



# HARPER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all participants in the planning process. Your time, technical expertise, and guidance was critical to the development of the Harper Comprehensive Plan (Plan). Your investment in this Plan is valued.

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# SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

**Section 1** establishes the groundwork upon which the Plan is built. This portion sets the stage for the Plan, explaining the importance of the planning process and the resulting document. It also outlines the purpose of this document and sheds light on the steps involved in the planning process.

## PLAN OVERVIEW

This Plan serves as a guide for the identification and implementation of Harper’s unified vision and its future. It builds upon the community’s values and directs Harper toward its goals, using a diverse set of tools and approaches. The Plan addresses key topics that shape the way Harper continues to develop, including:

- Future land use recommendations based on input from stakeholders, the public, Planning Commission, City Council, and city staff members.
- Future housing options and opportunities to balance and diversify the existing housing stock.
- Economic development strategies that encourage a vibrant, healthy mixture of revenue generation sources.
- Mobility and transportation options to enhance connectivity for residents and visitors.
- Character and placemaking enhancements designed to improve residents’ quality of life and work within existing environmental and developmental conditions.

The planning process resulted in a fully integrated document (this Plan) that reflects the needs and desires of the community and guides future decision making related to the strategic growth of Harper. The Plan provides the framework for developing future public policy related to development, redevelopment, transportation and connectivity, and the provision of community services and amenities.

## PLANNING AREA

Harper is in the north-central part of Harper County and in the south-central part of Kansas. Of the seven cities in Harper County, Attica, Anthony, and Harper are the largest in population. These cities form a triangle in the middle of the county with Harper and Anthony being nine miles apart (by road) and Attica 12 miles from Harper. Anthony and Attica are 16 miles apart. Wichita is 45 miles northeast with 396,192 people and is the state’s largest city (U.S. Census, 2022). The Oklahoma state border is 20 miles to the south of Harper. Nationally, Harper is located about 150 miles southeast of the geographic center of the continental U.S. and about 500 miles southwest of the center of population of the nation.

## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan – sometimes referred to as a general plan, master plan, or land use plan – is a vision for the future of a community. Comprehensive plans are created by and for the community to record shared goals and desires for themselves and their fellow community members. Comprehensive Plans examine what a community is, where it came from, and craft a coordinated road map for the future. This road map guides the growth and development of the community for the next 10 years and is revisited often to ensure its relevance. Effective plans are grounded by measurable, achievable action items that lead to reaching shared goals. Communities use the factual and objective base of comprehensive plans to justify future decision-making.

While the focus of the Plan is concentrated on activities within the City of Harper's incorporated area, it is also concerned with the development of the larger Planning Area. The City of Harper's Planning Area (Planning Area) is larger than the City of Harper's incorporated area (see **Figure 1.1**). The current incorporated area of the City of Harper totals 1,238.1 acres (1.93 square miles), while the extraterritorial Planning Area totals 1,129.2 acres (1.76 square miles). The total number of acres within the incorporated boundary and Planning Area totals 2,367.3 acres (3.70 square miles).

State highways K-2 and K-14 intersect in Harper, as well as US 160. The city is about 1.25 miles wide and 2.25 miles long from the eastern city limit boundary to the edge of the city's wastewater treatment pond off Boone Street.

Harper's development was heavily influenced by the railroad and US 160, both on an east-west alignment, with the result being a generally matching east-west urban development pattern. The northern border naturally runs along the Burlington Northern Railroad, but also includes the Harper City cemetery. Much of the land located within the Planning Area, but outside the city limits, is classified as agricultural or vacant, with pockets of residential development and a small light industrial/commercial area at East 14th Street and Boone Street.





## REGIONAL CONTEXT

Harper is heavily influenced and supported by Wichita—and more locally by Anthony and Attica—for employment, shopping, cultural and sporting events, health facilities, information systems, and other activities. Harper is a “bedroom community” with substantial housing areas and has available employment opportunities for residents and those living in surrounding areas. Harper is home to several businesses, including eight manufacturers, six restaurants, two banks, grocery and hardware stores, and many service-related businesses (Source: City of Harper website).

Harper is within 250 miles of several cities and metropolitan areas, including Wichita (50 miles), Joplin (101 miles), Oklahoma City (166 miles), Tulsa (181 miles), Topeka (188 miles), and Kansas City (246 miles).

## HISTORY

The City of Harper is the oldest city in Harper County, founded in April of 1877 by a group of settlers from Bloomfield, Iowa. In June of that first year, the city’s name was changed from Cora City to Harper—after the county and Sergeant Marion Harper of the Second Kansas Cavalry. On May 22, 1877, the first post office was established in Harper, and mail was hauled from Wellington semi-weekly, tri-weekly, and then daily until September 16, 1880, when the railway arrived, and mail service was transferred to the postal clerk.

Harper was organized as a city of the third class (population between 10,001 and 20,000) on September 7, 1880, and the first city election was held on September 25th of that same year. The population on June 1, 1880 was 212 residents. Soon after the town’s founding, a physician and an attorney arrived, and then the first store was built by J.B. Glenn on the site where the First National Bank now sits. By the early 1880s, the business section had grown to include two daily and two weekly newspapers, a bakery, a cigar factory, a broom factory, a hardware store, two livery stables, two blacksmith shops, a lumber and coal yard, a wagon-building establishment, restaurants, ice cream and candy stores, a brickyard, three banks, and several grocery stores. Within two years, a Board of Trade was assembled, and several new enterprises opened for business, including: a jewelry store, photographer’s studio, brickyard, and a new combination coal yard and meat market. By 1883, the population had grown to 779 and the town boasted three banks, seven drug stores, five lumber yards, nine grocery stores and two saloons known as “Blind Tigers.”

With its location on the railroad, Harper became an important shipping point for various agricultural products. By 1886, the population had reached 3,472 and the town continued to grow rapidly until May 27, 1892, when a tornado struck and inflicted heavy damage to many buildings. This disaster, accompanied by the opening of the Cherokee Strip on September 16, 1893, set the town back considerably. The town was rebuilt, but it never again reached its former heights. Harper reached its greatest population of 1,899 residents in 1960 and has steadily declined since 1980 to today with roughly 1,300 residents.

The Harper City Historical Society, formed in 1959, operates and maintains two museums: the old German Apostolic church on East 12th Street and the former St. Patrick Anglican and St. James Episcopal Church (corner of Pine and 11th Streets), which was moved from Runnymede, a late 19th century English town north of Harper. On March 15, 2004, renovation began on the Historic Red Barn in downtown Harper. At the time, the landmark was the only wood-constructed livery barn still standing on Main Street in Kansas. Originally built in 1903, the livery was used by the Harper County Fair Association from 1928 through 1990. On April 23, 2004, a disaster struck when strong winds destroyed this beloved landmark.

Harper is a rural community in the heart of wheat county, with Harper County being second in the state for wheat production in 2003. Many other crops, from cotton to soybeans, are increasingly important to area farmers. Although farming is a big part of Harper's economy, manufacturing is also a notable contributor. Many manufacturers call Harper home and draw employees from Harper and the surrounding area, which creates a need for other businesses in the area. Industries include an electric utility, fire truck manufacturing, aerospace subcontractors, metal frame and door manufacturing, beef processing, farm equipment manufacturing, lawn and garden implement manufacturing, machining, welding, sheet metal fabrication, and construction (Source: 2004 Comprehensive Development Plan).

The City of Harper operates under the form of government known as the Mayor-Council model. Policy making and legislative authority are vested in a Governing Body consisting of the mayor, who is a non-voting member, and six City Council members. The six City Council members are elected at-large, serving four-year staggered terms, with three City Council members elected bi-annually. The City Council members are responsible for adopting ordinances and resolutions, adopting the annual budget, and confirming the appointments of certain officials, boards, and committees. The mayor is also elected at-large and is responsible for presiding over City Council meetings, setting the City Council agendas, appointing City officials, and publicly representing the city in various capacities.

The City Administrator is responsible to the Mayor and City Council for the administration of all city affairs. All city department heads report to the City Administrator. The City Administrator provides management of city operations and works to ensure that policies adopted by the Governing Body are implemented.

The city owns and manages several recreational opportunities for Harper residents and the broader populations of Harper County. The city boasts Harper City Park and the Harper Aquatic Center. In all, the city manages approximately 39 acres of parks within the city limits, not including 209.4 acres of cultural, entertainment, and recreation space.

The City of Harper is served by Unified School District 361, which operates the Chaparral High School, Harper Elementary School, and Harper Junior High School. There are 32 community or junior colleges within 200 miles of Harper. Less than an hour away from Harper is Wichita State University, a national accredited university. Harper's proximity to Wichita State University potentially allows residents to live in town but commute to receive higher education. The nearest community college – Pratt Community College – is 45.5 miles from Harper.

## THE WHY

It is necessary for Harper to revisit the goals, reflect on what has been achieved over the past decades, and identify shifts in prioritization to move forward. Changing technology, thought patterns, and development best practices make it critical for communities to conduct frequent long-term planning practices with an eye on the future.

The intent of the Plan is to create a community-wide vision that resonates with the public. This planning process answered the following questions:

### **Where is Harper today?**

This question defines what is loved about Harper, what needs improvement, and the current realities of the city.

### **Where does Harper want to be?**

The only sustainable path forward is one that has community buy-in. By asking the question of who Harper wants to be, recommendations for the future were created.

### **How does Harper get there?**

This is ultimately what the Plan answers. This Plan offers a road map to the future, outlining goals and strategies that keep elected and appointed leaders and city staff members on track to make Harper the community that residents need and want.

Harper's previous comprehensive development plan was adopted in 2004. The plan was written to cover a 17-year timeline from 2003 to 2020. The 2004 Plan was organized around the following topics: Comprehensive Plan and Regional Influence; Historical Development; Goals; Economy; Population; Housing; Physical Development Influences; Land Use; Transportation; Utilities; Community Facilities; and Implementation. Within each chapter topic is a discussion of related issues, community goals, and strategies and recommendations to achieve each goal.

In 2017, Harper initiated an update to the 2004 Plan with Riggs Associates—however, only Phase I was completed. The Phase I update that was completed provided updated goals and objectives, as well as population patterns and land uses as they were documented in 2017. Since then, Harper has utilized these plans in combination to guide short- and long-term decision-making in alignment with the previously developed community goals.

## PLANNING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The Plan development process took approximately one year and consisted of five primary phases: *Discover*, *Engage*, *Plan*, *Refine*, and *Implement*. From *Discover*, where a baseline of Harper was compiled; to *Engage* where the community shared its voice; to *Plan* and *Refine* when the actual road map for the future of each of the Plan's topics were recorded; to *Implement* when the Plan is put to work for the community.

## PLAN ORGANIZATION

This Plan is organized into five sections and two appendices. Section 1 explains how the Plan came to be, why it is necessary, and how it should be integrated into daily decisions. Section 2 describes the vision and values that set the tone for and outline the goals, strategies, and implementation actions.

Sections 3 through 5 provide additional details for the Plan’s recommendations as they relate to land use and development; mobility; and character and livability on an individual and community-wide scale. These sections include illustrations (graphics and imagery) that help visualize the goals and strategies.

Lastly, the appendices provide detailed background information that was evaluated to form the Plan. The two appendices include an inventory and analysis of existing conditions (**Appendix A**) and a full recap of public and stakeholder engagement events and findings (**Appendix B**).

## HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This Plan is intended to be a living document and reference for the city. As city staff members, elected leaders, and community members make decisions for Harper, this Plan serves as the lens through which the appropriateness of proposed changes is considered. This Plan serves as the guide toward Harper’s determined vision for the future through the development decisions, zoning changes, and community modifications that face the city. Part of the review process for such changes includes ensuring alignment with the Plan, which works to protect the city’s established long-term goals via short-term decisions. While it was compiled as a reflection of current conditions using the public and stakeholders’ interests in the community at the time, the Plan establishes a broad policy foundation to guide future growth and reinvestment in Harper for years to come.

This Plan is used to:

- Establish a strategic development and improvement vision for the future of Harper.
- Provide guidance for elected and appointed officials when making decisions that affect the long-term needs of the community.
- Guide city staff members’ day-to-day decision-making regarding the location, intensity, and design of development.
- Inform residents, property and business owners, developers, and others interested in Harper’s priorities and expectations for development.
- Maintain an implementation strategy (**Section 6**) that helps achieve the community’s vision for Harper.

This Plan uses a variety of terms in its structure, including vision, value, strategy, and framework plan.

- **Vision:** paints an aspirational image of the community’s shared desires for Harper’s future.
- **Values:** address a specific topic or functional area where efforts and resources should be focused to reinforce the vision.
- **Strategy:** provides direction as to how the vision and values will be carried out.
- **Framework Plan:** illustrates the strategies through maps.

This Plan should be reviewed and revised periodically to respond to shifts in economic or demographic conditions, changes in state and federal law, the impacts of existing policies and past decisions, and new implementation tools or resources that would benefit outcomes. **At least once a year, the Planning Commission should review or reconsider the Plan or portions of the Plan and may propose amendments, per Kansas Statutes Annotated § 12-747(d).** Without regular evaluation and monitoring of the Plan’s progress, the Plan will lose its effectiveness in achieving and upholding a shared vision for Harper.

## SECTION 2 – VISION AND VALUES

Critical to the pursuit of drafting a plan is a refined understanding of Harper’s vision and values. The community’s goals and interests are complex and compelling, driving the direction of the Plan. **The vision and values are born from the voices of the people of Harper and shape the recommendations of the Plan.**

Nestled in the heart of the Midwest, Harper embodies the quintessential American spirit of hard work, unity, and progress. The town’s vision is rooted in fostering a thriving, close-knit community that embodies its traditions. While preserving Harper’s heritage the town looks to actively seek opportunities for growth and development. Looking towards the future, Harper remains determined in its pursuit of a vibrant, welcoming, and prosperous hometown for generations to come.

### **A Vision for the Future of Harper:**

**Harper is a thriving small town, home to people of all ages, with a variety of quality housing options, robust public services, attractive streets, connected public spaces, and unique destinations – a safe and charming place to live.**

#### Harper’s Community Values:

- People of All Ages
- Vibrant Local Businesses
- Employment Opportunities
- Variety of Quality Housing Options
- Robust Public Services
- Attractive Streets
- Connected Public Spaces
- Unique Destinations
- Quality Services
- Safety

Moving forward, Harper remains a place where the warmth of small-town hospitality shines brightly. With values that allow for unity and community pride, the town will continue to build a sense of purpose and belonging. Harper has unique character and with the efforts of the town it will collectively build upon the community’s commitment to make it a unique destination.

## SECTION 3 – LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

This section describes the physical framework for land use and development in the City of Harper through designation and definition of land uses and land use patterns. Harper is a blend of established neighborhoods, rural subdivisions, corridor commercial, and a historical downtown core. This Plan seeks to preserve the integrity and variety of existing businesses and neighborhoods; create high caliber, cohesive, new commercial nodes; emphasize connectivity between neighborhoods to local amenities; and propel forward-thinking growth that embraces the principles of safety, accessibility, and high-quality development.

While single-family detached homes stand as the prevailing housing type, Harper continues to grow and evolve. The goal of this section is to showcase how this Plan will strengthen connections between and within the neighborhoods, and accommodate a diversity of commercial uses, sensitively blended with housing that includes affordable and senior housing options.

As part of the comprehensive planning process, a land use analysis identified seven different future land use types in Harper – those future land uses that should be encouraged within the city. The categories are based on spatial attributes, street pattern, zoning, and land use. Spatial attributes include building height and sizes of lots, as well as the relationship between the buildings and street. The street pattern greatly influences connectivity and major modes of transportation.

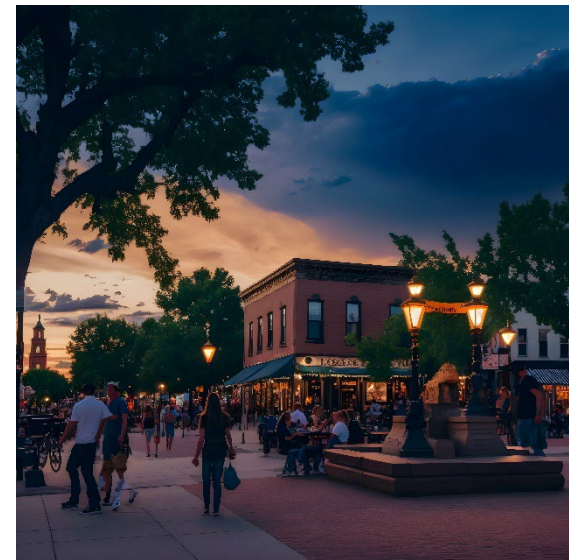
The recommended *future* land uses of Harper are divided into the following categories:

### DOWNTOWN MIXED-USE

The downtown core utilizes a mixture of land uses—commercial and residential— and is intended to create a lively city center, concentrating a range of activities and housing density within a compact area. The downtown core should have the largest concentration of restaurants, shops, and various services in Harper.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Traditional and historic downtown area that honors Harper’s history and provides a vibrant small-town feel.
- Includes a mixture of commercial, office, and some residential uses to create a vibrant town center that concentrates a range of activities within a compact area.
- Residential uses on upper levels buildings are encouraged.



## SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Both large lot and traditional single-family residences contribute significantly to the character of the Harper community. These neighborhoods have smaller blocks and well-connected street networks with access to services and jobs in the downtown core, which are only a short walk or bike ride away. Other aspects within this zone district include single-family homes that are set on large lots, typically greater than one acre in size. Parcels within this category may also include homes that integrate agricultural uses utilizing rural water, septic systems, or adjacent to unimproved roads.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Single-family homes, including both planned subdivisions and large-lot family homes developed over time.
- Contributes to the rural character of Harper and helps transition and buffer from other uses, outlying rural areas, or sensitive natural features.
- Neighborhoods with primarily single-family homes, and a smaller mix of duplexes and other attached products.
- There are bike and pedestrian connections to nearby parks, schools, and open space.



## MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

This land use category includes residential structures that contain multiple dwelling units such as apartments and townhomes. Housing units are usually stacked vertically and attached horizontally, and typically have common amenities. This category may also include attached single-family housing, as well as senior housing and assisted living facilities. The category is intended to serve as a transitional land use between lower density residential areas and higher density uses.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Accommodates a range of housing types, including single-family attached and multifamily.
- Promotes development that caters to a variety of family sizes and incomes and provides an opportunity for residents to age-in-place.
- Promotes compact, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods with a variety of housing types and densities, small-scale commercial activity centers, and other public amenities.



## CORRIDOR COMMERCIAL

Corridor Commercial areas refer to retail and office developments that prioritize vehicular access and are usually located around major roads and corridors. This land use category includes areas designated for the sale of goods and services and to accommodate residents and other professional employment uses. The designation encompasses local commercial uses that typically serve the needs of residents and the immediate surrounding area.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Generally located along Harper’s primary arterial corridors and highways, with excellent access and visibility.
- These areas are more appropriate for auto-oriented uses, stand-alone uses with vehicle drive-throughs, and larger scale shopping options.
- Shopping centers, lifestyle centers, or commercial corridors that are not intended to integrate single-family residential uses.



## PUBLIC/CIVIC FACILITIES

The public character type covers civic and educational spaces such as the elementary school, police buildings, fire stations, City Hall, and City recreational facilities. Public and civic land uses are generally integrated within and adjacent to both residential and commercial land uses, such as the substation or wastewater treatment facility.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Purposefully integrated within and adjacent to residential and commercial land uses to serve the Harper community and surrounding rural residents.



## INDUSTRIAL/FLEX

This land use category includes business and industrial parks used to support a variety of operations, research, or logistics. Typically, this land use category has limited environmental and noise impacts and is generally compatible with nearby residential or commercial areas. Many uses within this category serve both Harper and the surrounding rural areas, such as the railroad corridor and its adjacent uses.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Provides flexible employment uses, light industrial, and supporting commercial businesses.
- Activities within this category tend to occur inside structures, with outdoor areas allowing well-screened and limited storage or distribution.
- May generate increased truck traffic and uses should be well-screened and buffered from adjacent non-business type uses.



## PARKS AND RECREATION

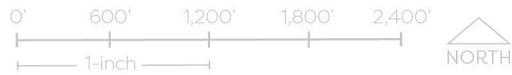
Public parks and open space areas include parcels that are designated for active recreation, typically hosting fields, facilities, and amenities related to athletics and public gathering. Within these uses, other City-wide recreation amenities may include greenways and trails, wildlife habitat corridors, community gardens, undeveloped natural areas, and conservation easements.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Intended as accessible public amenities for residents and the broader community.
- Includes active and passive recreation, sports facilities and fields, golf courses and gathering spaces.
- Generally, encompasses natural areas within the community that remain undeveloped due to development constraints or important environmental features such as wetlands, large tree groves, wetlands, ecosystems, etc.

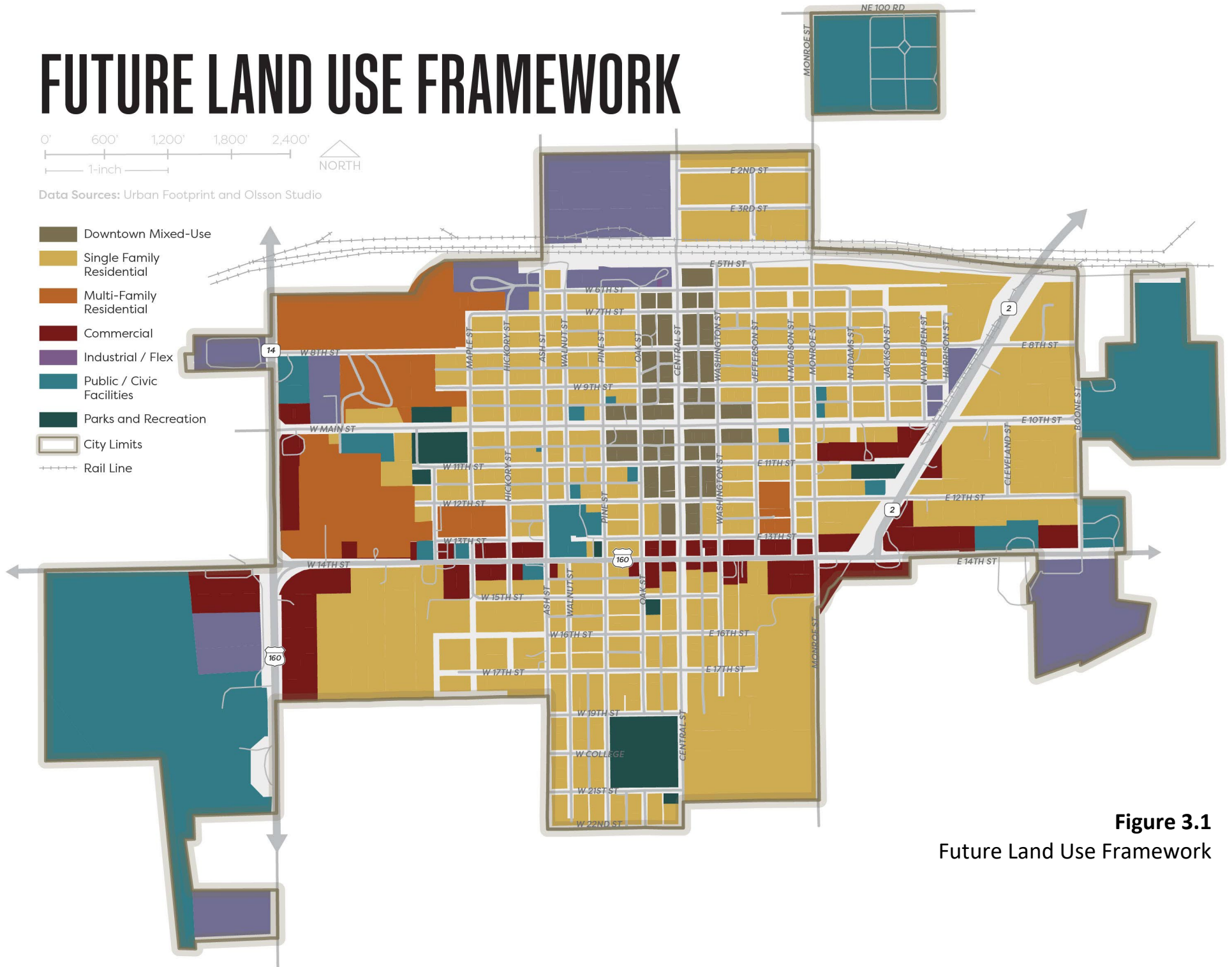


# FUTURE LAND USE FRAMEWORK



Data Sources: Urban Footprint and Olsson Studio

- Downtown Mixed-Use
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial / Flex
- Public / Civic Facilities
- Parks and Recreation
- City Limits
- Rail Line



**Figure 3.1**  
Future Land Use Framework

## UNDERSTANDING THE FUTURE LAND USE FRAMEWORK

The Future Land Use Framework is intended to guide future land use and development decisions as well as provide a framework for future zoning updates and amendments. It should serve as the formal policy statement for land use, informing decision-making for development and redevelopment projects. In certain parts of Harper and its planning area, parcels have been developed and the existing built form should be acknowledged in the Future Land Use Framework. Further, although not completely built-out, other subdivided and improved parcels present a fair degree of certainty on their ultimate development, such as the former hospital. Other areas are still taking shape. As a result, some areas on the Future Land Use Framework are demonstrated with harder edges and existing parcel lines; in other areas, such as south of West 14th Street, they are demonstrated more conceptually.

Land use in Harper is primarily residential and highway commercial, with room for growth in both areas. Multiple acres of undeveloped land remain in the city's three-mile planning area along with dozens of opportunities for infill or redevelopment within Harper today. As Harper considers its future growth patterns and land use designations, this Plan supports a balance of housing, retail, employment, and recreation options that operate in unison to produce a diverse, mobile, and appealing environment for all.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND LAND USE

Harper has a typical rural infrastructure system consisting of water, sewer, septic systems, stormwater, and both paved and gravel roads, all of which are supported by either dedicated or general funds. The city's infrastructure is fairly dispersed for its size, resulting in higher infrastructure installation and maintenance costs. Land use decisions will play an important part in future infrastructure considerations as development requires additional connectivity to public services. Concentrating development in appropriate areas would reduce overall construction and maintenance costs and increase efficiency and sustainability of the system.

## ZONING CODE ALIGNMENT

As the long-term guide to future development in the city, this Plan provides the policy direction that should guide any future zoning requirements or development standards. Generally, the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan should be followed by an initiative to update the city's development codes, including zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, and others. Changes to Harper's zoning regulations may include the refinement of existing regulations to address height, bulk, and intensity standards, as well as permitted uses.

While there should be an understanding of what zoning districts could apply to each land use category, **Figure 3.1 Future Land Use Framework** should not be as granular as the regulatory zoning map. Instead, the Future Land Use Framework provides a general guide of character and land use types that encompass neighborhoods or corridor areas.

## USING THE PLAN

The Future Land Use Framework was developed through detailed analysis to consider existing land uses and development, while creating a development pattern that seeks to achieve the vision for the community. This Plan provides designations for all areas within the planning area. Although the Plan strives to co-locate compatible uses, there may be areas that have juxtaposed land uses with a range of different intensities. As the city continues to build out undeveloped areas and redevelop existing parcels, it should ensure future land use impacts to existing residential neighborhoods are mitigated. This includes, but is not limited to, effective use of development buffers, screening, and landscaping. Furthermore, where buffering and screening does not allow for an effective separation of uses, new development should be of a similar design aesthetic of established neighborhoods to maintain the existing community character. While the scale and bulk of new development may be more intense, it can better blend with adjacent buildings through similar design.

### ***Strategy 3.1 – Update the city’s zoning and other relevant development criteria to support the Comprehensive Plan’s land use goals.***

This strategy is the backbone in providing options for both staff and residents to update the city’s zoning code and relevant development standards to align with the vision of the Comprehensive Plan and provide regulatory direction for the city over the coming years. This may pertain to height, bulk, and intensity standards among a variety of others which will help champion the goals of this Plan.

When cities look to amend their code, change can be a great opportunity to find consensus. Harper should provide a variety of public hearings and public outreach efforts to capture the types of incentives and opportunities the community would support for new developments related to high quality and compatible proposals. As the community looks forward, Harper should prioritize the implementation of code amendments that allow higher density residential development near downtown, commercial corridors, and infill areas.

Zoning and building code amendments should be implemented to incentivize expanded housing options. This was a critical finding from the public engagement process. With a particular focus on the aging population, Harper should seek to implement amendments to aid and facilitate aging in place by providing more diverse housing options such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and housing products for downsizing households.

Harper should also investigate the potential implementation of incentive packages for residential and commercial redevelopment and infill opportunities to further community amenities and mixed-use development to increase by increasing building heights, increasing density, or reducing parking requirements.

### ***Strategy 3.2 – Leverage local and natural amenities to create unique, people-centered destinations and reinforce Harper’s identity.***

Harper has a unique identity within Harper County to build out as a regional destination. Harper should seek to create opportunities for residents and visitors alike to come together and enjoy great local attractions, amenities, and destinations.

The city should prioritize investment in unique and attractive projects that are well connected, people centered, and cultivate safe, walkable, and bikeable districts. This stewardship and spirit of collaboration will help leverage access to natural amenities to promote health, well-being, and recreational opportunities for all community members.

Through the promotion of quality design and development of commercial areas, Harper will be able to grow in ways, which will help define residential districts and reinforce distinct neighborhood character. By catalyzing key projects, Harper will help embolden its character to residents, visitors, and those just passing through.

***Strategy 3.3 – Provide incentives and other opportunities for developers to create compatible horizontal mixed-use areas to invigorate surrounding land uses.***

An important part of implementing Harper’s development vision is managing land use adjacency through an approach that promotes compatibility and supports “horizontal mixed-use” design. This land use approach is more about promoting the connectivity between adjacent land uses and less about buffering, screening, and separating different land uses from each other.

Based on both public feedback and the city’s direction, it will be critical to identify and resolve barriers that impede the development of housing, the rehabilitation of existing homes and find new commercial properties. By doing so through a variety of product types, such as cluster style housing with non-residential infill, could serve as useful catalysts in areas typically built out as traditional neighborhood designs to further community access to goods and services otherwise localized around automotive centric corridors.

To sustain and attract future generations, Harper can also focus on programs that provide increased density when adding in affordable housing units to both residential and mixed-use projects. This could also be used as an economic incentive, which will also draw in a variety of businesses and other townwide amenities as a broader base population grows. Through these development opportunities, the city may also encourage housing above retail in mixed-use and commercial areas to enhance community vitality.

***Strategy 3.4 – Support and create diverse housing options to accommodate varying household sizes, lifestyles, and generations.***

As Harper continues to grow and evolve, diversified housing stock will strengthen the connection between and within its neighborhoods and accommodate housing that includes affordable and senior housing options. These actionable items also seek to serve those with accessibility and functional needs and residents with special needs.

Through incentives or code amendments, the city will benefit to allow a diversity of housing types and sizes within all neighborhoods, such as duplexes, townhouses, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), co-housing, cottage communities, and other types as appropriate. By promoting policies and programs that increase the number of affordable housing units by offering higher density allocations when affordable housing is included is a keyway to bring in development projects that fit the needs of Harper residents.

Harper should leverage sensitive design criteria, reduced parking requirements, fee reductions, and other means to strengthen the local economy through higher density residential development downtown, along highway corridors, and in infill opportunity areas.

***Strategy 3.5 – Enhance connectivity and cohesion between commercial uses, public amenities, and neighborhoods across Harper.***

As Harper continues to become a destination for both residential and non-residential development, it is important to maintain unified design elements across all neighborhoods to strengthen Harper’s identity through thoughtful land use cohesion. By conducting educational efforts that inform residents of the value of preserving historic buildings, neighborhoods, and places, the city can help establish baseline guidelines and neighborhood protection measures.

By incorporating code language to help ensure neighborhood access and resident mobility through necessitating trails, pedestrian paths, and future road connections as a part of all development projects, Harper residents will be able to access the great businesses and recreation amenities more safely.

Furthermore, as new commercial and neighborhood developments are proposed, it is critical that the city maintains appropriate development codes to uphold high standards of connectivity, safety, and continuity across the community.

By implementing various code amendments for updated design standards for all commercial and redevelopment areas, guidelines will be put in place to manage land use and aesthetic, working to maintain Harper’s beloved charm and small-town character. With updated design standards and the city’s intentional efforts to maintain the balance of new versus existing buildings within Harper, future proposals stand to enhance the quality of land use development, and ultimately, cohesiveness of the city.

***Strategy 3.6 – Maximize the sustainability and fiscal responsibility of community services and opportunities across Harper.***

With new growth comes new opportunities for collaboration. The city should both lead and partner in multiple efforts to maintain a high standard of fiscal stewardship and proper management of resources to create further community investment and opportunity for generations to come.

By maintaining regular interagency communication and partnerships, Harper will take strides to sustain cooperative use and distribution of services and facilities using intergovernmental agreements. Whether it be with educational institutions, non-profits, or other community-based organizations, this will position the city to provide a variety of informational opportunities in Harper.

