



# 2023

MAYOR'S ANNUAL UPDATE



DECEMBER 5, 2023

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# 2023 MAYOR'S ANNUAL UPDATE



MAYOR/CEO TYRONE A. GARNER

DECEMBER 5, 2023

Dear Unified Government Board of Commissioners,

At my inauguration, I promised to bring a new approach to how we address some of the greatest challenges facing our community while embracing the incredible talent and hometown pride that has always made Wyandotte County a special place. I committed to working with you and our community to find sustainable solutions to alleviate the cost of living in our county through lower taxes, more efficient government services, and economic development that benefits all neighborhoods, particularly those east of 55th Street.

Key to this promise was hiring a permanent county administrator to help guide the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS (UG) toward fiscal responsibility, greater accountability, and improved customer service. Following a national search, we welcomed David W. Johnston, ICMA-CM, to the UG in March of this year. A highly qualified public administrator, I am confident that our organization now has the leadership needed to guide us through our continued transformation as an organization and community.

## EMBRACING OUR TRUTH

We are a community that deserves the best. As your Mayor, I have sought ways to address the systemic challenges we face, particularly in areas that have experienced decades of disinvestment due to red lining and other discriminatory practices. Throughout our citywide comprehensive planning process, PlanKCK, we heard presentations about how the history of racism has shaped our city and county today, impacting our community health and well-being on many fronts. Our

Wyandotte County Public Health Department convened a series of community listening sessions to develop strategies for addressing racism as a public health crisis. In 2024, we will explore the recommendations developed and examine how we can incorporate this into public policy.

We must continue to embrace our truth. I look forward to working with the county administrator and Commission on reimagining the future of the Quindaro Townsite, a nationally significant historic site. I believe we can begin to heal much of the ills of the past in the historic Northeast through thoughtful investment in this cultural landmark which will benefit us all. We must work to restore trust with our community while creating new opportunity.

While systemic change is hard, it is not impossible. We must aggressively approach these challenges with optimism and through collaboration. We have many things to celebrate as a county but must be intentional in ensuring that everyone benefits from our successes.

## CULTIVATING OUR FUTURE

Looking ahead to 2024, I am eager to continue working with our Commission, community, and partners to address the following goals:

### • PROVIDE TAX RELIEF FOR RESIDENTS

Property values have continued to rise year over year and we continue to hear from our community that we need to do more to address the tax burden and cost of living impacts felt county-wide. While we cannot cut our way out of the financial problems facing the Unified Government, we must identify operational efficiencies,

## 2023 UNIFIED GOVERNMENT COMMISSION



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Mayor/CEO



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District 7



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District 8

focus on core services, and engage the other taxing jurisdictions across Wyandotte County to identify ways to reduce the mill levy wherever possible.

I remain committed to addressing the BPU PILOT, a tax that supports many of our basic services but cannot be a burden to so many in our community. No household should have to choose between keeping the lights on and food on the table. While we took a small step forward to provide relief in the 2024 budget with our homestead and utility tax rebate programs, we must work together to prioritize how we can make the cost of utilities more affordable in our community.

#### • FACILITATE EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

We must continue to grow our economic base to help us maintain and sustain critical infrastructure and services through equitable opportunity, new business attraction and small business support. Furthermore, we must identify new revenue that does not place the burden on households or individuals who cannot bear these costs. As you will see within this report, we have had many economic development wins this year and continue to see an interest in investing within our community. However, we must continue to address policies that impede equitable economic development, examine our incentive models to maximize our taxpayer return, and explore creative solutions to infill development - a formidable challenge but critical to our urban core.

I urge you to consider the proposal for a community benefits agreement, working toward a model that enhances positive impact of new development in our community. This proposal, developed by the Business & Economic Development Task Force, seeks to address the imbalance of economic activity in our county.

We have also seen progress in elevating the arts as a key economic catalyst in our community. The Arts, Culture & Equitable Development task force has successfully launched a new arts council, a standalone non-profit, who will continue its work in identifying our local arts ecosystem and how we can support the creative economy across the county. The arts play an important role in our shaping our community identity, both within

our neighborhoods and across the region.

Additionally, the Unhoused Residents & Neighbors in Need Task Force has prepared recommendations to address this growing, regional issue. Their support and advocacy for a continuum of care for the unhoused has helped inform the 2024 budget proposal to create a center here in Wyandotte that will ensure we are responsive and able to meet these needs. But the Unified Government cannot go it alone and will work with partners and the community I am committed to elevating the voices across our community to bring these recommendations to you in the new year.

#### • STABILIZE THE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT

We must continue to work to identify ways to eliminate our reliance on debt, cut unnecessary spending, and stabilize the government for the next 25 years. This is important not only for our credit rating but will help make us a more attractive place to invest in the future. Unfortunately, we continue to pay for decades of decisions by those who preceded us, giving us fewer dollars to work with today. Addressing this will help us add value for our taxpayers.

We have made important hires this year, in addition to welcoming our new county administrator to the UG. This year, we hired a new Wyandotte County Health Director; Transportation Director; and Fire Chief. We finished multiple union contract negotiations to provide certainty to our workforce. However, with more retirements to come and key vacancies to fill, such as chief counsel and director of economic development, we must continue to address policies that allow us to be the employer of choice in the region while attracting the most capable talent in the future.

We will continue the work to identify ways to leverage new technology and innovative practices into how we work which can further savings and efficiencies within our organization. The launch of the enterprise system, Workday, for instance, has transformed our management of human capital with better processes for hiring, career pathways, and succession planning.

### UNIFIED GOVERNMENT | VISION STATEMENT

**WE ARE A VIBRANT, RESILIENT COMMUNITY OF COMPASSIONATE AND DIVERSE NEIGHBORS, UNITED FOR AN EQUITABLE, HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS FUTURE THAT IS PROUDLY WYANDOTTE.**

Additionally, by streamlining our accounting, Workday will help us institute the financial controls and best practices as stewards of public funds.

#### • INVEST IN CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

With aging infrastructure, including the closure of two vital bridges, we know that it is important for us to restore and rebuild our infrastructure for the next generation. Like many cities across the United States, our once robust infrastructure is reaching the end of its useful life. Through evaluating our assets, improving our capabilities to pursue grant funding, and being strategic in our investments, we must proactively address our most critical infrastructure. As we have heard from many of our community members, infrastructure is vital to our economic success.

#### • PROMOTE COMMUNITY PROSPERITY & UNITY

This next year, we must focus on promoting community prosperity and unity. The incredible improvements in public safety is just one of the ways we can attain this goal. Working with our neighborhood leaders and being responsive to community needs will help us set ourselves apart, making Wyandotte County the best place to live, work, and play. Our public safety departments have embraced the importance of working with our community on all levels and their hard work and dedication is paying off with safer neighborhoods.

The UG Commission has just adopted PlanKCK, our new citywide comprehensive plan, which establishes a vision for community prosperity through the lenses of equity, access, health and regeneration. This followed an unprecedented outreach effort by our staff and community volunteers with more than 5,000 engagements including with our partners in Bonner Springs, Edwardsville, and Lake Quivira; a newsletter to every single household in the county; and our first-ever annual neighborhood summit. We now have a duty to pursue this vision through our work in the coming years. It will not be an easy path but is critical to ensure we confront our challenges, breakdown systemic barriers, and work in partnership.

With Wyandotte County on the world stage with the 2026 World Cup, it is important for us to work together to be ready for this exciting event while ensuring lasting benefits to our community. I have launched a new task force to help us prepare for this important event which should be a great thing for all of Wyandotte County. Taking advantage of these opportunities and the many strengths of our neighborhoods and sister cities, I believe we can accomplish this vision for community prosperity.

Our community's involvement in these processes is key

to our success. This year, I launched our Youth Council as a means of engaging not just future leaders but the young leaders of today in our civic arena. It is important to invite all community members to the table and I am encouraged by the enthusiasm and talent of these young leaders. I invite you to encourage more civic participation in our DotteTalks on the budget and the many other engagement efforts needed to foster trust.

#### EMPOWERING HOPE

As elected officials, we are in a unique position to shape public policy that is both proactive and addresses the systemic inequity created in our past. I believe we have the much-needed momentum to create the long-lasting change we all seek for the betterment of lives across the county.

This year, we have seen how the Unified Government can work differently within our community, engaging more broadly and inviting everyone to the table. I am excited by the work being done to reinvigorate our Livable Neighborhoods Task Force with a new strategic plan and the efforts of staff to improve customer service. I am heartened by the creative ideas and passion for our city and county that I regularly witness as your Mayor.

As the Unified Government, we work with everyone and we must promote an inclusive, diverse workforce that reflects the community we serve while addressing issues of implicit bias and customer service. Throughout my second year as your Mayor and CEO, I have personally witnessed the great talent and commitment of our staff and community partners and believe we can absolutely achieve our shared vision for the future of the Dotte.

As your mayor, I remain committed to being Community-Driven. Every person. Every neighborhood. Every single day.

**Mayor/CEO Tyrone A. Garner**  
**#DotteProud**

#### WHAT'S IN THIS DOCUMENT

In the following pages, we have summarized key statistics and information about the current state of our county and government for your reference. I encourage you to read and share this document with your neighbors and constituents as we look ahead to 2024.

In the meantime, thank you for the considerable honor and privilege to serve in this capacity as Mayor and CEO of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS.



## TASK FORCES

*This year, our task forces met to look at some of the most significant issues facing our community. You are welcome to get involved by emailing the Mayor's Office at [mayorgarner@wycokck.org](mailto:mayorgarner@wycokck.org)*

### ARTS, CULTURE & EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

This committee is focused on how to mobilize the local arts and culture to spur economic activity and shape our neighborhoods. Chaired by Commissioner Angela Markley. Meets every Third Thursday of the month at 6:00pm.



### BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This task force is exploring ways to promote equitable economic growth and a healthy ecosystem of local businesses. Chaired by Commissioner Harold Johnson. Meets first Tuesday of every month at 3:00 pm



### CHARTER ORDINANCE

This committee is conducting a comprehensive review of the existing foundational document, the UG Charter Ordinance, seeking amendments or revisions that increase efficiency, effectiveness, and shared governance. Chaired by Commissioner Tom Burroughs. Currently inactive.



### COMMUNITY HEALTH, RECREATION & WELLNESS

Access to open space can improve our overall well-being as a community. With Wyandotte County ranking low in overall public health indicators, this task force is looking for ways to advance health equity across the community. Chaired by Robert Gibson. Meets the fourth Tuesday of every month at 6:30 pm.



