential and commercial properties in such areas. Investment in sidewalks should be regarded as an investment in Abilene's quality of life, and its future.



Typical residential sidewalks in Abilene



Typical downtown sidewalk in Abilene

Sidewalk Policy Abilene's City Code ([Chapter VI, Article 3](#)) addresses standards for sidewalk construction and maintenance, repair, and snow removal. It also addresses condemnation of unsafe sidewalks, and their demolition and replacement.

Under the Code, **new sidewalks** can be constructed after petition by citizens, and paid for by assessments on abutting property, if the petition is approved by the City Commission. Alternatively, when recommended by City staff, the City Commission may approve a Resolution to construct new sidewalks in any developed area of the city where it is determined they would be a benefit to the general public.

Ideally, the City's sidewalk policy should also provide a practical means to retrofit new sidewalks into existing neighborhoods where they were never built

[Section 5-8](#) of the Abilene Subdivision Regulations allows for the option of requiring sidewalks in new development.

Sidewalk Funding There is no national standard for how sidewalk installation and repair projects are paid for. While public streets and parking areas are regularly funded with tax dollars, sidewalk funding is a patchwork of solutions that varies from city to city. Often, cities use either full municipal funding or a cost split program between the City and adjacent landowners.

The City of Abilene utilizes a cost-split program called the [Sidewalk Connection & Replacement Program](#). On a "first come, first served" basis, as long as funding lasts, the City will pay up to \$500 (or up to \$1,000 for a corner lot) for sidewalks on residential properties, and pay half the cost for sidewalks on a commercial property.

For more information, see the Federal Highway Administration's [Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities for Enhanced Safety Research Report](#), which includes an overview of funding options.

BICYCLING FACILITIES

Abilene currently has no dedicated bicycle paths, lanes, or routes. Bicyclists generally share the roads with motor vehicles.

A **bike path**, typically used by both pedestrians and bicyclists, is usually 8 or 10 feet wide, paved, and separated from the street but built within a right-of-way or along a drainage route.

A **bike lane** is typically 5 feet wide, and located on a street or its shoulder, between a motor vehicle traffic lane and the gutter or road edge.

A **bike route** is designated with signs and pavement markings, on a street specifically intended for simultaneous use by both motor vehicles and bicycles.



Bike Path



Dual Bicycle/Pedestrian Path



Bike Lane



Bike Route Signs

Consider the option of selecting a **bike rack design** that can also be a marketing tool for the City, for use on public properties. As new racks are installed, or existing racks need to be replaced, use a customized "Abilene standard" bike rack to begin establishing a consistent design style for the City's bike racks.

Any bike rack should meet functional requirements for proper two-point bicycle support, be lockable, and be constructed of low maintenance materials. Avoid ribbon racks, spiral racks and schoolyard racks, which do not provide effective support. Racks located along a sidewalk usually need a crossbar in order to be compliant with ADA vertical-element requirements.

The simplest rack design which meets these functional criteria is the inverted "U" type, with or without a crossbar. There are endless variations on the theme, and they can easily be customized to be unique to Abilene.



Visit the [*Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals*](#) website to find more information about bicycle rack design and installation standards.

Bicycle racks should be available at local destinations, particularly at schools, parks, the Library, and downtown. The City of Abilene has installed bike racks at a number of these destinations, but not all of the existing racks are of a functionally preferred design, or placed in ideal locations.

While every single street does not need to provide for every type of user, a community's street *system* should serve the needs of all its citizens. Even if the City chooses to make no immediate plans to implement a network of bicycle lanes, paths, and routes, **make sure that planning decisions made now do not foreclose the possibility of their future development.**

AIRPORTS

Airline Travel Abilene residents have reasonably good access to national and international air travel. The Salina Regional Airport, just a 30 minute drive away, has daily scheduled passenger air service to Denver International Airport and Chicago O'Hare International Airport, provided by Skywest flights for United Airlines. Manhattan Regional Airport, just 36 minutes away, has daily American Airlines flights to Chicago and Dallas/Fort Worth. The Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport is an hour and a half drive south from Abilene, and hosts seven airlines. The Kansas City International Airport is a two and a quarter hour drive east, and hosts 14 airlines.

Abilene Municipal Airport Owned and operated by the City of Abilene, and managed by Abilene Flying Services, the Abilene Municipal Airport is used primarily for general aviation. The Airport Advisory Committee, appointed by the City Commission, provides guidance to the City Commission on matters related to the Airport's operations.

Located at 801 South Washington Street about a mile south-southwest of the downtown business district, the Airport has one concrete runway. The City is currently working on building new T-Hangars at the Airport, after a storm in the spring of 2020 destroyed all the existing T-Hangars. The hangars will be available for lease to the public. The City also allows the lease of land at the Airport for the development of private hangar space.

A 20-year *Airport Master Plan* was completed for Abilene by Benesch in 2020. It calls for ten new Hangars to park planes, expansion of the existing runway, a new crosswind runway, an expanded and improved terminal building, a new beacon, and an automatic weather operation system.

General Aviation There are a number of other general aviation airports within an hour's drive of Abilene, including Salina Regional Airport, Junction City Municipal Airport, Herington Regional Airport, and McPherson Airport.

RAILROADS

Union Pacific Railroad (UP) tracks run roughly east-to-west through the heart of historic Abilene. Going west-southwest from downtown, the UP tracks are also used by the Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad. Three sets of tracks run easterly from Abilene, the northernmost being the UP tracks going east-northeast toward Kansas City.

The BNSF Railway tracks, which are also used by the UP, run directly east from the city, but then turn south toward Wichita. BNSF Railway tracks, also used by Union Pacific and the KYLE Railroad System, also run north from the UP tracks.

Together, these railroads provide Abilene's business and industry with excellent railroad freight service.

The **Abilene and Smoky Valley Railroad (A&SV)** operates the third set of tracks heading east from Abilene. It is a heritage railway, owned and operated by a non-profit organization that offers public excursion train rides between Abilene and Enterprise. The A&SV operates on track that was initially laid by the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad in 1886. The former Rock Island Depot is now a gift shop.

The nearest access to passenger rail service for Abilene is available at the **AMTRAK** station in Newton, about a 65 minute drive south on K-15.



Excerpt from KDOT's *Kansas Railroad Map 2022*

PUBLIC TRANSIT

There is no regularly scheduled City bus service or other public transit system in Abilene. However, the City of Abilene contracts with OCCK Transportation Inc. to operate the GoAbilene General Public Transportation service. OCCK is headquartered at 340 N. Santa Fe Avenue in Salina, Kansas.

GoAbilene is a door-to-door, low-cost, on-demand transportation service, available from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, within the city limits of Abilene. It provides transportation services for the general public, including seniors and passengers with disabilities, as well as young people ages 7 through 18.

A partnership with Memorial Health Foundation provides passengers on GoAbilene with free rides to medical facilities, including but not limited to doctors' offices, pharmacies, chiropractors, and dentists. GoAbilene also offers free fares to West's Country Mart through a partnership with the West family.

There is no **taxi service** located in Abilene, although **rideshare** services such as Uber or Lyft may be available.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM GOALS

Streets

- Pursue a solution to traffic problems at the **intersection at NW 14th and Van Buren Streets**.
- Have a ***Downtown Traffic & Parking Study*** done, to determine traffic counts on downtown streets, and to evaluate parking availability versus both present and future parking needs.
- If supported by the results of the ***Downtown Traffic & Parking Study***, begin a program of **narrowing downtown streets and creating curb extensions** at intersections, to allow for wider sidewalks, street trees and bike lanes. Developing such a streetscape along Buckeye Avenue will likely involve negotiations with the State of Kansas.
- To improve future walkability in Abilene, consider requiring any new **cul-de-sac streets** to be platted in such a way that they **allow for direct pedestrian and bicycle connections** linking cul-de-sacs to each other, and to the street grid.
- Whenever **street lighting** improvement projects take place, work towards transitioning to full-cutoff, energy efficient LED lighting.
- Over time, implement **complete streets** principles to make Abilene more walkable and bikeable.

Airport

- Pursue implementation of the ***2020 Airport Master Plan***.

Public Transit

- Continue to support the ***GoAbilene General Public Transportation*** service.

Sidewalks & Bicycling Facilities

- Pursue funding from KDOT's School Zone Program to install new and better **crosswalks** around the schools. Consider prioritizing sidewalk improvements in the vicinity of St. Andrew's Elementary School, particularly north of the building.
- Proactively identify existing sidewalks in need of repair or replacement, and prioritize locations for development of new sidewalks.
- Continue to support Abilene's *Sidewalk Connection & Replacement Program*.
- Require all new developments to include sidewalks and ADA curb ramps.
- Select a **bike rack design** for Abilene that provides two-point support, is lockable, is constructed of low maintenance materials, and meets ADA requirements. Ideally, it should also incorporate a customized Abilene logo.
- Continue to install secure **bicycle racks** at local destinations where they are needed, and prioritize a replacement schedule for older non-standard racks.
- **Create a plan to develop a network of bike paths, lanes and routes** in Abilene. Explore federal grants and other **funding** sources to help finance development of the bicycle network.

Utilities

A community's long-term success depends very much on the caliber of its infrastructure and utilities. Dependable and cost-effective utility services are essential, both to maintain a high quality of life for current residents, and to support future growth.

The City of Abilene provides **water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, and recycling** services as municipal utilities. Electricity, natural gas, trash collection, and telephone and internet services are available from corporate providers.

Abilene's utilities operations are and should remain self-supported, and funded by user fees. City staff administers billing services for municipal utilities.

POLICIES

Standards and procedures for installation and maintenance of utilities should be regularly reviewed, and updated as necessary, to reflect both changes in technology, and changes in public expectations for environmental responsiveness.

Policies on the placement of structures, fences and vegetation in **utility and drainage easements** should be periodically reviewed, and amended as necessary. Such policies should always be rigorously enforced.

Overhead Lines There is growing public awareness of the visual impact and sometimes noise made by utility equipment, and an increasing public expectation that electric, telephone and TV cable lines should be installed underground. Though underground utilities are more costly to install, they are far less prone to service outages during inclement weather, and can reduce long-term maintenance costs.

The City requires new development in Abilene to have electrical, telephone and cable TV utility lines buried underground. There are no plans to bury any existing overhead lines, nor is there any City incentive program to encourage property owners to have their supply lines buried.

Mapping Good maps of municipal utility systems are an essential tool for efficient coordination of maintenance activities, and an indispensable asset in long-term planning. Abilene's water and sewer lines are mapped by GIS. The water lines map was last updated in January of 2023, and the map of the sewage disposal system (which does not show gravity flow limits) was last updated in 2021.

The map of City's stormwater drainage system is hand-drawn, and was last updated in February of 2023. It should be incorporated into the GIS mapping system as soon as possible.

Agreement to Not Protest Annexation Cities often have a policy which requires that any landowner who wants to have property outside the city limits served by municipal utilities must first agree in writing that they will not protest if the City later chooses to annex the property. This is generally described as a *No Protest Agreement*.

The City of Abilene currently does not require such agreements. If requested, the City will typically provide municipal water and sewer services to properties outside the city limits, even though the landowners do not pay City taxes.

WATER SUPPLY & DISTRIBUTION

The City of Abilene supplies, treats and distributes water as a municipal service. The City system currently serves approximately 3,200 water customers, including those in Dickinson County Rural Water District #2.

Water is pumped from City-owned wells, to the Water Treatment Plant, and then pumped into water storage tanks, some of which are elevated water towers. The height of the towers provides the water pressure to distribute water via gravity flow through mains and supply lines throughout the City.

The City of Abilene has 11 **water wells**, located west and southwest of town. Four wells are in the river alluvium field, and seven are in the Sand Springs field.

The Abilene **Water Treatment Plant** is located at 2200 NW 8th Street. The 12,612 square foot reverse osmosis/pressure filter system facility was built in 1998. At maximum capacity the plant can treat 4.2 million gallons of water a day (MGD), though the daily average production over the course of a year is about 1.3 to 1.7 MGD.

The Water Treatment Plant is staffed by three operators, who also manage and maintain the groundwater wells, and perform all daily testing procedures to assure a safe water supply.

Treated water is stored in **two elevated storage tanks (water towers)** with a total capacity of 750,000 gallons, and in **two ground storage tanks** with a total capacity of 1,000,000 gallons.

A City-owned and maintained network of 450,000 linear feet of **distribution pipes** carries water, with the help of a booster station, from the water towers to individual homes and businesses throughout Abilene. Some of the community's water distribution pipes are fairly new, but others are many decades old. As pipes age, they may experience cracking and intrusion by tree roots. Dedicate an annual budget for ongoing maintenance of the water distribution system, and plan to replace a portion of the oldest pipes in the system each year—especially lead and copper service lines, and undersized main lines.

The water distribution system also supports all of the City's approximately 425 **fire hydrants**, which are flushed and tested annually, and maintained by the Public Works Department.

In the **Abilene Planning Area**, most rural residents north of I-70 are served by Dickinson County Rural Water District 1, and some south of town along the River may be served by Dickinson County Rural Water District 2. Alternatively, rural residents may maintain private water wells, which are regulated by the Dickinson County Environmental Services Department, and must also meet KDHE requirements.

Improvements planned for the Water Treatment plant include replacing the roof, and renovating the access drive. An elevated water tower needs both interior and exterior rehabilitation, and various mains, valves and hydrants need to be replaced. All 4-inch water mains need to be upgraded to 6-inch mains. The concrete driveway at the Water Treatment Plant Office also needs repair. An additional generator is needed, and will be installed shortly.

Water Rights Water production is constrained not only by the quantity of water produced by the City's wells, but also by legal requirements. Abilene owns water rights for about 700 million gallons per year (MGY), but because of complexities in state water law, can use only about 300 MGY of its water rights.

During recent hot dry summers, the City has heavily utilized its wells in order to meet demand. As a result, well depths are at their lowest recorded levels since 1974, and City officials have had to ask water customers to employ voluntary water conservation measures. The 2018 Hydrogeologic Evaluation and Groundwater Flow Model Report addresses concerns over growth potential, and outlines steps the City might take to acquire additional water rights.

WASTEWATER COLLECTION & TREATMENT

The City of Abilene provides wastewater collection and treatment as a municipal service.

A gravity flow sewer system conveys wastewater by gravity, through pipes installed with sufficient slope to keep the suspended solids moving through the system. Where local topography limits the option of gravity flow, **lift stations** must be employed to pump the sewage from the low point in the system up to another gravity line. Lift stations are expensive to construct and maintain, so when possible, development within the system's existing gravity flow limits is preferable to development which requires a new lift station.

The Abilene system has two lift stations, one at the intersection of NW 8th and Rogers, and one at Red Bud Lake which is owned by the Red Bud Lake Association but connected to the municipal sewage system.

As sewer lines wear out, cracks allow tree roots to grow into the pipes, causing blockages. Waste may leak out and contaminate groundwater. Stormwater infiltration into the system also occurs, which increases the volume of influent the Wastewater Treatment facility must treat, and therefore its operational costs.

Abilene's network of **sewage collection** pipes vary in age. During the 20-year span of this *Plan*, it is likely that the City will need to fund and develop an ongoing program to begin replacement of the oldest parts of the system, as segments reach the point where it is more cost-effective to replace them than to maintain them. Some sewer mains will need to be upsized.

Once, replacing a sewer line involved digging a trench along the entire length of the existing pipe, then replacing the deficient pipe piece by piece, or building a new sewer pipe parallel to the old one in order to maintain service. Modern **trenchless sewer rehabilitation** techniques use the existing pipe as a host for a new pipe or liner, and can correct deficiencies with much less disturbance and environmental disruption.



*Abilene's
Wastewater
Treatment plant –
aerial*

Abilene's **Wastewater Treatment Plant** is a Sequencing Batch Reactor plant located on a 9.5 acre site at 1014 2100 Avenue. The plant has a maximum design capacity of 1.5 million gallons a day, but typically treats 400,000 to 600,000 gallons a day. There are two to three full-time operators who monitor the operation of the plant on a daily basis. The facility has had no major modifications since its construction in April of 2008.

The Wastewater Treatment Plant's original Maintenance Shop (39x47 feet), was built in 1961, and an ultraviolet treatment building (39x47 feet) was added in 1997. The Wastewater Treatment Basins (127x179 feet), the Sludge Shed (50x93 feet), and the Generator Shed (13x30 feet), were all built in 2007.

The **Wastewater Treatment Plant Office** is located at 1014 2100 Avenue. The 8,644 square foot building was constructed in 2007, and has an office, a break room/kitchen, a locker room and a bathroom.

Currently, effluent from the Wastewater Treatment Plant discharges to the Smoky Hill River. Sewage must be treated to the point that effluent meets or exceeds strict permit requirements prescribed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Abilene's wastewater treatment system is regularly monitored for compliance.

The term "population equivalent" refers to the amount of wastewater treatment capacity needed to handle the waste typically produced by one person. This does not equate directly to a community's actual population, but includes load created by bussed-in students and workers who commute into the city, as well as wastewater generated by local industry.

Abilene's Wastewater Treatment Plant is designed to support a population equivalent of 10,000. The plant is able to handle load created by visitors and bussed in students, in addition to the city's own population, and has enough capacity to support likely population growth during the 20-year length of the Planning Period.

Rural Sewage Disposal Many properties in the Planning Area are beyond the reach of the municipal sanitary sewer system, and must deal with sewage disposal on their own sites, utilizing septic tanks, leach fields, or sewage lagoons. Private residential sewage disposal systems in the Planning Area outside the City are regulated by the Dickinson County Sanitation Department.

Even though it is a code violation for very good reasons, some people connect their personal downspouts or basement sump pumps to a sanitary sewer line. Consider establishing a public education program to make sure people understand that they should not do so, and why.

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

Solid waste disposal services within the City of Abilene are available from three waste disposal companies which are licensed by the City to operate in Abilene: Superior Sanitation, Waste Management, and Salina Waste Systems. Trash disposal services in the Planning Area are also available from private companies.

Trash collected in Abilene is taken to the Dickinson County Transfer Station, located on Jeep Road about a quarter mile south of the I-70 interchange, where it is consolidated and eventually transferred to Perry, Kansas to be landfilled in Hamm Quarry.

Hazardous waste disposal is available at the Dickinson County Transfer Station.

The City of Abilene owns and operates a multi-stream, free **recycling center** and a **composting** operation at 1210 NW 8th Street. Opened in 1994, the recycling facility was staffed by Public Works personnel for the first 15 years. Then the City partnered with OCCK, who now provide staff, while the City continues to own and maintain the building and machinery.

The recycling center is funded by a flat charge from all water customers, and by sales of baled and processed recycled materials. The center is used by 25 to 30 recyclers per day, and processes about 350 tons of recycled material annually.

The 10,044 square foot Recycling Center building has one office/ break room and a bathroom. The building was insulated with spray foam in October 2023, and provided with heating.

The City of Abilene's Zoning Code has a **no-burning ordinance** (Chapter IV, Article 7, 4.708c), which prohibits burning solid waste except in an approved incinerator with a variance and a written permit from the City.

ELECTRICITY & NATURAL GAS

Currently, in the City and in the Planning Area, **electrical power** is provided and the distribution system is maintained by the public utility company Evergy.

In the City and in the Planning Area, **natural gas** is provided and the distribution system is maintained by the public utility company Kansas Gas Service. Gas lines are currently in good condition.

All public utility companies are regulated by the Kansas Corporation Commission.

COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

A variety of publicly regulated private companies provide communications services in Abilene, including both hardwired and wireless phone service, cable TV service, and internet service options of up to 1000 megabits per second. Such companies normally maintain continuing short and long-range facility planning programs.

UTILITIES GOALS

Policies

- Pursue opportunities to transition City facilities to use of **sustainable energy**.
- Regularly review and update standards and procedures for installation and maintenance of utilities, to reflect changes in technology and in environmental expectations.
- Regularly review and rigorously enforce policies on the placement of structures, fences and vegetation in **utility and drainage easements**.
- Establish a policy requiring landowners of properties outside the city limits to sign a **No Protest Agreement** in order to connect to Abilene's municipal utilities.
- Develop a long-term plan to put existing **overhead utility lines** in Abilene underground, including an incentive program to encourage property owners to have their supply lines buried.

Mapping

- Transfer the hand-drawn map of Abilene's stormwater drainage system to GIS.
- Add gravity flow limits to the GIS map of Abilene's sewage disposal system.

Water

- Establish a budget line item to **replace a percentage of outworn water distribution lines each year**, especially lead and copper service lines, and undersized main lines.
- Add a **generator** at the Water Treatment Plant.
- Replace the **roof** of the Water Treatment Plant building.
- Repair the concrete **access drive** at the Water Treatment Plant.
- Rehabilitate the elevated **water tower**, inside and out.
- Replace all 4-inch water mains with 6-inch mains.
- Replace mains, valves and hydrants as needed.

Wastewater

- Fund and develop an ongoing program to begin replacement or relining of the oldest parts of the sewage collection system.
- Establish a public education program to make sure people understand that they should not connect downspouts or basement sump pumps to a sanitary sewer line.
- Establish a long-term **Wastewater Treatment Plant Maintenance Plan**, to schedule and plan for major WWTP equipment repairs and replacements that will be needed during the course of the Planning Period.

Stormwater Management

When precipitation occurs too rapidly to be absorbed by plants and soil, water runs off the surface of the land and flows down to streams, rivers, or lakes. While this is a natural process, development creates large expanses of impervious surfaces (roofs, streets, parking lots, and so on) which may generate far more runoff than natural systems can handle.

Excess runoff can cause localized flooding. It can collect trash and other pollutants and transport them into natural waterways. It can erode river banks and scour stream beds, depositing so much sediment in ponds and lakes that they have to be dredged.

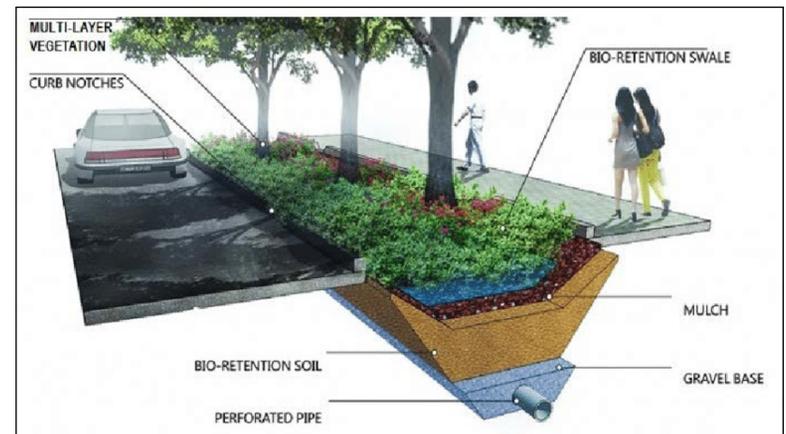
Stormwater management systems prevent excess runoff from accumulating in low areas to the point where it causes localized flooding, and potential water damage to homes, roads, and other structures. Areas prone to such flooding are constrained in their development potential, create traffic safety problems, and may contribute to blighted conditions.