With new development comes the need for carefully curated coordination. For new projects such as annexations or other redevelopment plans, regional community service and utility providers will require streamlined communication to ensure adequate levels of service are extended to new growth areas and maintained in existing service areas.

Lastly, code amendments and incentives take time and resources. With a new comprehensive plan, Harper is now eligible for additional grants, particularly at the state level, which require recipients to have a comprehensive plan in place. Harper should take intentional strides to pursue grant opportunities to fund the recommendations provided in this Plan. The grants may ultimately help provide the necessary resources to achieve defined goals and strategies and sustain Harper for generations to come.



## SECTION 4 – MOBILITY FRAMEWORK

The mobility of a community is critical to both its form and function. A well-balanced transportation network promotes economic development, quality of life, and equity, while creating physical transitions and networks that connect people to their destinations. A community must offer multiple transportation options that are accessible, affordable, sustainable, and safe. Transportation infrastructure can be among a city's largest investments, making its implementation and maintenance critical drivers of local success.

A city's transportation network can largely be assessed through an evaluation of its infrastructure including the quality and quantity of sidewalks, walking trails, sidewalk priority areas, intersections, multi-use paths, and protected or unprotected bike lanes, among other mobility assets.

Several modes of transportation are currently utilized in Harper, including personal vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrian travel. The transportation network functions to move both automotive and non-motorized traffic across the city and must accommodate a variety of modes to meet local travel needs. Harper must continue to accommodate these needs to ensure greater overall connectivity throughout the city, high-quality mobility infrastructure, safe and easy pedestrian access, multimodal connectivity, and a high standard of maintenance of the public right-of-way.

**Figure 4.1 Transportation Framework** represents the proposed enhancements for the Harper's mobility system, as described in detail in the following strategies.

# TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK



Data Sources: Urban Footprint and Olsson Studio

Community Destinations

City Limits

Points of Interest

Rail Line

Intersection Safety & Aesthetic Enhancements

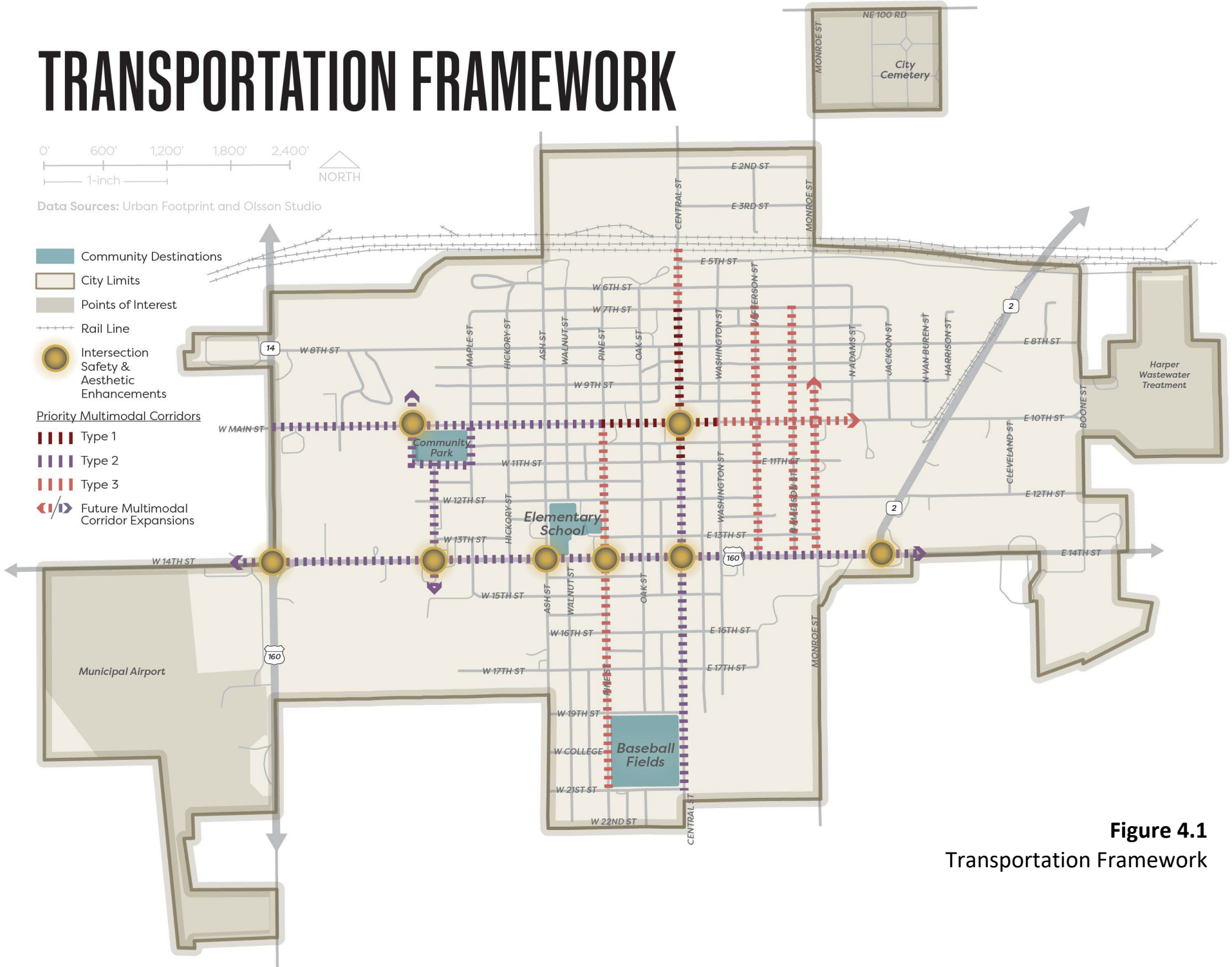
Priority Multimodal Corridors

Type 1

Type 2

Type 3

Future Multimodal Corridor Expansions



**Figure 4.1**  
Transportation Framework

**Strategy 4.1 – Prioritize the establishment of multimodal corridor developments to support sustainable mobility.**

Many communities with major transportation connections are auto oriented and difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate. Establishing the use of multimodal corridors can serve multiple modes of transportation and better balance the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and freight vehicles. These corridors aim to create an integrated transportation network designed to accommodate various forms of transportation with an emphasis on promoting sustainable and active modes of transportation, ultimately reducing congestion, and enhancing overall transportation efficiency. Harper can successfully sustain effective mobility by implementing a combination of multimodal corridors in areas of need around the city.

**PRIORITY MULTIMODAL CORRIDORS**

**Type #1:** On-Street Protected Bike Lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the street

- West Main Street between Pine Street and Washington Street
- Central Street between 7th Street and 11th Street

**Type #2:** Off-street multi-use paths

- 14th Street (Highway 160) between K-14 Highway and K-2 Highway
- Spruce Street between West 11th Street and West 14th Street (Highway 160)
- West 11th Street between Elm Street and Maple Street
- Elm Street between West Main Street and West 11th Street
- Maple Street between West Main Street and West 11th Street
- West Main Street between K-14 Highway and Pine Street
- Central Street between 11th Street and West 21st Street

**Type #3:** On-street bike routes and sidewalk on both sides

- East 10th Street between Washington Street and Monroe Street
- Central Street between the railroad tracks and 7th Street
- Monroe Street between the railroad tracks and East 14th Street (Highway 160)
- Pine Street between Main Street and West 21st Street
- Jefferson Street between East 7th Street and East 14th Street (Highway 160)
- Madison Street between East 7th Street and East 14th Street (Highway 160)

Each type of multimodal corridor is referenced in **Figure 4.1**. This map should serve as a comprehensive guide to managing Harper’s transportation systems. By identifying priorities such as multimodal corridors, intersection safety and aesthetic enhancements, and future multi-use expansions, this Plan can be a blueprint for the city’s transportation landscape in a way that meets the evolving needs of the Harper community, positioning it for sustainable and prosperous development in the years to come.

***Strategy 4.2 – Develop dedicated bicycle infrastructure for key corridors to increase safety for all modes of transportation.***

Bicycle infrastructure encourages safe and enjoyable cycling through a community. Dedicated bike lanes and protected paths can make bicycling a more attractive option for those who have the choice to drive instead, and a safer and more enjoyable experience for those who would still do so otherwise, including children and those without a personal vehicle. Harper should invest in the development of bicycle infrastructure throughout the community.

Securing funding for bicycle infrastructure is a critical step in the development process. Harper can explore grants and funding opportunities at the state and federal levels, such as Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants, which are often earmarked for projects like bike lanes and trails. Collaborating with neighboring municipalities and regional planning organizations can also help pool resources and create a more extensive network of bicycle infrastructure.

The city should prioritize safety, ensuring that dedicated bike lanes and paths are well-designed, properly marked, and integrated into existing roadways. The bicycle network should connect to key destinations including schools, community parks, and places of employment.

A Bicycle Advisory Committee or Task Force should be established to facilitate ongoing dialogue and collaboration with community members and promote development of dedicated infrastructure that aligns with the city’s vision and goals.

Shown in the Transportation Framework, opportunities to integrate Type 1 multimodal corridor On-Street Protected Bike Lanes should be implemented at:

- West Main Street between Pine Street and Washington Street
- Central Street between 7th Street and 11th Street

Shown in the Transportation Framework, opportunities to integrate Type 3 multimodal corridor On-Street Bike Routes should be implemented at:

- East 10th Street between Washington Street and Monroe Street
- Central Street between the railroad tracks and 7th Street
- Monroe Street between the railroad tracks and East 14th Street (Highway 160)
- Pine Street between Main Street and West 21st Street
- Jefferson Street between East 7th Street and East 14th Street (Highway 160)
- Madison Street between East 7th Street and East 14th Street (Highway 160)

Additional bicycle infrastructure should continue to be implemented after further assessment of community transportation needs and desires, as shown by the arrows for Future Multi-Use Expansions in **Figure 4.1**.

***Strategy 4.3 – Support the expansion of sidewalks and multi-use paths to connect pedestrians to city services and amenities in a safe manner.***

Multi-use paths present an exciting opportunity to enrich Harper’s recreational and transportation infrastructure. The paths should be designed with inclusivity in mind, accommodating various modes of transportation, such as walking, cycling, rollerblading, and jogging, to cater to the diverse needs, ages, levels of ability, and preferences of the community. It is essential to consider connectivity to key destinations like parks, schools, and neighborhoods, promoting active and sustainable transportation choices. Well-designed landscaping and amenities like benches, lighting, and water stations can enhance the path’s aesthetics and functionality, making it an attractive option for residents and visitors alike.

Shown in the Transportation Framework, opportunities to integrate Type 2 multimodal corridor **off-street multi-use paths** can be placed on:

- 14th Street (Highway 160) between K-14 Highway and K-2 Highway
- Spruce Street between West 11th Street and West 14th Street (Highway 160)
- West 11th Street between Elm Street and Maple Street
- Elm Street between West Main Street and West 11th Street
- Maple Street between West Main Street and West 11th Street
- West Main Street between K-14 Highway and Pine Street
- Central Street between 11th Street and West 21st Street

The city should explore various sources, including federal grants, state programs, and local initiatives, to finance these projects. Some specific examples of transportation funding resources that the city can take advantage of include:

- KDOT Cost Share Program – Flexible funding opportunity for communities looking for assistance with a wide range of highway, local road, bridge, rail, airport, bicycle, pedestrian, and public transit projects.
- KDOT City Connecting Link Improvement Program (CCLIP) – Assists cities in funding improvements to City Connecting Links (city streets that carry a state highway designation).
- KDOT Kansas Airport Improvement Program – This program assists with improvements to all public-use airports except those classified as Primary airports.

***Strategy 4.4 – Enhance key intersections in locations with higher volumes of vehicle or pedestrian traffic to improve the efficiency and safety of the overall system.***

Improving the safety and efficiency of major intersections is critical to the overall mobility of a community. Intersections should function well for all modes of transportation, leveraging infrastructure enhancements, safety features, and aesthetic enhancements to improve the overall experience of traversing the community.

Harper’s intersections should integrate safety and aesthetic enhancements at the following locations:

- West Main Street and Elm Street
- West 14th Street (Highway 160) and K-14 Highway
- West 14th Street (Highway 160) and Spruce Street
- West 14th Street (Highway 160) and Ash Street
- West 14th Street (Highway 160) and Pine Street
- East 14th Street (Highway 160) and Central Street
- West Main Street and Central Street
- East 14th Street (Highway 160) and K-2 Highway

Further investigation of community intersections should be conducted to identify more specific recommendations and prioritize intersection improvements based on a data-driven and community-centered study. A thorough traffic analysis is essential to identifying intersections with the highest congestion, accident rates, or traffic flow issues. This analysis should consider current and projected traffic volumes, peak hours, and pedestrian or cyclists needs. Input from local law

enforcement agencies can help pinpoint intersections with safety concerns. Engaging with residents, and local businesses through public meetings, surveys, or online platforms can reveal intersections that are particularly problematic or inconvenient for the community.

***Strategy 4.5 – Prioritize maintenance and repair requirements, as well as the correction of existing deficiencies, to heighten the quality and safety of the transportation system.***

The city is responsible for the public right-of-way maintenance and operations that keep Harper running smoothly, including street clean-up, overall maintenance of parks and public right-of-way, and code enforcement. City code requires weekly trash pick-up; however, the service to the residents is provided by a private hauler. Harper should continue to hold itself to a high standard of operations, establishing a proactive maintenance schedule and a high degree of internal accountability. Regular inspections and assessments of the quality of roads, utilities, and public spaces should be conducted to identify areas in need of repair or upgrades.

Harper should continue prioritizing investments in their GIS (Geographic Information System), as the mapping will help create and maintain a comprehensive inventory of its infrastructure, aiding in the prioritization of maintenance projects and informing budget decisions.

Additionally, Harper’s annual budget should dedicate personnel and funds to the dedicated maintenance and repair of the public right-of-way and transportation system. There should be sufficient funding allocated to support timely maintenance and repairs, preventing them from escalating into more costly problems.

***Strategy 4.6 – Participate in statewide transportation safety initiatives to enhance Harper's emergency response and driving conditions.***

To participate effectively in statewide transportation safety initiatives, Harper should engage in collaborative partnerships with relevant state agencies, such as the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and the Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office (KTSRO).

Communication is key, and Harper should establish regular dialogues with these agencies to stay informed about state-level initiatives, funding opportunities, and safety priorities. When collaborating with the state agencies, the city should seek to access and utilize traffic and safety data that can inform local decision-making. By identifying accident-prone areas, high-risk behaviors, and emerging safety trends, the city can prioritize its efforts and resources effectively.

***Strategy 4.7 – Develop citywide trail connectivity to promote outdoor activity and different modes of transportation to everyday destinations.***

Trails should be constructed to connect city services and amenities, including existing parks, as well as city services and amenities. This Plan should consider their proximity to parks, schools, and residential neighborhoods. Engaging with the community through public meetings and surveys can help gather input and ensure that planned trail connectivity aligns with the needs and preferences of residents.

Securing funding for trail development is essential for turning future trail connectivity into a reality. Just like bicycle infrastructure, Harper can explore various funding sources, such as state grants, federal programs like the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), and public-private partnerships. Collaborating with regional non-profits, businesses, and philanthropic organizations can also provide financial support and resources. As trail segments are constructed, it is important to focus on maintenance and upkeep to ensure their longevity and safety.

Strong partnerships should be developed between local user groups, volunteers, and city staff to help establish a maintenance plan and ensure that the trail system remains accessible and enjoyable for all residents and visitors.

## SECTION 5 – CHARACTER AND LIVABILITY FRAMEWORK

The character of a community is comprised of its distinctive traits, qualities, and attributes that embody or define a place, encompassing architectural styles, aesthetics, community design, cultural heritage, and the overall ambiance of an area. The character of a place is often reduced to individual attributes and details, but community character should be approached as a holistic experience that requires the maintenance of a system of social, economic, and environmental characteristics.

The character of a community can be evaluated by considering attributes such as:

- Site design
- Street design
- Intensity of development
- Building location, dimensions, and orientation
- Natural features
- Parks and plazas
- Monumentation
- Gateways
- Textures and patterns
- Architecture and building facades
- Colors
- Attractions and points of interest
- Public art
- Vegetation

The presence or absence of these characteristics comprise the character of a community. They are present in commercial areas, downtown, major corridors, neighborhoods streets, and undeveloped spaces alike, and they impact the overarching aesthetics of the community. Character is shaped more by the above list of attributes than by land use alone, and both public spaces and private properties work together to create community character. These attributes ultimately result in the experience of living, working, or visiting Harper.