### COMMUNITY SAFETY & JUSTICE

Public safety is a partnership, and this task force is examining various practices that address system reform and promote positive conflict resolution and de-escalation. Chaired by Reverend Terry Bradshaw and Damon Daniel. Meets first Thursday of every month at 6:00 pm.



### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & GREEN ENERGY

Pollution and climate change disproportionately impact our most vulnerable communities. This task force will look to assess environmental justice across our county and, through meaningful involvement, shape policy recommendations for a sustainable county. Chaired by Gayle Bergman and Ty Gorman. Meets every second Tuesday of the month at 6:00 pm.



### GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

This task force is charged with identifying issues that impact residents and stakeholders, while also studying and proposing more efficient methods of organizational reform. Recommendations from this committee will be forwarded to the respective governing boards and/or administrators for consideration. This committee has been inactive but Mayor Garner recently appointed Duane Beth as Chair and currently recruiting members and establishing days and times to meet.



### UNHOUSED RESIDENTS & NEIGHBORS IN NEED

This task force has been working to establish minimum standards for wrap-around, community-based services to address local housing costs, rising homelessness, warming stations and shelters, food insecurity and substandard housing. Chaired by Tom Lally and Dr Evelyn Hill. Meets on the third Monday of every month at 4:00 pm.



### WORLD CUP 2026 READINESS

Having the World Cup grace our region will be extremely beneficial for our community. This task force will ensure Wyandotte County is included and prepared for the needed accommodations and large projected crowds that are to come. The mayor has appointed Alan Carr and County Administrator Johnston as co-chairs. They are currently recruiting members and establishing days and times to meet.



# 2023

## MAYOR'S ANNUAL UPDATE

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## COMMUNITY PROFILE

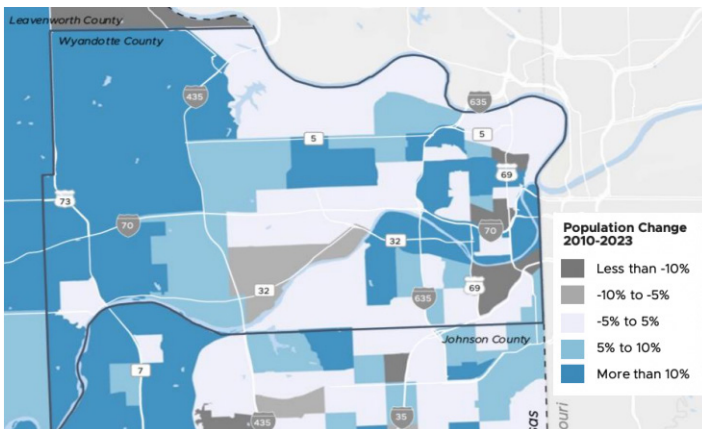
*Highlighted here are some key statistics that capture the current state of the county and our government. We also share key updates on our work to address priorities in the city and county.*

### • COUNTY OVERVIEW

Wyandotte County is a diverse place at the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri Rivers. Wyandotte County encompasses 156 square miles with Kansas City, Kansas home to the vast majority of the 169,200 residents. As compared to the region, Wyandotte County is both more disadvantaged and diverse.

Wyandotte County and KCK are known for their historic neighborhoods, such as Strawberry Hill, Parkwood, and Westheight Manor. The city features numerous historic homes and monuments, and newer tourist attractions like the Kansas Speedway. The region is also a shopping destination, featuring the Legends Outlets, adjacent to the Speedway, and including over 110 retailers.

As shown in the map below, population gain has been strongest in suburban areas, largely west of Interstate 435, though significant growth was also observed in the Northwest, Bethel Welborn, and Strawberry Hill neighborhoods. Population decline was concentrated in census tracts around Shawnee Heights and Downtown Kansas City, Kansas.



Source: 2023 Countywide Market Analysis, Population Change (2010 to 2023)

### • POPULATION

Wyandotte County saw moderate overall population growth over the prior decade, reflecting region-wide trends. According to ESRI (a third-party provider of socioeconomic data from the census) estimates, from 2010 to 2023, the county's population grew by nearly 13,000 residents, for a present total of around 170,400. The majority (93 percent) of Wyandotte County residents live within the boundaries of Kansas City,

Kansas, which grew 7.5 percent in population during the period. In contrast, the Kansas City MSA increased 11.4 percent, while statewide growth lagged behind at 3.5 percent.

The age distribution of the county's population skews slightly younger relative to the region. The county has a median age of 35.6 years, with larger shares of residents in the Preschool (ages zero to four) and K-12 (ages five to 17) cohorts compared to the MSA and state. The MSA and state both have relatively greater proportions of residents in the Empty Nesters (ages 50 to 64), Seniors (ages 65 to 74), and Elderly (ages 75 and older) age cohorts, resulting in median ages of 38.7 years (MSA) and 37.9 years (state).

Consistent with national trends, the fastest projected growth in the city will be among the Seniors and Elderly cohorts, increasing five percent and 19 percent, respectively, by 2028. The Preschool (ages zero to four), College Age (ages 18 to 24), and Family Years (ages 35 to 49) cohorts are expected to rise slightly, whereas K-12, Early Workforce, and Empty Nesters are projected to decline or remain unchanged. Hence, the city has an aging population, increasing the median age to 35.8 years by 2028. These demographic trends strongly indicate a need for a mix of new housing types for seniors and the elderly, but also rental housing to attract young professionals and new families looking for smaller starter homes.

### QUICK FACTS

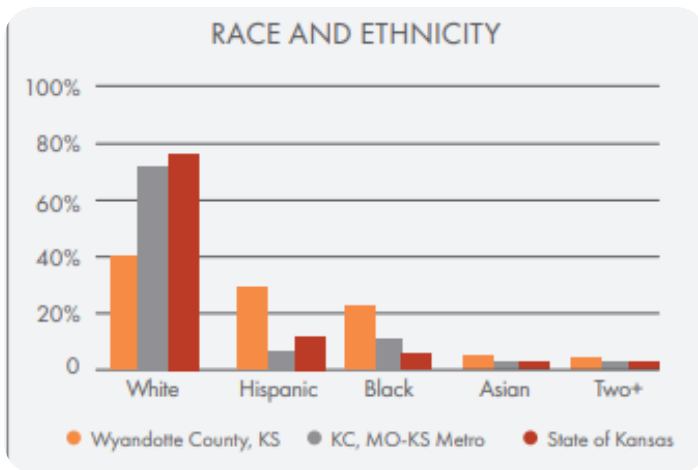
<b>169,200</b> Population	<b>\$164,000</b> Median Housing value
<b>57,000</b> Households	<b>+7%</b> Population Change 2010-2023
<b>\$56,800</b> Median Household Income	<b>35.6</b> Median Age

### • DIVERSITY

Our county is among the most diverse in the Kansas City metropolitan area and across the state of Kansas. In our outreach this year around PlanKCK, more than half of survey respondents said diversity is one of our greatest strengths as a community. There are challenges with addressing our diversity - adding complexity in how we provide services, address neighborhood-level issues, and communicate with stakeholders.

In acknowledgment of our diversity, the Wyandotte County Public Health Department has piloted programs such as culturally-familiar food boxes to provide food for community members, especially people in Wyandotte County experiencing food insecurity.





Source: American Community Survey,  
2020 5-year Estimate data profile

Additionally, our history of systemic racism in our built environment has been a key focus of our comprehensive planning process as we look to regenerate our neighborhoods and advance community prosperity. Through one of our contract interpretation vendors, the Municipal Court implemented the use of real time video interpretation for non-English speakers. This system, PropioOne, allows the court to address many cases without requiring the need for a continuance.

In 2023, the Unified Government (UG) Human Resources Department hired a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator to examine our internal policies and promote hiring of diverse staff to reflect the community we serve. Ongoing efforts to provide training on implicit bias and inclusive workplaces will support our efforts to address continuous improvement in customer service across our departments. In July, the Kansas City, Kansas Fire Department (KCKFD) launched an important department-wide opportunity for diversity and inclusion training which was then offered to all UG staff.

KCKPD 2023 Promotions	Black Male	Black Female	Hispanic Male	Hispanic Female	White Female
Sergeant	6	1	2		2
Captain	1	1	1		
Major	1		1	1	1
Deputy Chief			1		

The Kansas City, Kansas Police Department (KCKPD) has continued its community trust-building initiatives through 2023, including the creation of a Hispanic Community Liaison Officer; requiring all supervisors and commanders to receive annual civil rights and color

of law training by the FBI; offering Citizen Academies in both English and Spanish; requiring all department members to complete yearly bias policing training. Additionally, the KCKPD has increased minority representation in department leadership (see chart above with this year's promotions).

### • POVERTY RATE & MEDIAN INCOME

KCK has a median household income of approximately \$55,000—slightly lower than the county-wide median of \$57,000. Approximately one fifth (21 percent) of households in the city are very low income, earning less than \$25,000 annually, compared to 20 percent of households in the county.

Over the next half decade, the city and the county will see similar annual income growth at 1.7 and 1.8 percent, respectively. However, the MSA and the state will experience slightly higher income growth at 2.2 and 2.6 percent, respectively. Consequently, current income disparities between study areas will remain the same over the next half decade.

Zip Code	Poverty Rate	Median Income	Population
66012	9.1%	\$75,824	11,210
66101	33.8%	\$30,032	13,220
66102	28.6%	\$35,937	29,282
66103	21.0%	\$43,581	13,934
66104	19.5%	\$42,944	25,401
66105	22.2%	\$27,445	2,924
66106	15.0%	\$50,328	23,367
66109	3.1%	\$80,546	20,480
66111	18.4%	\$56,339	10,155
66112	14.8%	\$52,831	11,458

Source: American Community Survey,  
2020 5-year Estimate data profile

Median Income 2020 / 2010	County		US	
	2020	2010	2020	2010
Median Income	48,093	37,293	64,994	50,046
Total Workforce	82,075	77,301		
Unemployment Rate	6.3	13.7	5.4	10.7
Labor Participation Rate	65.9%	65.7%	58.4%	64.4%
Poverty Level of Total Population	16.9%	24.3%	11.4%	15.3%

Source: American Community Survey,  
2020 5-year Estimate data profile

## • ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

In 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Wyandotte County lost roughly 2,209 jobs (three percent of total employment) in conjunction with a rise in the unemployment rate to 7.9 percent. Despite the acute impacts of the pandemic, the county recovered relatively quickly: in 2021, the unemployment rate lowered to 4.7 percent and 95 percent of the jobs lost the year prior were restored. As of the most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (April 2023), total employment in the county is 76,681 jobs, surpassing pre-pandemic totals. The county unemployment rate is 3.6 percent—lower than the national rate (3.7 percent), though still higher than rates in the MSA and Kansas (2.6 and 2.8 percent, respectively).