In urban areas, runoff is typically guided by streetside curbs and gutters into underground storm sewers, while in rural areas runoff is usually transported by open roadside drainage ditches.

Changing Strategies Traditional stormwater management strategies simply moved the problem downstream, diverting stormwater away from developed areas, and channeling it as quickly as possible into a natural drainage system such as a stream or river.

Stormwater management strategies have evolved to recognize the advantages of reducing runoff in the first place by reducing impervious surfaces, and increasing opportunities for precipitation to be absorbed as close to the point where it falls as possible.

Utilizing **green infrastructure** techniques—from residential raingardens to urban bioswales to permeable parking lots—can often help **manage stormwater more effectively and less expensively than traditional methods.**



More information on green infrastructure is available from the [Environmental Protection Agency](https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure).

Stormwater Management in Abilene

Much of Abilene lies within floodplains of one category or another. Even though the city has a robust storm sewer system, there are places where localized flooding occurs during heavy rainfalls, especially in the downtown area. A drainage study done in Abilene in 2010 identified 25 different areas of concern.

Southeast Drainage One of the major drainage problems is in the southeast part of the city, where about 600 acres are drained by way of a single undersized, 7,800-foot-long, 80-year-old concrete pipe which drains runoff water to the River. This pipe often becomes overloaded during rainfalls, and when it backs up, numerous street intersections have significant standing water for up to 45 minutes.

The Abilene Southeast Drainage Preliminary Study done in 2020 examined alternatives and preliminary costs for five different scenarios for solving the problem, all of which involved removing the existing undersized drainage pipe and replacing it with either a larger pipe or an open channel. Estimated project costs ranged from \$18.4 million to \$29.3 million. A followup Study is pending.

Buckeye Avenue Drainage Construction to improve Buckeye Avenue's storm drainage infrastructure, between SW 6th Street and the Union Pacific tracks, began in late 2023. The project was funded through the Kansas Department of Transportation's City Connection Link Improvement Program (CCLIP)

There is strong community support in Abilene for maintaining a good stormwater management system. On the **Community Questionnaire**, residents were asked whether or not they support the fee paid by property owners to the City, in order to pay for improvements to stormwater drainage in Abilene; 63% said they did, 23% said they did not know, and **only 14% said they did not support the fee.**

The City of Abilene has not yet implemented zero runoff requirements in its Subdivision Regulations, or used green infrastructure concepts for stormwater management.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT GOALS

- Approve a City ordinance to **require a drainage study in order to get a building permit**, for any construction project other than a single-family residence.
- Consider implementing a **zero runoff policy** in Abilene's Subdivision Regulations, requiring new developments to avoid adding runoff to any neighboring properties.
- Consider developing an **incentive program** that leverages the stormwater drainage fund to provide matching dollars to projects that improve stormwater management in a larger area.
- Whenever substantial construction work is done on an Abilene street, consider incorporating **green infrastructure** stormwater management strategies into the street design, particularly downtown.
- Analyze the cost-effectiveness of a green infrastructure solution to the **problem drainage area in the southeast** part of the city, as opposed to the cost of replacing the entire existing undersized concrete drainage pipe.

CHAPTER 5. Facilities & Services

A community's quality of life depends very much on the caliber of its public services and facilities. Today, public expectations for municipal services extend beyond basic fire and police protection, and include a high demand for community facilities related to education, health, and leisure time activities.

Abilene's existing public facilities are generally in good condition. Most essential public services in the community are supported by public funds, and maintained under public control.

It is vitally important to provide adequate staff and budgetary support for *maintenance* of public facilities. **A good maintenance plan is the most cost-effective investment a City can make in preserving the quality of its community facilities.**

When planning for any future community facilities, it is important to determine their optimum location, to maximize efficiency and economy in serving the public. **Identify and acquire suitable sites for community facilities in advance of need.** Otherwise, ideal sites may be preempted for other purposes. The need for land acquisitions for public facilities should be a consideration in the review of subdivision plats and rezoning applications.

City Facilities & Services

This section describes some of the public facilities which are owned and directly operated by the City of Abilene. It does not include facilities which have already been described in the previous chapter on Transportation & Utilities, or park facilities, which are described in detail in the *Abilene Park System Master Plan 2024-2045*.

Detailed information on City-owned vehicles and other costly equipment are not included in this chapter, because they are tracked in the ***Abilene Asset Inventory List***, which is maintained by City staff. The *List* keeps track of the date of purchase for every item, its expected life span, mileage, and history of routine maintenance and repair costs. Regularly updated ratings for each item, on a scale of 1 to 5, estimate its criticality and its current condition. The *List* includes an estimated replacement cost for each item, and an estimate of the year it will need to be replaced.

An overview of the following City facilities is provided in this section:

- City Hall / City Auditorium / Police Department / Fire Department / Library
- Public Works buildings
- Civic Center
- Senior Center

Municipal facilities are evaluated on their ability to continue to serve through the Planning Period to 2045.

Abilene's City Hall, Police Department, Fire Department, Library and City Auditorium are all in different portions of one interconnected building, which takes up an entire city block.



City Hall

Abilene City Hall is located at 419 North Broadway, on the southeast corner of 5th and Broadway. It and the City Auditorium were constructed as one three story brick building in 1922, on a 1.14 acre lot. Originally, the building was separate from the Carnegie Library, which was on the south end of the same lot.



Abilene City Hall—west facade

City Hall currently has 11 offices, 2 break rooms, 5 bathrooms, and a conference room. On street parking, including ADA spaces, are available on adjacent streets.

Planned improvements for City Hall include a renovation of the first floor to combine the old Police Department officer room and investigations room into a single conference room, and to turn the old conference room into office space for City Hall administrative staff. Also, the sewer system is currently inside the building, and needs to be relocated to the outside.

City Hall has been well maintained and is in reasonably good condition. The building's historic nature is appreciated, but as staff continues to expand over the course of the Planning Period, additional space may be needed.

City Auditorium



Abilene City Auditorium— east and north facades

The Auditorium and City Hall building was constructed in 1922, in late Classical Revival style. The building is not listed on the National Historic Register, but it is listed on the Kansas State Register, and is considered a contributing property to the 2009 listing of the Abilene Downtown Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places.

The City Auditorium/Gymnasium has been closed to the public since May of 2005, shortly before the Abilene Community Center opened. Its only current use is for storage, and as a place to put gym equipment used by Police and Fire Department staff.

The building appears to be structurally sound, but it has numerous problems, including insufficient restrooms, a gym floor that needs to be replaced, an elevator that is too small, lack of ADA access, and large quantities of asbestos that need to be removed before it can be renovated for any future public use.

Though it is clear that the Auditorium will require extensive and expensive renovation, the space has great potential—which is currently being wasted. The first step in restoring this community asset to a useful life is to develop a plan for its future. The Downtown Historic District listing may make it eligible to apply for a grant to help fund historic repurposing.

Police Department

The Abilene Police Department is now headquartered at 419 North Broadway, on the second floor above City Hall. Prior to a 2022 renovation, their offices had been located on what was once the Auditorium stage.

The Police Department currently has a Chief's office, an Assistant Chief's office, a Sergeant's office, an Investigator's office, an interview room, an Officer Work Area, an Administrative Work Area, a break room/training room with a kitchenette, a restroom (on the 2nd floor), and a storage space for equipment and evidence that is in the basement. On street parking, including ADA spaces, is available on adjacent streets.

There is also a **Police Shop** located at 300 S. Cherry Street, at the old city landfill. Built in 2018, the Shop is 30x26 feet, and has no heat or air conditioning.

The City does not have its own detention facility, so prisoners are held in the Dickinson County Jail.

Staff The Abilene Police Department currently has 14 full time officers and one part time officer. Police protection services are provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week. One additional officer was added in the City's 2024 budget cycle.

Vehicles As of February 2023, the City's Police Department had ten Ford Explorer SUVs with model years ranging from 2014 to 2022, a 2022 Ram 1500 pickup truck, and a 2015 Ford F-250 pickup truck. Vehicles are typically replaced yearly on a rotating basis.

Fire Department

The Abilene Fire Station is located at 419 N. Broadway, in a 1977 brick addition that connected the original government building to the Carnegie Library, providing new facilities for the Police and Fire Departments, as well as more space for the Library.

The Fire Station has two pull-through bays for its vehicles, as well as 4 offices, a meeting room, a kitchen, five bedrooms, a shower, 3 bathrooms, a gear room, and 2 storage rooms.



Abilene Fire Department—west facade

The **Abilene Fire Department** provides 24/7 fire protection coverage inside the city of Abilene and also responds to structure fires in Grant Township—a 36-square mile area. They also respond to traffic accidents throughout Dickinson County. They respond to calls for medical aid in the City of Abilene to assist Dickinson County EMS, and will also respond outside of the city when requested by EMS or another Fire Department.

In 2022, the Department responded to 1,263 incidents, including fires, emergency medical calls, traffic accidents, rescues and other calls for service.

The Abilene Fire Department utilizes the **Kansas NG911** (Next Generation) system for emergency calls, which has automatic software updates every six months.

ISO RATINGS

Fire department services nationwide are rated by the **National Insurance Services Office (ISO)**. Ratings, which cover a wide variety of factors, are made on a scale of 1 to 10, with one being the highest rating. A City's ISO rating may impact fire insurance rates for local residents.

The latest ISO inspection for the Abilene Fire Department, in 2021, rated fire protection services in the City at 3. The ISO inspection report called for more personnel, and improvements to the water system. Since then, personnel have been added, and Public Works is looping water mains to improve water flow and pressure.

Vehicles Engines, ladder trucks and Rescue vehicles are generally replaced after 20 years of service. Squad/brush trucks are replaced after 15 years service. In 2023, the City signed a lease purchase agreement and ordered a replacement for Engine 31.

Year	Description	Tank Capacity (in gallons)	Pump Capacity (in GPM)
2019	Engine 34	750	1500
2003	Engine 31	750	1250
2013	Quint / Ladder	300	1250
2009	Squad/Brush	300	75
2006	Rescue	225	—
2022	Command Pickup	—	—
2012	Support SUV	—	—

Staff The Department has 10 full-time staff, including the Chief and an Assistant Chief, as well as 11 volunteer firefighters. Additional full-time staff will be needed over the course of the Planning Period, so additional office space will be necessary.

The existing Fire Station is not big enough to accommodate modern firefighting vehicles. The Shop area is too small, and its concrete floor is settling and becoming very uneven.

Sometime during the Planning Period, a **new larger Fire Station** will need to be constructed. Relocating the Fire Department to a different location will free up needed space for expanding City Hall and the Police Department.

Library

Located at 209 NW 4th Street, the Abilene Public Library was originally funded by a Carnegie grant, and constructed in 1908. Major additions in 1934 were built with funding from the Public Works Administration. A 1977 addition connected the Library to the government building, providing more space for the Library as well as new facilities for the Police and Fire Departments. Then in 2010, a renovation was completed to make the Library handicapped accessible and to add yet more needed space.

The Abilene Public Library has two library halls, a Teen and Technology Center, a bookstall room for the Friends of the Library, five offices, the Jordan Meeting room, the Commission Meeting room, the Mallot Room, three break rooms, a kitchen, six bathrooms, and two storage closets.

The Library's heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system equipment will need to be replaced at some point during the Planning Period.

The Library has 8,612 registered borrowers, and is open 50 hours per week, Monday through Saturday. The Library's current collection includes 53,004 books, 15 periodical titles, 1,511 audio books, and 4,336 DVDs.



Abilene Public Library— south facade

The Abilene Public Library service area includes all of Dickinson County. In addition to lending its own books and DVDs, the Library provides interlibrary loans, access to computers and Wifi hotspots, story times, printing, faxing, notary service, gaming, proctoring, tech help, speakers, a puzzle exchange, and reading programs for all ages.

The Abilene Public Library is managed by a Board of Trustees, and financed by City of Abilene property taxes.

NORTH CENTRAL KANSAS LIBRARY SYSTEM

The Abilene Public Library is a member of the **North Central Kansas Library System (NCKLS)**, which is a regional system of cooperating libraries from twelve counties, based in Manhattan. An elected Executive Committee establishes policy and provides financial oversight of the NCKLS.

Membership in the NCKLS is voluntary, and each member library retains its local self-government and independence. Among other services, NCKLS provides a bookmobile service, workshops, and technology and grantsmanship training for Library staff. More information is available on the [NCKLS](#) website.

Public Works Buildings

The Abilene Public Works Department maintains the City's water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater management systems, City streets, and parks and other City-owned property.

The main Public Works Office/Maintenance Building is located at 601 NW 2nd Street. The 9,900 square foot, single story metal building was constructed in 1980. It has seven offices, a kitchen/breakroom, a locker room with shower, and three bathrooms.



Public Works compound – aerial

The main Public Works building is in the center of a compound with a number of other buildings and storage sheds, and two main yards. The buildings and yards provide office space for Public Works staff, as well as storage space for vehicles, equipment, tools and supplies.

Public Works vehicles continue to get larger over time, and existing garage buildings are undersized to meet current needs.

The Public Works building, the Chemical Shop & Sign Shop, and the Map Room have heating and air conditioning; other structures in the compound do not.

- The Chemical Shop & Sign Shop is a 1,984 square foot building constructed in 1963. It has two offices and a bathroom.
- The Map Room building is a 1,584 square foot building originally constructed in 1900. It has two offices and two bathrooms.
- The Truck Shop/Weld Shop is a 4,984 square foot building constructed in 1975.
- The City Dump Salt Shed is a 1,800 square foot building constructed in 1970.
- The City Dump Pole Shed is a 1,920 square foot building constructed in 2016.
- A 775 square foot Pole Shed was constructed in 2010.
- A 780 square foot Pole Shed was constructed in 1985.
- A 1,000 square foot Storage Building was constructed in 1970.

The Public Works Department also utilizes the old city landfill site at 300 S. Cherry Street, to store vehicles, as well as bulk materials and supplies for future use.

While some of the buildings are structurally sound, others are reaching the end of their useful life spans. For some of the storage buildings in particular, it would be more cost-effective to simply replace them, than to attempt to expand them to meet the Department's growing storage needs.

Civic Center

The Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) is a department of the City of Abilene, serving as the official marketing arm of the City, and generating economic growth through tourism. CVB staff provides services to tourists and groups visiting in Abilene, and are also responsible for the management of the Civic Center.



Abilene Convention & Visitors Center

The former Union Pacific Depot, located at 201 NW 2nd Street, is now the Civic Center. Originally constructed in 1928, the 6,000-square-foot Depot has been restored for reuse. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Civic Center is home to the state-designated Abilene Visitor Information Center, administrative offices for the Abilene CVB, administrative offices for the Community Foundation of Dickinson County, and a meeting room. The building also has a kitchen and four sets of restrooms. There are large paved parking lots on either side of the building.

Senior Center

The Abilene Senior Center is located at 100 North Elm Street, on the east bank of Mud Creek. Built in 1988, it is a 6,000 square foot single-story building with an office, a large activities room, a dining room, a lounge area, a kitchen, two restrooms, and a storage area. The 0.7 acre lot has a large paved parking lot with 29 regular spaces and 9 ADA spaces.



Abilene Senior Center

Senior center programs include lunch service, exercise, cards, bingo, pool, corn hole, dominoes, puzzles, and health programs. The Senior Center coordinates with the nonprofit North Central Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging to provide the senior meals program and meals delivery.

The Senior Center can be rented by members of the public.

FACILITIES GOALS

City Hall / City Auditorium / Police Department / Fire Department / Library

- Replace building's HVAC system.
- Repoint building's exterior bricks.
- Replace roof.
- Redesign and replace drainage system, including gutters and downspouts.
- **City Hall:** Complete the planned first floor renovation.
- **City Hall:** Relocate the sewer system from inside the building to the outside.
- **City Auditorium:** Develop a plan for the Auditorium's future use and renovation. Consider pursuing a grant for repurposing historic buildings.
- **New Fire Station:** Develop a plan for a new larger Fire Station, and determine an appropriate site. Purchase land, if necessary. Arrange funding, and construct a new Fire Station.
- Renovate the vacated Fire Department space to accommodate expansion of City Hall and the Police Department.
- **Library:** Repair and refinish flooring.
- **Library:** Renovate elevator.
- **Library:** HVAC system equipment will reach the end of its life cycle and need to be replaced at some point during the Planning Period.

Public Works

- Expand the existing Truck Shop/Weld shop, which is too small.

Civic Center

- Rebuild those **window and door frames** that are damaged from wood rot.
- **Repoint** and reseal the building's exterior bricks.
- **Restore paver bricks** around the buildings and in the parking lots and sidewalks to a safe and level surface.

Senior Center

- Build an **addition to expand the kitchen** and provide additional storage. Replace the existing coolers with a commercial **refrigerator**, and replace the existing deep freezers with a **walk-in freezer**.
- Replace and upgrade the building's **windows**.
- Consider organizing a **home maintenance help program**.
- Consider acquiring a **van** to safely transport seniors for off-campus social & educational activities. A **garage** would provide secure storage for the van.

Community Partners

This section provides an overview of some of the community facilities which provide important public services, but which are not directly owned and operated by the City of Abilene.

With the exception of St. Andrew's Elementary School, these facilities are operated by governmental entities other than the City of Abilene, but are still supported by local property taxes.

- **Emergency Medical Services** are provided by Dickinson County.
- Abilene's **schools** are a vitally important part of the community's public services. Public schools are owned and operated by the Abilene Unified School District, **USD 435**. **St. Andrew's Elementary School** is a private Catholic school.
- **Abilene Recreation Commission**

There are two other parochial schools in Abilene besides St. Andrew's, but neither of them has a dedicated school building, and so they are not discussed in detail in this section.

- **Foundation Christian Academy** is a private Christian school for kindergarten through 3rd grade students. Classes are held in Trinity Lutheran Church at 320 North Cedar Street. It is non-denominational, managed by a Board composed of representatives from various churches in Abilene.
- **Abilene Baptist Academy** is a private Christian school for 1st through 3rd grade students. Classes are held in Abilene Bible Baptist Church at 409 North Van Buren Street.

Emergency Medical Services

Dickinson County Emergency Medical Service (EMS) provides emergency Advanced Life Support ambulance service to residents of Abilene and the rest of Dickinson County. EMS is operated by the County, and funded by County property taxes.

There are two stations, one in Herington and one in Abilene. They respond to approximately 1,700 calls per year, serving about 20,000 people in an 852-square-mile coverage area.

The Abilene EMS station is located at 1001 North Brady Street. Built in 2009, it is a 5,900 square foot, two-story, three-bay building on a one acre lot. It has four offices, a meeting room, a training room, a kitchen, two showers, and two storage rooms. There is ample paved parking for staff.



Dickinson County EMS

Abilene EMS is staffed with 12 Paramedics, 3 Advanced Emergency Medical Technicians, and 5 Emergency Medical Technicians. In 2022, the Abilene Station had 986 runs in Abilene, and 1,427 runs outside the city. As the County's population continues to grow over the course of the Planning Period, EMS may need to add staff.

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045



Kennedy Elementary School



Abilene Middle School



McKinley Elementary School



Abilene High School



Eisenhower Elementary School



USD 435 Administrative Headquarters

ST. ANDREW'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

St. Andrew's Elementary School in Abilene is a Catholic school located at 301 South Buckeye. The 270 x 60 foot, single story building was constructed in 1959 on a 380 x 440 foot lot. The building has eight classrooms, a gym, and a playground. The lot has ample parking and a drop off zone.



St. Andrew's Elementary School in Abilene

St. Andrew's Elementary School has a design capacity of 150 students, and as of 2023 had 120 full-time-equivalent students, in preschool through 5th grade. A slight majority (59%) of its students live in Abilene.

Recent enrollment trends have varied from steady to increasing. Groundbreaking on a renovation and addition to the south end of the building took place in May of 2023.

The sidewalks in the vicinity of the school are not adequate, especially on the north side of the building. Students and staff have to walk in the streets when they take walking field trips.

Abilene Recreation Commission

Kansas state statutes ([K.S.A.12-1922 et. seq.](#)) allow communities to choose to support recreational programs through a mill levy based on School District boundaries, rather than municipal boundaries, by establishing a Recreation Commission.

This system makes particular sense for small cities with large school systems, where many recreational activities take place at school facilities. A Recreation Commission allows the population of an entire School District to support recreational facilities and programs—which, after all, benefit the citizens of the entire School District.

Mill levies for Recreation Commission activities are subject to voter approval by residents of the School District. The tax dedicated to the Recreation Commission is typically collected by the County Clerk, distributed to the School District, and then passed on to the Recreation Commission. State statutes require that funds dedicated to Recreation Commissions may not in any way reduce the dollars provided to the School District for educational purposes.

Recreation Commissions can and often do generate additional funding through user fees, rentals, investments, gifts, or grants.

The [Abilene Recreation Commission](#) was established in September 1972. The Board governing the Abilene Recreation Commission has two members appointed by the City of Abilene, two members appointed by the School District, and one appointed as a member at large by the four appointees.

Public Perceptions of Community Facilities

The adjacent table shows results from the Community Questionnaire, when people were asked how they would rate the listed community facilities, programs, and services in the Abilene area. The results are arranged in order of the percentage of responses that were marked "Very Good", followed by the percentage marked "Adequate".

The highest scores went to Fire, Police and Ambulance services, the Library and the Schools. The Community Center was also highly appreciated.

Five different options addressed housing issues, from various perspective. Shown in maroon text, all five are clustered near the bottom of the ratings.