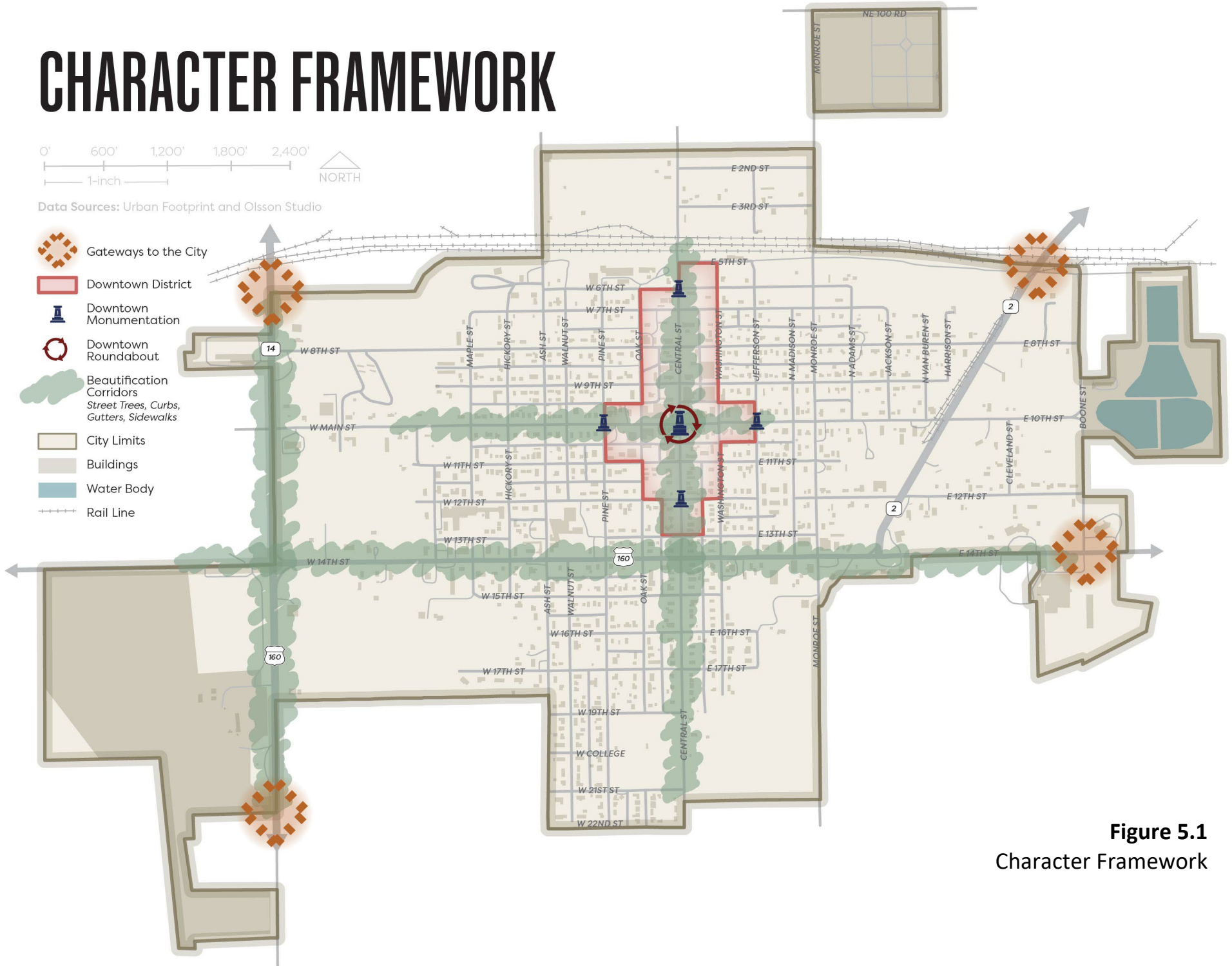
Harper should work to cultivate a character that reflects the multifaceted values, interests, and aesthetics of those who live here. Public engagement for this Plan revealed that Harper desires a livelier environment rich with shopping, dining, and entertainment options, as well as community programming that makes use of community spaces. The community hopes to see revitalization of commercial and residential building stock, as well as beautification of the public right-of-way. Harper should seek to integrate more community art, landscaping, green spaces, gathering spaces, and monumentation to reflect the unique and intricate beauty of this community through its composition. **Figure 5.1 Character Framework** should guide the implementation of character strategies described in this section.

# CHARACTER FRAMEWORK



Data Sources: Urban Footprint and Olsson Studio

-  Gateways to the City
-  Downtown District
-  Downtown Monumentation
-  Downtown Roundabout
-  Beautification Corridors  
*Street Trees, Curbs, Gutters, Sidewalks*
-  City Limits
-  Buildings
-  Water Body
-  Rail Line



**Figure 5.1**  
Character Framework

Each of the identified Community Values will be enhanced or addressed by the community character and livability strategies outlined in this section, expanding the vibrancy and character of Harper.

**Figure 5.1 Character Framework** is the guide to implementation of character strategies described in this section.

***Strategy 5.1 – Designate gateways to the city with enhanced entry signage to provide a sense of arrival as people enter Harper.***

Cities have main entrances and intersections that provide visitors with their first impressions that set the tone for the community and its residents. Gateways should be intentionally considered and established to make a statement about Harper, communicating its history, values, and interests. Gateway signage and monumentation can be designed at a variety of scales to accommodate specific locations, traffic volumes and traffic speeds along a corridor, as well as communicate important information about the area.

Gateways are typically located along freeways and major intersections along city limit boundaries to signify entry into town. In Harper, as shown in **Figure 5.1**, gateways should be located at the following intersections:

- South on Highway 160 at the Harper Municipal Airport
- North on Highway 160 just south of the train tracks
- North on Highway 2 just south of the train tracks
- East on 14th Street at the intersection with Boone Street

Gateways are not necessarily limited to a single sign or element but can also encompass an entire node or intersection. Gateways provide visitors with a sense of place and give the impression they are entering a unique destination. Harper should evaluate the opportunity to craft unique gateways that signify entry into Harper and potentially represent the community's identity.

***Strategy 5.2 – Formalize a Downtown District to protect and create a strong sense of place through a unique mix of uses, specific development requirements, building articulation, and dedicated programming.***

While downtown mixed-use district boundaries have previously been established by the city, the preferred uses and requirements for redevelopment and development efforts need to be formalized, incentivized, and implemented.

Downtown districts contain a **unique mix of special uses** (horizontal and vertical) including retail, office employment, residential, and lodging. While densities vary, most buildings in a downtown mixed-use district are generally multi-story and with minimal single-family detached housing. All or most residential development takes the form of multifamily buildings, many of which have other uses at ground level and on other levels as well. Mixed-use districts generally do not allow industrial land uses or any significant amount of warehousing or storage buildings.

## Harper's Community Values

People of All Ages

Vibrant Local Businesses

Employment Opportunities

Variety of Quality Housing Options

Robust Public Services

Attractive Streets

Connected Public Spaces

Unique Destinations

Quality Services

Safety

Downtown District **development requirements and design considerations** should be established, setting high expectations for both public and private properties, as well as the public right-of-way, including:

- **Site Planning and Design.** Downtown properties are held to design standards involving site- and building-specific issues such as density, urban scale, and floor-area ratio, as well as design matters like parking, setbacks, lighting, and drainage, to name a few.
- **Building Design.** Unique elements of design and articulation should be encouraged and incentivized to create identity and a sense of place downtown. Building materials, special ground-floor design treatments, facade variation, corner treatments, building setbacks for upper stories, and facade elements such as transparency, building entries, and other architectural details help define downtown spaces and create a more intriguing and appealing district.
- **Mobility and Connectivity.** Multimodal corridor planning sets standards for the design of the transportation network as well as its performance. This includes the provision of and accessibility to multiple mobility options—which is fundamental in the development of a true mixed-use district.

Building articulation can have a huge impact on the visual appearance of a downtown. Harper should seek to incentivize development that aligns with these principles for downtown buildings.

- **Define entries.** Providing visual cues, such as articulated entries, support navigability and mobility for pedestrians. Wayfinding and clearly defined uses along the ground floor are essential components of pedestrian activity. The use of awnings, canopies and overhangs provides visual interest, entry definition and protection from inclement weather.
- **Use a variety of quality materials.** The use of quality materials, particularly on the ground floor, translates to a sense of quality in the public sphere. Quality materials typically last longer and wear better, preserving the pedestrian realm with less maintenance. Natural materials, local whenever possible, can create timeless and weather-resistant designs. Variation in materials, when combined with facade articulation, can effectively create interesting streetscapes.
- **Keep the ground floor transparent.** Transparency contributes to a great street. Windows create visual interest (for those of either side of the window), make the street highly visible and thus safer, and engage the pedestrian in various activities along the street.
- **Use patterns to maintain interest.** Using pattern and repetition to create and maintain visual interest are proven architectural tenets. Windows, entries, facade modulation, and design treatments occurring in patterns help create great streets by providing visual appeal. Patterns and materials that refer to the local context can help create a pleasant, cohesive environment that is easy to navigate. Development along designated beautification corridors and within downtown should set minimum standards for building orientation and façade elements that break up the appearance, increase transparency, and create depth.

**Downtown programming** should be regularly and strategically hosted in downtown Harper, positioning itself as the center of the community and hub of activity, while showcasing the community’s unique characteristics, culture, history, and defining features. Effective programming and activities enhance the image of downtown, preserve its unique heritage, and create a reputation as the place for residents to shop, work, live, have fun, and invest. Festivals, markets, community theater performances, musical concerts, and other programs should be invited to take place downtown, creating awareness, excitement, and economic activity downtown, and then spurring more of the same.

***Strategy 5.3 – Design and incorporate meaningful downtown monumentation to signify arrival to and enjoyment of the Downtown District.***

Monumentation is a form of branding and wayfinding that can be used to distinguish special districts and make a lasting impression on visitors. Monument features can provide a strong sense of arrival by serving as small-scale gateways signifying entry into the Downtown District. Using district-specific designs for signage enhances the district’s sense of place, provides wayfinding guidance, identifies the areas as part of the district, and creates additional character and visual intrigue for downtown.

Downtown monumentation can take several forms, but it should serve as a unique visual tool. Enhanced landscaping, signage, creative art displays, and other elements should be integrated into the design of monumentation, representing the unique character of downtown.

As shown in **Figure 5.1**, downtown monumentation should be located at the following intersections:

- The intersection of Central Street at West 6th Street (North Entry to the Downtown District)
- The intersection of Central Street at East 13th Street (South Entry to the Downtown District)
- The intersection of Main Street at Jefferson Street (East Entry to the Downtown District)
- The intersection of Main Street at Pine Street (West Entry to the Downtown District)
- At the center of the roundabout at the intersection of West Main Street and Central Street (At the center of the Downtown District)

***Strategy 5.4 – Create Beautification Corridors throughout Harper that incorporate consistent street trees, curbs, gutters, and sidewalks to enhance community aesthetics and appeal.***

One critical element of community character is the care for major corridors. A consistent and beautiful public right-of-way has several benefits including heightened aesthetics, safety, character, and the overall impression of a high degree of investment and care for the community.

Streetscape is defined as the elements within and along the street right-of-way that define its appearance, identity, and functionality, including adjacent buildings and land uses, street furniture, landscaping, trees, sidewalks, and pavement treatments, among others. These kinds of improvements can be critical for community development.

Corridors are important to circulation and connectivity, but also to the general appearance and attractiveness of the community. Improvements like street trees, curbs, gutters, and sidewalks can drastically change the look and experience of Harper—presenting an opportunity to refine and revitalize its identity for the future.

As shown in **Figure 5.1**, some corridors should be designated as **Beautification Corridors**, integrating consistent street trees, curbs, gutters, and sidewalks:

- The West 14th Street corridor (from Highway 160 to Boone Street)
- The West Main Street corridor (from Elm Street to Jefferson Street)
- Central Street Corridor (from East 5th Street to West 21st Street)
- Highway 160 (from the train tracks on the north side to first interruption of city limits to the south by the airport)

Achieving the goal of providing attractive, quality development in unique areas and along key corridors requires considering both site and architectural design. Effective site design must produce safe site circulation for both car and pedestrian traffic. This is achieved through strategic points of entry and exit, proper building orientation, parking design, and adequate land dedication for landscaping. When these elements work together, corridor development can accommodate high-traffic businesses that remain functional, beautiful, and cohesive.

There are several additional elements associated with the design of great streets and places, including:

- Access
- Site circulation and connectivity
- Inclusive/universal design
- Building orientation and articulation
- Building entry frequency
- Canopies and arcades
- Capacity
- Scale (of design and development)
- Intersections
- Lighting
- Parking
- Setbacks
- Screening and buffering
- Sidewalk/street design
- Signage
- Stormwater
- Street trees and landscaping
- Utilities



*Cohesive corridor development and streetscape enhancements example*

**Strategy 5.5 – Promote local character and connectivity throughout the city with cohesive branding and wayfinding signage.**

Wayfinding signage assists in establishing community character by creating a local identity and directing residents and visitors to the city’s main attractions, while also allowing them to discover new attractions and events. Wayfinding signage should be created for Harper’s local attractions and points of interest such as:

- Harper Sports Complex
- Harper Aquatic Center
- Harper Historical Museum
- Harper City Park
- Harper Art Depot
- Rolla Rena Skate Center
- Harper City Cemetery
- Harper Municipal Airport
- Harper Public Library

Strategically placed signage for both pedestrian and vehicular use allows for maximum visibility and utilization. The design of signage throughout the city should maintain consistent and **recognizable city branding**. Unique, yet complimentary signage design tailored to each district or unique area can be utilized to create distinction within the community. The integration of art and landscaping can enhance the appearance and effectiveness of signage.

**Public Art and Branding Elements.** Strategically located public art in public spaces is a powerful community asset. Unique art displays along roadways and in public parks make art more accessible to residents, as well as enhancing roadsides, pedestrian corridors, and community gateways. Art imagery is often associated with the local culture and becomes part of its brand. Branding aims to establish a significant presence to create visual associations. A city symbol or slogan located on citywide signage and in public spaces helps to perpetuate the brand—though in many cases public art and branding are not mutually exclusive. Colorful displays and installations can be placed throughout the community and sponsored by various businesses and local organizations building community pride and participation. In October of 2023, the Arts Center, supported by private donors and the City of Harper, funded a large mural in the downtown park.

**Signage** plays a key role in wayfinding. Since commercial signage is generally intended to be seen by the driving public, it is important to consider public safety in the regulation process. To achieve this goal, signs should be aesthetically pleasing and effective, but also sized appropriately. This requires context-sensitive solutions; for example, along freeways signs need to be larger to be seen at a distance at high speeds, while residential or pedestrian areas need a much smaller scale. Sign standards should encourage integration of signage with the surroundings, including regulation for scale, landscaping, materials, location, and building design.



*Branding and wayfinding example*

***Strategy 5.6 – Encourage establishment of a community association to advocate for community needs, finance neighborhood improvements, and help keep Harper vibrant.***

To preserve or enhance local resources, many communities take intentional strides to bring different stakeholders, including organizations, businesses, government representatives, and residents together to build a plan for action. Clear community organization creates a shared vision that can convert the community’s vision into clear goals, roles, and tasks to make community revitalization happen. Community efforts such as this should be encouraged and supported by the City of Harper, to further the advancement of community improvements.

Harper has limited resources that can be allocated to public and private beautification and enhancement efforts, creating gaps that the community and grassroots efforts could work to fill through **organized community collaboration and coordination**. Local organizations can work to leverage funds and relationships to help small businesses and establish new partnerships advance community priorities. There are many options for the community to cultivate local governance organizations that can advance the community’s vision of creating a beautiful small-town with robust civic pride, unique local charm, and character.

The most resilient community efforts seek support from local organizations like community institutions, neighborhood coalitions, and other civic structures. Main Street organizations and other place governance entities are providing recovery relief to rural residents and small businesses, as well as supporting the development and capacity of other community-based organizations, coalitions, and networks that are needed to build long-term resilience.

***Strategy 5.7 – Maintain vacant properties or allow popups and startup business to utilize spaces to give the impression of occupancy and vibrancy.***

Cities own and acquire a variety of real estate assets, and sometimes these assets are not serving any public good or generating any revenue for the government entity that owns them or for the community where they are located. Structures like vacant office buildings, abandoned warehouses or storefronts, and other outdated facility buildings are often ideal candidates for redevelopment efforts and investment from the private sector.