Wyandotte County's leading industries by employment are manufacturing, healthcare and social assistance, and retail trade, employing a combined 34 percent of the total workforce. Relative to both the state and nation, the county has a larger share of employment in "blue collar" industry sectors, manufacturing, construction, and transportation and warehousing. Further, around one fifth of county residents have a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 40 percent and 36 percent of residents in the MSA and state, respectively.

According to the Kansas Department of Labor's long-term industry projections, employment gains in the Kansas City, Kansas region between 2018 to 2028 will be concentrated in the "professional class" sectors, professional, scientific, and technical services, healthcare and social assistance, and administration and support services. Combined, these three industries are projected to account for around half of the over 30,000 jobs that will be added to the region. Consistent with trends from the prior decade, job losses are projected in the retail trade and manufacturing sectors, with an overall gain in total employment of 23,400 jobs.

The UG, as part of the PlanKCK comprehensive planning process, developed its first economic development strategy focused on generating community prosperity. Additionally, the UG has developed a historic preservation plan to help preserve, rehabilitate and return to productive use historic buildings. This plan is one part of a larger initiative to help connect property owners with grants and resources available through historic preservation initiatives.

The UG also completed a county-wide market analysis and launched a redevelopment initiative for three UG-owned sites in Wyandotte County. The request for qualifications shortlisted several developers and consultants for sites located at 4th/Minnesota and the former Indian Springs Mall site. The first request for proposals will be issued in December 2023 with the second request for proposals slated for the Q1 2024.

### KEY METRICS

Median Annual Wage	
<b>\$46,410</b> Kansas City MSA	<b>\$41,870</b> Kansas
Job Gain (2014 to 2019)	
<b>5.3%</b> Wyandotte County	<b>2.8%</b> Kansas
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	
<b>21%</b> Wyandotte County	<b>36%</b> Kansas

Largest Industry by Employment		
	Wyandotte County	Kansas
Manufacturing	<b>12%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Health Care / Social Assistance	<b>11%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Retail Trade	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Construction	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>

SOURCE: Countywide Market Analysis, 2023.

**FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT OUR ECONOMY, CHECK OUT THE COUNTYWIDE MARKET ANALYSIS.**



## • HOUSING AND HOUSEHOLDS

With a larger proportion of families with children, Wyandotte County also has larger household sizes. The mean household size in the county is 2.68 persons, whereas both the state and MSA have averages of 2.46 and 2.47 persons, respectively. The median household size in KCK is more similar to the county at 2.69 persons.

The county has approximately 68,800 housing units. Of the county's 6,141 vacant units, the vast majority (95 percent) are in KCK. Hence the citywide occupancy rate is the same as the county-wide rate (90 percent).

The median housing value in KCK is \$159,000, just below the county-wide median of \$164,000. In comparison, Kansas has a median housing value of \$205,000, while the MSA has the highest value at \$268,000.

As of August 2023, there are 1,300 units that are expected to be created from 2023 to 2025 across market rate, mixed income, and income-restricted properties. This will be crucial to closing the gap between demand and supply among higher-income renters, while improving the quality of the available housing stock for lower-income renters. That being said, following this rapid expansion of the market, without robust population growth, multi-family development may slow in the latter half of the decade.

Included in the PlanKCK process, the UG developed a first-ever Housing and Neighborhood Strategy for the UG that seeks to better partner with other agencies and stakeholders to support housing rehabilitation, developing attainable units (“missing middle”), and create new tools to expedite the creation of new and varied housing typologies for the diverse KCK community.

In 2023, the UG Commission adopted new policies for short-term rentals (STRs): rentals of less than 30 days and managed through online services such as VRBO or AirBnB. After an extensive community outreach campaign, this new ordinance limits short-term rental to one per block. A review of the ordinance to discuss how it has been administrated and address any needed amendments is scheduled for the May 2024 City Planning Commission hearing.

## • UNHOUSED

Across the metropolitan region, we have seen a rise in challenges finding and maintaining affordable housing for all. We know that youth growing up with unhoused mothers are 40% more likely to experience homelessness themselves.

**ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS, 8 OUT OF 10,000 PERSONS ARE UNHOUSED IN WYANDOTTE COUNTY.**

Currently, there is no permanent shelter or destination for wraparound services for our neighbors experiencing homelessness in Wyandotte County. The UG and our community partners have provided warming shelters, including an overnight warming shelter, for the past few years. A new community care center will co-locate multiple services in one place to help address the needs of our unhoused population. The 2024 budget includes a \$3M allocation to find a location for this center that will

optimize access to services for our neighbors in need.

The KCKPD has continued its work with the municipal ID project to assist the unhoused community. The program allows individuals access to a temporary identification while working toward securing their state-issued identifications. Additionally, the department has expanded its COPPS unit focus to include homeless outreach to help connect neighbors-in-need with resources and services.

## • COMMUNITY HEALTH

We all want the opportunity for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors to live our healthiest lives. However, not all in our community have the same opportunity or access to good health. Wyandotte County faces disproportionately poor health outcomes compared to the state and many neighboring communities. In the annual County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, our county has consistently ranked near the bottom of the list in Kansas for health outcomes and factors that affect health (in contrast to neighboring Johnson county, ranked #1 for health in 2023). Systemic racism and the perpetuation of discriminatory systems have contributed to disproportionately poorer health outcomes for Wyandotte Community members who are Black, Hispanic, or otherwise marginalized. One stark example of this is in our infant mortality rates: in Wyandotte County, Black infants are 2.4 times more likely to die before their first birthday than white infants.

While health care is one piece of the puzzle, it will take a much broader approach to address the poor health outcomes and health inequities impacting our County. This means focusing on “social determinants of health,” the non-medical factors and conditions that affect health and quality of life. These determinants include economic stability, education access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, health care access and quality, and social and community context (definition adapted from Healthy People 2030). This is why you will see the Wyandotte County Public Health Department partnering with other organizations to focus on things like jobs and education, housing, and violence prevention. It is also why you will see health mentioned in other sections of this update about urban heat islands, transportation to medical appointments, and a Suspended License Intervention Program. All these things and more affect our community’s wellbeing. As we close out this year and look ahead to 2024, will continue our work to address social determinants of health in everything from health services to policy to partnerships with agencies across different sectors.



Health Outcomes	County	Kansas
Premature Death (years of potential life lost before age 75, per 100,000 people)	10,600	7,500
Poor or Fair Health	20%	13%
Low Birthweight	9%	7%
Life Expectancy*	74.7	77.8
Infant Mortality Rate* (rate per 1,000 live births)	8	6
Child Mortality* (rate per 100,000 children)	80	50

Source: 2023 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

\*Not included in overall ranking

Health Factors	County	Kansas
Uninsured	16%	10%
Patient to Primary Care Physician Ratio	1,940:1	1,260:1
High School Completion	81%	92%
Children in Poverty	22%	14%
Children in Single Parent Households	32%	21%

Source: 2023 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

**ACCESS TO CARE.** There are several programs that have continued in 2023 to improve access to healthcare resources across our community. The **WyCo Health Link** program provides rides to-and-from non-emergency medical appointments at no cost to the patient. Any Wyandotte County resident, regardless of income, insurance or immigration status, can request a ride to their appointment at participating clinics and this year the service has provided more than 560 rides. The **WyCo Care Connection** is a partnership between the Vibrant Health and the Kansas City, Kansas Fire Department (KCKFD) to reduce the number of individuals using emergency medical services for non-emergent care.

The **Wyandotte County Developmental Disabilities Organization (WCDDO)**, a division of the Department of Human Services, is charged with the responsibility of arranging services for the Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) population in Wyandotte County. There are over 800 individuals who have been identified as living with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) in Wyandotte County. Currently, there are 218 individuals waiting for services due to lack of funding from the State of Kansas - the average wait on this list is 10 years. Over 40 individuals continue to be funded by local funds despite current and anticipated funding cuts. In 2023, 163 individuals received needed medical, dental, program services, equipment,

Special Olympics activities, and other emergent needs were funded by state and local resources.

**COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN:** The Wyandotte County Public Health Department is using community input and collaborating with partner organizations to develop a new five-year **Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)**, which will launch in 2024. Every five years, local health departments across the country undertake a **Community Health Assessment (CHA)**, using community input from surveys and listening sessions as well as existing public health data to identify the top health issues affecting our community. Health departments and partner agencies use this data to inform the development of a CHIP five-year plan to collaborate on addressing and improving the top health issues in the community.

The Wyandotte County Public Health Department conducted the most recent Wyandotte County CHA in 2022, and released the findings earlier this year. Based on the CHA and stakeholder input on health equity, feasibility and community concern, five issue areas rose to the top for the upcoming 2024 – 2028 CHIP:

- Health Care Access
- Jobs & Education
- Violence Prevention
- Safe & Affordable Housing
- Behavioral Health, including mental health and substance use (NEW to the 2024-2028 CHIP).

This October and November, the Wyandotte County Public Health Department brought together community groups, community members and organizations serving Wyandotte County to help develop goals, measures, and strategies to address these five priority health issues. The Wyandotte County Public Health Department team and partners are working to turn this input into the next CHIP, which will be brought to community members before launching in 2024.

**EXPLORE THE COMMUNITY  
HEALTH ASSESSMENT  
AND COMMUNITY HEALTH  
IMPROVEMENT PLAN AT  
[WYCOKCK.ORG/CHIP](https://wycokck.org/chip)**



**NUTRITION FOR SENIORS:** The Kansas Aging network, which includes the Association of 11 Area Agencies across the state of Kansas, effectively advocated and received a \$3M increase in the 2024 State General Fund Nutrition allocation based on the appropriations bill passed by the 2023 Legislature. Nutrition is a critical service offered to the seniors who reside in the local community, and

increased funding means older adults needing this service can continued to be served.

**PREVENTING OVERDOSE DEATHS:** Since late 2022, the health department has provided free Narcan (naloxone) kits for community members. Naloxone is a medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. The UG's 2023 Legislative Agenda included a priority area to allow fentanyl test strips in Kansas to help prevent unwilling consumption of fentanyl. Earlier this year, Kansas legalized fentanyl test strips, and afterward, the Wyandotte County Public Health Department began providing free fentanyl test strips.