How would you rate the following community facilities, programs, and services in the Abilene area?								
Facility / Service	Very Good		Adequate		Inadequate		Don't know	
Fire Protection	68	61%	35	32%	1	1%	7	6%
Library	66	61%	37	34%	0	0%	6	6%
Police Protection	63	57%	39	35%	4	4%	5	5%
Ambulance Service	60	54%	38	34%	1	1%	12	11%
Abilene Schools Facilities	59	54%	37	34%	0	0%	14	13%
Community Center	47	43%	46	42%	4	4%	13	12%
Municipal Pool	41	37%	48	44%	6	5%	15	14%
Water Supply System	37	34%	53	49%	1	1%	18	17%
Recreation Programs	37	34%	50	45%	8	7%	15	14%
Sewage Disposal System	35	32%	48	44%	1	1%	25	23%
Health Services	34	31%	50	46%	21	19%	4	4%
Park & Recreation Areas	33	30%	64	58%	9	8%	4	4%
Electrical Service	32	29%	54	50%	1	1%	22	20%
Trash Disposal	25	23%	64	58%	8	7%	13	12%
Traffic Signs & Signals	22	20%	82	75%	5	5%	0	0%
Street Maintenance & Cleaning	18	17%	64	59%	26	24%	1	1%
Job Opportunities	17	15%	53	48%	25	23%	16	14%
City Hall	16	15%	61	56%	11	10%	21	19%
Stormwater Drainage System	16	15%	41	38%	32	29%	20	18%
Street Lighting	13	12%	78	72%	18	17%	0	0%
Economic Development & Promotion	9	8%	53	48%	19	17%	30	27%
Housing for Elderly & Handicapped	9	8%	29	26%	34	31%	39	35%
Industrial Development Sites	7	6%	41	37%	22	20%	41	37%
Housing Availability	7	6%	32	29%	50	46%	20	18%
Street Paving	6	5%	56	50%	47	42%	2	2%
Sidewalks	6	5%	56	50%	48	43%	1	1%
Sufficient Variety of Housing Types	4	4%	34	31%	51	46%	21	19%
Housing Quality	3	3%	56	51%	37	34%	14	13%
Sufficient Quality Rental Housing	2	2%	14	13%	58	52%	37	33%
Totals	792	25%	1,413	44%	548	17%	436	14%

CHAPTER 6. Land Use Plan

Analysis of existing land use patterns is a basic component of comprehensive planning, affecting planning decisions regarding everything from new community facilities to transportation system improvements. It is the essential first step in order to determine desired *future* land use patterns, a determination which in turn impacts municipal policies and programs.

The use of any given parcel of land may change over time, but it is typically a slow process. Therefore, existing land use patterns are generally accepted as the basis for a realistic projection of future land use patterns.

A Land Use Plan describes existing patterns and future goals for various categories of land use—such as residential, commercial, and industrial. Types and amounts of future land use categories should be designed to accommodate the estimated future population of the City by the end of the Planning Period.

A Land Use Plan must coordinate *future* land uses with the patterns of *existing* land use, **minimize incompatible adjacent land uses**, strive for **harmony** between land uses and existing physical conditions such as floodplains, and maintain an appropriate **balance** among the various types of land uses within a community.

This Land Use Plan addresses the distribution and interrelationships of existing land uses in the City of Abilene and its surrounding Planning Area. It also evaluates the potential for future development in the area, and will help to guide that development as it occurs.

MAPS

Included within this chapter are diagrammatic maps showing existing land use patterns for both the City and the Planning Area, as well as maps showing proposed future land use patterns and growth areas for the City.

Although zoning and land use are interrelated, an Existing Land Use Map is **not** a Zoning Map. An **Existing Land Use Map** is a snapshot of what types of use a parcel or part of a parcel of land was being used for, at the time the map was created—irrespective of that parcel's zoning.

An analysis of how actual land uses intersect with existing zoning districts can help to inform any potential adjustments that may be needed to zoning district boundaries on the City's Official Zoning Map. In certain cases, it may be appropriate to revise a zoning district classification in order to better reflect the reality of an existing land use.

A **Future Land Use Map** is a projection of proposed future land use patterns. A Future Land Use Map in a legally adopted and valid Comprehensive Plan provides a **legal foundation** for both the judicial review of zoning cases, and for the adoption of Subdivision Regulations.

Existing Land Use

Existing land use in the Abilene Planning Area was evaluated in the summer of 2023. Land uses were determined based on a review of the use designations available from Appraiser's information on the [Dickinson County GIS Parcel Search](#) website, coordinated with an examination of aerial photos and street views. City leaders and municipal staff then reviewed the map for accuracy.

Each parcel of land was classified by its current type of use, according to the following land use definitions:

- **Agricultural & Vacant** – Land outside the city limits which is used for agricultural purposes, such as growing crops or raising livestock, or retained as natural open space. Also, land within the City limits which is not built upon, such as vacant lots, natural open space, and urban land used for agricultural purposes.
- **Single-family Residential** – Land devoted to residences occupied by one household.
- **Multifamily Residential** – Land devoted to multiple occupancy dwellings containing two or more individual residential units, such as duplexes or apartment buildings. Also includes single parcels that have more than one dwelling unit.
- **Public and Semi-public** – Land devoted to state, county, city, or school district-owned buildings, parks, schools and other governmental activities, including uses regulated by government, such as utilities, cemeteries and hospitals. Also includes institutional uses of land for public purposes, such as churches, social or service clubs, lodge halls, and nonprofit organizations, including land owned by homeowners associations.

- **Commercial** – Land and buildings where merchandising, service-oriented, or professional activities are conducted.
- **Industrial** – Land and buildings used for manufacturing or heavy construction purposes, or their associated storage. Includes grain elevators and salvage yards.
- **Transportation** – Public land used for transportation right-of-way or other transportation related purposes. Includes streets, alleys, highways and railroads; does not include driveways, garages or parking lots.

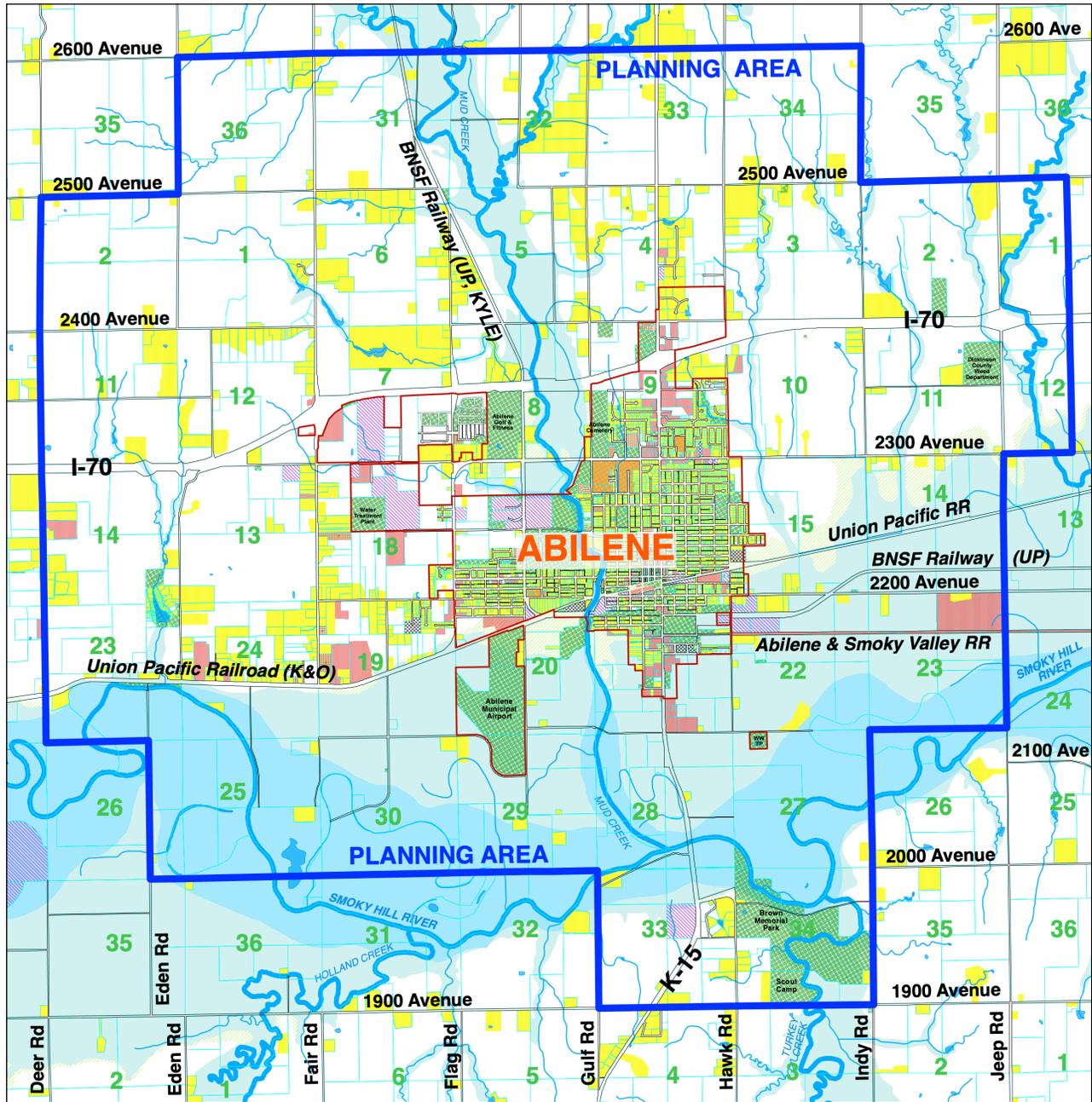
MIXED USE

"Mixed use" describes land with multiple uses on a single parcel, typically residential use along with another use such as office, retail, public, or entertainment. It often occurs in downtown areas where multi-story buildings allow residential uses on upper floors, and commercial uses on the street level.

Though not listed or mapped as a separate category for this analysis, mixed land use was historically common, and is now being recognized again as advantageous. During the course of this Planning Period, mixed land use in Abilene should be expected and encouraged to grow, especially downtown. Cultural changes across the nation mean more and more people want to live and work in walkable neighborhoods, and mixed land uses are a reliable way to enhance walkability.

Maps on the following pages show patterns of existing land use for the Abilene Planning Area, for the main developed area of Abilene, and for the downtown area.

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045



Flood Hazard Areas

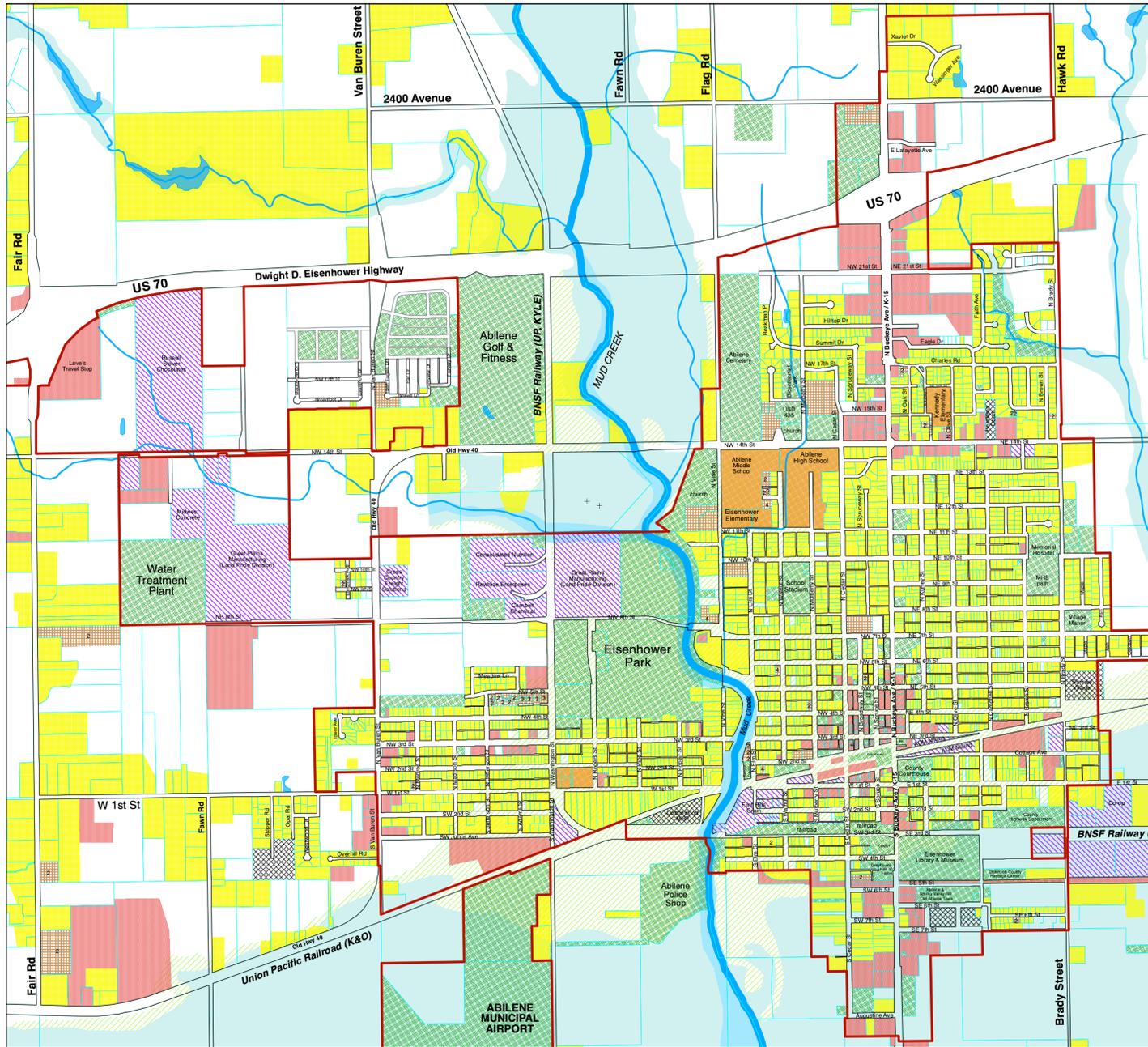
- Floodway
- 1% Annual Chance Flood (100 Year Flood)
- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood (500 Year Flood)

Existing Land Use

- Agricultural & Vacant
- Single-family Residential
- Multifamily Residential
- Manufactured Home Park
- Public & Semi-public
- Commercial
- Industrial

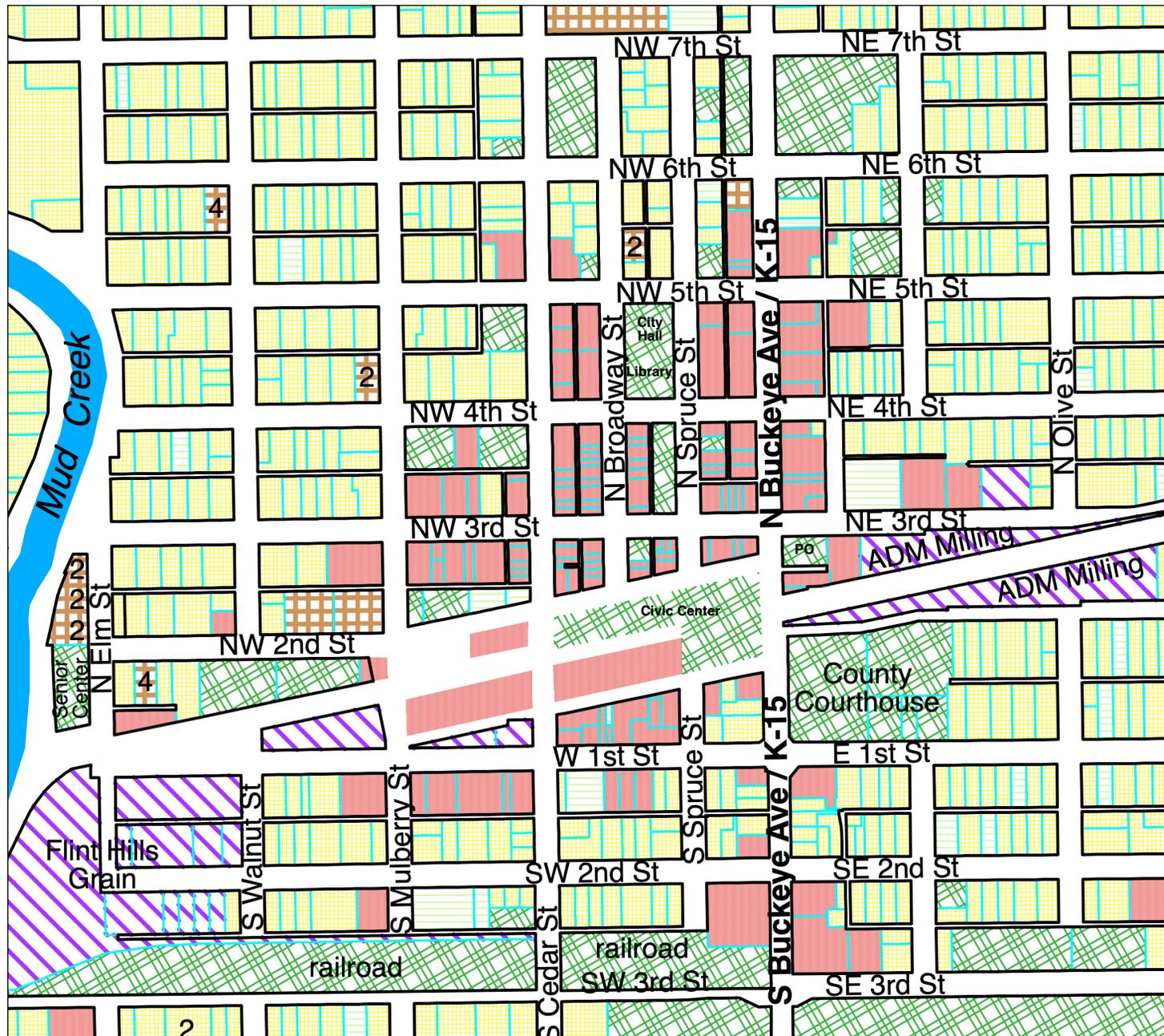
Map: Existing Land Use – Abilene Planning Area

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045



Map:
Existing Land Use –
Abilene Urban Area

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045



The numbers shown on multifamily parcels indicate the number of dwelling units per parcel.

For clarity, floodplains are not shown on this diagram.

With the exception of the upper right corner of the area shown, downtown Abilene is in the 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Zone (500 Year Floodplain).

Map:
Existing Land Use –
Abilene
Downtown Area

GENERAL CITY PATTERN – EXISTING

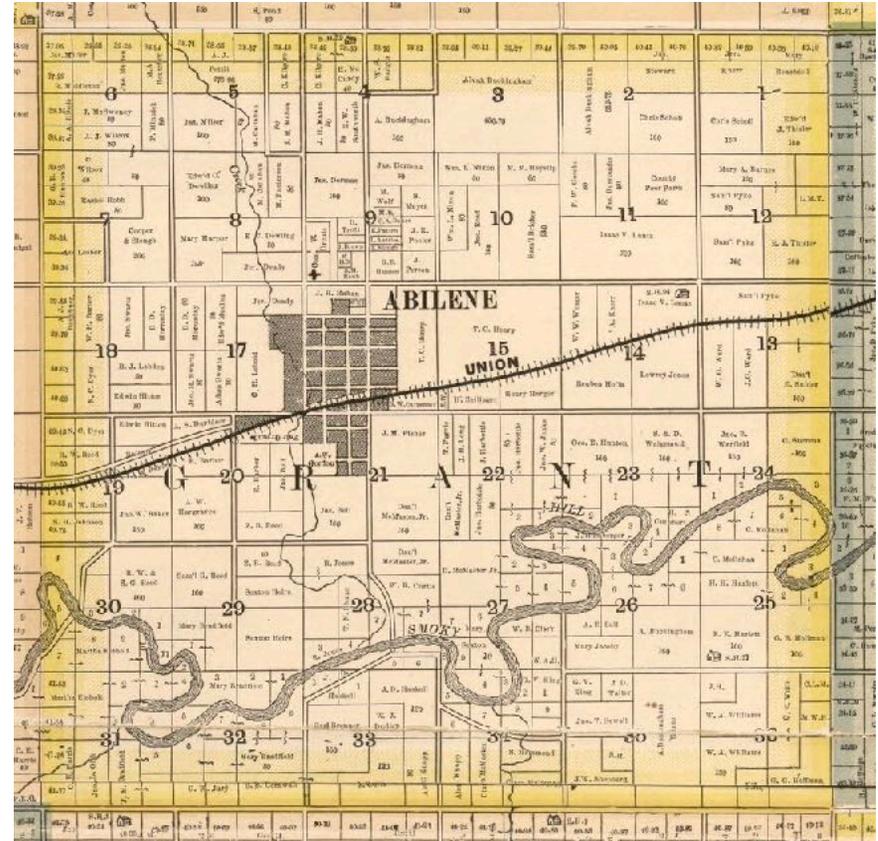
The City of Abilene incorporates 3,041.1 acres, or 4.75 square miles. Land use patterns within the city limits are generally cohesive. The following table shows the percentages of various land use categories in the city.

Existing Land Use in the City of Abilene			
Land Use	Total acres	% of developed area	% of total area
Residential (total)	798.3	32.6%	26.3%
Single-family	743.8	30.4%	24.5%
Multifamily	37.3	1.5%	1.2%
Manufactured Home Park	17.2	0.7%	0.6%
Public & Semi-public	680.6	27.8%	22.4%
Commercial	202.5	8.3%	6.7%
Industrial	213.8	8.7%	7.0%
Transportation ROW	554.0	22.6%	18.2%
Total Developed Area	2,449.2	100.0%	80.5%
+ Agricultural & Vacant	592.0		19.5%
= Total Area	3,041.1	—	100.0%

Developed land represents 80.5% of all the land in the city, and totals about 2,449 acres. The remaining 19.5% of the land is categorized as undeveloped, and is vacant or in use for agricultural purposes. Some of the undeveloped land is in residential-scale platted lots, but most is in large parcels near the city's perimeter, particularly in the western and northern portions of the city.

The city limits currently extend from about a quarter mile north of 2400 Avenue in the north, to 2100 Avenue in the south (at the south end of the Airport), and from about a quarter mile east of Brady Street on the east to a little past Fair Road on the west.

Abilene originally developed mostly north and west of the intersection of the Union Pacific railroad tracks and Buckeye Avenue. The majority of downtown is still there today, forming a compact and contiguous urban core.



Extent of development in Abilene in 1885

Since the 1800s, residential development generally avoided the River's floodplains to the south, and spread predominantly north from the tracks. By the early 1900s, the city was also beginning to extend west of Mud Creek. Development has recently begun to expand north of I-70 as well.

Existing land use patterns within the city limits are generally cohesive.

- Established **residential** neighborhoods typically contain only a few scattered vacant lots.
- Most **public** land use is devoted to parks, schools, the Cemetery and the Airport, as well as a variety of smaller public facilities such as the City Hall complex, the Hospital and various visitor attractions.
- **Commercial** uses are largely downtown, or along Buckeye at either the north end or the south end of town, or along the railroad tracks. There are some scattered commercial parcels in the west side of town, typically buffering residential land uses from industrial uses.
- **Industrial** land uses are located either along the railroad tracks, or in the west part of town north of 8th Street and south of I-70.