A **cottage industry** is a small manufacturing business that often operates in the home of the craftsperson, who is also usually the company's proprietor. These decentralized home occupation style businesses produce goods and services and sell directly to consumers at local markets or online without altering the character of the home or neighborhood. Examples of cottage industry businesses include leatherworking, decorative handicrafts, musical instruments, shoemaking, pottery, and textiles, to name a few. A cottage industry community would ideally be cultivated in the vacant residential structures south of the Downtown District. For this to be a success, the city will need to evaluate local ordinance regulations and ensure that commercial uses are allowable in residential homes both in and outside of the Downtown designated area. Flexible parking requirements and renovation processes will need to be included to make the transformations feasible for incoming startup artisans.

***Strategy 5.8 – Attract new businesses to Harper including age-inclusive entertainment, fine dining, and shopping that will generate activity and raise the quality of life for current and future residents.***

Local businesses are the backbone of a strong local economy and city as a whole. Money spent at local businesses is more likely to stay in a community, and a solid core of local owners ensures that important economic decisions that affect Harper are made prioritizing local interests. These businesses also become a unique draw for visitors, bringing in added revenue and creating a sustainable local economy. Although Harper continues to grow, it is important that the community protect and maintain the small-town atmosphere that means so much to residents. Harper is the home of many thriving businesses, including eight manufacturers, six restaurants, two banks, grocery and hardware stores, and many service-related businesses. Resulting input from the public engagement efforts of this planning process revealed that the community would like to see additional shopping, dining, and entertainment options in Harper.

Cities should be attuned to the challenges would-be entrepreneurs face in starting and operating a business in the area. There is likely a policy change—zoning reform or streamlined startup processes— or development incentives that could help them and the city to accomplish economic development and redevelopment goals. The city should conduct an evaluation of current zoning policies and redevelopment processes to limit the barriers to new and innovative development, as well as allowing special uses (i.e., microbreweries, education centers, outdoor venues, etc.) to locate in redeveloping areas. Harper County can partner with many State agencies to package different incentives and tax policies together to best fit local business needs. The City of Harper currently offers two incentive programs: Ad Valorem Rebate and Utility Forgiveness. Harper County currently offers Economic Development Exemptions and the Commercial Ad Valorem Tax Rebate Program.

## Harper County Economic Development Incentives

### Economic Development Exemption - EDX Property Tax Abatement

Harper County and cities may exempt real property from ad valorem taxation (property taxes). The tax abatement can include all or any portion of the appraised buildings, land, and improvements. A total or partial tax abatement may be in effect for up to 10 years after the calendar year in which the business commences its operations.

Any property tax abatement is the decision of the City Council or County Commissioners. Properties that may qualify include any buildings, land, and tangible personal property used exclusively by a new business for a) manufacturing b) research and development, or c) the storing of goods traded in interstate commerce. Also, an exemption may be given for existing buildings or new expansions to existing buildings, and for the land and associated new personal property, for these same purposes, to facilitate the expansion of the business, if new employment is created.

***Strategy 5.9 – Develop additional programming and events for the community that will attract residents and visitors to Harper and create a centralized cultural destination.***

Harper should designate time and resources into the establishment of regular community programming to heighten community cohesion, tourism, and economic activity. Ongoing public events help drive positive awareness. Bringing people together on a regular basis, serves to make citizens aware of the unique amenities that exist in the community.

Harper already hosts the annual Harper County Fair and the Red Fish Festival, bringing visitors from surrounding areas to enjoy the festivities. These events bring people together and spur excitement in the community, which can result in long-term economic investment, community cohesion, resident retention, new development, and other important long-term dividends.

Regular events such as farmers markets or art walks can draw people who do not live or work in Harper and expose others in the region to what the city has to offer. These visitors are then more likely to visit on other occasions (for events, shopping, dining, and entertainment) and may even consider living or locating a business in Harper. Community events also engage local merchants, artists, and entrepreneurs, helping to establish community champions who may invest in community revitalization efforts. City leaders should work with the community to create community events such as downtown parades, public art walks, holiday celebrations, seasonal block decorating, live music, farmers markets, community training events, community cleanup events, meet-and-greets with local elected officials, and more.

## **Harper County Economic Development Incentives (Continued)**

### **Commercial Ad Valorem Tax Rebate Program**

This program is intended to promote the economic development of Harper County by stimulating new Commercial construction and rehabilitation. A tax rebate incentive based on the incremental increase of qualified improvements will be available to commercial and industrial property owners in Harper County, Kansas.

## APPENDIX A – EXISTING CONDITIONS

Harper, Kansas is in the southern region of the state, specifically Harper County. With a population of 1,250 people, based on 2021 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, Harper offers a charming and close-knit community atmosphere. Situated amidst the scenic beauty of the Kansas prairies, the city boasts a rich history and a range of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

### EXISTING LAND USE

The term “land use” refers to the developed uses conducted within a building or on a particular parcel of land. Existing land use in Harper consists of a mixture of land uses, with a high concentration of single-family residential dispersed throughout the city, majorly located on local residential roads. On the outer edges of the city, large amounts of agricultural land and open space exist, which provides the potential for future development for the city, while also preserving its agricultural heritage.

Current development patterns in and around Harper have been greatly affected by the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) railroad and US 160, both of which run east-west, resulting in a generally matching east-west urban growth pattern. Other factors include the north-south K-14 Highway corridor and, later, the municipal airport, which effectively constrained community growth to the west and southeast. Within this pattern, industrial development has tended to cluster on the northwest, near the railroad and highway, while commercial uses are concentrated in the downtown area near the community’s center, with a secondary but significant presence along US 160 in the city’s southern incorporated area. From the original core region, residential construction and accompanying uses have continued to develop to the south and east.

Within the broader community growth pattern, the most recent commercial and industrial development trend has been toward the southeast, along US 160 at the city’s limit, where major portions of retail commercial and industrial uses have been built. Most residential neighborhood expansions, including community infrastructure, have occurred to the south, with a modest secondary growth to the east. The population of Harper has been trending downwards since 2000. **Although these trends are declining, the room for growth could be an opportunity for developers to provide affordable housing to attract new residents to live within the city.**

Portions of Harper remained undeveloped, located mostly north of the BNSF rail line, just east of K-14 Highway, and south of US 160. The undeveloped land inside the city boundary presents a decided advantage to the City as development can be guided toward these undeveloped areas before the City considers annexing more property into the community.

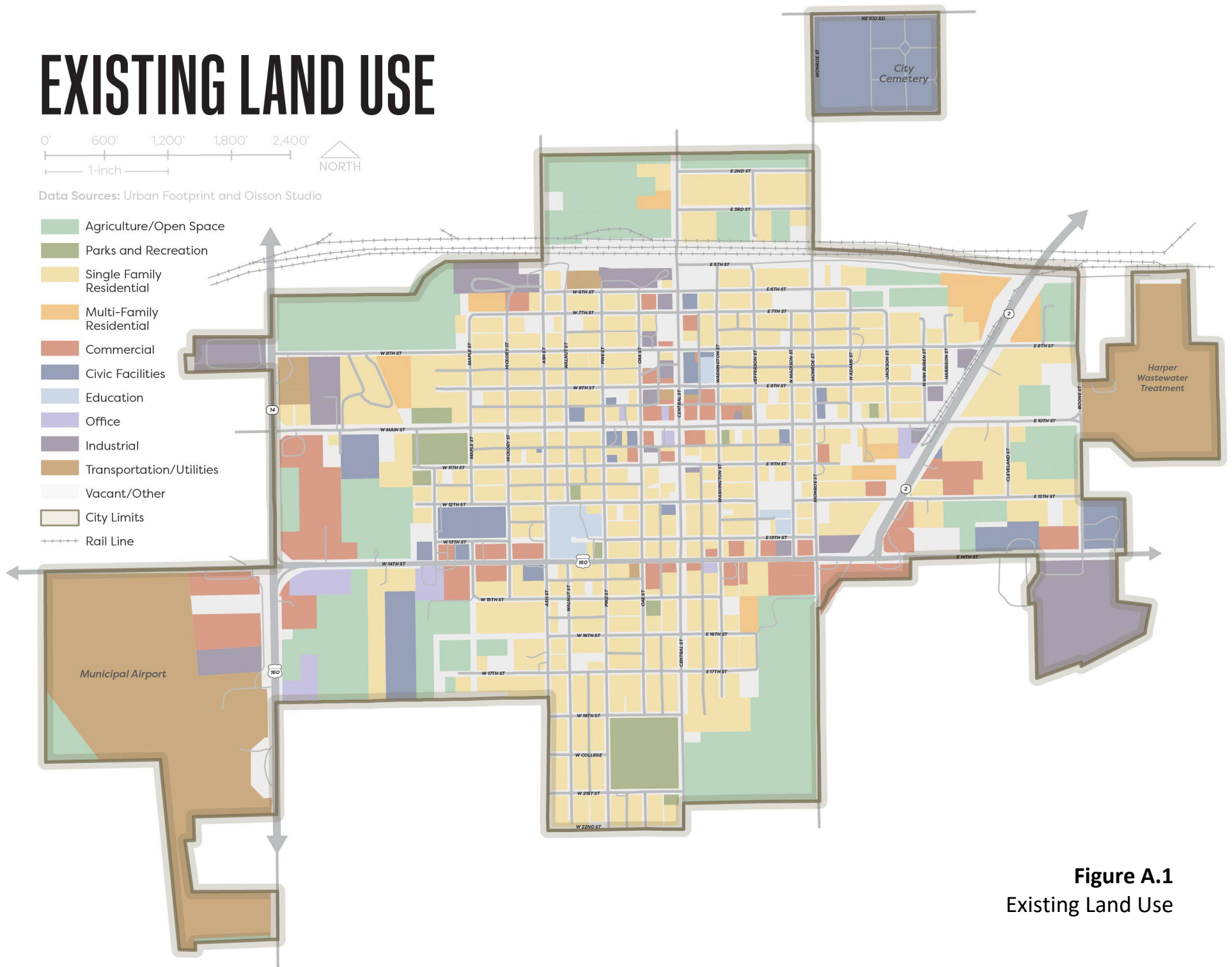
**Figure A.1** illustrates these land use patterns.

# EXISTING LAND USE



Data Sources: Urban Footprint and Olsson Studio

- Agriculture/Open Space
- Parks and Recreation
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial
- Civic Facilities
- Education
- Office
- Industrial
- Transportation/Utilities
- Vacant/Other
- City Limits
- Rail Line



**Figure A.1**  
Existing Land Use

## Key Takeaways

Harper’s existing land uses are predominantly residential, with some commercial, light industrial, and heavy industrial uses. The most developed use of land in the region is for city streets and corridors. The bulk of uses are spread across the city and based on the existing zoning, US 160 has the most significant growth and serves as the major commercial corridor for Harper.

## EXISTING ZONING

Harper has 18 zoning districts, which include:

- A-H: Airport Height Control District
- F-P: Floodplain District
- W-P: Water Quality Protection District
- AG-1: General Agriculture District
- A-C: Commercial Agriculture District
- R-S: Residential Suburban District
- R-1: Single-Family Dwelling District
- R-2: Two-Family Dwelling District
- R-3: Multiple-Family Dwelling District
- PUD: Planned Unit Development
- M-H: Manufactured Housing District
- M-P: Manufactured Home Park District
- C-S: Highway Service District
- C-1: Central Business District
- C-2: General Commercial District
- C-3: Adult Entertainment District
- I-1: Light Industrial District
- I-2: Heavy Industrial District

## Key Takeaways

Harper is largely zoned for single-family residential, with minimal land area designated for multi-family residential uses. Sitting in the middle of the city is the C-1 Central Business District, surrounded by the highest concentration of residential zoning (R-1: Single-Family Dwelling). Connected to the BNSF Railway is the largest designated area of I-2 Heavy Industrial, just north of the Central Business District.

The main corridors of K-14 and US 160 have the highest concentration of industrial-zoned parcels (Light and Heavy Industrial) and commercially zoned parcels (Highway Service and General Commercial) districts. The K-2 corridor contains diverse usage of districts that include Single-Family Residential, Light and Heavy Industrial, and Commercial. In the southwest portion of the city, along K-14, is the AG-1 General Agriculture District that encompasses the Harper Municipal Airport.

## EXISTING PARKS, RECREATION, AND DESTINATIONS

Harper has several parks, recreational facilities, and historic destinations that add to the character of the city and quality of life for the residents. These destination points allow residents and visitors to experience a connected system of community and regional serving amenities.

Existing parks, recreation, and destination points include the following:

- **Harper City Park.** The park is a year-round community park, that includes a network of walking paths that connect to a gazebo, horseshoe pits, picnic tables, modern restrooms and a playground for all residents and visitors. The **Harper Aquatic Center** sits directly across from City Park, and is a swimming facility that offers aquatic programs, lap swimming, free swim, and swimming lessons. Due to the location and popularity of the facility, it hosts swim teams, and other special programming events. In June 2023, received \$5,000 from the Karen Williams Memorial to replace chairs for patrons, umbrellas for the stands, and to help fund the toddler splashpad project.
- **Harper Downtown Park.** This park, at the intersection of Main Street and Central Street, provides those visiting downtown a place to lounge in open green space along or utilize the park benches. Additionally, the park includes a gazebo, which is an ideal opportunity to attract residents and visitors downtown for future live music events. The image displays the new mural in Downtown Park, which is one of four new murals in Harper County, providing future art tourism for those interested around the county.
- **Harper Sports Complex.** The complex is located at 1921 Pine Street on the southern side of the city. It provides three recently renovated baseball fields, along with a large green open recreational space that could be used for multiple sports. The largest field in the complex is known as “Wharton Field.” In 2018, the Harper community renamed the park after Harold Dean Wharton due to the relationships and friendships he built coaching and umpiring in Harper County. The softball field (north field) was also officially named “Howie Field” in 2020 after a long-time supporter and coach of local softball teams, Fred Howie.
- **Rolla Rena Skate Center.** Founded in 1984, the Rolla Rena Skate Center is a one-floor indoor roller-skating rink that is open in the fall through spring seasons. The center is open during the cooler months of the year from September/October to April/May and provides an outlet for those who enjoy skating. The center is available for birthday parties, holiday parties, and corporate events.



*New Downtown Park mural*

- **Historic Places.** In addition to the sports and recreational parks, Harper is home to numerous properties that are listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. As seen on the home page of the City of Harper website, construction for the **Harper Standpipe** was started in 1886 and completed in 1887. It is significant for its association with community planning and development as well as its engineering method of construction. It is a unique example of a late 19th century standpipe with a base constructed of local materials and collection of riveted iron plates. The fish wind direction indicator on top still moves, and the standpipe is in current use as a part of the city water system.
- **Gallery Mostaza.** The Gallery Mostaza provides big-city art in a small-town setting as a ceramic art gallery just east of the city limits. Open four days a week, the gallery is owned by two artists who have their work displayed in private collections and galleries across the United States as well as internationally. Pictured is one of the four catalyst murals on the side of the gallery.
- **Harper City Cemetery.** The cemetery consists of a 12.5-acre tract in the northern-most part of the city with 1011 burial spaces. On December 12, 1921, Ordinance No. 918 was passed for the purchase of the cemetery from Harper Lodge No. 191 making it a Municipal Cemetery. A new addition is now open to the west of the existing addition with 1,072 new burial plots. As visitors enter, they will see the oldest part of the cemetery, where graves there date back to the late 1800s.

### Key Takeaways

Harper provides a wide variety of privately and publicly owned community facilities for its residents and visitors. The Harper City Park attracts many visitors due to its wide selection of activities for children and adults. Both the city’s baseball and softball fields recently underwent renovation and were renamed after long-time volunteers and coaches. The Harper Aquatic Center is one of the most popular pools in Harper County. Each year the pool attracts visitors from around the county who celebrate birthdays and special events and take advantage of many pool amenities like the diving board, toddler slide, and large slide.

In June of 2023, the Pickleball Project, located at Harper City Park, received \$6,000 from the Harper County Community Foundation, propelling interest further into the new sport. The recently renovated Harper Sports Complex is an important facility to the Harper community as it holds baseball tournaments and practices for residents and visitors. There are two parks located in Harper: the City Park just east of K-14 Highway and the Sports Park located about a mile south of US 160. This inclusion of the neighborhood and their recreational facilities shows that effort has been made to increase recreational opportunities in various parts of the city.



*New Gallery Mostaza mural*

## EXISTING TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

### Roadway Network

The city's roadway network consists primarily of streets built to provide for residential areas in the central and southern regions of the city. Numerous roadways are local residential roads with highway corridors intersecting and bordering city limits. This construction style has allowed for most residents to travel on a concentration of east to west and north to south residential streets.