### • PUBLIC SAFETY & MUNICIPAL COURTS

Public safety has improved substantially across our community in 2023. Overall violent crime is down 25% and homicides are down 38% year-to-date. In addition, the KCKPD has taken over 8.5 million lethal doses of fentanyl off the streets.

**PUBLIC SAFETY HAS IMPROVED  
SUBSTANTIALLY IN 2023. TO DATE,  
VIOLENT CRIME IS DOWN 25%  
& HOMICIDES ARE DOWN 38%.**

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH.** Community outreach and engagement by our public safety agencies include KCKPD patrol station open houses; summer youth police academies; a youth football camp to help youth ages 8-18 with anger management and conflict resolutions; and the annual Community and Police Peace Walk for solidarity. Additionally, the new KCKPD website features a community crime map to help neighbors understand what is happening where they live, work and play. The Wyandotte County Sheriff's office has prioritized community engagement as part of its mission. This year, the Sheriff's Office will have attended over 64 events across the county, a 30% increase over 2022.

**CADET PROGRAM.** The Wyandotte County Sheriff's Cadet program was approved and went through a trial phase in 2023. For the program year of 2024 we had over 12 applicants and will be starting our first full class in January 2024. We are looking at having a full class for 2024 as the program was opened up to all the public high schools in Wyandotte County. This is the last recommendation from the 2016 Public Safety Study to be implemented with all other recommendations now in place.

**COLD CASES.** The KCKPD launched a new Cold Case Squad in early 2023 to investigate old cases with

substantial success in its first year. The Cold Case Squad identified suspects in 11 cold cases. Four of these cases, dating back between 1976 and 2003, resulted in criminal charges. The department has also instituted a bi-weekly Violent Crime Review Process to ensure accountability and procedural justice in police investigations.

**BEST PRACTICES.** The KCKPD collaborated with the Justice & Equity Coalition to become compliant with the "8 Can't Wait" use of force campaign and was re-accredited through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) in mid-2022.

**MUNICIPAL COURT.** The KCK Municipal Court has been busy this year with all services fully restored post-COVID. The court welcomed the Honorable Karen C. Wittman as well as three judges pro tempore to the bench this year. As of October 31, the court has processed 20,115 citations and anticipate finishing the year with around 26,000 citations. The top violation is for people driving without insurance. There has been a positive three year trend for violations posing the highest threat to public safety, with a decline in Driving Under the Influence (DUI) and Domestic Battery, and only a slight increase (2022) in other Violent Misdemeanors.

**FINES & FEES REFORM.** This past summer, the Municipal Court, working with a grant through Cities & Counties for Fine & Fee Justice, eliminated the \$30 court cost fee in July. Also, while the grant is finished at the end of this year, the Municipal Court will continue to seek the elimination of program fees (mostly through probation) by working to provide programming through the Municipal Court at no cost to the participant. A new public defender team has recently been contracted to provide services through Municipal Court – we expect an increase in services for those individuals appointed a public defender.

**NEW CHIEF:** The KCKFD welcomed Chief Dennis L. Rubin as its permanent chief in November. Since accepting the position as Interim Fire Chief in June, Chief Rubin has made great strides among KCKFD staff, fire unions and community members. In less than six months, Chief Rubin has managed to evaluate various department processes and introduce and implement plans of action to continue improving community customer service. Chief Rubin has also exposed department staff to national training and professional development opportunities and conferences, such as the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Conference and trainings focusing on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Fairness in August 2023.

**SAFE DRIVERS.** The KCKPD has partnered with the Police Athletic League to start a driver's education program for under-served youth to obtain their license as a proactive way to avoid citations in the future. In partnership with Kansas Legal Services and the Health



Department, there have been 379 clients served by the Suspended License Intervention Program (as of September 2023). This program is designed to help community members restore their driver's license by navigating the bureaucratic processes and alleviating the disproportionate impacts on community members.

**DISPUTE RESOLUTION.** The UG Dispute Resolutions Office helps resolve hundreds of petty offenses such as phone harassment, assault, battery petty theft, and landlord/tenant issues with most referrals coming from the KCKPD, Animal Services, Code Enforcement and Municipal Court. Approximately 90% of cases referred are resolved without court involvement and the office handles an average 200 police reports each month. A state-approved mediator, the office is developing an online application process for dispute/mediation requests from the community to help simplify the process for residents.

**MARIJUANA DIVERSION PROGRAM.** In October, the Prosecutor's Office launched a Marijuana Diversion Program to offer alternatives to those arrested for possession of marijuana in Kansas City, Kansas. The program is intended to help people who have been arrested avoid misdemeanor charges - which can lead to a felony charge with significant jail time and penalties - through education and awareness. While marijuana may be available in states around us, the Prosecutor's Office reminds everyone that it is still illegal to possess and transport marijuana in the State of Kansas.

**SWIM SAFETY.** For the second year in a row, the UG Parks & Recreation Department partnered with the YMCA, USD 500, GEHA and Hunt Family Foundation to offer the **Joe Delaney Learn to Swim Program** at Parkwood Pool, introducing basic water safety skills to area youth. The department was honored with the Kansas Recreation & Park Association Aquatic Branch Innovation Program Award for this program which started in 2022.

**SPAY & NEUTER EVENT:** KCK Animal Services held its first free spay/neuter event in November for Wyandotte County pet owners - and 45 pets. This was part of a metro-wide campaign sponsored by the Spay & Neuter Collaborative of Kansas City as part of a collaborative effort to tackle the crisis of pet overpopulation by alleviating the stress that can come with spay and neuter surgery costs. Heartworm preventatives and discounted rabies vaccines were also available at the event. In all, the Spay & Neuter Collaborative of Kansas City fixed a total of 321 pets at 7 different organizations.

**FACILITIES.** This summer, KCKPD opened only the second **Real-Time Intelligence and Crime Center** in the metro. The UG also broke ground on a new \$8,000,000 **crime scene investigation facility**. The 13,000 square foot facility will house 12 staff, have 2 labs, 6 vehicle

processing bays, and space for up to 90 vehicles in the holding area. The new facility will help with talent recruitment and retention. The facility is expected to be operational next fall. **Fire Station #16** is set to open by the end of this year. This station will be the first new station since 1953 in the Turner community, replacing two township fire stations that were originally built for volunteer firefighters. Opening in December 2023, the station will be 15,736 square feet with four drive-thru bays and a mezzanine and training wall. The station will provide 12 bunk rooms, EMS and gear storage, decontamination facilities as well as a fitness room and support spaces and reduce operating costs by \$100K annually.

## • ELECTIONS

The Wyandotte County Election Office conducted the Primary Election on August 1, 2023 and the General Election on November 7, 2023. The two elections combined effected over 20,000 voters in Wyandotte County. The election office expanded early-in person voting out West in Wyandotte County. Wyandotte county now has a total of five early-in person voting locations compared to three locations in previous years.

Looking ahead to 2024, there will be three elections. Kansas will be conducting a Presidential Preference Primary on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, the first in Kansas since 1992. The primary election is scheduled for Tuesday, August 6, 2024 and the general election will be held on Tuesday, November 5, 2024.

## • ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The federal government defines environmental justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

**HEAT:** Extreme heat poses a public health risk from heat-related illnesses and deaths, especially among those who work outside, athletes, pregnant people, children under 4, adults over 65, and low income households. Urban heat islands can cause an increase in the risk of heat related illness when compared to surrounding rural areas.

This summer, the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment and Wyandotte County Public Health Department worked together on the **Kansas Community Heat Watch**, an urban heat island mapping campaign. On August 12, 200 volunteers traveled 31 unique routes



to collect over 200,000 temperature and humidity data points throughout 310 square miles of the two counties. The goal was to collect data about the distribution of heat as part of a regional effort to map where people are most at risk during extreme heat waves.

Findings included large temperature differences between the hottest and coolest communities throughout the day, with the biggest difference, 11.7 degrees F, occurring in the evening. Though the recorded high temperature for the Kansas City metropolitan area on August 12th was 91 degrees F during the afternoon, the official records don't tell the whole story. Data from the Heat Mapping Campaign clearly demonstrate that temperatures can vary substantially throughout communities in the region. In the hottest area on the map, the afternoon temperature approached 97 degrees F, while the coolest areas were about 85 degrees F. The heat index (what the temperature feels like when the effect of humidity on air temperature is included) reached over 100 degrees F in the hottest neighborhoods in the afternoon, while staying under 90 (89.7) degrees F in the coolest parts of the counties.

**LEAD MITIGATION:** The Wyandotte County Public Health Department was awarded 3.9-million-dollars from the Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes and Housing and Urban Development December 2022. Over the next 4 years, the **kNow Lead** program will reach low-income families in single and multi-family housing, prioritizing pregnant women and children under six, to provide healthy homes services and remediate homes with lead-based paint.

**PLAN FOR THE FUTURE:** The **PlanKCK** citywide comprehensive plan specifically addresses environmental justice and resiliency through a series

of strategies and action items designed to proactively mitigate existing issues while preparing for a more sustainable future.

**FLEET ELECTRIFICATION:** On the operations side, the UG Fleet Division have introduced eight (8) Chevrolet Bolt EVs to the fleet of 1,400 vehicles it oversees. The purchase marks a new era for the municipality's fleet. These electric vehicles are ideal for light-duty transportation needs, and they can cover a range of up to 259 miles on a single charge, which saves approximately \$6,400 in annual fuel costs. Additionally, the UG Transportation Department has set a goal to transition at least 15% of its fleet to electric buses by 2025.

## • INFRASTRUCTURE

Public Works is responsible for buildings and facilities, streets, bridges, stormwater, wastewater, and solid waste. Facilities include more than 200 publicly-owned buildings with an average Facility Condition Index (FCI) of 19 and a known backlog of \$90 million in deferred maintenance. KCK has more than 2,400 lane miles of streets with an average pavement condition index (PCI) of 56 and declining.

**ROADS AND BRIDGES:** The Unified Government is also responsible for more than 270 bridges with 212 of them on local streets as stormwater infrastructure, 65 of them as medium with a space of 21-199 feet, and 17 major bridges spanning more than 200 feet. Our stormwater and wastewater programs are funded by a separate enterprise utility function of the City. The stormwater program is responsible for more than 400 miles of stormwater pipe, more than 10,000 stormwater structures, more than 120 miles of open channel drainage, and more than 130 miles of unfunded ditching and swales. In just 8 of our 56 watersheds, we need more than \$158 million in stormwater work to tap the economic development potential of many key areas in the community.