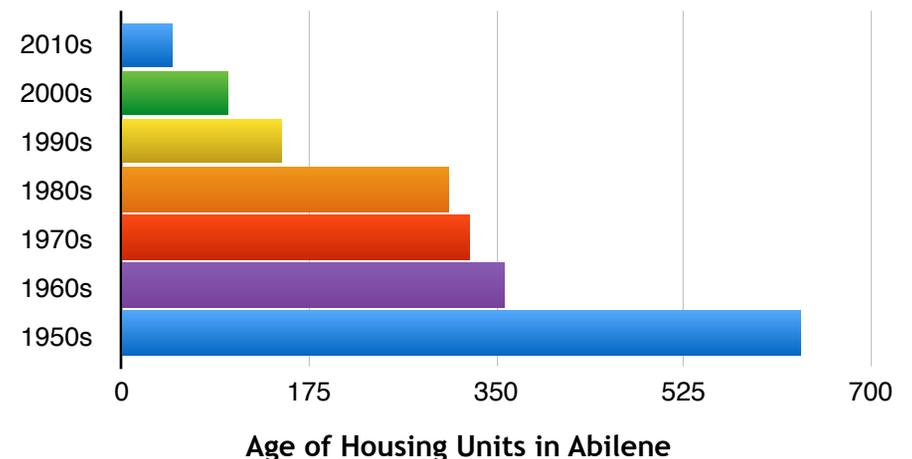
Portions of a city that are geographically separated from the majority of city by unincorporated land are termed "island annexations". Such dispersed development can be problematic, not least because such islands are sometimes challenging to reach with municipal utilities.

Abilene has several incorporated areas that are technically island annexations, but they are separated from the bulk of the City only by a single street right-of-way. One is the Airport, separated by the Union Pacific railroad tracks, and two are on the northwest corner of town on the other side of 14th Street. Abilene's only other island annexation is the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant, southwest of town, which is deliberately separated from developed land for obvious reasons.

RESIDENTIAL – EXISTING

Residential land use covers 798 acres within the city limits, accounting for 33% of developed land. It is the single largest category of land use in Abilene. Of the land in residential use, about 744 acres are used for single-family homes, about 37 acres are used for multifamily homes, and about 17 acres are used for manufactured home parks.

Unfortunately, the pace of housing construction in Abilene slowed down dramatically in the 1990s, and has slowed further each decade since. This gap in housing construction has resulted in a shortage of up-to-date housing that is having a major impact on the local economy.



The chart above shows the age of housing units in Abilene as of the 2020 Census. Since most houses built since the 1950's are still around, this gives a good idea of the pace of housing construction over recent decades. Note, the term "housing units" counts individual homes in a multi-family structure—so, for instance, each apartment in an apartment building counts as a separate housing unit.

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045

Single-family Housing In Abilene, residential neighborhoods contain a range of housing types, from 19th and early 20th Century bungalows and cottages, to post-WWII ranch homes, to contemporary subdivision homes.

Most of Abilene's historic neighborhoods are composed primarily of single-family homes. More recent development, closer to the edges of the city, is more likely to contain both single-family and multifamily housing in a single neighborhood.



Typical single-family homes in Abilene

Multifamily Housing Abilene has an assortment of duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes, sometimes clustered in small groups, but mostly dispersed in single-family-home neighborhoods. The majority of them are well designed to be compatible with neighboring single-family houses.



Representative duplex & triplex homes in Abilene

Abilene also has a wide variety of apartments, from renovated historic structures, to standard late-20th-century apartment buildings, to contemporary townhomes.



Representative apartment buildings

Manufactured Homes Abilene's Zoning Regulations generally require manufactured homes on individual lots in single-family neighborhoods to be residential-designed units on a permanent foundation, which often makes them fairly difficult to distinguish from single-family stick-built houses.

There are four manufactured home parks in Abilene.

- **Sunrise Village**, at 501 North Brady Street, on the east side of Brady at about 5th Street, has pads for about 50 manufactured homes.
- **Cottonwood Mobile Home Park**, at 210 South Cherry Street, south of the Union Pacific tracks and west of Mud Creek, has pads for about 35 manufactured homes.
- **Heartland Mobile Home Park**, at 419 NE 14th Street, on the north side of 14th between Olive and Brown Streets, has pads for about 19 manufactured homes.
- An unnamed cluster of about 10 manufactured homes is located on a parcel of land on SE 7th Street just east of Kuney Street.



*Typical
manufactured
home parks
in Abilene*

PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC – EXISTING

The 681 acres of public and semi-public land use in Abilene represent 28% of the developed area within the city limits. It is the City's second-largest category of land use, after residential.

The Abilene Municipal Airport uses 207.4 acres, while the Parks use 119.0 acres. Abilene's schools, including the Stadium, use 57.8 acres. The Water Treatment Plant is on 40 acres, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant is on 9.8 acres. The Cemetery occupies 37.6 acres. Unsold City-owned parcels in the Golden Belt Heights subdivision total 32.5 acres.

Smaller public land uses include City Hall, the Fire Station and the Library, the Post Office, the Hospital, the County's Courthouse and Highway Department properties, the Senior Center, as well as the Civic Center and a variety of local attractions, including the Eisenhower Library & Museum, Old Abilene Town, the Dickinson County Heritage Center, and the Greyhound Hall of Fame.

Semi-public land uses include numerous churches, land used for infrastructure owned by private utilities companies, and land owned by Homeowners Associations.

COMMERCIAL— EXISTING

Abilene has 202.5 acres of land in commercial use within the city limits, comprising just 8% of the developed area. This is the smallest category of land use inside the city.

Abilene has a strong and diverse variety of commercial land uses in its downtown area. Commercial uses which benefit from a direct rail connection occur along the railroad tracks. Another cluster of commercial land uses are in the south end of town in the vicinity of Buckeye Avenue. Commercial uses which benefit from proximity to the interstate are clustered either in the north end of town near Buckeye and the I-70 interchange there, or near the Fair Road interchange at I-70 in the west edge of town.

Typical commercial land uses in Abilene

On K-15 near I-70



Downtown

INDUSTRIAL— EXISTING

There are 214 acres of industrial land use inside Abilene, comprising 9% of the developed area. This is the second smallest category of land use inside the city.

The largest industrial use in Abilene is the 85.1 acres owned by Great Plains Manufacturing's Land Pride Division, at two separate sites. Russell Stover Manufacturing uses 58.7 acres. Flint Hills Grain uses 10.2 acres, Midwest Concrete uses 9.2 acres, and a variety of smaller industrial sites make up the balance.



Typical industrial land use in Abilene

TRANSPORTATION RIGHTS-OF-WAY — EXISTING

Within the the city limits, 554 acres are incorporated in platted rights-of-way for streets, alleys and railroads. This number does not include the acreage used for the private Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad, which is categorized as a semi-public land use.

Transportation rights-of-way comprise about 23% of the City's developed area, and 18% of the City's total area. Transportation is Abilene's third-largest category of land use, after residential and public/semi-public.

LAND USE OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS — EXISTING

The Planning Area, **excluding** land within the city limits, encompasses 23,617 acres, or 36.9 square miles. About 81.5% of that land is in **agricultural** use, though residential, public, commercial and industrial uses also occur.

Of land inside the Planning Area but outside the city limits:

- About 2,333 acres are in **single-family residential** use.
- There are also four **multifamily** parcels, each with a duplex on it, using a total of 19 acres.
- There is one unnamed **manufactured home park** just outside the city limits, owned by Morrell Rentals. Located at Skipper and Opal Roads, in the vicinity of SW 1st Street and Fawn Road, the parcel is 8.3 acres in size and has pads for about 34 manufactured homes.



Manufactured homes in this park are typically double-wide residential-design units on large landscaped lots.

- About 580 acres are in **public and semi-public** land uses, including the 300 acres of the Brown Memorial Park and Scout Camp, and the 78 acres of the Abilene Golf & Fitness facility. The Dickinson County Weed Department site uses 54.5 acres, and the Abilene Police Shop site uses 28.5 acres. Church properties account for the bulk of the balance.
- There are 272 acres in use for **commercial** purposes.
- There are 84 acres in use for **industrial** purposes.
- About 1,065 acres are in use as transportation right-of-way, for roads and railroads.

Future Land Use

A future land use plan is intended to encourage efficient, balanced, and compatible land use patterns in the City and its immediate area. The **Future Land Use Map shown in this chapter** exhibits a desired pattern of land use, and is intended to guide land use planning decisions during the Planning Period.

However, flexibility is also essential in the implementation of a future land use plan, and it is expected that the Planning Commission may occasionally need to make minor adjustments. In the event of a natural disaster such as a tornado or flood, the Commission may have to quickly make major adjustments.

When a specific area in the city is about to be developed, policy decisions on its development should remain in keeping with the overall land use concepts expressed in the Future Land Use Map, but must also respond to current data.

When an area is designated for a particular future land use, that designation should be considered as an indication of preferred land use character and predominant type, rather than an absolute requirement that the area be developed exclusively for the noted land use. For example, a church or school could be considered a compatible use in an area designated for future residential development.

A number of factors must be considered when projecting future land use—including community attitudes and goals, existing physical features, existing land use patterns, potential utility service areas, future population goals and housing needs, and proposed development projects.

In general, it is considered desirable for **residential** land use patterns within a city to be separated from commercial or industrial uses. The exception to this guideline is in **mixed-use neighborhoods, where the proximity of residences to commercial and public areas promotes walkability.**

Some **public** land uses are compatible with residential areas (such as neighborhood parks or small churches), and some are more appropriate to commercial areas (City Hall or the Post Office, for example). Modern schools tend to be larger and generate more traffic and noise than schools in earlier times, but ideally should still be located close enough to residential neighborhoods to allow at least some children the option to walk or bike to school.

Commercial land uses are typically located near transportation nodes, and clustered together to create economic synergy. By preference, at least some residential neighborhoods should be within walking distance of both retail destinations and workplaces.

Industrial land uses, particularly for heavy industry, often require heavy-duty utility services, generate considerable truck traffic, and may produce dust and other air pollutants, as well as considerable noise. Therefore they are often consolidated in a few areas with appropriate utility services, typically near highways and railroads, and away from and usually downwind of residential neighborhoods.

GENERAL CITY PATTERN – FUTURE

Since the development of the interstate highway system began in the 1950s, the United States has been on a 70-year building spree of sprawl. Only recently have we begun to face the fact that we cannot possibly afford to *maintain* the sprawling infrastructure that we have built.

- For more information on the costs of America's deferred infrastructure maintenance needs, see the American Society of Civil Engineers' [2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure](#).
- For more information on alternative strategies for making your city fiscally strong and resilient in the long term, see [Strong Towns](#).

It is crucial for cities to maintain a compact development pattern, because it maximizes the efficiency and minimizes the cost of providing public services, from utilities to police patrols—not only in short-term operating costs, but in long-term maintenance costs.

Compact and contiguous development is not only an economical strategy, it is also a pragmatic one. Kansas statutes [K.S.A. 12-520 et. seq.](#) make new island annexations very difficult for Kansas cities to implement, while it is relatively easy for cities to annex land that is adjacent to existing corporate limits.

- An overview of the detailed requirements for various types of annexation processes is available in the [2015 Kansas Legislator Briefing Book on Annexation](#).

Abilene is basically compact, and has avoided developing much sprawl. This gives the community a huge advantage in city planning for the 21st century. Abilene should continue its pattern of contiguous development. Consider encouraging future development in Abilene that maintains a higher percentage of more dense, urban-style neighborhoods in proportion to large-lot suburban developments.

DIRECTION OF GROWTH

Abilene's founders located the original city adjacent to the railroad, outside of the Smoky Hill River's likely flood area, and close to Mud Creek. Access to fresh water and rich floodplain soils have given Abilene many advantages over the years, but there are undeniable disadvantages to the city's site, as well—primarily resulting from the fact that much of the community lies within the 500-year floodplain.

Today, the main factors determining Abilene's likely future growth pattern are the **floodplains** along the River to the south and along Mud Creek in the north, and the two Abilene I-70 **interchanges**.

Any further development **south** of the Union Pacific tracks should be minimized, in order to avoid conflict with the River's floodplains. There is ample land around the rest of the city's perimeter which is not in floodplains, and which is much more suitable for development.

Inappropriate development in Mud Creek's 100-year floodplains should also be avoided. Land in 100-year floodplains is generally considered suitable only for agriculture, or perhaps for parkland.

Commercial development is already well established in the area around the **K-15 interchange** with I-70, and much of the land has already been annexed by the City. Large-lot residential development is occurring in the area **north** of the interchange's commercial development, and is likely to continue to expand. Whenever such development is served by municipal utilities, it should be annexed; alternatively, a parcel of land should at least have a *No Protest Agreement* in place before being connected to utilities.

As opportunities become available, Abilene should continue to **annex land around both interchanges**, particularly at the Fair Road interchange, **in order to establish and maintain local control over the character of development** in these locations. These two interchanges are gateways to the city, and their appearance will impact the public perception of Abilene as a desirable community.

WEST SIDE

Most of Abilene's new development over the course of the Planning Period is likely to occur on the **west side**. Any new major **industrial** development will likely be near the Fair Road interchange with I-70, or possibly along the railroad.

The location of west-side **commercial** development will vary depending on the type of commercial activity, with some businesses preferring close access to the freeway, and other smaller-scale retail and professional offices preferring proximity to more residential neighborhoods.

Both single-family and multifamily **residential** development is already occurring on the west side, particularly in the Golden Belt Heights subdivision, and will likely continue to expand over the course of the Planning Period.

The west side would be a suitable area for a **park dedicated to sports fields**, should the City decide to pursue that option. Be prepared to take advantage of any opportunity to acquire appropriate land for a **west-side park**.

EAST SIDE

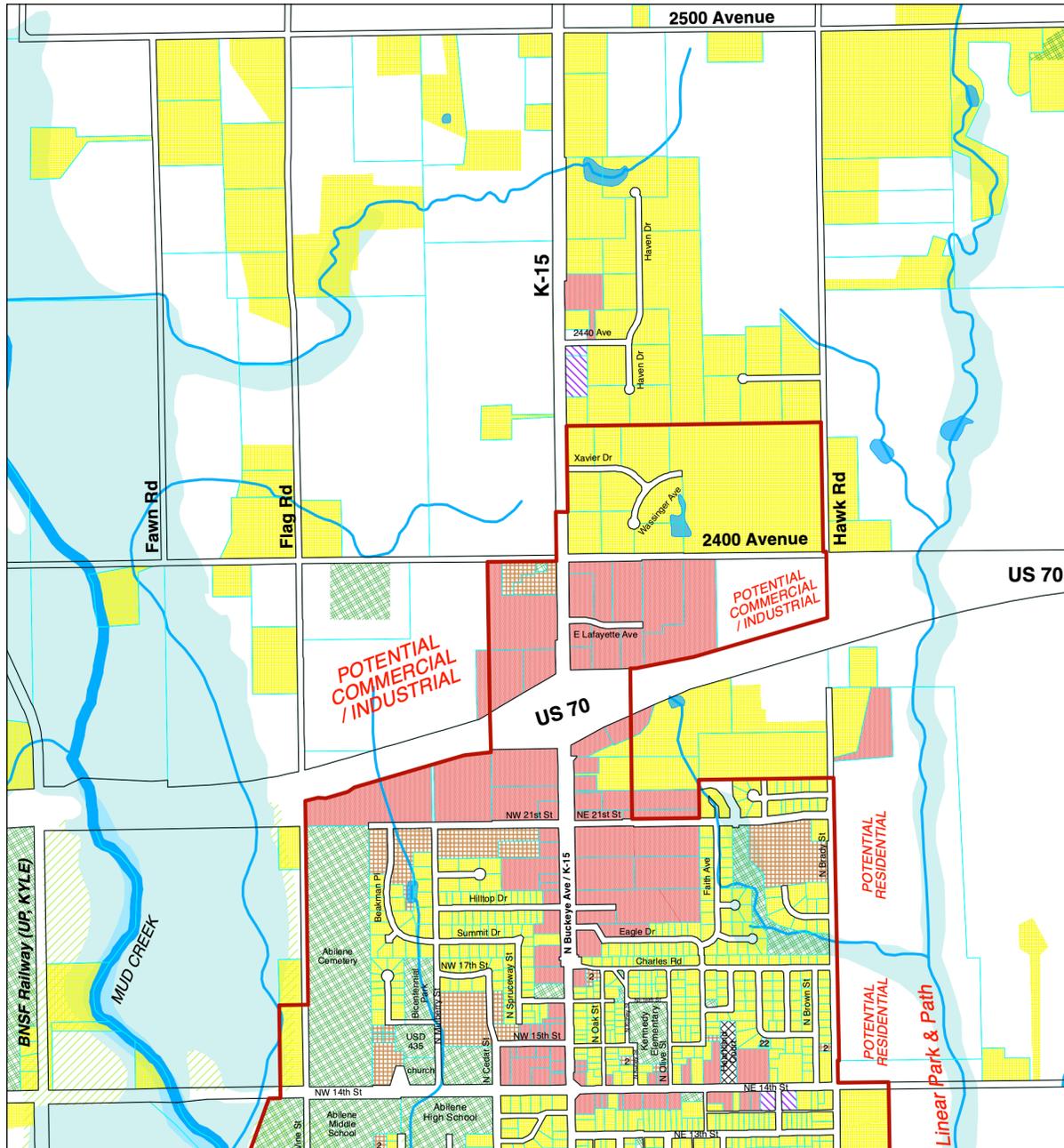
On the **east side** of Abilene, focus on additional walkable residential development, with compact lot sizes and a street and block pattern similar to the community's existing neighborhoods. Continue the pattern of creating diverse neighborhoods by intermixing compatible single-family and multifamily structures.

At some point during the Planning Period, the City should plan to acquire land for an **east-side park**. Land along a stream could support a linear park with a pathway. Alternatively, land in the floodplain would be more suitable for use as a park than for other types of development which are more vulnerable to flooding.

One of the goals of the City's new *Park System Master Plan* is to acquire a **minimum of five acres of land for a new Dog Park**. Ideally, land for this use would have well-drained turf and mature shade trees, a good access road and space for sufficient parking, and be far enough from residential development to avoid noise conflicts. A Dog Park combined with a Linear Park pathway could become a primary destination on the east side of town.

The following pages show four closeup views of the **Future Land Use Map** developed for this *Comprehensive Plan*: Northeast, Southeast, Northwest and Southwest Abilene.

A pdf file of the complete Future Land Use Map is available on the City of Abilene website, under [Community Development/Comprehensive Plan](#).



Flood Hazard Areas

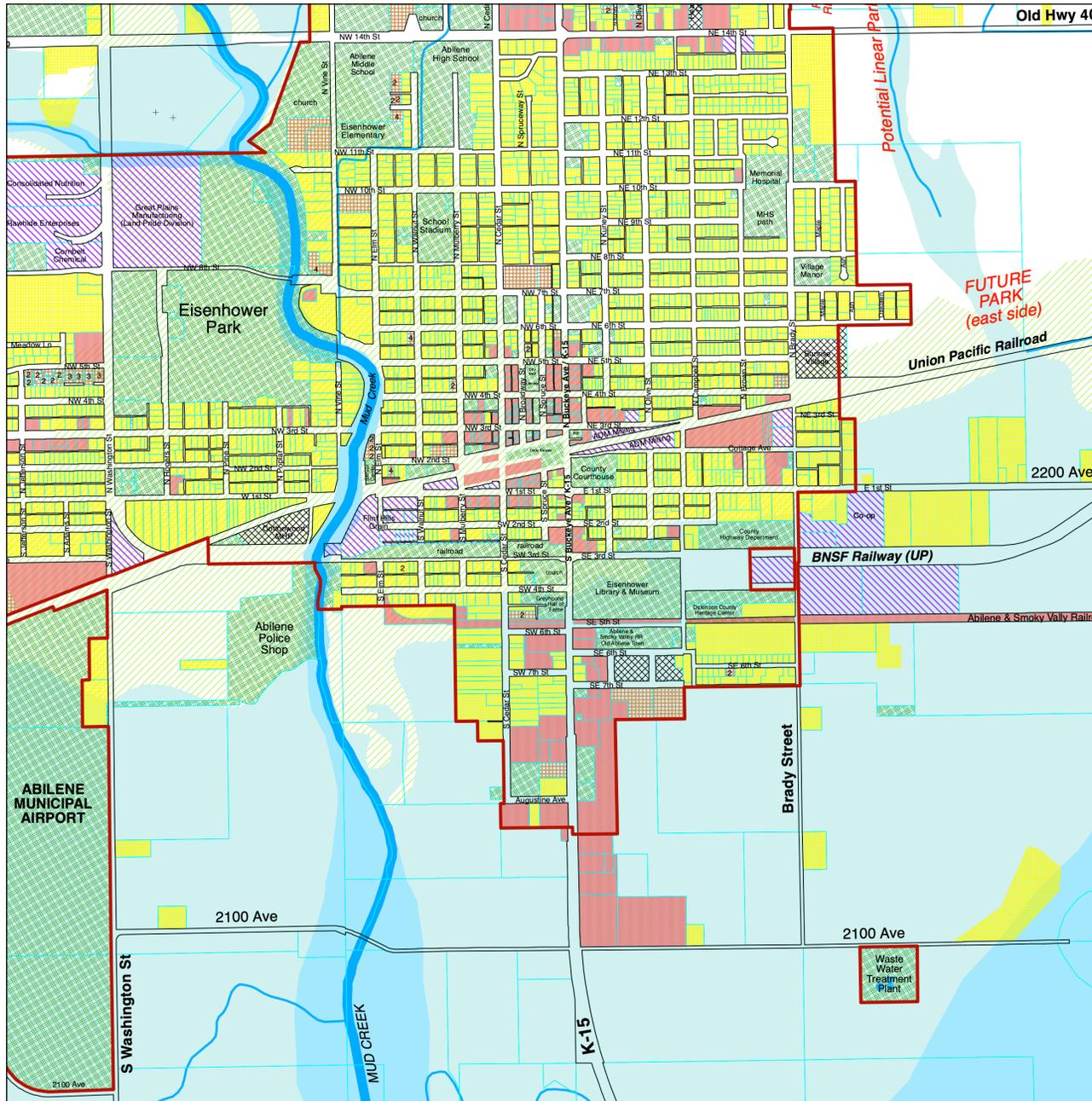
-  Floodway
-  1% Annual Chance Flood (100 Year Flood)
-  0.2% Annual Chance Flood (500 Year Flood)

Future Land Use

- Agricultural & Vacant 
- Single-family Residential 
- Multifamily Residential 
- Manufactured Home Park 
- Public & Semi-public 
- Commercial 
- Industrial 