One of busiest corridors located in Harper is the K-2 Highway on the east side of the city having a total volume of 2,230 vehicles per day with 330 of those vehicles being heavy commercial automobiles. US 160 runs about 1.5 miles from west to east, acting as a divider between the north and south areas of the city. K-14 Highway, running north into city limits at the intersection with US 160 (West and East 14th Street), is the busiest corridor and contains the highest density of commercial businesses in the city. This section has an average volume of 3,850 vehicles per day with 455 of those vehicles being heavy commercial automobiles.

US 160 is connected to all main residential roads throughout the city, so it is a heavily traveled road for the residents of Harper. A primary goal of US 160 is to connect the residents to all the core residential roads. US 160 connects with K-14 on the west side of the city which connects residents and visitors to the Harper Municipal Airport and other commercial/utility areas. With a volume of 1,200 vehicles per day, this section of K-14 is the least busy corridor in the city limits of Harper with 310 of those vehicles being heavy commercial automobiles.

### Active Transportation

With the city being just below two square miles in size, there is room for different modes of human powered modes of transportation. The centralized area of the city is mostly residential, so using walking and cycling as opposed to the use of motor vehicles can make significant positive impacts on physical and mental health. Due to the low-density roadways in the residential neighborhoods, the residents of Harper can walk and bike to daily destinations. In downtown, there is an efficient connection of pedestrian sidewalks, which cannot be said for many communities throughout Kansas. Allowing the citizens of Harper several mobility choices can help ensure local businesses will retain the workforce they depend on.

### Public Transportation

The City of Harper does not have a public transportation system. However, Harper County has a public transportation program, funded by U.S.C 49-5311, where the elderly, disabled, and the public (under age 60) can use to traverse the county. In-city local round trip is four dollars per passenger and an in-county round trip is seven dollars. The Harper County Public Transportation Services program fleet has three wheelchair life and restraint system equipped vehicles and four Transit 9 passenger vans. The Monday through Friday affordable service allows the residents of Harper to not only get around their city, but to also travel to different areas of Harper County, as well.

In May 2023, Harper County received \$362,000 from the Kansas High-Risk Roads Program that will go towards improving the safety and efficiency of roads and local roadways, specifically upgrading signage on 90 miles of major collectors west of K-14 in the county. This will provide safer access around the county and for the residents and visitors of Harper.

### **Airport**

The Harper Municipal Airport opened in June 1947 and is publicly owned by the City of Harper. The airport is currently operating. However, the airport does not have an operator and is currently unmanned. In 2023, the City of Harper received a KAIP (Kansas Airport Improvement Program) grant to update the credit card system for their 5,000-gallon above-ground fuel system. The Anthony airport is the official airport of Harper County.

### **Railroads**

A main, mid-continent line of the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) crosses through the northern area of the city and K-2 and K-14. The railway divides two blocks from the main portion of the city and the rest of the residential housing. There are two BNSF Freight stations located east of Central Street and west of Ash Street when headed north from downtown. The principal shipments are of livestock, flour, wool, creamer products, hides, and produce. The trains can travel up to 70 miles per hour and can be 8,000 to 9,000 feet (about 2.74 km) long. This railroad only provides freight connectivity.

### **Key Takeaways**

Harper is primarily accessible by road transportation. K-14, US 160, KS-2, and local residential roads efficiently connect the residents to nearby cities and towns by automobile. Within city limits, there is room for opportunity to help grow the sidewalk system in and around downtown, and the city. The limited public transportation is an indicator that the city relies heavily on automobile use. Residents of Harper, who are not able to drive or do not have a vehicle, have an opportunity to use the county funded public transportation program to not only get around the city, but county as well.








## **EXISTING NATURAL FEATURES**

The natural environment is a key consideration for community planning efforts for several reasons, including its impact on developable areas, natural hazard risk mitigation, the efficiency of ecological services, and more. This subsection of the Plan briefly describes the environmental features of Harper and existing risks and opportunities associated with the natural landscape of the area. The existing natural features within and surrounding Harper are illustrated in **Figure A.2**.

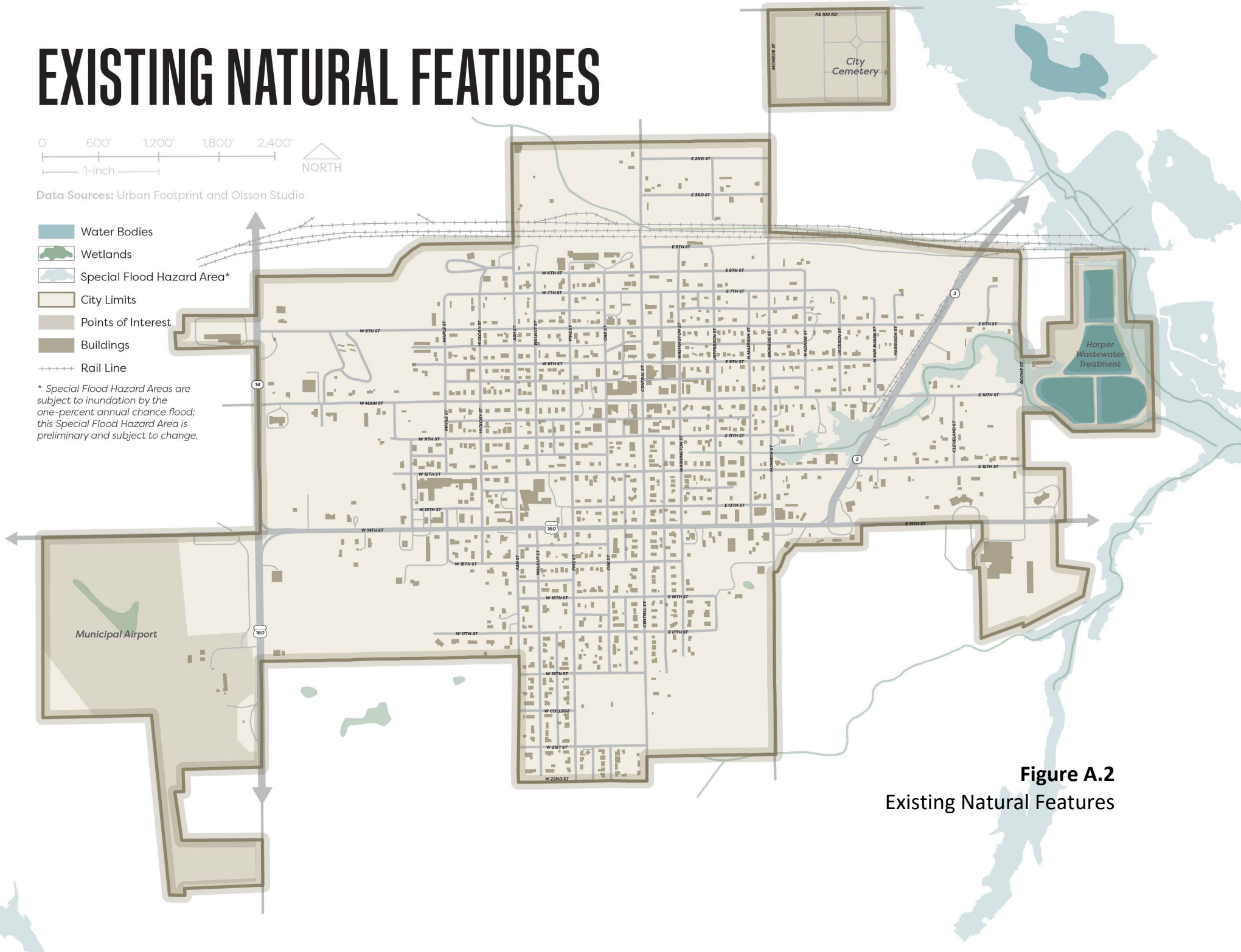
# EXISTING NATURAL FEATURES



Data Sources: Urban Footprint and Olsson Studio

-  Water Bodies
-  Wetlands
-  Special Flood Hazard Area\*
-  City Limits
-  Points of Interest
-  Buildings
-  Rail Line

\* Special Flood Hazard Areas are subject to inundation by the one-percent annual chance flood; this Special Flood Hazard Area is preliminary and subject to change.



**Figure A.2**  
Existing Natural Features

## Waterbodies and Waterways

The Chikaskia River is a 159-mile-long tributary of the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River that flows southeast through Harper and Sumner counties in Kansas. Sand Creek flows into the Chikaskia River, which is on the northeast side of the city's boundaries. The creek is largely surrounded by open agricultural land and some residential land uses within Harper, ultimately going underground at Washington Street. The creek's floodplain is managed by drainage culverts within the city's grid system and does not limit current development as much of the floodplain is within agricultural or vacant land.

## Floodways and Floodplains

Just south of the center of the city is a drainage canal running west to east, culminating in a preliminary-designated Special Flood Hazard Area east of Monroe Street. The channel crosses under K-2 and extends northeast to Sand Creek, just skirting the city's wastewater treatment ponds. According to preliminary floodplain data created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the area is identified as minimally flood prone (Zone A). Between 8th and 12th street is a stormwater drainage ditch. The drainage is channeled further to the east side of K-2 where it runs up north winding back to 8th Street. Traveling across Boone Street the drainage goes back southeast around the wastewater treatment ponds and dumps into Sand Creek.

**Please note:** Preliminary floodplain data are for review and guidance purposes only. By viewing preliminary data and maps, the user acknowledges that the information provided is preliminary and subject to change. Preliminary data are not final and are presented as the best information available at the time. Additionally, preliminary data cannot be used to rate flood insurance policies or enforce the Federal mandatory purchase requirement. FEMA will remove preliminary data once effective data are available.

## Key Takeaways

The existing natural features, or limited degree of such features like the floodplain, do not directly hinder development in Harper. The floodways are managed by the canal and will likely need added vegetation if development takes place to increase density in that area. Non-farm dwellings have not occurred in large numbers outside of the city, which is an advantage to maintaining a compact urban pattern within the city's limits.

## EXISTING COMMUNITY HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

According to the 2018 Robert Wood Johnson County Health Rankings, Harper County ranked 95th in Health Outcomes (e.g., how long people live, how healthy they feel while alive, etc.), 88th in Health Factors (e.g., health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, physical environment, etc.), and 87th in Physical Environmental Quality out of 105 counties included in the assessment. Harper County's rank was 90 of 104 ranked counties in Kansas. Harper is ranked among the least healthy counties in Kansas (Lowest 0%-25%).

Monetary resources will (at times) drive health "access" and self-care. The per capita income in Harper County is \$25,944, and 14.6 percent of the population is in poverty. There are 3,172 total housing units with a severe housing problem of 15 percent. According to the Harper County "[Community Health Areas of Strengths](#)" Town Hall, the county has an unemployment rate of 3.9 percent. Food insecurity is at 13 percent, and limited access to a store (healthy foods) at seven percent.

## Health Outcomes

In 2023, Harper experienced 10,200 premature deaths and roughly 15 percent of residents living in poor or fair health. The average life expectancy of Harper residents is 74.3, compared to 77.8 for the State of Kansas and 78.5 for the United States. Harper residents experience poorer physical and mental health days than the state averages. The health outcomes of living in Harper are comparable to Kansas as a whole, however demonstrate a lower quality of life than Kansas and the rest of the country. See **Table A.1**.

**Table A.1 Health Outcomes, 2023**

	Harper County	Kansas	United States
Length of Life			
Premature Death	10,200	7,500	7300
Quality of Life			
Poor or Fair Health	15%	13%	12%
Poor Physical Health Days	3.3	2.8	3.0
Poor Mental Health Days	4.6	4.4	4.4
Low Birthweight	6%	7%	8%
Additional Health Outcomes*			
Life Expectancy	74.3	77.8	78.5
Premature Age-Adjusted Mortality	560	370	360
Child Mortality		50	50
Infant Mortality		6	6
Frequent Physical Distress	11%	9%	9%
Frequent Mental Distress	15%	14%	14%
Diabetes Prevalence	10%	10%	9%
HIV Prevalence		139	380
<i>Source: <a href="#">Harper, Kansas   County Health Rankings &amp; Roadmaps (2023)</a></i>			
<i>*Not included in overall ranking.</i>			

## Health Factors

Health factors, detailed in **Table A.2**, represent those things we can modify to improve the length and quality of life for residents. Harper County is ranked 90th of 104 Kansas counties—ultimately, placing it among the least healthy counties in Kansas (Lowest 0%-25%). Adult smoking, obesity, inactivity, access to exercise, and teen births are higher risk health behaviors that Harper County residents experience more than Kansas as a whole. About 14 percent of Harper County is

uninsured, compared to ten percent of Kansas and the United States. There were 3,661 preventable hospital stays compared to 2,708 in Kansas and 2,809 in the United States.

Harper was formerly the home of Hospital District #5 Campus (700 West 13th Street). In 2019, when Patterson Health Center combined with the Anthony, Kansas and Harper, Kansas locations, Hospital District #5 was absorbed by Hospital District #6. The Harper location then became the Harper Campus for Hospital District #6. The old hospital wing on the west side of the campus has been demolished, and the treatment room area still exists but is currently vacant. The Wellness Center is still open and active, and the east wing is still operating as long-term assisted living. The cottages south of the east wing are independent assisted living.

Patterson Health Center combined two critical access hospitals in Anthony, Kansas and Harper, Kansas. The new centrally located critical access hospital has 16 inpatient beds with a large emergency room to support its service as a Level IV Trauma Center. In addition, the facility has relocated the Harper and Anthony rural health clinics and specialty outpatient clinics into a new, larger clinic integrated within the new health center. According to the 2023 County Health Rankings, there is less access to primary care physicians, dentists, and mental health providers—with a greater patient to doctor ratio than both Kansas and the United States as a whole.

**Table A.2 Health Factors, 2023**

Health Factors	Harper County	Kansas	United States
<b>Health Behaviors</b>			
Adult Smoking	22%	17%	16%
Adult Obesity	37%	36%	32%
Food Environment Index	7.3	7.0	7.0
Physical Inactivity	26%	21%	22%
Access to Exercises Opportunities	70%	80%	84%
Excessive Drinking	20%	20%	19%
Alcohol-Impaired Driving Deaths	17%	19%	27%
Sexually Transmitted Infections	202.4	501.8	481.3
Teen Births	32	22	19
<b>Clinical Care</b>			
Uninsured	14%	10%	10%
Primary Care Physicians	1,780:1	1,260:1	1,310:1
Dentists	1,330:1	1,610:1	1,380:1
Mental Health Providers	1,780:1	450:1	340:1
Preventable Hospital Stays	3,661	2,708	2,809

Mammography Screening	29%	42%	37%
Flu Vaccinations	33%	51%	51%
Social and Economic Factors			
High School Completion	89%	92%	89%
Some College	49%	71%	67%
Unemployment	2.6%	3.2%	5.4%
Children in Poverty	23%	14%	17%
Income Inequality	4.1	4.4	4.9
Children in Single-Parent Households	23%	21%	25%
Social Associations	24.4	13.2	9.1
Injury Deaths	131	78	76
Physical Environment			
Air Pollution – Particulate Matter	7.6	6.7	7.4
Drinking Water Violations	No		
Severe Housing Problems	11%	13%	17%
Driving Alone to Work	80%	79%	73%
Long Commute – Driving Alone	23%	22%	37%
Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps 2023, a program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute			

### Key Takeaways

Health indicators show that the quality of life in Harper County is lacking regarding physical and mental health, as well as access to critical care and services for locals. Residents are experiencing more health factors, which all ultimately lead to poorer health outcomes and poorer quality of life. The city’s rural location makes it difficult to receive specialized services like those for mental health. Access to more exercise opportunities is a factor that can be controlled locally and should be considered to improve local quality of life.