In 2023, the UG Public Works Department secured \$24,000,000 in grants and earmark funding for projects. The team also patched 33,577 potholes as of November 2023. Unfortunately, due to the scale of our infrastructure, the Pavement Condition Index has declined from 56 (2018) to 51 (2022). Inflation has increased our costs for infrastructure projects which has impacted our overall budget.

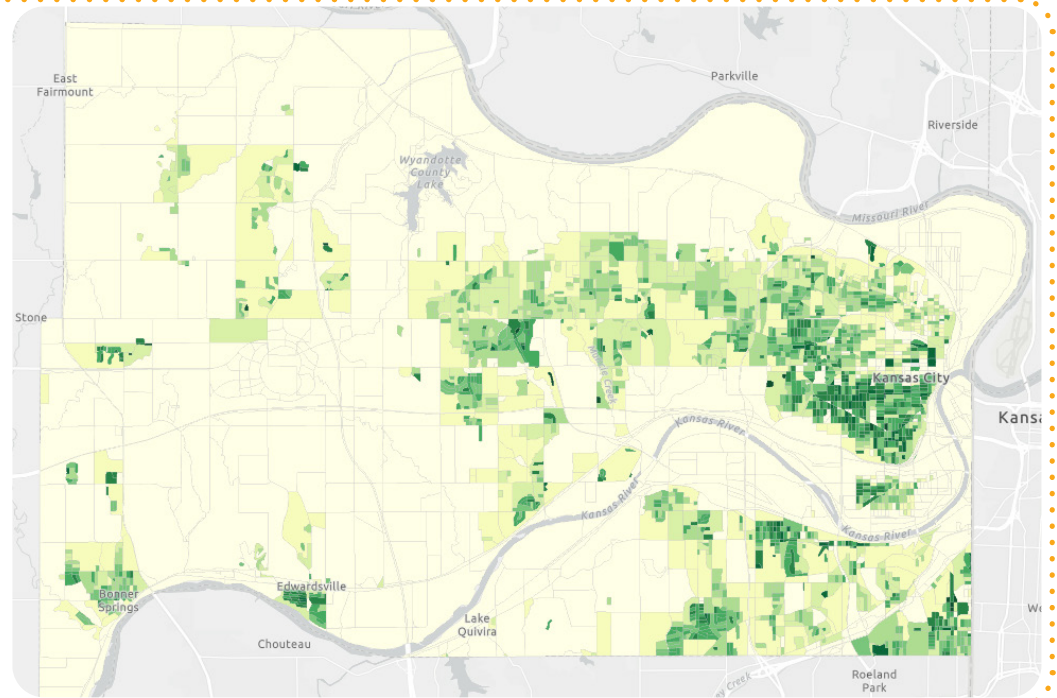
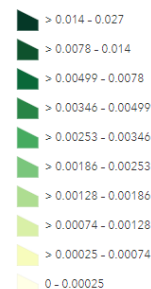
In May 2023, the Department of Planning & Urban Design presented the second annual Complete Streets Annual Report to the City Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners. The report noted all the project updates, new policies, and other accomplishments to implement the Complete Streets Ordinance.

**LEVEES:** The KCMO/KCK Levee project consists of seven

## POPULATION DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICES

We face challenges in funding services such as sidewalk and street infrastructure, sewer and stormwater infrastructure, public safety response times, and equitable access to community services. With less density, we have fewer taxpayers but considerable area to cover.

Census2020\_KS\_Blocks\_wPopulation



levee units including 60 miles of levees and flood walls along both banks of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers in the Kansas City Metropolitan area. The system protects 32 square miles of industrial, commercial and residential areas, and includes 100,000 jobs, 7,000 structures and \$22B in investments. The area is vital to the national economy as a manufacturing, distribution, transportation and warehousing hub. Life safety is paramount to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The purpose of this project is to ensure these levee systems perform during the next flood event. We also recognize the vitality of this area to local and national economies as a major manufacturing, distribution, transportation and warehousing hub.

The remaining Kansas City Levees project includes improvements to ~17 miles of existing levees and flood walls along the Kansas River in Kansas City, KS and Kansas City, Mo. This collaborative effort between USACE, the Kaw Valley Drainage District, the Unified Government, and the City of Kansas City, Missouri will reduce the risk of flooding, improve the reliability and resiliency of the systems, strengthen aging infrastructure and ensure the levees and flood walls perform during future flood events. The improvements will consist of levee and flood wall raises, replacements and repairs to existing pump stations, improvements to aging infrastructure and seepage and stability improvements. Our goal is to complete the \$529M project by 2026. This final phase will complete nearly 15 years of construction on the system. Improvements are complete for the Fairfax/Jersey Creek, North Kansas City and East Bottoms Units along the Missouri River.

In 2023, the levee project hit several key milestones. Earlier this year, the full first reach or segment of the

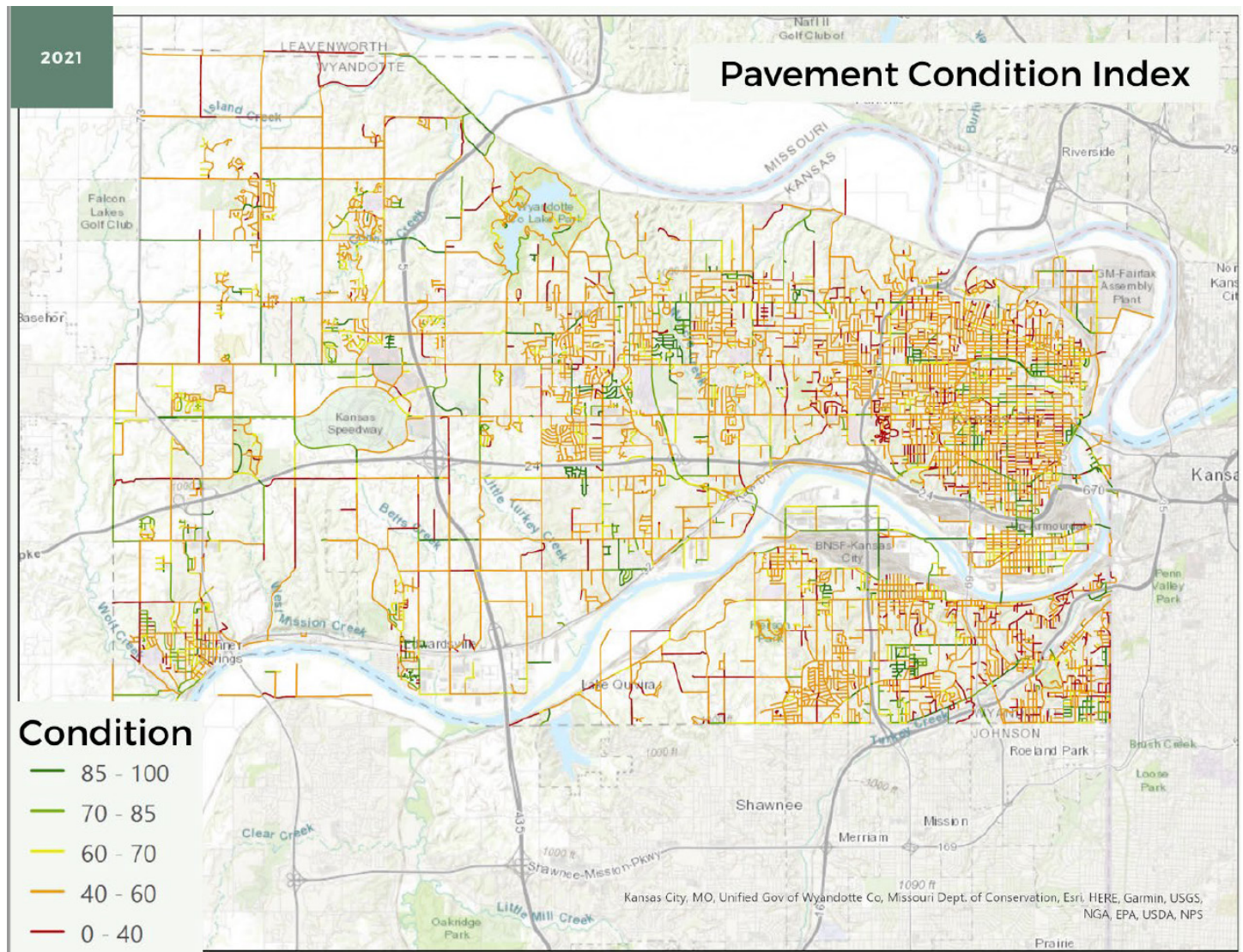
levee raise was completed between I-670 and the Hy-Vee Arena. Additionally, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed upgrades to seven pump stations which will help protect 30,000 people and \$10 billion in infrastructure in the Argentine, Armourdale, and Central Industrial District.

**THE UG WORKED WITH STATE & FEDERAL AGENCIES TO UPGRADE KCK'S COMMUNITY RATING SCORE, REDUCING FLOOD INSURANCE PREMIUMS BY 20 PERCENT.**

**WASTEWATER:** Our wastewater program serves more than 45,000 customers and has needs driven by data and by Consent Decree requirements. The program, in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Justice, have developed a 25-year program for sewer investment that will address combined sewer overflows (CSO) at a predictable rate to the customer. CSOs are often located in neighborhoods with vulnerable populations and in areas with aging and deteriorating infrastructure.