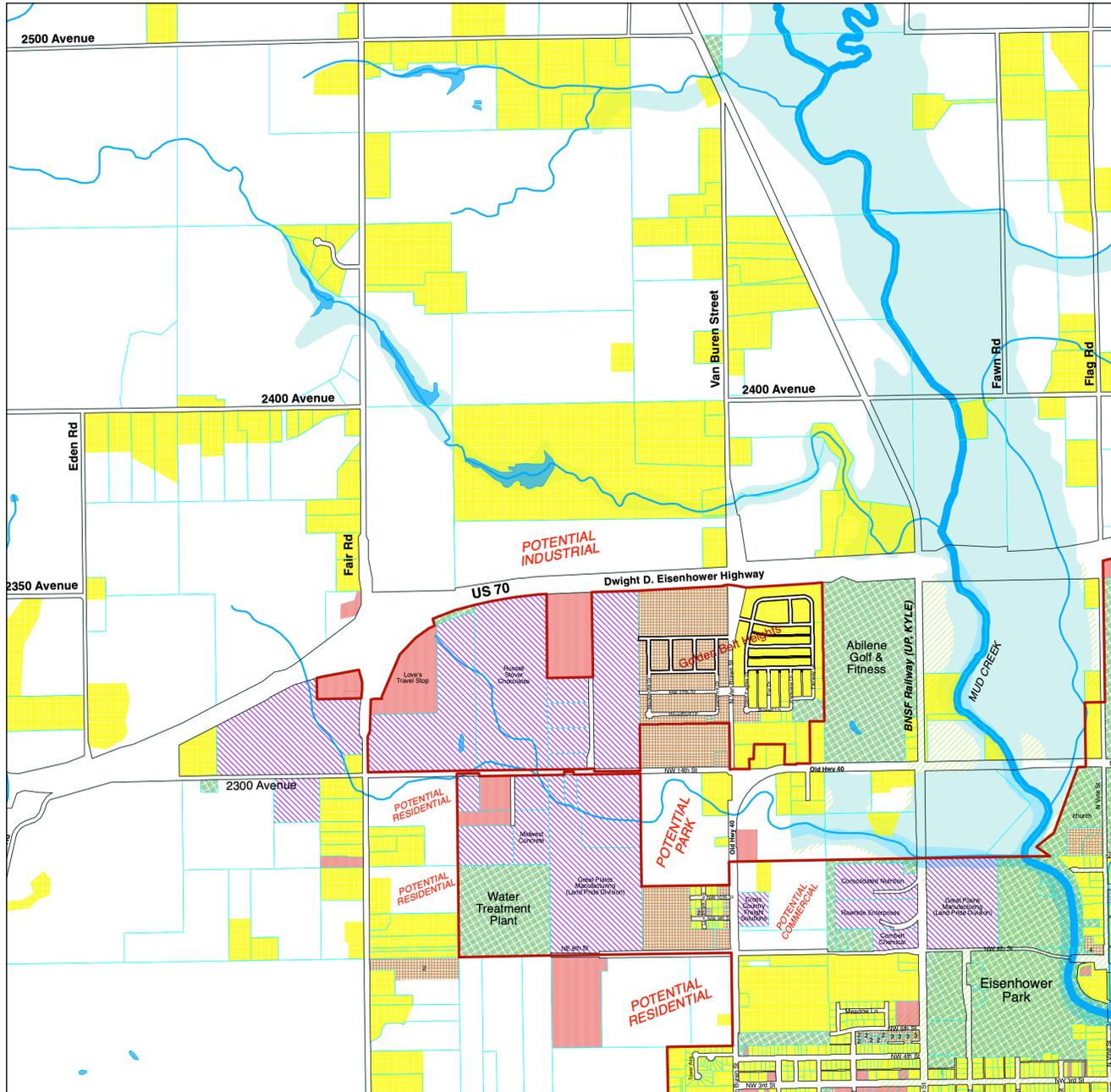
Map:
Future Land Use –
Northeast Abilene

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045



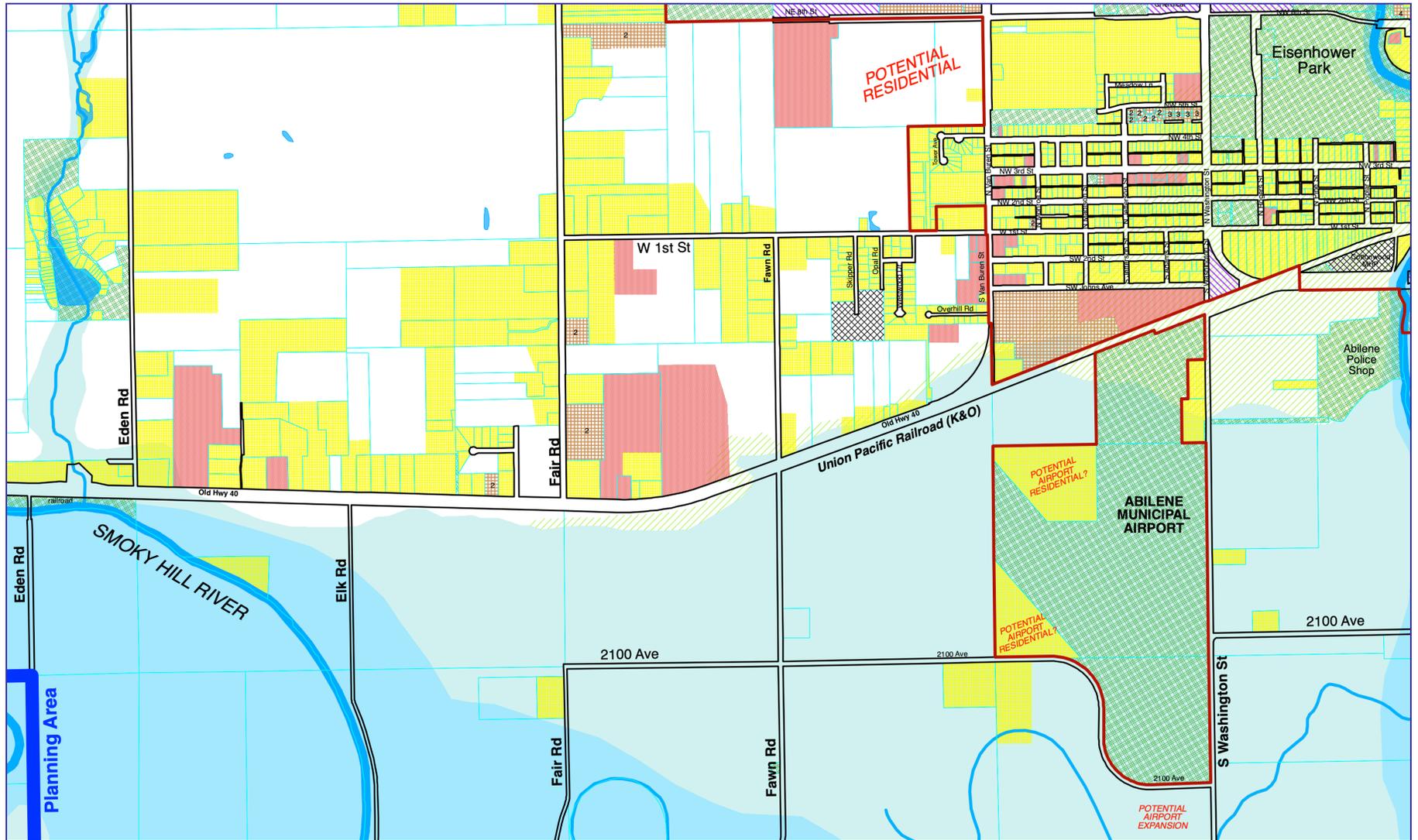
Map:
Future Land Use –
Southeast Abilene

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045



Map:
Future Land Use –
Northwest Abilene

Map: Future Land Use – Southwest Abilene



RESIDENTIAL – FUTURE

Before the 1950s, it was common for American neighborhoods to have a mix of single family and multifamily homes, including garage or upstairs apartments, duplexes, and even small three- or four-unit apartment buildings. These neighborhoods worked well, supporting diverse multi-generational communities with housing at a range of price points.

In the last half of the 20th Century, however, it became standard practice to isolate single-family housing in large and homogeneous developments of similar houses. On the occasions when multifamily housing was built, it tended to be in the form of big apartment complexes or entire city blocks of duplexes, completely separated from single-family neighborhoods.

Now, in the 21st Century, the social and economic advantages of traditional mixed neighborhoods are appreciated again. Such neighborhoods offer the option for multiple generations of a family to find appropriate housing without having to move far away. Higher density allows more people to be supported with less infrastructure, and improves options for walkability and the social connections that walkability encourages.

Many small rural cities have insufficient low-cost and rental housing to meet local demand, and therefore lose young people who cannot yet afford to own a home, as well as older residents who may be looking for a lower-maintenance lifestyle.

There is often a tendency to think that all single-family homes are owner-occupied, and all multifamily homes are rentals, but this is not the case. Twin homes and condominiums of various configurations allow individual ownership of homes within a multifamily structure, and single-family detached houses may be rented.

- About **21%** of Abilene's housing units are in **multifamily** configurations, and **30%** of its occupied housing units are **rentals**.

While there is clearly an ongoing demand for **large, single-family suburban homes**, there is also a national trend toward **smaller homes in walkable, urban-style neighborhoods**. Ideally, such neighborhoods should supply both owner-occupied and rental options.

- Over **73%** of Abilene's occupied housing units are occupied by **one- or two-person households**.

Continue to encourage development in Abilene that offers **a mix of both single-family and appropriately-scaled multifamily housing**. Such housing might include townhomes, patio homes, duplexes, triplexes, small apartment buildings, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

Abilene's existing Zoning Regulations already allow most of these possibilities. Only accessory dwelling units are not yet allowed. Update the City's Regulations to accommodate ADUs.

As Abilene has already frequently shown, smaller types of multifamily housing can be comfortably accommodated in single-family neighborhoods, as long as they are designed to fit in with the character of the neighborhood, and parking requirements are handled sensitively. Only apartment buildings or complexes that are large enough to generate significant amounts of traffic are typically incompatible with single-family neighborhoods.

Maintaining an array of **diverse housing options at a range of price points** should be a primary goal of future development in Abilene, including economical units for young adults and accessible units for seniors. Continue to encourage development of single-family homes, as well as high-quality, accessible, and low-maintenance multifamily housing.

20-year Housing Needs The following rough calculations are intended to show the scale of Abilene’s 20-year housing needs. These estimates do *not* account for the replacement housing units that would be needed in order to compensate for existing houses which may be lost to causes such as fire or demolition.

- If the City’s 2020 Census population of 6,460 grew by **5% per decade**, Abilene would have 7,122 people by 2040, for a net gain of about 662 individuals.

Taking the additional population, and dividing that number by the *2017-2021 American Community Survey* average household size of 2.22 people per household, Abilene might expect to have **about 298 additional households over a twenty-year period**, which would require an average increase of **about 15 housing units per year**, each and every year over the course of two decades.

- A similar calculation for a **10% per decade** rate of population growth would result in **about 1,357 additional individuals**, and **about 611 additional households over a twenty-year period**, requiring an average increase of **about 31 housing units per year** each year over the course of two decades.

Of course, housing is rarely built at smooth and predictable rates. In fact, it tends to be developed in spurts. Nevertheless, these estimates should help provide an idea of the scope of long-term housing demand in Abilene.

Current Rate of Housing Development Between 2018 and 2022, the City of Abilene issued building permits for a **total of 31 dwelling units over the course of five years**—13 single-family houses, 11 manufactured homes, 1 triplex (3 units), and 1 fourplex (4 units).

Building Permits Issued in Abilene / 2018-2022					
Type of Building Permit	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Demos / Removals	3	4	5	5	14
Single-family Residence	1	0	3	1	8
Manufactured Home	1	2	1	4	3
Duplex	0	0	0	0	0
Triplex	0	0	1	0	0
Fourplex	0	0	0	0	1

At the 5% per decade population growth rate suggested in this *Plan*, the estimated figure of 15 new housing units needed per year would imply a need for **75 new housing units over the course of five years**.

While these are admittedly rough estimates, it would seem that **Abilene will likely need to more than double its recent rate of housing construction, in order to meet the oncoming demand**. Compensating for unmet existing demand will require an even higher rate of increase.

Renovating Existing Housing Another factor to bear in mind is that, according to Census data, Abilene currently has 480 vacant dwelling units—a **vacancy rate of 14%**. This would strongly imply that while there is ample vacant housing in Abilene, it is either not the right *kind* of housing to meet people’s needs, or not the right *quality* of housing to meet people’s standards.

Nevertheless, those 480 vacant housing units are a potential resource. Properly renovated, they could help the city meet its need for expanded housing development, while making better use of existing infrastructure.

PUBLIC & SEMI-PUBLIC – FUTURE

The City may need to acquire additional land during the 20-year Planning Period, to allow for construction of a **new Fire Station**. Additional **park land** may be needed as well, particularly for sports fields. Additional parkland might also be provided for in any new approved plats for subdivision development.

COMMERCIAL – FUTURE

Continue to enhance Abilene's commercial areas. Ideally, the character of businesses in each area should serve different commercial needs, complementing each other, rather than unduly competing.

Continue to focus areas near the freeway interchanges, and along K-15 south of town, on large-lot commercial development that depends on vehicle traffic and ample parking lots for success. Continue to focus downtown's commercial development on businesses that thrive in a walkable environment: offices, professional services, coffee shops, restaurants, and the sort of locally owned retail commercial stores that thrive on lifestyle and impulse buying.

INDUSTRIAL – FUTURE

Over the Planning Period, further expansion of Abilene's strong industrial sector would substantially impact Abilene's future economy, its transportation network, and its future housing needs as well.

To attract additional industry to Abilene, consider developing an **industrial park** in the area of the I-70 interchange at Fair Road. Ideally, provide pad-ready sites—graded, with utilities stubbed, and road access already developed; in short, ready to be built on.

TRANSPORTATION RIGHTS-OF-WAY – FUTURE

From a land use perspective, Abilene has an adequate right-of-way network to sustain expected growth.

As new housing is developed on currently vacant land, neighborhood streets should be platted with enough width to accommodate the roadway itself, as well as adequate drainage facilities, utilities, sidewalks, and street trees. **Curb-to-curb, roadways themselves should be as narrow** as fire-fighting equipment access allows, in order to calm vehicle traffic speeds and keep residential neighborhoods comfortably walkable.

Street patterns should be designed to coordinate with both existing streets, and with potential future expansion of both the street network and the sidewalk and bike path network.

LAND USE OUTSIDE THE CITY – FUTURE

Portions of the Planning Area near Abilene have already been developed for commercial, industrial, and both single-family and multifamily residential use. Consider annexation of any developed parcels making use of City utilities.

If demand for **large-lot residential housing** occurs in the Planning Area, **discourage scattered lots** and instead **establish platted rural subdivisions**. Such subdivisions should have good road access, and be located to avoid floodplains.

In general, however, the Planning Area outside the City should continue to be used mainly for **agriculture**, which should be regarded as the highest and best use for such productive soils.

Consider implementing a policy of annexation, or at least requiring a *No Protest Agreement*, for any property outside the city limits that wishes to connect to City utilities.

Downtown

A city's downtown is a concentration of commercial, cultural, and civic activities, ideally with a strong residential component as well. No matter how large or small the city, having a vibrant downtown is critical to both its quality of life and its economic success.

A vibrant downtown is not only a small city's major economic driver, it is "everybody's neighborhood", a cultural center where people from the entire area congregate. When people think of a particular small city, its downtown is usually the first image that comes to mind, so the character and attractiveness of a community is often judged by the character and attractiveness of its downtown.

Community Questionnaire participants were asked to think about Abilene's downtown business district, and check factors of the physical environment which need improvement. Factors are listed in order of the percentage of respondents that expressed concern.

- Areas behind businesses: 12%
- Storefronts used as storage: 12%
- Restrooms: 10%
- General appearance of building facades: 10%
- Condition of sidewalks: 10%
- General attractiveness of streets & sidewalks : 9%
- Lack of street trees : 8%
- Condition of streets: 7%
- Parking lots: 7%
- Ease of vehicle access: 5%
- Handicap access to businesses: 5%
- Business signs: 4%

DOWNTOWN – EXISTING

Abilene's downtown is an active commercial center, with numerous civic, cultural and tourism destinations. It has ample and widely available free parking. Downtown has a generous supply of two-story buildings that offer opportunities for development of loft apartments to support a solid downtown residential presence—a critical factor in making any downtown a vibrant hub for the whole community.

What Abilene's downtown lacks is truly **walkable streetscapes**. While the sidewalk space downtown is adequate, it is not generally *attractive*. There is little shade, and there is practically no street life to keep it activated. Little Ike Park is the exception to the rule, offering green plants, shade, public art, and places to sit and have a cup of coffee or a brown-bag lunch. Its popularity provides clear-cut clues on ways to make downtown Abilene more animated and vital.



Typical downtown Abilene street scenes

DOWNTOWN – FUTURE

The building facades in downtown Abilene are generally in good to excellent condition. To take full advantage of the public space they create, sidewalks and streets which are currently optimized for vehicle traffic can be reconfigured to **prioritize the pedestrian experience**.

Such a transition does not happen instantly, but can be **implemented in phases** over time. The first step is to agree on a specific **streetscape plan** that leads to such a future.

A downtown designed for cars encourages people to drive in, do exactly the errand they came for, then get back in their car and leave. A walkable streetscape increases foot traffic, which increases the economic success of businesses that thrive in the synergy of a walkable neighborhood, such as restaurants, small retail shops, service businesses, or professional offices. As more such businesses are available, downtown becomes a more attractive place both to visit and to live, and as more people spend more time downtown, all downtown businesses thrive even more.

A small reduction in Abilene's existing on-street parking—which, pending a parking study, appears to be excessive to need—would allow space for **wider sidewalks, curb extensions to support shorter and safer crosswalks, street trees, improved ADA accessible parking, street furniture** like benches and bike racks, **pedestrian scale ornamental lighting**, and perhaps some small-scale **outdoor dining**.

Drainage improvements utilizing green infrastructure could be incorporated as part of suitable streetscape improvement projects. Green infrastructure solutions can often be scaled and localized, to focus on solving specific drainage problems near where the problem occurs. The living green portion of green infrastructure can provide an opportunity for badly-needed landscaping to beautify Abilene's downtown.

K-15 Buckeye Avenue should definitely be included in any streetscape improvement plan for downtown Abilene. Pursue discussions with KDOT to put K-15 in Abilene on what the Federal Highway Administration calls a **Road Diet**.

A road diet would reduce Buckeye Avenue from four lanes of traffic to three—one traffic lane each way, and a continuous turn lane. This configuration actually carries at least as much traffic, far more safely, than a four-lane road.

Traffic on K-15 is required to slow down in Abilene anyway, for safety's sake. A reduction in roadway width would likely not require any reduction in current speed limits in Abilene— though a properly designed road diet and streetscape can definitely help reduce the speeds at which people actually travel.

The space regained in the right-of way by eliminating one traffic lane would permit streetscape improvements that could vastly improve the appearance and function of Buckeye Avenue. Landscaping and perhaps bike lanes could be added. Curb extensions could allow for shorter, safer crosswalks, reconnecting the east and west parts of Abilene's downtown for pedestrians.

Consider implementing a K-15 road diet plan at least in Abilene's downtown area, and possibly from North 14th Street all the way to South 7th Street.



*Example:
Crosswalk
after
Road Diet*

Downtown Living Developing policies to encourage renovation of the upper-floors of Abilene's downtown buildings into **loft apartments** is also an important part of future downtown success. Having people living downtown is the key to activating downtown on evenings and weekends, so it doesn't become a ghost town outside of regular business hours. For many downtown businesses, those extra hours of activity can often make the difference between "barely making it" and "doing well".

Where appropriate, encourage private development projects in downtown Abilene by utilizing the City's existing Development Incentives programs. Be prepared to pursue opportunities to develop downtown residential projects as they arise, anywhere in Abilene's downtown area.

Celebrations & Events Continue Abilene's practice of organizing community celebrations that attract both residents and visitors downtown. Continue to coordinate among the Convention and Visitors Bureau and other concerned organizations to promote special events, implement holiday lighting and displays, and coordinate group advertising.

Tourism Continue to recognize the importance of tourism as a key element of Abilene's community identity. Encourage private owners of destination facilities to maintain high standards of quality. Foster the activities of concerned organizations to maintain and market Abilene's many visitor destinations.

Wayfinding Signs Abilene has an existing wayfinding sign system to help visitors find their way to the many tourist attractions in the City—however, existing signs are almost exclusively oriented toward drivers. Consider developing a wayfinding signage system for use downtown that is **oriented toward pedestrians**.

The future land use plan for downtown is more a matter of preserving and enhancing Abilene's existing downtown, rather than making any substantial changes to land use patterns there. The major difference would be an increase in mixed use development, primarily by adding more residential options downtown. This, in combination with improved streetscapes, would help **create walkable live-work-play neighborhoods** in the urban core.



Ideas for Renovating Downtowns

Consider the following resources to inspire ideas for continuing to improve Abilene's downtown:

- [Here's What *Not* to Do to Your Small-Town Main Street](#) is an article from [Strong Towns](#), that may be particularly applicable to K-15 in Abilene.
- From 1985 to 2012, [Kansas Main Street](#) programs operated successfully in 25 Kansas communities, helping to revitalize and preserve downtown districts. The Kansas program was reestablished in 2020, and once again offers resources and tools to breathe new life into historic commercial districts.
- USDA's [Downtown Revitalization](#) webpage includes case studies and a list of [funding resources](#).
- [50 Best Small Town Downtowns in America](#) is a 2015 article in *Best Choice Reviews*.
- [40 of the Best Main Streets in America You Need to Visit](#) is a slide show of images from an article in *Country Living* magazine.
- HGTV's [Home Town Takeover](#), available for viewing online, is an 8-episode television series featuring 12 renovations designed to revitalize the small town of Wetumpka, Alabama, population about 7200. Episode 8 is a retrospective highlighting the logic behind selecting renovation projects that will have the biggest impact on the whole community.

LAND USE GOALS

Policies & Regulations

- Consider establishing a policy that requires a **No Protest Agreement** between the City and any landowner outside the city limits, before they can connect to City utility services.
- Consider establishing **Site Plan Review standards** for both commercial development along K-15 and interchange-oriented commercial development near the I-70 interchanges.
- Update the City's Zoning Regulations to:
 - Allow **accessory dwelling units (ADUs)**
 - Address tiny homes
 - Address preservation of **historic homes & neighborhoods**
- Update Subdivision Regulations to address walkable versus cul-de-sac neighborhood design.
- Develop **policies and utilize the City's Development Incentives programs to encourage renovation** of the upper-floors of Abilene's downtown buildings into **loft apartments**.