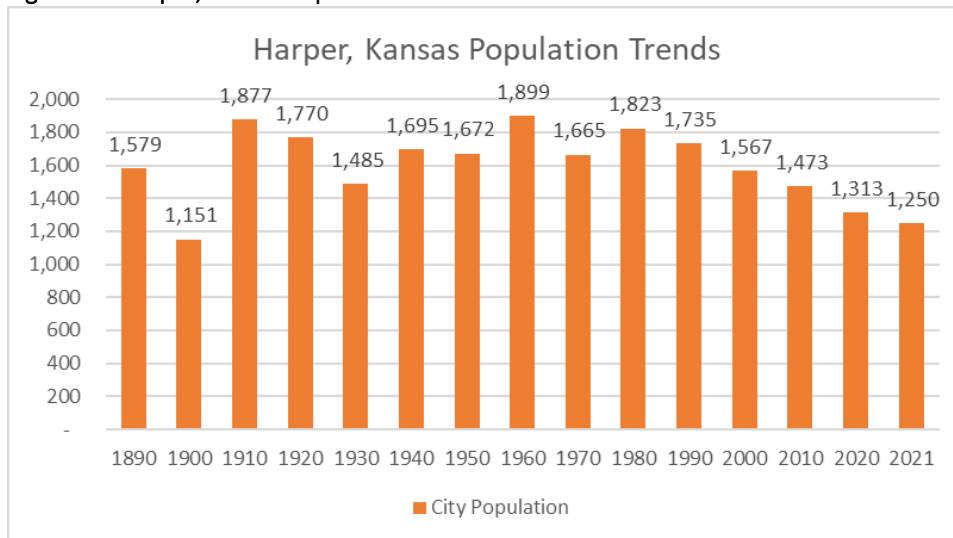
## EXISTING DEMOGRAPHICS

### Population Growth

The city's demographic history shows a mixed pattern of population increase and decrease from 1890 to 1980, followed by declines during each decade thereafter. The population peak of 1,899 in 1960 represented an expansion of 320, or 20.3 percent, over the 1890 population of 1,579. Since 1980, the population of the city has declined by 573, or 31.4 percent (refer to **Figure A.3**).

Within the 130-year period from 1890 to 2020, the greatest decade of growth was between 1900 and 1910 with over 63 percent, while the most recent decade loss was during the 2010s with nearly 11 percent. The city represents almost a quarter of the total countywide population throughout the 131-year period.

**Figure A.3 Harper, Kansas Population Trends**



Source: 2020 U.S. Census, 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

## Population Age and Composition

Universal characteristics of the population of the City of Harper as reported by the federal decennial census of 2000, 2010 and 2020 are noted in **Table A.3**.

**Table A.3 Harper Population Characteristics, 2000 - 2020**

<b>Item</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Percent Change (2010-2020)</b>
Population	1567	1473	1313	-10.9%
Median Age	41.7	40.3	39.6	-1.7%
Male	757	740	663	-10.4%
Female	810	733	650	-11.3%
Under 5 years	82	112	65	-42.0%
18 years & over	1159	1103	977	-11.4%
65 years & over	340	281	285	1.4%
White	1529	1358	1008	-25.8%
Black	2	3	3	0.0%
Hispanic Origin	19	148	262	77.0%
Households	675	624	584	-6.4%
Persons per Household	2.29	2.33	2.33	0.0%
in Group Quarters	19	18	0	-100.0%
Source: 2020 U.S. Census				

The statistics show that between 2010 and 2020 the population of Harper declined, as did most categories of comparison. Increases were registered for the 65 and over age group and Hispanics. The number of Hispanics evidenced a significant increase of 77 percent growth over the decade.

Detailed age data of the local population is noted in *Table A.4* for the period 2000 to 2020.

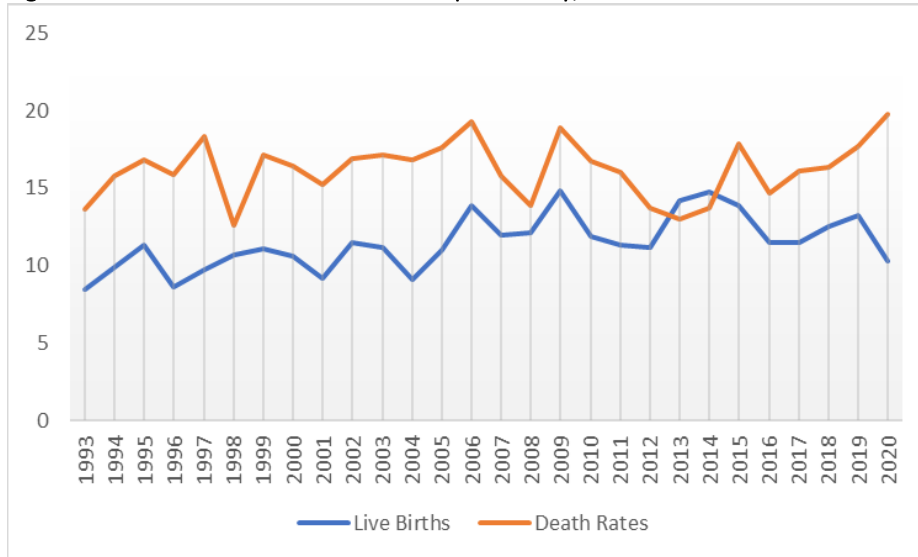
**Table A.4 Age Specific Trends in the Municipal Population, 2000 - 2020**

<b>Item</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Change</b>
Total Population	1567	1473	1313	-160
Under 5 years	82	112	65	-47
5-14 years	241	188	209	21
15-24 years	185	186	145	-41
25-34 years	143	158	158	0
35-44 years	201	178	153	-25
45-54 years	220	161	154	-7
55-64 years	155	209	144	-65
65 years & over	340	281	285	4
Source: 2020 U.S. Census				

As mentioned, the overall population of the city declined, and so too did most age classification within. Increases were recorded in the number of people five to 14 years (21 people) and people aged 65 years and older (4 people). Particularly strong decreases were recorded for the under five years, 15 to 24 age bracket and the 44 to 64 and older group. This is somewhat unusual as in many small communities the older age brackets have evidenced moderate to strong increases in recent decades.

While migration is the dominant aspect of population change locally and statewide, the effects of natural increase, that is, the differences between resident births and deaths, is also a factor. A summary of birth and death rates per 1,000 population for Harper County is illustrated in **Figure A.4**.

Figure A.4 Actual Births and Deaths in Harper County, 1993 - 2020



Source: [Kansas County Profiles](#), University of Kansas Institute for Policy & Social Research (2022)

The birth and death rate statistic indicate a pattern of net decrease over most of the 30-year period, as deaths have typically outnumbered births. The birth rate has remained stable, ranging from 8.5 to 14.8 births per thousand populations during the period, with an average value of 11.5. Death rates have ranged from 12.6 to 19.8 per thousand with an average value of 16.2. With continuing aging of the population, the current pattern of net population decreases from natural increases factor will likely continue.

### Household Composition

Harper has a high rate of family households, as shown in **Table A.5**. The average household size in Harper is 2.51 people, which is slightly higher than the state’s average of 2.47 people per household. The number of individuals living alone in Harper is 38.5 percent, which is higher than the 30 percent statewide.

The higher rate of people per household is supported by the high rate of families and married couples with children. Due to this type of household composition, the City of Harper has seen a preference for detached single-family housing, which is the preferred housing type for many families.

**Table A.5 Harper Households by Type**

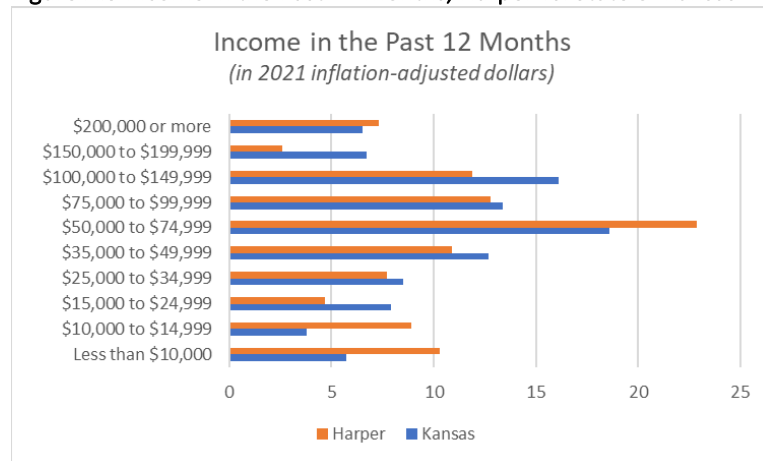
Household Type	City of Harper	State of Kansas
Total Households	494	1,159,026
Family Households	58.30%	63.9%
Married Couple Households	43.72%	49.5%
With Related Children		2.0%
Other Family (No Spouse Present)	41.70%	36.1%
With Children Present	0.00%	0.80%
Householder Living Alone	38.50%	30.00%
All Households with Children	24.10%	30.30%
Average Household Size	2.51	2.47
Average Family Size	3.28	3.08
Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates		

## Household Income

Household income levels indicate a community’s retail expenditures, housing needs and values, and residential rents. Lower income levels of \$35,000 or below are more likely to be renters and may require some form of housing assistance based on their needs. Almost 24 percent of Harper households earn less than \$25,000 annually with 7.7 percent of households earning \$25,000 to \$34,999 annually. For comparison, 17.4 percent of households statewide earn less than \$25,000 annually with 8.5 percent earning \$25,000 to \$34,999 annually. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median rent in Harper is \$718 per month.

Based on standard lending practices, households that earn \$50,000 to \$74,999 represent entry-level, for-sale housing. An estimated 22.9 percent of Harper households earn \$50,000 to \$74,999, compared to 18.6 percent statewide, as seen in **Figure A.5**.

**Figure A.5 Income in the Past 12 Months, Harper vs. State of Kansas**



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

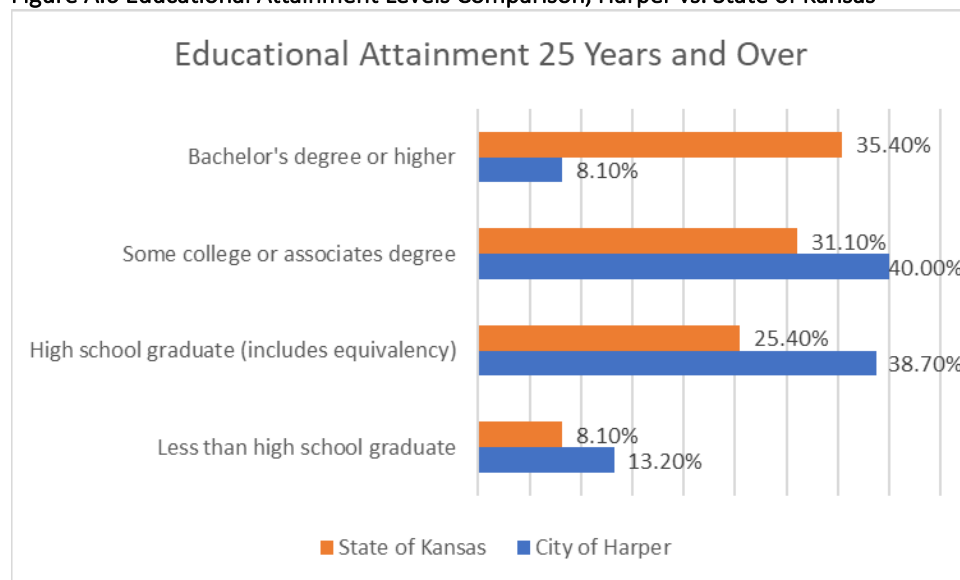
## Educational Attainment

Educational attainment impacts a community’s income levels, retail expenditures, housing values, and residential rents. A higher level of education indicates a community’s ability to attract white collar jobs, such as finance, technology, and aerospace, that typically merit larger salaries and pay.

In general, the population in Harper is less educated than the population in Kansas, as shown in **Figure A.6**. The percentage of residents 25+ years of age that have attained an Associates degree or higher is 40 percent, which is higher than the statewide percentage of 31.1 percent. However, only eight percent of Harper’s population has achieved a Bachelor’s degree or higher, while the state boasts 35.4 percent.

Of the 8.1 percent, 5.6 percent have obtained a bachelor's degree and 2.5 percent have obtained a graduate/professional degree. 28.6 percent have some college education, but did not obtain a degree and 11.4 percent obtained an Associates degree. Lastly, 13.2 percent of Harper residents did not graduate from high school, compared to 8.1 percent across Kansas.

**Figure A.6 Educational Attainment Levels Comparison, Harper vs. State of Kansas**



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

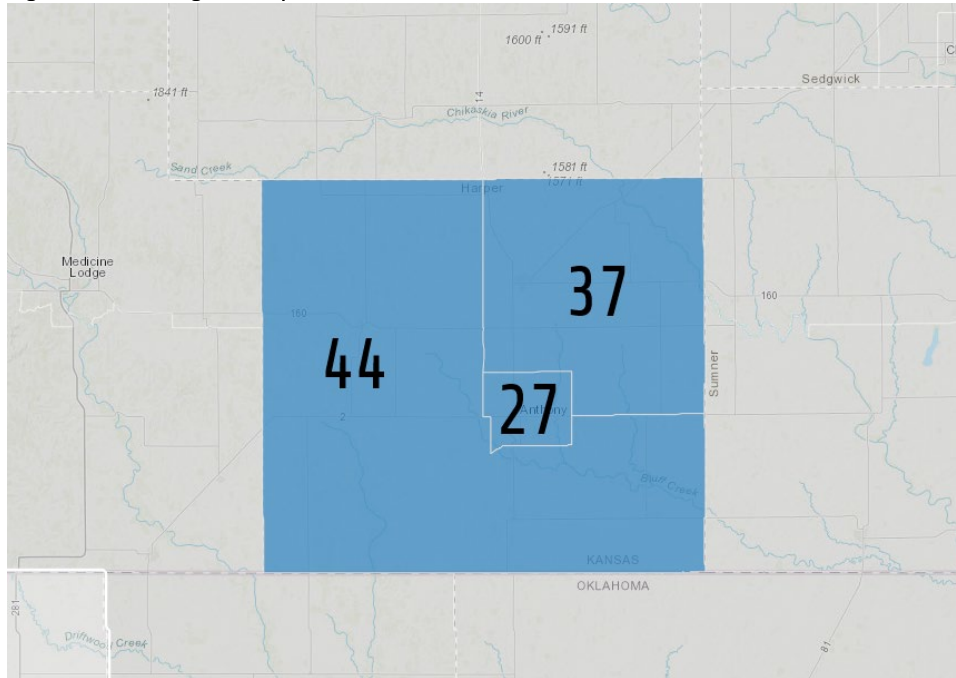
### Poverty Index

According to the American Community Survey, there are 17.9 percent of people whose income in the past 12 months is below the poverty level. There are roughly 19 households (3.8 percent) who have received public assistance income in the past 12 months.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development generates an index called the Low Poverty Index (LPI) by using two forms of data. The index uses family poverty rates and public assistance receipts, in the form of cash-welfare, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The poverty rate and public assistance for neighborhoods are determined at the census tract level and are then combined. These values are then inverted and ranked nationally by percentile. The scores range from 0 to 100. The higher the score, the less exposure to poverty in a neighborhood.

The entirety of Harper County ranks between 27 (central section), 37 (northeast quadrant) and 44 (northwest, west and southern portions), with an average of 36. Harper is in the quadrant of the county that is ranked 37. This is a lower ranking LPI and indicates that compared to other communities around the nation, Harper’s neighborhoods are likely to experience or be exposed to poverty (Source: Office of Policy Development and Research). See **Figure A.7**.

Figure A.7 Existing Poverty Index, 2020

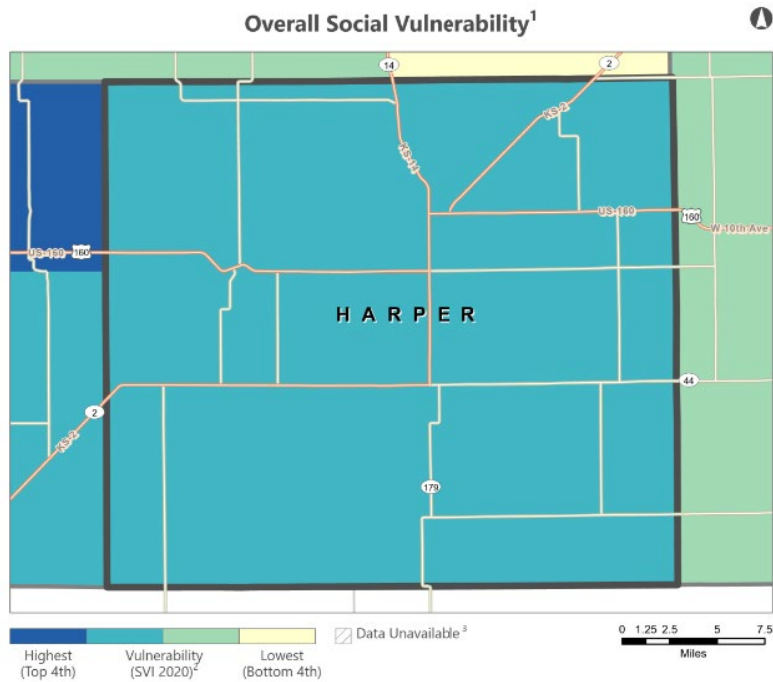


Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2020)

### Social Vulnerability

Social vulnerability refers to the potential negative effects on communities caused by external stresses on human health. Such stresses include natural or human-caused disasters, or disease outbreaks. Reducing social vulnerability can decrease both human suffering and economic loss. The CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index (CDC/ATSDR SVI) uses 16 U.S. census variables (i.e., including poverty, lack of vehicle access, and crowded housing) to help local officials identify communities that may need support before, during, or after disasters. The possible scores range from 0 – the lowest vulnerability – to 1, the highest vulnerability. See **Figure A.8**.