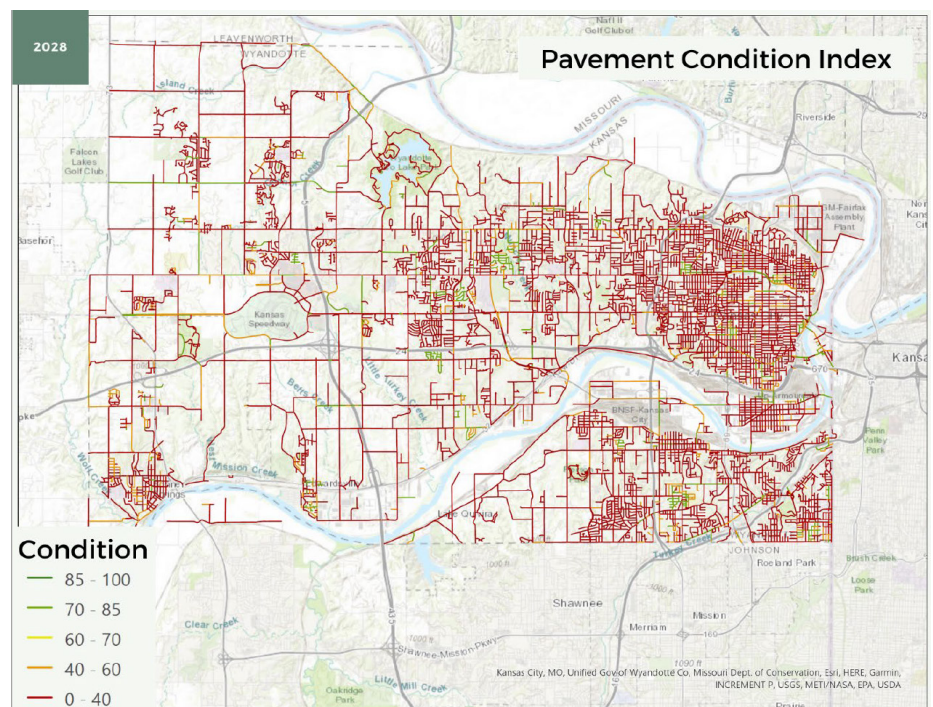
In 2023, the UG Water Pollution Control professionals responsible for operation and maintenance of the Kaw Point Wastewater Treatment Plant were recently given their first-ever Platinum Award from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies. This annual award recognizes wastewater treatment facilities that have achieved 100% permit compliance with the National





#### STREET STATUS: PAVEMENT CONDITION INDEX (PCI)

2028 Pavement Condition Index (RIGHT) as compared to the 2021 Pavement Condition Index (ABOVE) illustrates the magnitude of the rapidly deteriorating infrastructure across the community as streets get worse at the current level of funding. The Commission adopted a goal of improving the PCI to 65 by 2038 which will take considerable strategic investments over the coming years.





Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) over a consecutive, five-year period. Kaw Point first received NACWA platinum award in 2020 after 5 years of achieving Gold beginning in 2016. Gold award means there was not a single violation in that year from a total of 243 parameters we must monitor and report. The plant has also achieved Platinum in 2021 and 2022, meaning the plant has been in full compliance for 7 years running and comprising more than 1700 individual data points / potential violations. Plant 14 and the Wolcott Treatment Plant both earned Gold Awards.

Sitework has started on the 62,000 square foot facility with space for up to 60 employees with training room and meeting spaces. The \$20,000,000 facility will have garage space for up to 50 maintenance vehicles, and a large repair/service area. UG Water Pollution Control is responsible for more than 1,000 miles of underground sanitary and storm pipes, along with 79 sanitary and flood pump stations. Having a centralized sewer maintenance facility in Wyandotte County will help them better respond to issues that arise. The new facility will have outside training grounds that will help with recruitment, equipment demonstrations, and testing, along with creating additional collaboration between working groups at the UG. This facility replaces one that was built in the 1950's and is expected to be operational in October 2024.

**SOLID WASTE:** The Solid Waste Management Division oversees all solid waste programs, including contracted residential trash and recycling collection; municipal trash and recycling collection; household hazardous waste disposal; recycling & yard waste disposal; e-waste collection; and organizes clean-up events with residents, neighborhoods, and community organizations. The Solid Waste Management Division is responsible for administering the Wyandotte County Solid Waste Management Plan as required by Kansas State statute. The Wyandotte County Solid Waste Management Plan establishes the guidance and framework for solid waste management across Wyandotte County and KCK. The primary goal is to reduce the waste stream, which is currently woefully behind the State (31%) and Federal (33%) average rates at only 5.8% of total waste diverted.

In 2024, the UG will pilot a new cart system for about 7,000 customers at no cost to taxpayers. This pilot will explore with our contractor, Waste Management, how this will improve service efficiency, prevent unnecessary litter, and address some of the issues with the quality of waste removal services. If successful, the UG will explore how to scale this across the entire service area.

**DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE:** The UG has expanded our public WiFi coverage to now include all community centers. The Department of Technology will continue work in 2024 to update the infrastructure at all locations

among other service enhancements.



*Community Collaboration: Volunteers came together to help build a new playground at Parkwood Park.*

## • PARKS & TRAILS

Our parks serve a variety of user needs and are paramount for promoting active lifestyles and improving overall community health. Over the last ten years, the UG Parks & Recreation Department has been challenged by sharp budget cuts and a reduction in staff by half making partnerships vital to the maintenance and investment in park facilities, as well as for programming. Parks and Recreation is responsible for more than 2,500 acres of park land spanning more than 50 parks, 100 additional spaces such as playgrounds and shelters, and more than 60 facilities to include community centers, soccer fields, skate parks, spray parks, and an amphitheater, as well as service as the abatement team for approximately 4,600 UG-owned vacant parcels.

Park Facilities and Trails in Wyandotte	
Neighborhood Parks	32
All Parks	54
Community Centers	6
Banquet Halls	3
Miles of Paved Trails	4.34
WyCo Lake Trail Miles	19

*Source: UG Community Comparisons, 2022*

When compared to other communities in the United States, we have 15.55 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents, while the median amount for other municipalities is 10.8 acres per 1,000 residents. Median spending per resident, however, is comparable to other communities. The UG spends \$72.61 per resident while others spend \$72.64. Additionally, parks maintenance is performed with a staff of 92 full-time team members, which is less than the median 114 full-time employees at



other agencies in the United States.

**NEW AMENITIES:** In 2023, the UG opened a new disc golf course at City Park, introduced our first four pickleball courts at Wyandotte County Lake; added a splash park and new sidewalk loop at Clifton Park - funded by federal funds. We have worked with the community to plan for updates at Boston Daniels Park and the recreation facilities at Quindaro Park. The design and construction of new trail networks in Wyandotte County Park and Pierson Park were made possible by American Rescue Act Plan funds. Four restrooms with water fountains were installed in St. Margaret's Park, Quindaro Park, Rosedale Park, and Kensington Park and construction is underway on a new five foot wide, 0.33 mile concrete walking trail at St. Margaret's Park to open in Spring 2024.

**RESTORED PARKS:** The UG installed new playground equipment at Westheight, Hope, Parkwood, and Wyandotte County Lake Parks; seal-coated trails at Vega, Alvey and Matney Parks; refurbished community center gym floors; and improved the tennis courts at Eisenhower Park. The restroom at the Wyandotte County Lake Marina has been renovated and we dredged at both the Wyandotte County Lake Park and the Azura Amphitheater to mitigate damage caused by flooding. Additionally, the handicap-accessible fishing dock at the Wyandotte County Lake Marina was replaced. The Marina is now operated by two employees of the UG Parks & Recreation Department.

**PROGRAMS:** In terms of community programs, the UG partnered with local high school sports coaches to offer basketball and volleyball clinics during the summer - both reached full enrollment. The Parks & Recreation Department also offered summer programs at two locations - the Eisenhower and Beatrice L. Lee Community Centers. In addition, the department hosted several popular community events, including the sold-out Someone Special Dance at the Joe Amayo Community Center. We have struggled to recruit recreation specialists to help us with our programs and facilities which is something we are evaluating for 2024.

**PLANNING AHEAD:** In early 2024, the UG will be exploring the recently-completed recreation center and aquatics studies which will help guide the strategic plan for community centers and the future of aquatics in KCK. This is part of an overarching effort to create a more systemic approach to asset management across community which will help us better anticipate maintenance and identify when capital projects are warranted.



**PLAN  
KCK**

CITYWIDE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

*On November 30, 2023, the UG Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted an update to our citywide comprehensive plan.*

### **ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY PROSPERITY.**

Through the development and implementation of this plan, Kansas City, Kansas (KCK) has the opportunity to celebrate its unique position as one of the most socially, economically and physically diverse communities in America, and to transcend a legacy of inequity and disinvestment in the past to realize an accessible, regenerative and healthy future its residents dream about.

Decisions made piecemeal across many decades have created a city today that is struggling to meet the needs of its residents. Wyandotte County and KCK are falling short of equivalent peer cities across a wide variety of metrics, and measures of resident satisfaction are lower than in many equivalent peer cities. It costs more to deliver city services in KCK today than it used to, and in general our patterns of physical development are unsustainable. Much of this is because to date KCK has lacked a comprehensive and concerted planning vision that can link our understanding of our shortcomings with strategic actions that transcend sometimes divergent public interests and the "silos" across a myriad of bureaucracies.

To address some of KCK's biggest challenges, in collaboration with a diverse array of stakeholders, businesses and residents, holistic and overarching thinking is needed in order to diagnose our complex issues and develop a strategy to meet them head-on. PlanKCK seeks clarity and balance in evaluating the community's current challenges, and strives for a series of clear and visionary actions for how we can capitalize on our assets and prioritize our limited resources in the future.

### **THE WORK IS JUST GETTING BEGINNING.**

While plan adoption is a major milestone, this is only the beginning of steps toward implementation. Realizing a vision of community prosperity will require much more involvement and collaboration to be possible. We look forward to working with you!

**EXPLORE OUR VISION**

**WYCOKCK.ORG/PLANKCK**

## BUDGET AT-A-GLANCE

### • CITY GENERAL FUND

The City of Kansas City, KS provides a variety of municipal services to the residents and businesses within KCK. If you are a resident of either Bonner Springs or Edwardsville, check with your local municipality on the services provided. The total projected revenue for the City of Kansas City, KS in 2024 is \$346M. The City General Fund is the primary source for financing the programs and services for the City of Kansas City, KS with projected revenues totaling \$179.2M. Total City General Fund expenses for the adopted budget in 2024 is \$180.7M.