Annexation

- Consider **annexation** of any developed land outside of the City that is adjacent to or quite near the city limits.
- Continue to expand Abilene's boundaries around both I-70 interchanges, particularly at the **Fair Road interchange**, in order to establish and maintain local control over the character of development there.

Land Acquisition

- Plan ahead to **acquire land that might be needed for any future municipal facilities**, especially a new Fire Station and parks.
- Plan to acquire land for a **west-side park**, possibly suitable for sports fields.
- Plan to acquire land for an **east-side park**. Consider land along a stream for a linear park with a pathway, or land in a floodplain.

Include a **minimum of five acres of land for a new Dog Park**, walkably adjacent to the Linear Park pathway. Ideally, a Dog Park should have well-drained turf, mature shade trees, a good access road, space for sufficient parking, and be far enough from residential development to avoid noise conflicts.

Downtown & Streetscapes

- Implement a **parking study of downtown Abilene**, to determine if existing parking is excessive to need or not.
- Pursue discussions with KDOT to **reduce K-15 in Abilene from four lanes to three**, at least downtown, and possibly from North 14th Street all the way to South 7th Street.
- Develop a **streetscape plan for downtown Abilene**, which can be implemented in phases, to **prioritize the pedestrian experience over vehicle traffic**.
Add wider sidewalks, curb extensions to support shorter and safer crosswalks, street trees, improved ADA accessible parking, street furniture like benches and bike racks, pedestrian scale ornamental lighting, and perhaps some small-scale outdoor dining.
- Consider **green infrastructure solutions for needed drainage improvements**, particularly downtown.
- Develop a **pedestrian-oriented wayfinding signage system** for use downtown.

Streets

- Plat any new **neighborhood streets to be as narrow as fire-fighting equipment access allows**, in order to calm vehicle traffic speeds and keep residential neighborhoods comfortably walkable.

Housing

- Encourage development of **both single-family and multifamily housing**, including townhomes, patio homes, duplexes, triplexes, apartment buildings, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- Encourage **updating of Abilene's smaller homes** for use by one- or two-person households, especially young adults and down-sizing empty-nesters.
- Encourage development of a variety of **low-maintenance and accessible homes**.
- Maintain an array of **diverse housing options at a range of price points**.
- Encourage development of a higher percentage of more dense, urban-style neighborhoods in proportion to large-lot suburban developments.
- Discourage scattered large-lot residential housing and instead prefer to **establish platted rural subdivisions**.

Industrial

- Consider developing an **industrial park** in the area of the I-70 interchange at Fair Road, with pad-ready sites.

CHAPTER 7. Regulatory Tools

A community's planning goals are implemented in a variety of ways, including the use of regulatory tools. This chapter provides an overview of such tools—Zoning Regulations, Subdivision Regulations, Construction and Environmental Codes, Annexation, Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, and Site Plan Review.

While Abilene does not currently utilize the last two options, Planning Commissioners and other City leaders should nevertheless be familiar with all of their potential regulatory resources.

By statute, a city's Planning Commission is directly involved with the development and administration of Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, can recommend other local codes, and makes recommendations to the City Commission on annexation decisions.

Zoning Regulations

The goal of zoning should be to ensure high standards for development, without unduly restricting private initiative or causing excessive development costs.

Zoning Regulations protect property values by ensuring that residential, commercial and industrial land uses are located in compatible arrangements which prevent conflicts. **Zoning seeks to *prevent* conflicts between adjacent land uses, and is the major tool for resolving conflicts which do occur.**

Zoning can help maintain the rate of development at a pace which can be sustained by the community's infrastructure of public and private facilities and utilities.

Zoning regulations establish residential densities, by specifying standards for building setbacks from property boundaries, as well as requirements for maximum building height and maximum lot coverage. They establish standards for required parking spaces, and for the size and location of signs. They regulate accessory structures and uses, and home occupations.

Zoning regulations in Kansas are **not retroactive** and, therefore, they are not effective in cleaning up past mistakes—except over very long periods of time, by the gradual demise of lawful nonconforming uses (grandfathered-in land uses). This is why it is **important to adopt and enforce appropriate zoning *before* problems occur.**

Legislative Capacity and Quasi-judicial Actions: When a city adopts new zoning regulations or makes revisions to existing regulations, it is acting in a **legislative** capacity. Since a 1978 court case, cities in Kansas have been required to act in a **quasi-judicial** manner when holding a hearing and deliberating on an application for rezoning of a specific parcel of land.

To act in a **quasi-judicial** manner, the **Planning Commission is required to make its recommendations based on findings of evidence and an issue oriented analysis, in order to prevent arbitrary and capricious zoning decisions. The Governing Body is held to the same standards.**

If the Governing Body chooses to differ with or amend the recommendation of the Planning Commission, it may not do so arbitrarily. It **must support its decision by determining its own findings and analysis**, and either override the Planning Commission's recommendation by a two-thirds majority vote, or by a simple majority vote return the recommendation to the Planning Commission to be reconsidered.

Reasonableness: The Governing Body must establish specific **factors** on which zoning decisions and special use cases are to be determined. According to K.S.A. 12-757(a), the governing body *"...shall establish in its zoning regulations the matters to be considered when approving or disapproving a zoning request..."*.

Court tests of zoning cases are based upon the "reasonableness" of the City's decision. Any zoning amendment (for instance, to change a zoning district classification or boundary), is legally presumed to be reasonable if it is **in accordance with a land use plan or the land use element of a comprehensive plan.** Having a good land use plan within this *Comprehensive Plan* is a key component of the City's defense, should one of its zoning decisions ever be challenged in court.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS (BZA)

Any city which enacts zoning regulations must create a Board of Zoning Appeals. Under K.S.A. 12-759, cities may establish boards of three to seven members who serve staggered three-year or four-year terms. When a city exercises zoning only inside the city limits, as Abilene does, all members must reside inside the city limits. For a city with extraterritorial zoning, at least one member of the BZA must reside outside the city.

Kansas statutes permit the members of a Planning Commission to be concurrently designated as the Board of Zoning Appeals, and Abilene has chosen to do so. Abilene's Planning Commission/ BZA members are appointed by the Mayor, with the consent of the City Commission. They serve three-year staggered terms.

Any appeal of a determination by the Zoning Administrator is decided by the BZA. An appeal from a decision of the BZA can be made only to the County District Court, and must be made within 30 days. The BZA also has the authority to grant variances, to permit modifications in such standards as the maximum height of a structure, in building setbacks, or in minimum lot sizes.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations are another important method of controlling the development of land. As required by K.S.A. 12-749(a), a city must have adopted a **comprehensive plan before it can adopt subdivision regulations.**

Subdivision Regulations specify the standards and conditions under which a tract of land can be subdivided. They set standards for the arrangement and design of streets, utility easements, lots, block sizes, open space, installation of public improvements, and proper drainage.

Subdivision Regulations may stipulate requirements for street lighting, sidewalks, and water supply and sewage disposal systems, among other things. They may encourage the dedication or acquisition of land for schools, parks, open space, or other community facilities within the new subdivision.

Subdivision Regulations also provide a framework to establish a working arrangement between the City and developers—to accept **dedications** of land within a development for future public facilities, to guarantee to the City the installation of necessary **public improvements** such as streets or sidewalks, and to allow for the use of **impact fees** to mitigate the City's costs of providing public utilities and services for the new development and other nearby areas which are benefited.

When a standard in the Subdivision Regulations is less restrictive than a standard in other applicable regulations or codes, the most restrictive requirement applies. However, in rural areas, **interim standards** on water supply, sewage disposal, and future easements may be applied temporarily, until urbanization is a reality.

According to [K.S.A. 12-749\(a\)](#), a city may extend its **Subdivision Regulations extraterritorially**. This arrangement recognizes that cities are the main providers of urban utilities in most counties, and logically should be able to administer the initial design and construction of utility services, even outside current city limits. Extraterritorial enforcement of Subdivision Regulations also increases a city's ability to ensure that new streets tie properly into the existing urban street system.

Abilene's current Subdivision Regulations apply only within the city limits. The City has no Extraterritorial Jurisdiction.

When Abilene's Subdivision Regulations are next updated, consider revising them to support and encourage development of **accessory dwelling units (ADUs)**, such as garage apartments or granny flats. ADUs allow both a primary and a secondary but independent home on one residential parcel, and are becoming increasingly popular as more and more families become multi-generational.

Construction & Environmental Codes

Various construction and environmental codes are the tools used to maintain minimum construction standards, to remedy substandard housing, and to deal with sanitary and nuisance conditions. Codes also establish the process for permit approval for construction projects, determine standards for licensing contractors, and create enforcement procedures for inspections and appeals.

Codes are generally administered and enforced by trained municipal staff specifically assigned those duties, typically a Code Enforcement Officer.

City Extraterritorial Codes If a city has extraterritorial jurisdiction for their subdivision or zoning regulations, they have authority to enforce city building codes outside the city limits (see [K.S.A. 12-751\(b\)](#)). A petition procedure permits 20% of the electorate to require an election to be held to decide whether the adopted extraterritorial building codes should be retained. If building codes are removed by such a vote, they cannot be reestablished for at least four years.

County Codes A county can adopt construction and environmental codes for all its unincorporated area, or for a defined area around a city. Counties may also adopt a city's codes by reference for an area around the city, or a city may adopt its county's codes by reference. Either the city or county may perform the administrative functions needed, as may be jointly agreed.

The City of Abilene enforces its own codes within the city limits, and Dickinson County enforces its County codes in the Planning Area outside of Abilene.

TYPES OF CODES

A variety of building, construction, and environmental codes play a role in protecting the health, safety and welfare of the public and their property. **Codes establish minimum standards** which, over time, help to upgrade and maintain the quality of the community's building inventory, in turn improving the quality of life and the city's tax revenue base.

Model Codes Typically, national or international model codes are adopted by reference, sometimes with specific amendments to address unusual local conditions. Model codes are developed by independent standards organizations, which regularly update their codes to deal with the latest in building materials and techniques.

It is generally far more cost-effective to adopt a model code, than to invest municipal resources in writing and regularly updating a local code. Also, contractors are already familiar with most model codes, but may be reluctant to work in a community with its own idiosyncratic requirements.

Building Codes govern the construction requirements for all types of buildings, by regulating their design, methods of construction, quality of materials, types of use, degree of occupancy, site location factors, and certain equipment required for their construction and operation. **Energy-efficiency requirements and historic preservation standards** may also be incorporated in building codes.



example: Building Code violation



example:
Plumbing Code violation



example:
Electrical Code violation



example:
Sanitation Code violation

Plumbing Codes are responsible for regulating both potable water carrying systems and sanitary sewers.

Electrical Codes safeguard persons, buildings, and their contents from hazards arising from the use of electricity in new and remodeled structures.

Mechanical Codes serve to protect individuals and property by controlling the design, construction, installation, quality of materials, location, operation and maintenance of heating, ventilating, cooling, and refrigeration systems, as well as incinerators and other heat-producing equipment.

Fire Prevention Codes prescribe regulations for safeguarding life and property from the hazards of fire and explosion. They set safety standards and attempt to prevent fires from starting and spreading. They are a factor in fire insurance ratings.

Sanitation Codes regulate a wide range of health concerns including sewage disposal, water supply, abandoned and inoperable vehicles, pest and animal control, and environmental features in and around buildings, such as outside storage, that often lead to health hazards and blighting conditions.

Dangerous Structures Ordinances require the repair or removal of dangerous and unsafe structures by the owner or the City.

Housing Codes prevent overcrowding, and maintain minimum health and safety features in dwellings. They are concerned with the quality of the residential environment, and affect the upkeep and maintenance of existing dwellings. They can be enforced as a response to regular house-to-house inspections, or complaints, or be triggered by a change in ownership or renter.

Weed Mowing Ordinances establish a maximum standard for the height of vegetation outside of planting beds. Typically, if the owner does not keep vegetation within required limits, the City will mow, and then assess the cost to the owner.

City Beautiful Ordinances are a method of removing or causing the repair of unsightly and blighted structures in order to promote beautification. They can apply to both principal and accessory structures. Such ordinances are often combined with housing code minimum standards.

Manufactured Home Park Codes cover such items as water supply, sewage disposal, drainage, and street and parking facilities in manufactured home parks, density, open spaces and recreational areas, refuse disposal methods, and utility connections. Manufactured Home Park Codes may also be written to include **recreational vehicle campgrounds**.

Manufactured Home Park Codes cannot control the actual location of manufactured home parks, or the locations of individual manufactured homes scattered in a community, since this can only be accomplished by zoning regulations. However, since Manufactured Home Park Codes are adopted as health and safety codes, they are not limited by the grandfather clause inherent in the administration of zoning regulations, and so can be used to upgrade existing parks.



*example:
Dangerous
Structure
violation*

MANUFACTURED, MODULAR, & PREFAB HOUSING

Manufactured, modular, and prefab homes are all forms of housing constructed in factories. A manufactured home may cost about half the per square foot cost of a site-built dwelling. Provided they meet local construction codes, modular and prefabricated units are usually permitted by zoning regulations anywhere that site-built housing can be constructed.

HUD Code In 1974, the U.S. Congress changed the name "mobile home" to "manufactured housing". A **nationwide certification process was initiated in 1976** by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which set standards for all such housing under the federal Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act, otherwise known as the **HUD Code**.

Homes which do not meet the HUD national standards, almost all of which were built prior to June 15, 1976, are still referred to as "mobile homes".

Manufactured homes which are certified under the HUD Code override any local construction codes, except for the manner in which they are installed—that is, hooked up to utilities, skirted, placed on a permanent foundation, or anchored.

Kansas Standards The Kansas Legislature passed the extensive Kansas Manufactured Housing Act in 1991 as K.S.A. 58-4201, et seq. Kansas also has statutes requiring the state architect to establish tie-down design standards under K.S.A. 75-1226, et seq. The state does not enforce tie-down standards locally, but instead regulates their design at the manufacturer.

Residential-design Manufactured Homes In K.S.A. 12-742 and 763, effective January 1, 1992, the Kansas Legislature adopted mandatory provisions for a "residential-design manufactured home". Such homes must meet the minimum standards of the HUD Code, be at least 22 feet in width, have a pitched roof, have siding and roofing materials customarily used on site-built houses, and be placed on a permanent foundation. These statutes do not preempt or supersede valid **restrictive covenants** running with the land.

Additional architectural and esthetic standards may be adopted in local zoning regulations to ensure the compatibility of residential-design manufactured homes with site-built housing. However, **zoning regulations which exclude residential-design manufactured homes from single-family residential districts solely because they are manufactured homes cannot be adopted or enforced in Kansas.**

Because of the similarity of lot sizes needed, **multiple-wide manufactured homes** are sometime accommodated in neighborhoods of site-built homes. Their shorter length permits them to be oriented parallel to the street.

However, the longer 70' to 90' **single-wide manufactured homes** pose a problem in neighborhoods of site-built homes. If placed parallel to the street, they create a wide frontage which significantly increases the cost of utilities and streets. If placed perpendicular to the street and intermixed with site-built houses, the extension of the manufactured home into the rear yard tends to reduce the open space and privacy of adjacent neighbors. In practice, single-wide homes are usually angled on the lot in order to permit more windows on one side to have some view of the street. The effect is to further cause some disorientation in the relationship of two dissimilar types of structures. In general, the intermixing of single-wide manufactured homes with site-built houses tends to depreciate the value of the site-built houses.

EXISTING CODES FOR ABILENE

The City of Abilene adopts the following standard codes, and amends them as necessary to make them specific to Abilene's conditions and needs.

- International Building Code
- International Residential Code
- International Existing Building Code
- International Plumbing Code
- International Mechanical Code
- International Fuel Gas Code
- International Property Maintenance Code
- National Electric Code

Model codes are typically updated every two years. Abilene's latest Building Codes are available online.

Dickinson County's current adopted codes apply to all unincorporated areas within Dickinson County, including all of the Abilene Planning Area outside of the City's boundaries.

Community Questionnaire participants were asked if regulations or enforcement of the following issues needed to be stronger.

Do City regulations or enforcement need to be stronger?						
	Yes		No		Don't Know	
Unkempt Vacant Lots	71	66%	24	22%	12	11%
Poorly Maintained Housing	70	65%	22	21%	15	14%
Dilapidated Outbuildings	67	63%	18	17%	21	20%
Unsightly Outdoor Storage	65	61%	24	23%	17	16%
Inoperable Vehicles	62	58%	26	24%	19	18%
Loose / Stray / Feral Cats	36	34%	41	38%	30	28%
Loose / Stray / Feral Dogs	28	26%	47	44%	32	30%
Noisy Neighbors	22	21%	46	43%	38	36%

Annexation

Annexation is the process by which a city expands its boundaries, in order to manage its physical growth in a sensible, predictable, and fiscally responsible manner.

Annexation brings property which has been under the jurisdiction of a county into the jurisdiction of a city. It is generally applied to land that is developed or about to be developed, and which uses or will use the city's utilities or other services.

Annexation allows a city government to exercise the regulatory authority necessary to protect public health and safety in peripheral urbanizing areas. It also ensures that residents and businesses who benefit from access to a city's facilities and services share fairly in the tax burden associated with constructing and maintaining those facilities and services.

Ideally, annexation occurs with the consent of the property owners involved. Unilateral annexation by a city is also an option, though it is more time consuming and complex than a consent annexation.

Note, a "Resolution Declaring the Boundary and Limits of the City" is not, in and of itself, an annexation. It is simply a way to clarify accumulated annexations, and describe, for the record, the entire city limits at a specific point in time.

An **annexation**, in order to be valid, must follow one of the following processes as outlined in Kansas state statutes.

ANNEXATION IN KANSAS

State statutes governing annexation in Kansas were revised in 2005, making the process more complex and very detailed. **K.S.A. 12-520 through 12-520(c) stipulate a variety of conditions that must be met before a city can annex land**, mostly having to do with public ownership, agricultural use, fire districts, and with how contiguous the proposed annexation is to existing city boundaries.

Platted areas of any size which adjoin a city are the most eligible for annexation. Limitations exist on unplatted land over 21 acres in size. Unplatted agricultural land of 21 acres or more must have the consent of the landowner.

When property which does not adjoin city limits is annexed, it is termed an **island annexation**. In Kansas, such property may be annexed without a formal hearing by the county, but only if the property is *city-owned*. For such property that is *not* owned by the city, even if the landowner consents, annexation must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

Whether a proposed annexation does or does not meet any of K.S.A. 12-520's conditions for annexation, **a city has the right to petition** their Board of County Commissioners to consider an annexation. Under K.S.A. 12-521, the Board of County Commissioners must consider the matter at a **quasi-judicial hearing**, where the Board is required to make its findings based on a preponderance of evidence.

PETITION OR CONSENT ANNEXATION

A property owner may petition a city to have their property annexed, or may consent to annexation when approached by the city. Annexation is generally a straightforward process under either of these circumstances.

Cooperation often occurs as a result of a **No Protest Agreement**, also known as a *Waiver of Annexation*. Most cities require a landowner to sign such an agreement before allowing municipal utilities to be extended to serve property outside the city limits. In a *No Protest Agreement*, the property owner agrees not to oppose current or future annexation, as a condition of receiving municipal utilities or other city services. Without such an agreement, annexing land after development takes place can be very difficult and costly for a city.

In general, the City of Abilene does not require *No Protest Agreements* before providing utilities to properties outside the city limits.

UNILATERAL ANNEXATION

A city can unilaterally annex land, without the cooperation of all affected property owners, but the process is long and difficult.

For a unilateral annexation in Kansas, K.S.A. 12-520a requires extensive notification to public agencies in the area, including any city, county or regional planning commissions with jurisdiction. In the case of Abilene, this would involve both the City and the County Planning Commissions, which would each be required to review the proposed annexation and make a finding of its compatibility or incompatibility with any adopted comprehensive plans or other land use plans.

K.S.A. 12-520b requires the City to have a **plan for providing appropriate public facilities and services** to annexed properties. The plan must describe the extent of public improvements, their financing, and provide a time-table to ensure that facilities and services will be available when needed. The plan must be in "*sufficient detail to provide a reasonable person with a full and complete understanding of the intentions of the city for each major municipal service*".

K.S.A. 12-531 and 532 establish a procedure for **deannexation** of unilaterally annexed land. Three years after a unilateral annexation, county commissioners are required to hold a hearing to determine if city services have been provided as required. If services have not been provided within two and one-half years following the hearing, the county may order the city to deannex the land.

Resource: Annexation in Kansas: A Manual Concerning the Annexation Powers and Duties of Cities (2015 Edition) is published by the League of Kansas Municipalities. Among other things, it provides samples of plans for extensions of municipal services, and various procedural forms.

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

Abilene currently has no extraterritorial jurisdiction, for either its Zoning or its Subdivision Regulations. Nevertheless, City leaders should be aware of the option.

Kansas statutes (*K.S.A. 12-715b et seq.*) allow a city to extend regulatory control beyond its boundaries, through zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, building codes, and floodplain regulations, within three miles of its city limits—but only if the county does not choose to assume the responsibility.

A city's extraterritorial jurisdiction is the area of land beyond the city limits, in which the city's zoning or subdivision authority is exercised. Dickinson County allows cities in the county to have extraterritorial jurisdiction if they so desire.

There is an **exemption for agricultural uses and related agricultural structures**. Cities are not authorized to adopt regulations outside the city which apply to or affect *"...any land in excess of three acres under one ownership which is used only for agricultural purposes"*. This exception, however, does *not* apply to floodplain regulations in areas designated by FEMA as floodplain.

If a City administers Zoning or Subdivision Regulations in an extraterritorial jurisdiction, **at least two members of the City Planning Commission must reside outside of the city but within three miles of the city limits.** (*See K.S.A. 12-744.*)

In general, a city's extraterritorial jurisdiction may extend for a maximum of three miles outside the city limits, but not more than one-half the distance to another city, nor into another county, nor beyond the City's Planning Area as designated in its approved Comprehensive Plan.

EXTRATERRITORIAL ZONING REQUIREMENTS

Before a City can implement extraterritorial zoning, its Zoning Regulations must authorize it, and incorporate provisions to apply it. Section 1-4 of Abilene's Zoning Regulations authorizes the option of extraterritorial zoning, but the City has not yet chosen to apply it.

A city must notify the board of county commissioners of its intention to adopt extraterritorial zoning regulations, in writing, 60 days before initiating such regulations by ordinance.

Joint Planning Option A rarely used alternative to accomplish extraterritorial zoning is to establish a joint, metropolitan or regional planning commission that includes both the city and the county. In such a case, the land proposed for extraterritorial zoning has to have been included in a comprehensive plan which was recommended by one of those two planning commissions, and which was then approved by either the city governing body or the board of county commissioners.

EXTRATERRITORIAL SUBDIVISION REQUIREMENTS

According to K.S.A. 12-749, a city planning commission may apply subdivision regulations to land outside of but within three miles of the city limits, provided such land is in the same county, and does not extend more than half the distance toward another city which has adopted subdivision regulations. A county may establish subdivision regulations for all or for parts of the unincorporated areas of the county.

If both a city and county want simultaneous subdivision jurisdiction in the same area, a joint city-county subdivision committee may be formed. According to K.S.A. 12-750(a), such a committee must be composed of at least three planning commission members from both entities, who then adopt and administer mutually agreed upon regulations. This is generally considered to be an extremely cumbersome method of subdivision regulation, and is rarely used in Kansas.

Site Plan Review & Approval

Currently, Abilene has not adopted any Site Plan Review standards, and has no Site Plan Approval process in place. City leaders should nevertheless be aware of the option.

A Site Plan is a detailed drawing that shows how a parcel of land will be developed. Site Plan Review is the process of reviewing site plans to ensure that the proposed land use meets the community's specified design standards. Site Plan Approval is typically required for all new development, except for single-family dwellings and certain duplexes.

Authority State statute K.S.A. 12-755(a)(4) allows for Site Plan Approval to be authorized in a community's Zoning Regulations, in order to "*control the aesthetics of redevelopment or new development*".

Site Plan Review (SPR) is intended to maintain and enhance the quality of a city's built environment. SPR can help improve the livability of neighborhoods, express community identity, preserve a sense of place, and contribute to a positive community image. Properly applied SPR standards can enhance the appearance of commercial areas, screen undesirable views, and improve relationships among non-compatible land uses. Over time, the Site Plan Approval process can increase property values and improve quality of life for the entire community.

Applicability SPR typically applies to all new development except single-family dwellings or duplexes which are not contained in a courtyard setting. SPR also applies to extensive alterations of existing sites and structures. SPR Criteria generally apply only to those parts of a development project which can be seen from public rights-of-way, such as building exteriors, accessory structures, parking areas, outdoor lighting, and landscaping.

Design Criteria: Written and illustrated Design Criteria may be adopted, to establish the esthetic standards utilized during the Site Plan Review process. Design Criteria can include both streetscape criteria which address improvements in the public rights-of-way, and other criteria which address design elements that may be used on private property.

Design Criteria are **not** intended to impose inflexible rules of style, size, material, or color on private and public spaces. Rather, design choices must be based on sound fundamental principles of successful planning, and then adapted to the specific needs of Abilene.

Site Plan Review Committee: The Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing and making final decisions on all site plans submitted for approval. However, the review process can be facilitated by use of a Site Plan Review Committee, tasked with making recommendations to the Planning Commission. Such a Committee usually includes members of the Planning Commission, as well as a selection of local residents with backgrounds in design or construction.

Plans for a proposed project, whether new construction or significant renovation, are reviewed from the perspective of how the exterior of the building and the design of its site visually impact the community, as well as how it accommodates vehicle and pedestrian traffic, parking, utilities, drainage, trash services, emergency vehicle access, and other features.

Site Plan Approval often **helps make development possible**. By clearly specifying the required conditions for a project, it ensures that new development is compatible with the character of the community, and will contribute to the Abilene's future quality of life.

CHAPTER 8. Resources

In order to implement the goals of this *Comprehensive Plan* over the next twenty years, Abilene's Planning Commission members and Governing Body will need to be aware of available resources of information and funding.

Though resources change over time—existing programs may be ended or defunded, and new programs may begin—this chapter will provide an overview of some of the state, regional, and national programs that are often useful in helping Kansas communities achieve their planning goals. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather to demonstrate the range of available possibilities.

Background on existing programs, information resources, and potential funding options are organized within this chapter under the following general headings:

- Seeking Grants
- Regional Cooperation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation Programs

Seeking Grants

Grants are available from both public and private sources. Public funding may include local capital improvement funds, bond referendums, or state and federal grant programs. Federal and state grants are often matching grant programs, and require partial local funding of each project. Private funding sources may include grants from foundations, land acquisition with the help of land trusts, or corporate sponsorships of specific projects or special events.

Some grants are available only to governmental entities, and some only to private nonprofits—so having a strong and active partnership between the City and local nonprofit organizations offers access to the greatest range of funding opportunities.

Competition for grant funding is fierce. The advantages of procuring outside funding should always be weighed against the sometimes substantial costs of grant research, selection, preparation, submittal, and administration.

To successfully compete for grant funding, carefully select projects that are well matched to the specific criteria of each grant. Be prepared to budget funds for either staff time for grant proposal preparation, or to employ a professional grant writer.

Ideally, funds for the City's portion of matching grants should be pre-approved by the Governing Body, so they are readily available when needed. If a City is willing to raise their percentage of matching funds even a little beyond a grant's required minimum, the likelihood of winning the grant may increase substantially.

To help grant seekers navigate the hundreds of thousands of potential grants available in the U.S. in any given year, there are any number of online grants search websites available, most of them basing their data on Form 990s filed with the Internal Revenue Service. Some are free, but most require a monthly fee.

Two websites that offer more than Form 990 data are [Candid](#) and [GrantStation](#). Other options include [FoundationSearch](#), [Grants.gov](#), [Kansas GrantWatch](#), the [Rural Health Information Hub](#), and [GrantFinder](#). Training in grant writing is available from organizations such as [The Grantsmanship Center](#).

Abilene is a member of the National League of Cities, which also provides grant information to members.

Regional Cooperation

Some factors impacting a community's economic development extend beyond planning area boundaries into a regional context. In particular, communication systems and transportation systems must be considered from a larger perspective. Environmental issues are also usually regional in nature—including air quality, water quantity and quality, and drainage and flooding.

Rather than having communities undercut each other as they compete for economic opportunities, **economic development** is most successfully achieved through cooperation on a regional level—with other governmental entities, with regional agencies, and with private organizations. Such **joint undertakings** can reduce the cost of providing a facility or service individually, improve its quality, and often make a project or program possible which would not be economically feasible if supported only by a single city. Regional cooperation is also sometimes an eligibility requirement of various state and federal grant programs, or may qualify grant recipients for added financial incentives.

The City of Abilene is indirectly represented in many regional organizations by the Dickinson County Board of Commissioners, whose members often serve on the boards of such organizations.

In order to effectively manage regional issues, many state and federal agencies operate by regional divisions. In addition, cities and counties often cooperate across political boundaries by utilizing **intergovernmental agreements**.

The **Interlocal Cooperation Act**, *K.S.A. 12-2901 et seq.*, is the principal statute which authorizes cooperation between public agencies and private groups for specific public improvements and services. Such interlocal agreements require the approval of the State Attorney General, and must be filed with the Secretary of State and recorded with the County Register of Deeds.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

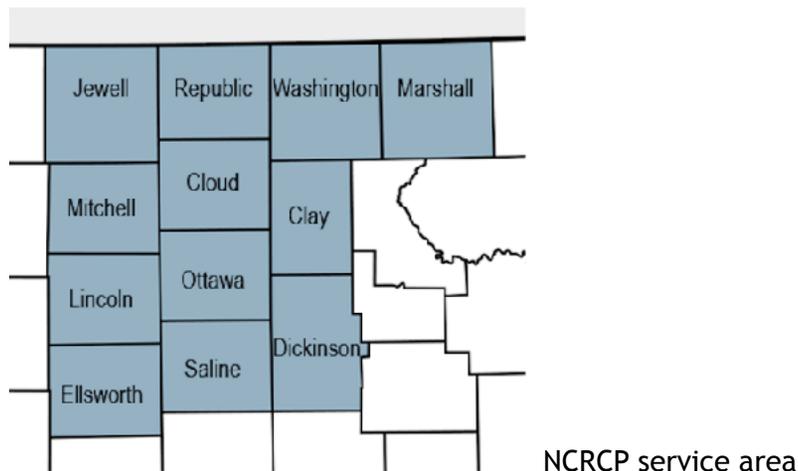
Community Foundations are 501(c)3 philanthropic nonprofit corporations that provide a legal vehicle for local residents to make charitable gifts back to their communities. They offer a variety of grant opportunities.

The Community Foundation of Dickinson County was founded in 1999. With over \$21 million in assets, the Foundation has provided over \$14 million in grants and scholarships to area nonprofits, local governments, schools and students.

The Chisholm Trail Extension District, which serves both Dickinson and Marion Counties, is headquartered at 712 South Buckeye in Abilene. The extension service is a partnership between Kansas State University and federal, state, and county governments, with offices serving every Kansas county. The Extension Service does not write applications or provide grants, but often provides **training programs for officials and civic leaders** on the "how to" of community development. They offer classes and technical information that can enhance economic viability and quality of life.

KSU Extension also administers the **First Impressions** program, which helps communities learn about their strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of a first-time visitor. Trained volunteers from a comparable community visit unannounced, and evaluate appearances, access to services; friendliness, and other community attributes. They follow standardized review procedures to document their visit and report on their findings.

The North Central Regional Planning Commission (NCRPC) is headquartered in Beloit. It partners with 83 cities in 12 north central Kansas counties, including Dickinson County. It supports programs that help member cities, counties, rural utilities and nonprofits with infrastructure, housing, technology, small business, and health and safety initiatives. The NCRPC has also helped members access millions in funding through the Homeland Security and Weatherization Assistance programs.



Dickinson County Economic Development Corporation, headquartered in Abilene at 203 NW 15th Street, is a local partner of the NCRPC. It works in partnership with local governments, community organizations and businesses to achieve economic development initiatives in the areas of business retention, expansion, recruitment and marketing; entrepreneurship; and community branding and marketing.

Housing

Over the course of the next twenty years, Abilene must both begin to improve its older housing and develop substantial amounts of new high-quality housing of various types.

There are a number of resources available that could aid the City in pursuit of these goals.

- The federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program provides federal grants to state and local governments to create affordable housing. The program can assist with rehabilitation, rental housing, new construction, and home ownership targeted to low and moderate income families.

In Kansas, HOME funds are distributed through the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation. Their First Time Home Buyer Program provides forgivable loans to Income-eligible households that have not owned a home in the past three years.

Programs to help provide affordable mortgages for low and moderate income people are typically administered by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) of the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**, or the **Rural Development (RD)** office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. RD also helps rural residents make health and safety repairs to their homes.

- Information on various types of HUD loans is available on the HUD Single Family Mortgage Programs website.
- Information on rural housing loan options is available on the RD Single Family Housing programs website.
- Information on multifamily housing loans for rural areas is available on the RD Multifamily Housing Programs website.

Economic Development

Cities have a vital interest in promoting their own economic development. Even though this is not a task which is typically the Planning Commission's responsibility, Planning Commissioners should be aware of the variety of economic development tools available to the City.

Many planning decisions have a profound impact on the local economy. From housing options, to infrastructure upgrades, to downtown streetscaping—planning decisions affect quality of life, which is fundamental to successful economic development.

GOVERNMENTAL TOOLS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The City of Abilene offers a variety of economic incentives for eligible businesses, including Neighborhood Revitalization Programs, Community Improvement Districts, Industrial Revenue Bonds, and Property Tax Abatements. With the exception of the Neighborhood Revitalization Programs, all Incentives are subject to approval by the City Commission.

More information on [Abilene's Economic Incentives](#) is available on the City website.

Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) This program is the result of an interlocal agreement among the City of Abilene, Dickinson County, and USD 435, to rebate a portion of property taxes in exchange for property or structure improvements in defined eligibility areas throughout the city. For qualifying properties, the NRP can provide a tax rebate on the incremental increase in property taxes that occurs after improvements valued at \$25,000 or more have been made to a structure or property.

Community Improvement Districts (CID) Under State law and City policy, when an eligible improvement project is planned, a property owner may petition the City to form a CID. One financing option allowed in a CID is the addition of a special sales tax, the proceeds of which must be used to cover the costs of eligible improvements inside the District. A CID sales tax may be as much as 2%, and may be applied for as long as 22 years.

Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs) These bonds are a potentially useful tool to encourage economic development and job creation. IRBs are issued by a government, but at the request of and on behalf of a private business, in order to support a specific project, such as the construction or expansion of a new manufacturing plant.

Since the bonds are issued by a government entity, they are tax exempt, and therefore the private business receives a lower interest rate on funds for startup. The business is responsible for repaying the IRB. The sponsoring government holds title to the collateral until the bonds are paid in full.

There are federal limits on the amount of IRBs that can be issued, and the uses to which the funds can be put.

- **Small Issue IRBs** are restricted to the construction, expansion, or renovation of manufacturing facilities. They are generally limited to \$1 million, but under certain circumstances that amount can go up to \$10 million.
- **Exempt Facility IRBs** have no size limits, but they can be used only for specific types of projects, such as water and sewer facilities, electricity and natural gas facilities, and certain types of rental housing.

Property Tax Exemptions Under various federal, state, and local programs, property taxes for certain property owners may be either eliminated or reduced. For instance, religious organizations and governments do not pay property taxes at all.

Other property owners may not be completely exempt, but may have their property taxes reduced by a specific percentage. For instance, veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces qualify for a partial exemption on taxes for their homes. Exemptions are often made for people over 65 years of age, for people with disabilities, and for agricultural properties.

Property Tax Funding for Recruiting Industry & Manufacturing Under K.S.A. 12-1617(h), cities are authorized to annually levy a property tax "*...for the purpose of creating a fund to be used in securing industries or manufacturing institutions for such city or near its environs...*".

The proposed levy must be initially approved by the voters at a referendum, may not exceed one mill, and is not subject to the property tax lid. Monies may also be expended from the general fund; however, they would be subject to the tax lid.

Such funding should be used judiciously and strategically, but occasionally may be necessary for a successful business recruitment effort.

FEDERAL & STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Some federal economic development programs are administered by state agencies. State economic development initiatives may create state programs, or simply enable local programs.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program:

This program distributes federal funds to Kansas cities and counties via the Kansas Department of Commerce. To receive funds, a project must meet at least one of three federally mandated criteria:

- Benefit low- and moderate-income individuals
- Remove or prevent slum or blight conditions
- Eliminate an urgent need created by a disaster, when local funds are unavailable

The State of Kansas receives an annual allocation for CDBG grants, which are distributed in four categories—Annual Competitive Grants, Economic Development Grants, Commercial Rehabilitation Grants, and Urgent Need Grants.

- **Annual Competitive Grants** Awarded annually, these grants apply to projects such as improvements to water, sewer, natural gas or electrical systems, fire protection, housing rehabilitation, demolition, bridges, community and senior centers, streets, architectural barrier removal, and public service activities.
- **Economic Development Grants** Business finance grants awarded to cities or counties are loaned in turn to private businesses that create or retain permanent jobs. Funding is also available for infrastructure improvements that directly create or retain permanent jobs. At least 51% of the jobs created or retained must meet HUD's low- and moderate-income standard.

- **Commercial Rehabilitation Grants** This is a relatively new CDBG program, designed to assist private business owners in rehabilitating downtown commercial buildings to stem the tide of decay. The buildings must house viable businesses that will carry on for-profit business activity.
- **Urgent Need Grants** Provided on an as-needed basis, these grants assist a local government to meet community needs created by a severe natural or other disaster that poses an immediate threat to community health or welfare, when no other financial resources are available.

Workforce Development Programs Federal funding under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act supports state workforce development programs, which are available to employers at no cost. Workforce Center services may include job listings, applicant pre-screening, assessment testing, interview scheduling, veteran services, and current labor market data.

Rural Development Kansas Programs The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers a number of programs through its Rural Development offices in each state, offering loans, grants and loan guarantees to support essential services such as housing, economic development, health care, first responder services and equipment, and water, electric and communications infrastructure. They also promote economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks, credit unions, and community-managed lending pools.

- The *USDA Rural Development Summary of Programs* provides an overview of all available RD programs.

BONDS

Kansas Development Finance Authority (KDFA): KDFA is authorized to issue tax-exempt or taxable bonds for public and private educational facilities, healthcare facilities, and to finance affordable multifamily housing. It operates the **Beginning Farmer program** to provide start-up funding for agricultural businesses.

KDFA can also issue obligations for qualifying private activities, including energy and electric generation and transmission projects and facilities; education facilities; energy conservation improvements; manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution facilities; communication facilities; research facilities; transportation; corporate and management offices; and computer services.

KDFA works in partnership with other state departments to implement various low-interest tax exempt bond programs for municipalities, through five state revolving loan funds.

- *Kansas Clean Water Supply Revolving Loan Fund Program* for municipal and rural waste water systems (with KDHE)
- *Public Water Supply Revolving Loan Fund Program* which targets public drinking water systems (with KDHE)
- *Transportation Revolving Loan Fund* to provide financing for local road and bridge infrastructure improvements (with KDOT)
- *Communications Revolving Loan Fund Program* to upgrade communications equipment (with KDOT)
- *Investments in Major Projects and Comprehensive Training Program (IMPACT)* to issue bonds which provides funds for job training, and for major project investments for companies which are locating or expanding their business in Kansas (with Kansas Department of Commerce)

TAX INCENTIVES & TAX CREDITS

The State of Kansas provides a variety of [tax incentives for business development](#), through income tax credits or deductions, property tax exemptions or abatements, and sales tax exemptions.

Historic Tax Credits Two tax credit programs are available for the historic rehabilitation of buildings in Kansas, both administered by the [State Historic Preservation Office](#). These tax credits may be applied to the costs of rehabilitating a historic building, as long as the rehabilitation meets the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#).

- The [Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit](#) program provides a federal income tax credit equal to 20% of total qualified expenses for a building that meets the program's criteria.
- The [State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit](#) program provides a state income tax credit equal to a percentage of the qualified rehabilitation expenses. These credits can be used to offset income taxes, premium taxes, or privilege taxes payable to the State of Kansas.

RESOURCES

- Information on state economic development programs is available on the Kansas Department of Commerce [Programs & Services](#) web page.
- Information on economic development tools for Kansas communities is available from the *League of Kansas Municipalities*, in a 2013 publication called [Economic Development Tools for Kansas Municipalities](#).

Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation Programs

Surface Transportation Block Grants (STBG) Previous federal funding programs that supported development of the bulk of the nation's bike paths and pedestrian trails have now all been replaced with a **Transportation Alternatives (TA)** set-aside of STBG program funding.

In Kansas, federal STBG/TA set-aside funds are administered by the Kansas Department of Transportation. TA projects are selected through a statewide competitive process. For each fiscal year, KDOT allocates about half of its TA funds to projects in smaller Kansas communities.

Only entities with taxing authority, such as local governments or school districts, are eligible to apply for TA funds, although nonprofits can and often do partner with cities on TA projects. The TA program provides no money upfront but rather is a **cost reimbursement program**. TA funds may pay for up to 80% of eligible expenses, but local matching funds are required to pay for at least 20% of project costs.

Transportation Alternatives program projects can include on-road and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, the conversion of abandoned rail corridors to railtrails, construction of scenic overlooks, and the preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities.

Certain **environmental projects** are also eligible for TA funding, including erosion control and stormwater mitigation activities, invasive species prevention, the construction of wildlife corridors, and billboard inventories and removal of illegal and non-conforming billboards.

For more information, see the KDOT Transportation Alternatives Program Guide 2020.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) This is a federal program intended to make it safer for more children to walk and bike to school, thereby reducing childhood obesity, as well as the traffic accidents, wasted fuel, and air pollution that result from traffic congestion near schools. More information on the Safe Routes to School website and on the Kansas Safe Routes to School website.

A city or a school district can apply for 100% SRTS funding to plan, design, and build projects that improve the ability of students to walk and bike to school, for projects within about two miles of a school.

Eligible projects include sidewalk improvements, traffic calming and speed reduction improvements, pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities, secure bike parking, and traffic diversion improvements

SRTS also funds activities that encourage walking and bicycling to school, including public awareness and outreach campaigns, traffic education and enforcement near schools, and student training programs on bicycle and pedestrian safety.

School Zone Program The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) funds a School Zone Program that can help towns with a population of fewer than 20,000 people improve their school zones with pavement striping, school zone signs, and reduced speed assemblies.

Walking School Bus Consider implementing a Walking School Bus program, which arranges for children to walk in groups, with adults along to supervise. The program can be as informal as a couple of families taking turns walking their kids to school—or as structured as a defined route with meeting points, a timetable, and a schedule of trained volunteers.

CHAPTER 9. Plan Implementation

This chapter reviews methods for implementing this *Comprehensive Plan*, and provides an **overview of Planning Commissioners' statutory responsibilities**.

City planning can be defined as a decision-making process which is expressed in the form of a plan. A plan typically **defines community goals** (physical, social and economic), and includes project proposals and policy statements, all aimed at the **broad objective of improving a community's quality of life**.

Policies are established principles and guidelines, intended to ensure that every important decision is made with long-term goals in mind.

- **Policy Resource:** The League of Kansas Municipalities provides sample policy statements on a variety of subjects, available to members on their website.

Leadership and organization are the keys to successful implementation of this *Comprehensive Plan*.

It takes a coordinated effort to successfully achieve community goals, so a good working relationship among governmental agencies, private organizations, potential developers and citizens is essential. Assigning specific responsibility for specific proposals is also crucially important—because in community-wide endeavors, "everybody's business" can easily become "nobody's business", and proposals can be forgotten.

FUNCTIONS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This *Comprehensive Plan* provides direction on both short-term and long-range planning objectives, so it is specific in some matters and general in others. As individual planning situations are addressed over the course of the Planning Period, each will need to be considered based on conditions current at the time. Nevertheless, every decision should be rooted in the overall planning goals expressed in this *Plan*.

A basic purpose of planning is to help guide land use in an orderly manner, minimizing conflicts between various users of land. Planning ensures that community services are provided efficiently and economically. Compromise in the location of a community facility affects its efficiency, and therefore its long-term costs to local taxpayers. To prevent such compromises, the process of planning is a means of making better short-range decisions by relating them to long-range goals.

Among other functions, this *Comprehensive Plan*:

- Compiles information helpful to **City officials** when they establish policies and make planning decisions.
- Assists potential **developers** to understand long-range community intentions.
- Serves as a planning rationale for administering City Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, providing a basis for making decisions that are "**reasonable**" under the law and therefore defensible in court, and for reviewing plats in terms of their fit with City growth policies and the capacity of existing community facilities and infrastructure.
- Is often a **prerequisite** for applications to state and federal **grant programs** which could benefit the City and the Planning Area.
- Helps to coordinate planning efforts among the City of Abilene, USD 435, Dickinson County, the State of Kansas, and the federal government.