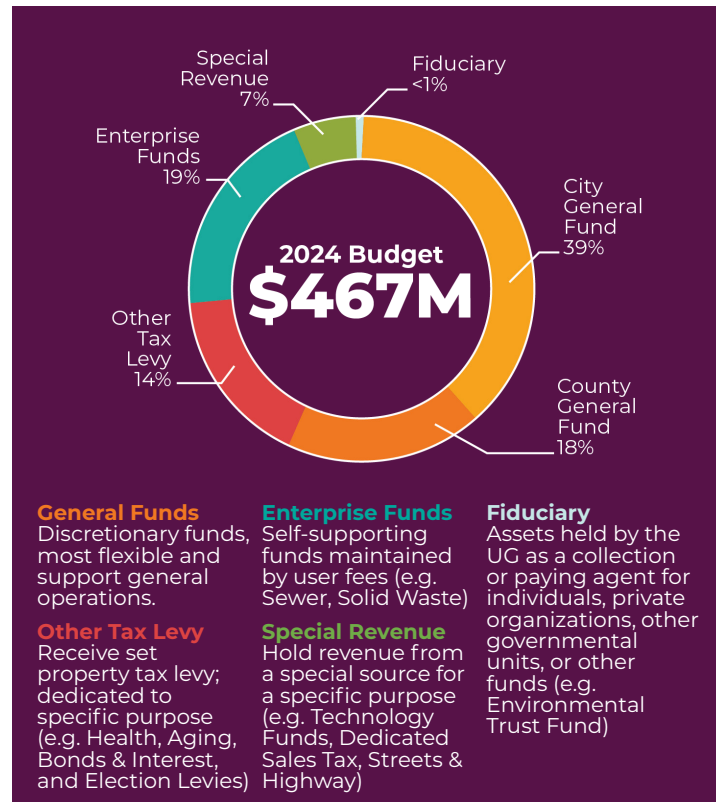
### • COUNTY GENERAL FUND

Wyandotte County is required by the State of Kansas to offer various services to all residents, including elections administration, motor vehicle registration, district court and community corrections functions, register of deeds, public health services, and more. The UG projects that the total revenue across all Wyandotte County funds for 2024 will be \$111.5M with the total County General Fund revenue of \$82M. With a 2024 County General Fund budget of \$84M, the Unified Government will rely on its reserves to cover the difference while creating cost-cutting measures to eliminate this practice in the future.

### • DEBT

Our total long-term general obligation debt, which includes general obligation bonds, tax increment financed GO bonds and bond anticipation notes is

approaching \$404.5M. Public building commission debt is approximately \$42.2M. **About 44% of our Mill Levy for Property Taxes on the city-side is directed to debt service;** overall, 25% our city-county Mill Levy for property taxes goes to debt service. While the UG has adopted policies to reduce our borrowing on certain projects, addressing our debt and obligations will be critical to moving from paying for the past to paying towards our future.



### MEET COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR DAVID JOHNSTON

David W. Johnston, ICMA-CM, joins the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas as its third County Administrator. David comes from Covington, KY where he served as City Manager from 2017 to 2021. During that time, he raised the city's Moody Bond rating to A2 status, effectively addressed blighted properties and poverty, successfully guided a major redevelopment effort and renewed focus on customer service within city government that improved staff morale.

As a result, Covington was awarded "City of the Year 2020-2021" by the Kentucky League of Cities and "One of the 50 Transformative Smart Initiatives in the World - 2021" by Smart Cities Connect as well as the IEDC 2021 Bronze Award for Neighborhood & Retail Development for Covington's Small Business Assistance Program that he started in 2017.

David holds a Master of Public Affairs degree from Indiana University, with a concentration in Urban and Regional Planning, as well as a Certificate in Economic Development from the University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute. He is a credentialed manager with the International City/County Manager Association (ICMA), the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), the National Association of Industrial and Office Parks (NAIOP) and the National League of Cities (NLC).



David Johnston meets with staff upon his arrival to Wyandotte County in March 2023.

## UNIFIED GOVERNMENT | MISSION STATEMENT

# TO CREATE, FOSTER, AND MAINTAIN AN OPEN, INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT; PROVIDING FIRST-CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNOLOGY TO UNIFIED GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

## ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

This year, the UG welcomed a new permanent county administrator to Wyandotte County. David W. Johnston, ICMA-CM joined the UG on March 27, 2023 after being confirmed unanimously by the Commission earlier that month. Mr. Johnston brings over 35 years of professional experience in public service and management to our organization with a proven track record of intergovernmental relations, economic development, strategic planning, financial management, budgeting and staff development.

### • COMMITMENT TO FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

While our 2024 budget is balanced and meets our policy requirements, our financial outlook points to the urgency of addressing our revenue and expenses as an organization. The UG will require substantial fiscal responsibility over the coming years to address rising costs and tenuous revenue streams to ensure the organization fulfills its commitment to our community, while operating with a balanced budget. The UG must get out of the practice of borrowing money for deferred maintenance and focus on delivering high quality basic services.

This year, we maintained credit ratings by Standard & Poor's (AA) and Moody's (A1) both with a stable outlook. Commercial development, strong liquidity and budget flexibility was viewed positively by both agencies.

Beginning in 2024, the new county administrator will work closely with our departments and our elected body to dive deeply into UG operations and budget to ensure that we are on course for the future that keeps us out of the red while meeting our community needs. As we all know from our own personal budgets, there are always trade-offs and hard decisions must be made. These processes can be uncomfortable and will require an honest conversation about all of our programs, their impact, costs and benefits to the community.

### • ADDRESSING A STRUCTURAL DEFICIT

From the very beginning of the budget process, it was important to address the structural imbalance in our city and county general funds. In the past, UG expenses exceeded total revenue. To cover those additional costs,

the Commission has elected to dip into the reserves, the "rainy day fund," or to finance projects through debt. At the onset of this year's budget process, the Unified Government city and county general funds had a combined deficit of \$9.4M.

Working with all departments, the UG has reduced expenses, focused on cash projects to reduce our overall debt, and tightened our budget to reduce that gap without impacting personnel. While there is still more work to be done to cut costs and find efficiencies, this exercise has bought additional time for the UG to address these critical budgeting needs.

Now that the 2024 budget has been adopted, there will be continued efforts to also address the structural deficit within the County General Fund for our long-term fiscal sustainability. With federal COVID funds and other one-time revenue, it will be important to identify what services should be prioritized for continued funding and where we can eliminate costs to reduce the impact on our reserves.

### • ADJUSTMENTS TO REVENUES

Economic uncertainty can make it challenging to estimate how much revenue will come in each year but our budget team works to track trends and their impacts. From 2023 to 2024, sales tax projections is expected to increase by \$1M. The increase in BPU rates will result in about \$750K additional revenue annually which helps some of the fiscal sustainability of our general fund.

Overall market uncertainty and volatility today makes the process of forecasting our revenues challenging for both the County and City. Revenue projections on the County side have been adjusted to reflect a drop in motor vehicle registrations (down 14% or \$720K) and revenue at the Register of Deeds (30% or \$677K). Interest income projections increased by 6.3% between 2023 and 2024 which is the equivalent of \$185,500.

### • MANAGING RISING COSTS

Inflation has made the cost of doing business increase for all sectors, including government. With supply chain issues and increased costs for basic materials and supplies, the budget reflects these increases.



## • COUNTY-FUNDED INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

The County-Funded Infrastructure Program is a newly-created fund for infrastructure projects across the county. In 2024, the Unified Government has committed \$2M to support infrastructure projects in unincorporated Wyandotte County as well as within the Cities of Edwardsville and Bonner Springs.

## • SHERIFF PAY PARITY

In 2022, the Commission voted to ensure that Sheriff deputies received comparable pay to others in law enforcement. This increase will help with recruitment and retention of talent which is particularly important for positions that have an established minimum for the safety and well-being of our staff and the public. From 2021 to 2023 (YTD), the Wyandotte County Sheriff's Office has seen more than 130% increase in Deputy applicants and over a 75% decrease in resignations. This can be contributed to several things - moving to a one-day hiring event process, streamlining other hiring practices, increase in community engagement, and pay parity.

## MOVING FORWARD

### GOAL 1: EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

The new county administrator has committed to bringing a culture of customer service and professional excellence to the UG. Not only is this important to the future and morale of our organization, it is essential as a premier employer in our county. Our residents and employees deserve a work environment that is welcoming and inclusive, conducive to collaboration, and encourages data-driven decision-making. The UG must strive for the highest standards of customer service in all that we do every day. *Here are a few highlights of what has been accomplished this year:*

**CALL CENTER:** This year, the UG migrated three departments to the Nice-in-Contact Call Center platform. This allows the organization greater flexibility to scale in response to fluctuating call volumes while eliminating on-premise hardware which reduces our over cost of service and efficiency.

**DEVELOPMENT PROCESS:** Earlier this year, the UG launched an effort to map the current development review process in order to better understand it, identify potential updates/fixes/efficiencies, and create a working group to implement changes aligned with the ongoing efforts to complete the update of the internal Accela permit tracking software and integration with Project DocX plan review software.



*PlanKCK engaged thousands of people this year in the development of the KCK comprehensive plan update.*

**KCKPD WEBSITE:** The KCKPD launched a completely new website in March 2023 to improve transparency and make it easier to access digital services. The website also features a link to a community crime map for the latest information about incidents occurring within our community.

**PLANNING INTERPRETATIONS:** The Department of Planning & Urban Design has created a centralized location for all Director's Interpretations, including the addition of new interpretations for mixed-use development in C-3 zones. The department also adopted a new policy to allow for additional community outreach as part of the review for any proposed master plan amendments.

**TRANSPORTATION SERVICES:** This year, the Transportation team launched a new microtransit app called IRIS to help connect more people to jobs in Wyandotte County. The app allows customers to request and pay for rides within specific districts and connecting to regional transit. There are new services available in Midtown and between South Edwardsville and the Legends. In 2024, services will be expanded to the Northeast as well as between various destinations in western Wyandotte County. These services are more flexible than fixed route transit and can adapt over time to demand.

**UGTV CLOSED CAPTIONING:** We updated our UGTV service to include automated closed captioning for real-time viewing of our Standing Committee and Commission meetings. UGTV service will be "relaunched" in 2024 with new content and options for viewing, including an app for your smartphone.

**VOLUNTEERING:** The UG Parks & Recreation Department hired a Volunteer/Community Liaison Program Coordinator to work with individuals and organizations interested in volunteering at our various parks and recreation facilities. This will help the department be more responsive to offers of support and volunteer time which is key in providing the breadth of

services and programs across the community.

**LIVABLE NEIGHBORHOODS:** The Livable Neighborhoods office added a new program coordinator and neighborhood liaison in 2023 and launched a strategic planning process. This will help us improve our ability to liaise between neighborhood leaders and UG staff, including coordinating minor home repair services and sharing of information.

**STAFFING:** The overall UG vacancy rate and turnover rate remains high due to external job market factors. A focus on effective recruitment and retention of employees will be important as well as addressing workplace morale. Hiring processes have been improved substantially with the introduction of Workday (see later update on Technology). The UG also hosted a successful in-person career expo in May 2023, the first since the COVID-19 pandemic, at Memorial Hall that attracted prospective applicants from across the county. Concurrently, the UG selected Marathon Health to manage the employee health center which was recently featured as a Forbes.com case study for the scope of services and care offered.