LEGAL BASIS

According to State statute K.S.A. 12-747, a planning commission is authorized to make a comprehensive plan for the development of a city, as well as any unincorporated territory outside the city which the planning commission believes is a constituent of the "total community of which the city is a part".

By statute, a comprehensive plan in Kansas must include information on existing conditions and trends related to land use, population, public facilities, transportation, economic conditions and natural resources, and must also include the commission's recommendations for development within the planning area. Statutes also allow for the inclusion of "any other element deemed necessary to the comprehensive plan".

Adoption & Approval Process

Adoption by the Planning Commission For a completed comprehensive plan to become effective, it must be formally adopted as a whole or in parts by a **resolution** of the Planning Commission, after a **Public Hearing** which has been properly advertised beforehand. Adoption must be based on a **majority vote of the total membership** of the Planning Commission. A certified copy of the adopted plan or part, together with a written summary of the Hearing, must then be submitted to the City's Governing Body with a recommendation for approval.

Approval by the Governing Body After receiving the certified copy of the *Plan* or part of the *Plan*, and a written summary of the Hearing (which can be unapproved Minutes of the Hearing), the Governing Body may choose one of three actions.

- The Governing Body may choose to **approve** the comprehensive plan as recommended by the Planning Commission, by publishing an **ordinance** of approval.
- By at least a 2/3 majority vote, the Governing Body may **override** the Planning Commission's recommendations.
- The Governing Body may **return** the *Plan* to the Planning Commission for further consideration, along with a statement specifying the basis for the Governing Body's failure to approve or disapprove.

After considering the returned *Plan*, the Planning Commission may provide its reasons and resubmit its original recommendations, or submit an amended recommendation. The Planning Commission must deliver its recommendations to the Governing Body following the Commission's next regular meeting after receipt of the Governing Body's report, or else the Governing Body must consider the Commission's inaction as a resubmission of the original recommendations and proceed accordingly. When the Governing Body receives a resubmitted *Plan*, it may, by a simple majority, either adopt the *Plan*, or revise and adopt the *Plan*, or it may choose to take no action.

Copies of the *Plan* An attested copy of an adopted and approved *Comprehensive Plan*, and any amendments to it, must be sent to all other taxing subdivisions in the Planning Area which request a copy of the *Plan*.

Annual Review & Amendments

In order to maintain the viability of the *Plan* under State statutes, **at least once each year the Planning Commission must review** or reconsider the *Plan* or any of its parts, and may propose amendments, extensions or additions to it. Amendments to the plan are made by the same procedures as required for the original adoption process, including a properly advertised public hearing.

By statute, an approved plan or part of the plan "... shall constitute the basis or guide for public action to insure a coordinated and harmonious development or redevelopment which will best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare as well as a wise and efficient expenditure of public funds."

Although the Kansas Supreme Court views the adoption and annual review of a comprehensive plan as a "legislative function", note that a plan is still a "guide", and actual implementation must take place within the democratic processes of local government and other agencies.

On a nationwide scale, comprehensive plans are assuming an increasingly important role in land use litigation.

A comprehensive plan must be consistent with the regulatory tools for its implementation, especially zoning and subdivision regulations. That consistence, or its lack, is often the crux of land use lawsuit decisions.

Planning Commission Responsibilities

The Abilene City Planning Commission was originally created in 1926, under Ordinance No. 628. According to City Code, the Commission must have seven members, all residents of the City of Abilene. Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor, with the consent of the City Commission.

Planning Commission members serve three-year staggered terms. The Commission operates under its adopted Bylaws, which have been approved by the Governing Body.

As the authorized agency under State statutes, the Planning Commission's major responsibility is to **prepare, adopt and maintain the *Comprehensive Plan***. The Commission should also undertake various responsibilities in implementing the *Plan*, including:

- **Review the *Comprehensive Plan* annually, as required by State statute**, and report its status to the Governing Body. Such annual reviews often result in only minor changes to the *Plan*, but it is recommended that a major review should be conducted at least once every five years, to update and revise goals and priorities. [K.S.A. 12-747(d)]
- As required by K.S.A. 12-748, review public improvement, facility and utility projects to determine their **conformance to the *Comprehensive Plan***.
- Prepare, adopt and maintain **Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations** for the City, by holding public hearings and making recommendations to the Governing Body.
- Hold hearings on proposed **vacations** of rights-of-way and easements, and make recommendations to the Governing Body.
- Review proposed **annexations**, and make recommendations to the Governing Body.
- Undertake development of **neighborhood or project plans**, to provide more detailed plans to develop new neighborhoods or rehabilitate older neighborhoods, or for special projects in the Planning Area.
- Assist the Governing Body on **special planning projects**, including economic development efforts, capital improvement planning, and grant applications.

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Public engagement in the planning process—not only by officials, but by individuals and groups of citizens, civic organizations and potential developers—is essential for a successful outcome.

Public participation should go beyond simply informing the public of planning activities. **Encourage feedback** from the public, so people can readily communicate their ideas about the kind of community they want to live in, and actively participate in the development and review of planning proposals.

Since plans and their implementation affect people and their property, it is extremely important that the planning process be conducted within an open democratic framework. To successfully implement *Comprehensive Plan* goals, pursue a variety of strategies to encourage public engagement, including:

- Conduct business and hearings in **open meetings**. Give adequate notice, and provide agendas. Encourage the public to voice their opinions and contribute their ideas. Take minutes, and make them available to the public.
- When preparing plans and considering regulatory decisions, specifically **involve affected individuals**, including residents and business owners.
- Make planning proposals, plans, reports, maps and regulations available on the City website. For people without internet access, printed planning documents should be available for review at City Hall.

NEIGHBORHOOD & PROJECT PLANS

Due to their large scale and long-range perspective, comprehensive plans are necessarily generalized. As specific areas approach the point of active development, the Planning Commission may require individualized neighborhood and project plans based on more current and specific information.

Neighborhood and project plans may serve simply as policy guidelines for future decisions, or they may be formally adopted with a public hearing process and approved as an element of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

A **neighborhood plan** typically analyzes in detail the land use, transportation, and public facility needs of a part of the Planning Area which poses unusual, difficult or new conditions. A neighborhood plan might deal with an area as small as a block or as large as a major segment of the Planning Area. They are often the first step taken in efforts to rehabilitate older neighborhoods.

Neighborhood plans can aid in making decisions on current and future land use proposals, capital improvement projects, and applications for zoning, subdivision plats, and annexations. They can also help facilitate a good working relationship between developers and area residents.

A **project plan** is a detailed description of the proposed development of a specific site for a particular purpose, such as a park, recreation area, public building, or industrial tract. They are often prepared as part of a grant application or bond issue, or as a result of funding becoming available from such sources.

Neighborhood and project plans often focus on a community's historic downtown, on specific business districts or residential neighborhoods, or on areas being considered for annexation. In their simplest form, they may consist of simply a drawing and a short explanatory report. More complex issues or areas, however, may require a more complex plan.

Property owners and potential developers who may be affected by such plans should always be invited to participate in their preparation.

Abilene Comprehensive Plan 2024-2045

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN (CIP)

Financing and constructing public improvement projects is a complex process. A Capital Improvement Plan is a long-range fiscal management tool which is used to establish the priority, timing, cost estimates and funding sources for public physical improvements, typically covering a period of four to six years.

A CIP does not deal with annually recurring **operating expenses**, except to note the effect which a new facility or improvement may have on future operating budgets. The current year of a CIP is the most detailed, and is often adopted as the City's capital improvements budget along with the City's annual operating budget.

A CIP is an essential tool for coordinating the sequence of financing and construction for any project involving joint funding, including public-private partnerships. Projects which incorporate funding from county, state or federal sources may require **scheduling at least several years in advance**.

A CIP is also an effective way to guide the direction and timing of **subdivision development**. This is particularly important in areas that have been unilaterally annexed by the City, where there are **stringent legal requirements for the timing of the installation of public improvements**.

Abilene has a Capital Improvements Plan. While Planning Commission members would not be directly involved with its preparation, they should understand how a CIP can support the implementation of a *Comprehensive Plan* and the community goals expressed in it.

PROJECT REVIEW

Once a *Comprehensive Plan* has been approved by the Governing Body, and its effectuating ordinance is published, K.S.A. 12-748 establishes a procedure for Planning Commission review of any public projects proposed in the *Plan*.

Any public improvement, public facility or public utility project recommended in the *Plan* **must be submitted to the Planning Commission for review**. Before the Governing Body may proceed with construction of the project, the Planning Commission must determine that the proposed project **conforms with the *Comprehensive Plan***. The Commission must make a determination **within 60 days**, or the project is automatically deemed to have been approved.

In the event the Planning Commission finds that the proposed project **does not conform** to the *Plan*, the Planning Commission is required to submit their findings in writing to the Governing Body. The Governing Body may, by a majority vote, choose to override the findings of the Planning Commission and proceed with the project. In this event, the statute states that the *Comprehensive Plan* **"...for the area concerned shall be deemed to have been amended"**. The Planning Commission should then proceed to revise and **formally amend the Comprehensive Plan**, so that the Plan conforms with the approved project.

Zoning cases and plats should be reviewed by the Planning Commission to **determine their conformance** to the goals of the *Comprehensive Plan*, as should **projects in a city's capital improvement plan**.

K.S.A. 12-748(b) provides that if a project in a capital improvement plan is reviewed by the Planning Commission and found to be in conformance to the *Comprehensive Plan*, then no further Planning Commission review is necessary, except as may be required by zoning and subdivision regulations.

The Planning Commission's recommendations on zoning cases, plats and public projects are intended to enable the Governing Body to make **decisions that support long-range planning goals**, while retaining their final decision-making authority.

STATUTORY DEBT LIMITATION

Typically, under Kansas law, the bonded debt limitation for a city may be calculated by taking 30% of the total of a city's tangible assessed valuation, including its motor vehicle valuations. The combination of a city's general obligation and its special assessment debt may not exceed this number. Bonds issued for general sewer and water work, and revenue bonds, are not included in the debt limitation.

Abilene's debt limit is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this *Plan*. As of 2022, the City of Abilene's bonded debt was just 20% of the amount allowed under its debt limitation.

Good municipal management maintains a continuing effort to keep public facilities up-to-date, while not allowing the mill levy for indebtedness to fluctuate too greatly. Prudent financial planning will enhance Abilene's ability to reach the goals established in this *Comprehensive Plan*.

Taking Action

A number of planning goals for Abilene were established during the process of developing this *Comprehensive Plan*. Community leaders should **regularly review goals and priorities, and revise them as necessary**, based on their urgency and the availability of resources. This process is often incorporated into the Planning Commission's required annual review of the *Comprehensive Plan*, and the Governing Body's annual budgeting process.

As each goal is addressed, an action program will need to be developed for its implementation. An **action program** is a way to make sure that goals turn into reality, by describing specific tasks that must be achieved in order to reach each goal. To be effective, an action program must include clear-cut implementation information for each goal:

- **Define the tasks** necessary to achieve the goal
- **Determine who is responsible** for making sure each task is achieved
- **Set a schedule and a deadline**
- **Assign resources** (funding, staff, etc.) sufficient to achieve each task
- **Establish communication hierarchies** (Who needs to know what, how soon?)

For significant public projects, be willing to **spend time and effort on the early stages of the planning process**—it will pay off later in community satisfaction with the overall success of the final project. Making good decisions at each step in a logical process of design helps prevent costly revisions later, during construction. Engaging the services of design professionals to help throughout the planning process, as opposed to waiting until you are ready for construction drawings, is recommended.

CHAPTER 10. Abilene's Planning Goals

This chapter provides an overview of Abilene's **comprehensive planning goals**. It is a compilation of the detailed planning goals incorporated throughout this *Plan*, as well as general policy and quality-of-life goals.

This chapter is intended as an aid to the City leaders and municipal staff who will be primarily responsible for seeing that these goals are implemented.

Planning goals must take into account the physical, social, economic and governmental needs of a community. Goals which are reasonable and well grounded, yet also purposeful and ambitious, can help **frame policies and focus decision-making**.

Meaningful goals will help Abilene hone its unique identity, which in turn will distinguish it from other communities, and enhance its ability to compete for residents, resources, and economic development.

COMMUNITY GOALS

Historic Preservation

- Continue to **preserve and creatively utilize Abilene's historic buildings**, and to **protect the character of the city's Historic Districts**.
- Apply for **grants to complete an official survey of Abilene's historic districts and properties**.
- Develop a **Preservation Plan** for Abilene's historic districts and properties.

Floodplain Regulations

- Continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program, and support regulations to **discourage inappropriate development in floodplains**.
- Update the City's Floodplain Regulations, incorporating higher standards to reduce flood insurance costs and provide greater flood protection.

Trees

- Continue to **plant new public trees** strategically to benefit the urban forest.
- Review and **update** the 1996 City Forestry Standards and Specifications. Add a policy addressing Memorial Trees, update the list of disease and insect problems, update the list of approved tree species to reflect current conditions, and revise curb and setback standards to allow street trees in the downtown area.
- Create a plan to **encourage trees in the downtown area**, particularly on any new curb extensions.
- As the City's public trees age, support a program of **regular maintenance pruning** to keep them healthy and safe for as long as possible.
- **Promptly** remove hazardous or diseased public trees, particularly **pinus and ash trees**.
- To prevent the spread of Pine Wilt, annually **remove symptomatic pine trees by March 1st** and maintain a **public awareness campaign** on this issue.
- Maintain a program to discover and treat **bagworm infestations** on particularly vulnerable and valuable public trees.
- Revise the City Subdivision Regulations to **require trees in new developments**.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM GOALS

Streets

- Pursue a solution to traffic problems at the **intersection at NW 14th and Van Buren Streets**.
- Have a ***Downtown Traffic & Parking Study*** done, to determine traffic counts on downtown streets, and to evaluate parking availability versus both present and future parking needs.
- If supported by the results of the ***Downtown Traffic & Parking Study***, begin a program of **narrowing downtown streets and creating curb extensions** at intersections, to allow for wider sidewalks, street trees and bike lanes. Developing such a streetscape along Buckeye Avenue will likely involve negotiations with the State of Kansas.
- To improve future walkability in Abilene, consider requiring any new **cul-de-sac streets** to be platted in such a way that they **allow for direct pedestrian and bicycle connections** linking cul-de-sacs to each other, and to the street grid.
- Whenever **street lighting** improvement projects take place, work towards transitioning to full-cutoff, energy efficient LED lighting.
- Over time, implement **complete streets** principles to make Abilene more walkable and bikeable.

Airport

- Pursue implementation of the ***2020 Airport Master Plan***.

Public Transit

- Continue to support the ***GoAbilene General Public Transportation*** service.

Sidewalks & Bicycling Facilities

- Pursue funding from KDOT's School Zone Program to install new and better **crosswalks** around the schools. Consider prioritizing sidewalk improvements in the vicinity of St. Andrew's Elementary School, particularly north of the building.
- Proactively identify existing sidewalks in need of repair or replacement, and prioritize locations for development of new sidewalks.
- Continue to support Abilene's ***Sidewalk Connection & Replacement Program***.
- Require all new developments to include sidewalks and ADA curb ramps.
- Select a **bike rack design** for Abilene that provides two-point support, is lockable, is constructed of low maintenance materials, and meets ADA requirements. Ideally, it should also incorporate a customized Abilene logo.
- Continue to install secure **bicycle racks** at local destinations where they are needed, and prioritize a replacement schedule for older non-standard racks.
- **Create a plan to develop a network of bike paths, lanes and routes** in Abilene.
Explore federal grants and other **funding** sources to help finance development of the bicycle network.

UTILITIES GOALS

Policies

- Pursue opportunities to transition City facilities to use of **sustainable energy**.
- Regularly review and update standards and procedures for installation and maintenance of utilities, to reflect changes in technology and in environmental expectations.
- Regularly review and rigorously enforce policies on the placement of structures, fences and vegetation in **utility and drainage easements**.
- Establish a policy requiring landowners of properties outside the city limits to sign a **No Protest Agreement** in order to connect to Abilene's municipal utilities.
- Develop a long-term plan to put existing **overhead utility lines** in Abilene underground, including an incentive program to encourage property owners to have their supply lines buried.

Mapping

- Transfer the hand-drawn map of Abilene's stormwater drainage system to GIS.
- Add gravity flow limits to the GIS map of Abilene's sewage disposal system.

Water

- Establish a budget line item to **replace a percentage of outworn water distribution lines each year**, especially lead and copper service lines, and undersized main lines.
- Add a **generator** at the Water Treatment Plant.
- Replace the **roof** of the Water Treatment Plant building.
- Renovate the **access drive** at the Water Treatment Plant.
- Rehabilitate the elevated **water tower**, inside and out.
- Replace all 4-inch water mains with 6-inch mains.
- Replace mains, valves and hydrants as needed.
- Repair the concrete driveway at the Water Treatment Plant Office.

Wastewater

- Fund and develop an ongoing program to begin replacement or relining of the oldest parts of the sewage collection system.
- Establish a public education program to make sure people understand that they should not connect downspouts or basement sump pumps to a sanitary sewer line.
- Establish a long-term **Wastewater Treatment Plant Maintenance Plan**, to schedule and plan for major WWTP equipment repairs and replacements that will be needed during the course of the Planning Period.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT GOALS

- Approve a City ordinance to **require a drainage study in order to get a building permit**, for any construction project other than a single-family residence.
- Consider implementing a **zero runoff policy** in Abilene's Subdivision Regulations, requiring new developments to avoid adding runoff to any neighboring properties.
- Whenever substantial construction work is done on an Abilene street, consider incorporating **green infrastructure** stormwater management strategies into the street design, particularly downtown.
- Analyze the cost-effectiveness of a green infrastructure solution to the **problem drainage area in the southeast** part of the city, as opposed to the cost of replacing the entire existing undersized concrete drainage pipe.

FACILITIES GOALS

City Hall / City Auditorium /

Police Department / Fire Department / Library

- Replace building's HVAC system.
- Repoint building's exterior bricks.
- Replace roof.
- Redesign and replace drainage system, including gutters and downspouts.
- **City Hall:** Complete the planned first floor renovation.
- **City Hall:** Relocate the sewer system from inside the building to the outside.
- **City Auditorium:** Develop a plan for the Auditorium's future use and renovation. Consider pursuing a grant for repurposing historic buildings.
- **New Fire Station:** Develop a plan for a new larger Fire Station, and determine an appropriate site. Purchase land, if necessary. Arrange funding, and construct a new Fire Station.
- Renovate the vacated Fire Department space to accommodate expansion of City Hall and the Police Department.
- **Library:** Repair and refinish flooring.
- **Library:** Renovate elevator.
- **Library:** HVAC system equipment will reach the end of its life cycle and need to be replaced at some point during the Planning Period.

Public Works

- Expand the existing Truck Shop/Weld shop, which is too small.

Civic Center

- Rebuild those **window and door frames** that are damaged from wood rot.
- **Repoint** and reseal the building's exterior bricks.
- **Restore paver bricks** around the buildings and in the parking lots and sidewalks to a safe and level surface.

Senior Center

- Build an **addition to expand the kitchen** and provide additional storage. Replace the existing coolers with a commercial **refrigerator**, and replace the existing deep freezers with a **walk-in freezer**.
- Replace and upgrade the building's **windows**.
- Consider organizing a **home maintenance help program**.
- Consider acquiring a **van** to safely transport seniors for off-campus social & educational activities. A **garage** would provide secure storage for the van.

LAND USE GOALS

Policies & Regulations

- Consider establishing a policy that requires a **No Protest Agreement** between the City and any landowner outside the city limits, before they can connect to City utility services.
- Consider establishing **Site Plan Review standards** for both commercial development along K-15 and interchange-oriented commercial development near the I-70 interchanges.
- Update the City's Zoning Regulations to:
 - Allow **accessory dwelling units (ADUs)**
 - Address tiny homes
 - Address preservation of **historic homes & neighborhoods**
- Update Subdivision Regulations to address walkable versus cul-de-sac neighborhood design.
- Develop **policies and utilize the City's Development Incentives programs to encourage renovation** of the upper-floors of Abilene's downtown buildings into **loft apartments**.

Annexation

- Consider **annexation** of any developed land outside of the City that is adjacent to or quite near the city limits.
- Continue to expand Abilene's boundaries around both I-70 interchanges, particularly at the **Fair Road interchange**, in order to establish and maintain local control over the character of development there.

Land Acquisition

- Plan ahead to **acquire land that might be needed for any future municipal facilities**, especially a **new Fire Station and parks**.
- Plan to acquire land for a **west-side park**, possibly suitable for sports fields.
- Plan to acquire land for an **east-side park**. Consider land along a stream for a linear park with a pathway, or land in a floodplain. Include a **minimum of five acres of land for a new Dog Park**, walkably adjacent to the Linear Park pathway. Ideally, a Dog Park should have well-drained turf, mature shade trees, a good access road, space for sufficient parking, and be far enough from residential development to avoid noise conflicts.

Streets

- Plat any new **neighborhood streets to be as narrow as fire-fighting equipment access allows**, in order to calm vehicle traffic speeds and keep residential neighborhoods comfortably walkable.

Housing

- Encourage development of **both single-family and multifamily housing**, including townhomes, patio homes, duplexes, triplexes, apartment buildings, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- Encourage **updating of Abilene's smaller homes** for use by one- or two-person households, especially young adults and down-sizing empty-nesters.
- Encourage development of a variety of **low-maintenance and accessible homes**.
- Maintain an array of **diverse housing options at a range of price points**.
- Encourage development of a higher percentage of more dense, urban-style neighborhoods in proportion to large-lot suburban developments.
- Discourage scattered large-lot residential housing and instead prefer to **establish platted rural subdivisions**.

Industrial

- Consider developing an **industrial park** in the area of the I-70 interchange at Fair Road, with pad-ready sites.

Downtown & Streetscapes

- Implement a **parking study of downtown Abilene**, to determine if existing parking is excessive to need or not.
- Pursue discussions with KDOT to **reduce K-15 in Abilene from four lanes to three**, at least downtown, and possibly from North 14th Street all the way to South 7th Street.
- Develop a **streetscape plan for downtown Abilene**, which can be implemented in phases, to **prioritize the pedestrian experience** over vehicle traffic.
Add **wider sidewalks, curb extensions to support shorter and safer crosswalks, street trees, improved ADA accessible parking, street furniture** like benches and bike racks, **pedestrian scale ornamental lighting**, and perhaps some small-scale **outdoor dining**.
- Consider **green infrastructure solutions for needed drainage improvements**, particularly downtown.
- Develop a **pedestrian-oriented wayfinding signage system** for use **downtown**.