## GOAL 2: FOSTER GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

As public servants, the UG has an obligation to our community to be transparent and follow-through on our commitments. In meeting with community members across the county, it is clear that the UG must rebuild trust and establish better ways to work with our community partners and neighborhood organizations. We know we must work harder to ensure information about our programs and services are getting to you in a timely manner as well as track and report our progress on major policies, developments, and our general operations. In the coming months, we will be focusing in on our performance measures across departments and working with our elected body on clear priorities. *Here are a few highlights of what has been accomplished this year:*

**COMMUNICATIONS:** The UG launched a new email newsletter service to enable community stakeholders and interested parties to subscribe to topics of interest. Since our launch in April 2023, the total audience has grown by 536.05% with a staggering engagement rate of 71.7% as more community members opting-in to receiving regular email updates from our organization.

This Fall, the UG published a new annual newsletter, *UG Spotlight*, which was mailed to every household in Wyandotte County with key service and program information. The newsletter is available in Spanish on our website. The addition of a Community Storyteller in April has enabled the UG to create and share more

video content across social media channels and UGTV with timely updates. Our YouTube videos have had 57,496 views so far in 2023, a 22% increase over 2022.

Multiple departments collaborated this year to help facilitated an extensive engagement process around the comprehensive plan update, PlanKCK. The UG attended or hosted 120 events across the community to engage the public in shaping a shared vision. With more than 5,000 engagements, we sought new and creative ways to connect with community stakeholders in-person and online.

The Office of the Appraiser hosted four public meetings this year, in addition to meeting with most taxing jurisdiction boards and neighborhood groups, to help the public better understand the assessment and appeal processes. Additionally, the DotteTalk series invited the community to participate in our budget process with four events across the county held in April-May 2023. These efforts to engage the community in policy discussions will continue into 2024.

The Clerk's Office also took their services to the community by hosting in-person workshops across the county to help connect taxpayers to various rebate programs. From January 2, 2023 – April 18, 2023, the Clerk's Office processed 549 Utility/Sales Tax Refunds in the amount of \$132,351.00; and Homestead rebates in the amount of \$261,150.00, for a combined total of \$393,501.

The Clerk's Office has also been working with the County Administrator to overhaul its public meeting agenda process. The changes being implemented will increase accountability as it relates to budget impacts, technology and procurement, and other important considerations for the UG Commission to consider. This new process is being tested now and will see continued improvement in 2024.

**TECHNOLOGY:** In 2023, the UG added a new cybersecurity team to our Technology Department for the first time. Additionally, the UG added an additional firewall to allow for greater system redundancy, simplified maintenance, and more control over network traffic. This will help improve system overloading and optimize overall performance of our networks. The UG continued its migration of applications to cloud-based services for added security and improved collaboration within the organization. This migration reduces our dependency for on-premise resources and avoids increasing costs to maintain such internal infrastructure. Work is ongoing to integrate current applications across multiple departments to enhance the functionality of systems will improving reliability.

The Municipal Court is moving forward with a new court management software system that will greatly improve efficiency, resulting in cost savings – we will



spend calendar year 2024 transitioning to Municipal Justice by Tyler Technologies. The Municipal Court is actively working with KCKPD as they implement their new eCitation program which will provide additional efficiencies and cost savings for the courts.

Launched in October 2022, the UG has moved several of its key internal operating systems to Workday, a cloud-based enterprise resource planning system. This implementation has been complemented by a thorough review of our processes and policies around human resource and financial management as an organization while eliminating countless paper-based processes. Earlier this year, the UG launched its online career portal, making it simpler to search for job opportunities, apply and track your application through our system. This has helped the UG find considerable time efficiencies while also improving the process experience both internally and externally. By the end of 2023, payroll, absence and time tracking will be added among the capabilities which will allow for timely reporting and resource management.

Established by Charter, the Office of the Legislative Auditor conducts independent reviews of operations through performance and financial audits. In 2024, the office is will be peer reviewed by the Association of Local Governmental Auditors which is required per the Government Auditing Standards established the Government Accountability Office (GAO). The most recent peer review covering 2018 through 2020 concluded that the Legislative Auditor internal quality control system was designed and operating to provide reasonable assurance of compliance with Government Auditing Standards.

### GOAL 3: PROMOTE EQUITABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The UG will be forming a new Department of Economic Development to guide equitable growth and business attraction. With the release of a county-wide market analysis later this year, we will be in a better position than ever to act on the potential of our neighborhoods for infill development, new commercial growth, and industrial sector attraction and retention. Working with our partners, the UG County Administrator is eager to foster strategic investments in our community to

help grow our population and support thriving, diverse neighborhoods. *Here are a few highlights of what has been accomplished this year:*

#### CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY TO FEDERAL

**RECOVERY FUNDS:** On March 11, 2021, President Joseph R. Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021**. ARPA is an ambitious initiative to stimulate the American economy, support residents, and curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The UG received \$87.5M in federal aid over two years with \$55.4M allocated to the City of Kansas City, KS and \$32.1M for Wyandotte County.

ARPA funds in the amount of \$31M were allocated to revenue replacement for City and County funds to supplement lost revenue for local government operations. \$16.5M was allocated to support our ongoing public health efforts, provide support for housing, and fund other critical services, and as we establish a new normal in a post-COVID world. In 2022, the Unified Government launched a grant program for nonprofits and Unified Government departments to request ARPA local recovery funds. Receiving more than 170 applications, the Commission allocated approximately \$40 million of these funds to support affordable housing, childcare, senior and youth services, local businesses, city and county capital projects, and more.

**NEW DEVELOPMENT:** There continues to be new projects announced or under construction across Wyandotte County which will continue to strengthen our local economy. Among the projects is the **American Royal's** new \$350M campus near the Kansas Speedway will include 100 acres of space for livestock shows, the legendary barbecue competition, and agricultural education. The \$838M **Homefield Project** near 94th and State Avenue will offer youth-focused indoor multi-sport facility and baseball complex. **Marvin Windows and Doors** is planning a 400K-plus square foot manufacturing facility on Leavenworth Road which will bring new jobs to the county by early 2024 and the industrial plumbing company **Striem** plans a new 56,700 square foot manufacturing facility in South Kansas City, KS to be completed before the end of 2025. Following the raising of the bridge to align with the levee system improvements, the \$12M **Rock Island Bridge** project continues with plans to open next summer, connecting

### 2023 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AT-A-GLANCE

**\$385M**

**KCK BUILDING PERMIT  
TOTAL VALUE TO DATE**

**586**

**MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING UNITS  
STARTED CONSTRUCTION**

**903**

**NEW JOBS ANNOUNCED  
SO FAR THIS YEAR**



Rendering of the new KCKCC downtown campus building at 7th and State Avenue.

Kansas City, MO and Kansas City, KS as well as serving as a regional destination for food, community and entertainment.

In addition to the redevelopment initiative on UG-owned property at Fourth and Minnesota, Downtown KCK will also see some exciting new development. This fall, the **Kansas City, Kansas Community College** broke ground on a \$70M downtown campus at Seven Street Trafficway and State Avenue. This campus will be a education and wellness center in partnership with Swope Health and CommunityAmerica Credit Union. The **Jack Reardon Convention Center**, across from the Merc Co+Op grocery store, will be redeveloped to include 85-100 apartments and a community meeting space. In early 2024, the UG will release a second request for proposals to redevelop the **former Indian Springs Mall site**.

Housing projects in Downtown KCK, Riverview and Rosedale and the western side of the county will bring new options for residents. **Boulevard Lofts** and **Y Lofts**, a combined value of \$29M, will offer 80-plus affordable apartments; **505 Central** will bring approximately 129-units to the corner of Sixth Street and Central Avenue; and Woodside Village will continue its expansion with Phase II at **Hudson Apartments on Rainbow** construction of 228 units; the **Residence at Victory Hills** is proposing five three-story apartment buildings for a total of 152 new units. A **multi-family housing project in Bonner Springs** was also awarded \$1.7M in federal funds for affordable housing for moderate-income families.

**NEW COUNTY INVESTMENTS:** When Cerner announced it would be vacating the office tower near the Legends, the State of Kansas Commerce Department entered negotiations to address the development incentives originally offered for this project. As a result of negotiations, \$7M will be contributed to various economic development and community projects primarily in eastern Wyandotte County. This includes \$4M in direct grants to catalyze and support economic activity at **Quindaro Townsite**, **WyCo Historical Museum**, **Kansas Agricultural Center and Hall of**

**Fame and Memorial Hall.** Additional funds will support ongoing efforts to provide supportive services for the unhoused.

**DELINQUENT REAL ESTATE:** The Delinquent Real Estate Division continued its Tax Sale focus to prioritize houses over vacant lots in prioritizing parcels for the Tax Sale. By moving structures to the front of the line, the UG is giving owners a better opportunity to successfully get out delinquency status instead of falling behind into deeper debt. This allows us to address the parcels that most impact their neighborhoods first.

**DOTTEBIZ:** The Procurement Department launched an online clearinghouse for prospective and current business owners looking to launch or grow their business in Wyandotte County. DotteBiz offers step-by-step guidance for starting or growing their business, user-friendly detailed checklists and resource guides. It is now easier than ever to find information regarding certifications, grant programs and other financing options, as well as how to become a Unified Government vendor for goods and services.


**LAND BANK POLICY REVIEW:** The UG has undergone an extensive review of its land bank policy this year as part of the ongoing overhaul of this program. The draft policy proposes greater flexibility for the use of land bank properties for urban farming; allows and sets a standard for yard extensions; and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Land Bank Manager. Currently, the Land Bank includes approximately 4,600 properties that have been donated to the UG or acquired through tax foreclosure which are essential to the regeneration of many of our neighborhoods.

The Land Bank continues to focus on infill development with over 450 projects in the pipeline and over 45 under construction or completed on previously vacant properties. Additionally, 90 structures have been rehabbed and placed back on the tax rolls for a total increase in appraised value of approximately \$6 million.

**NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION:** The Neighborhood Revitalization Act (NRA) Plan assists an average of 50 homeowners and business-owners annually to invest in their properties without experiencing a significant increase in property taxes. On an interim basis, this task is being managed by the Office of the Appraiser.

**DISCOVER PROGRAMS & SERVICES.  
SIGN-UP FOR UPDATES.  
MAKE A BETTER FUTURE.**

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