Figure A.8 Existing Social Vulnerability of Harper County, 2020



Source: CDC/ATSDR/GRASP, U.S. Census Bureau, Esri StreetMap™ Premium (2020)

According to the CDC, in 2020, Harper County had an overall SVI score of 0.5306, indicating a medium to high level of vulnerability. This indicates that the community is at risk of experiencing hardships in the face of hazardous events/disasters. This information can help public health officials and local planners better prepare for and respond to emergency events, as well as receive additional funding and support before, during, and after a disaster.

### Key Takeaways

The limited educational attainment in Harper indicates the community has a less skilled workforce, which can hinder economic growth and limit job opportunities within the community. This factor may be contributing to the higher rates of poverty experienced in Harper. Investing in education contributes to a more skilled and competitive workforce, attracts businesses and industries, enhances community pride, and ultimately increases quality of life for residents of Harper.

## EXISTING EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

### Employment Trends

When there is growth in employment opportunities, a community will also experience a growth in its population, income, and retail expenditures. Due to this economic relationship, job growth is a reliable indicator for a community's general economic conditions and provides an overview of the demand for housing and commercial and industrial space. The typical consumer prefers to live near their place of work for convenience. Affordable housing values, reduced commute times, and a higher quality of life can motivate employees to relocate to a community where their job exists.

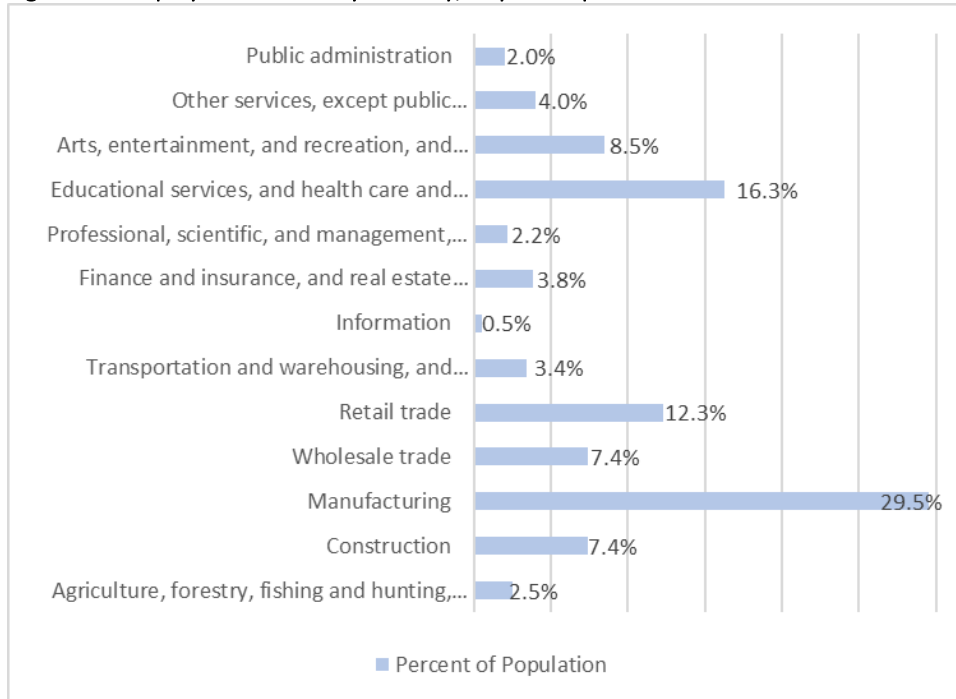
A summary of 2021 American Community Survey data for the City of Harper, Harper County, and the State of Kansas is provided.

**Table A.6 Employment Trends within Harper, Kansas**

Trend	Number	Percent of Employed Population
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	552	
Private for-profit wage and salary workers	447	81.0%
Private not-for-profit wage and salary workers	21	3.8%
Local Government Workers	37	6.7%
State Government Workers	32	5.8%
Federal Government Workers	0	0.0%
Self-Employed in own not incorporated business workers and unpaid family workers	15	2.7%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

**Figure A.9 Employment Status by Industry, City of Harper**



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Of persons 16 years and over, 285 (67.4 percent) were males in the civilian labor force and 138 (32.6 percent) were females. None were employed in the armed forces. 29 people (three percent) were unemployed. Of this age group, 59.6 percent were in the labor force as well as 78 percent of the total population.

Of employed persons 16 years and over, 84.8 percent were private wage and salary workers (for-profit and not-for-profit), 12.5 percent government workers, 2.7 percent self-employed and there were no unpaid family workers.

Considering all forms of transportation, 79.5 percent drove alone, 16.2 percent carpooled, 0 used public transportation nor bicycle, 1.5 percent walked, and 2.8 percent worked at home. The mean travel time to work was 18.7 minutes.

Median 2021 household income was \$53,716. The average family income was \$84,000. Per capita income was \$24,652. The number of families (288) by income classifications can be seen in **Table A.7**.

**Table A.7 Income and Benefits for Families (In 2021 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars), City of Harper**

Classifications	Estimate Number of Families	Percent
Under \$10,000	19	6.60%
\$10,000 to \$24,999	3	1.04%
\$25,000-\$49,999	43	15%
\$50,000-\$99,999	118	41%
\$100,000-\$199,999	69	24%
\$200,000 or more	36	12.50%
Total	288	100.00%
Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates		

Of the 288 families, 7.6 percent had incomes ranking them below the poverty level. 17.9 percent of the total population (221 individuals) were ranked below poverty level, of which 78 were children under 18 years and 35 were 65 years or over.

**Key Takeaways**

In most regional aspects, the Harper Planning Area is heavily influenced by Wichita—and more locally by Anthony and Attica—for employment, shopping, cultural and sporting events, health facilities, information systems, and other activities. Harper is a classic “bedroom community” with limited local employment opportunities and substantial housing areas. Manufacturing is Harper’s largest employment sector industry comprising nearly 30 percent.

## RESIDENTIAL HOUSING MARKET

The third greatest use of land is for residential purposes which accounts for 25.6 percent of the developed land acreage.

### Housing Stock and Inventory

Single-family dwellings are the predominant housing type within Harper. According to the American Community Survey, detached single-family housing accounts for 86.2 percent of Harper’s total housing stock, exceeding the statewide rate of 73.6 percent.

Multi-family housing accounts for 10.3 percent of Harper's housing stock compared to 17.9 percent for Kansas, as shown in **Table A.8**, which demonstrates total dwelling units in a complex. Mid-size multi-family properties with five to nine dwelling units account for the largest inventory of multi-family housing, totaling 21 dwelling units. Large-scale properties with ten or more units account for 3.4 percent of the Harper housing stock compared to 8.6 percent for Kansas.

**Table A.8 Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Units, Harper vs. State of Kansas**

Units in Structure	Harper City		Kansas
	# of Units	% of Total	% of Total
Occupied housing units	494	100.0%	1,159,026
1-Unit, Detached	426	86.2%	73.6%
1-Unit, Attached	0	0.0%	5.2%
2 Units	9	1.8%	2.3%
3 or 4 Units	12	2.4%	3.6%
5 to 9 Units	21	4.3%	3.4%
10 or more units	9	1.8%	8.6%
Mobile Home or other type of housing	17	3.4%	3.3%
Source: 2021 ACS 1-Year Estimates			

Knowing the age of housing stock in a community is important because it helps to understand the overall condition of the housing infrastructure. Older housing stock may require more maintenance, repairs, or renovations, which can have implications for housing quality and affordability. According to the American Community Survey (2021), all of Harper’s occupied housing units were built before 1999, with most of the existing housing (53.4%) constructed between 1940 and 1979. However, the city reports that since 1999 there have been eight single-family residences, three manufactured homes, one triplex, and an assisted living facility built in the city. Understanding the age distribution of housing helps in assessing the need for housing renewal or redevelopment initiatives. It can inform strategies for urban revitalization, urban infill, or the preservation of neighborhoods. See **Table A.9**.

**Table A.9 Year Structure was Built for Occupied Units, Harper vs. State of Kansas**

Year	# of Units	Percent of Total
Occupied housing units	494	
2020 or later	0	0
2010 to 2019	0	0
2000 to 2009	0	0
1980 to 1999	123	24.9%
1960 to 1979	128	25.9%
1940 to 1959	136	27.5%
1939 or earlier	107	21.7%
Source: 2021 ACS 1-Year Estimates		

## Housing Values

The median housing value for Harper has risen from \$57,500 in 2010 to as estimated \$69,500 in 2021. This median value is lower than the statewide median of \$183,800. See **Table A.10**.

**Table A.10 Housing Value Comparison, Harper vs. State of Kansas**

Price Range	City of Harper		State of Kansas
	2010	2021	2021
Less than \$50,000	42.2%	28.6%	9.4%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	38.6%	45.1%	15.7%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	12.4%	18.3%	13.9%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	2.3%	4.1%	15.2%
\$200,000 - \$299,999	3.8%	0.3%	20.9%
\$300,000 - \$499,999	0.2%	3.5%	17.7%
\$500,000+	0.5%	0.0%	7.1%
Source: 2021 ACS 1-Year Estimates, 2010 Census			

Housing stock that is valued under \$150,000 accounted for 92 percent of housing in Harper, compared to 39 statewide. This contrasts with the 3.8 percent of Harper’s housing stock that is valued at \$200,000 and above. The statewide percentage of this higher valued housing is 38.6 percent.

## Apartment Market

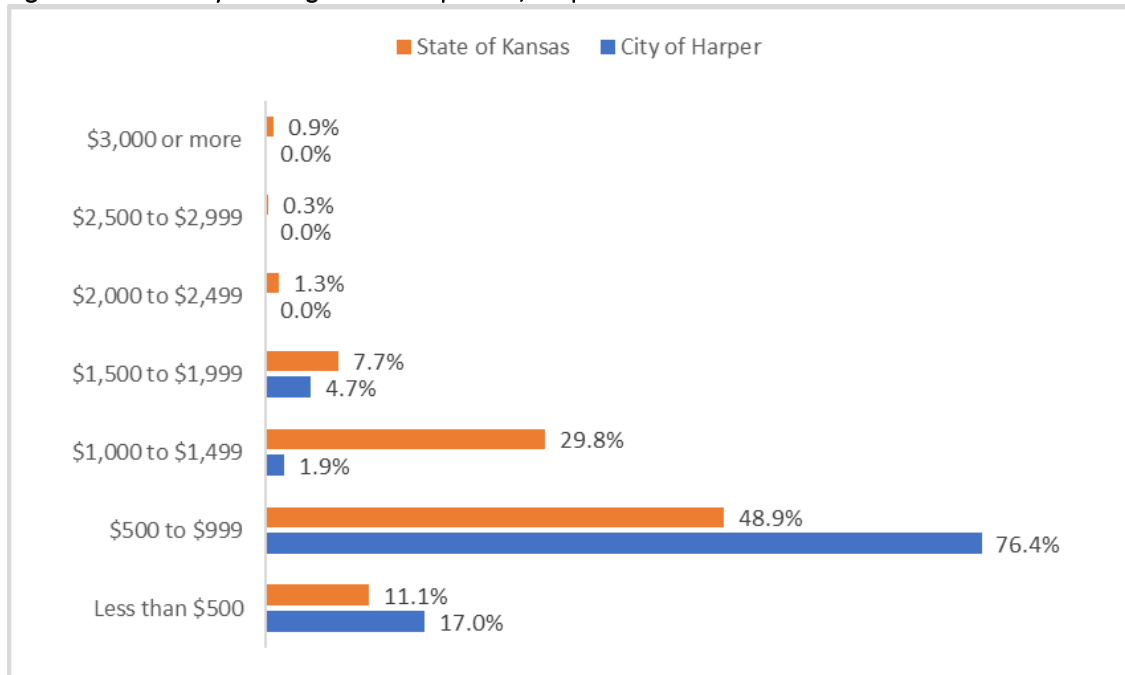
Due to the preference for single-family dwellings, Harper’s market for apartment complexes differs from the statewide market. According to the American Community Survey (2021), Harper’s inventory of multi-family housing totaled 51 dwelling units, or 10.3 percent of the city’s total housing stock. By comparison, multi-family housing accounts for 21.2 percent of the Kansas housing stock.

Multi-family properties consisting of two to four dwelling units account for 4.2 percent of Harper’s total housing stock, compared to 5.9 percent statewide. While the predominance of smaller multi-family properties is common among smaller cities, Harper’s apartment properties with 10 or more units account for 1.8 percent of the total housing stock, which is much lower than the statewide average.

According to the American Community Survey (2021), only 17 percent of Harper’s rental housing stock supports rents of less than \$500 per month, compared to 11.1 percent statewide. An estimated 76.4 percent of Harper’s rental stock support rents of \$500 to \$999 per month, compared to 48.9 percent statewide.

The bulk of Harper’s rental housing, 76.4 percent, is represented by units costing \$500 to \$999 per month, as seen in **Figure A.10**. Units costing less than \$500 per month make up 17 percent, the second largest proportion of rentals. The preference for low-cost single-family rentals is due to Harper’s above average share of single-family housing (78.8 percent).

**Figure A.10 Monthly Housing Rents Comparison, Harper vs. State of Kansas**



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

**Key Takeaways**

Single-family dwellings are the predominant housing type, accounting for 86.2 percent of Harper’s total housing stock. This exceeds the statewide rate of 73.6 percent. Most of Harper’s housing stock, 45.1 percent, is valued at \$50,000 to \$99,999—much higher than 15.7 percent statewide.

Multi-family housing only accounts for 12.3 percent of Harper’s housing stock. This is below the statewide rate of 10.3 percent for multi-family housing. The Harper community prefers rental housing units that rent for less than \$999 per month. Monthly rents of \$1,000 to \$1,499 account for 1.9 percent of Harper’s rental market with housing renting for excess of \$1,500 per month totaling 4.7 percent.

## APPENDIX B – STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Public engagement lies at the heart of a meaningful planning process. An open dialogue with the stakeholders and the public reveals countless insights into the lived experience of a community and aids in the development of an informed and compelling Plan. To better understand the needs and desires of Harper’s residents, it is necessary for this process to be collaborative, personal, and genuine.

The Plan benefits from the input gathered from the stakeholder and public engagement events. This feedback helps the planning team to craft specific recommendations for the Plan, tailoring its policies to the needs and wants of the community. **Appendix B** summarizes both this process and the findings from the project’s engagement.

### ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

The planning team worked with members of the city administration, the stakeholders, and community members to generate ideas and concepts for the Plan. All the feedback that was received during the engagement process was reviewed and analyzed by the planning team, better informing the Plan’s framework and policies.

The city’s comprehensive plan workshop took place over a three-day period, involving the public, members of the stakeholder committee, and city leadership. The planning team presented an existing conditions analysis, led various exercises to gain feedback on different aspects of the city, hosted a public open house, and met with city leadership. The following findings are based on the responses gathered from the stakeholder session and the public open house. All responses can be found in the **Full Documentation of Responses**.

### KEY FINDINGS

Participants indicated that they felt Harper had a strong small town feel that supports a family friendly atmosphere. Other comments pointed to the city’s strong sense of safety, great schools, and enjoyable parks and pool as strengths of Harper. Responses also suggested that the city benefits from the proximity to Wichita.

Participants expressed concerned about poor road conditions; the lack of entertainment; a blighted downtown; a lack of quality and affordable housing choices; and poorly maintained private properties. Participants also identified the loss of young people and families as a threat to Harper’s vitality and its future.

Participants conveyed that physical infrastructure needs updates and repairs, including streets, signage, buildings, and local structures. It was also noted that there is a need for additional affordable housing and senior housing options, as well as new artistic, entrepreneurial, and cultural opportunities, particularly for younger people.

## **Land Use**

When asked about the city's current land uses, participants said they would like to see more single-family residential (single houses), attached residential (townhomes, duplexes, condos, etc.), and business and employment land uses in Harper. Participants indicated, on multiple occasions, that newer housing is needed in the city, particularly affordable and senior-living options.

## **Transportation**

Participants indicated that sidewalk connectivity and infrastructure was in poor condition throughout the city. Suggestions for improvement were primarily recommended along Main and North Central Streets, with an emphasis on improving connectivity to key destinations including the grocery store, the Dollar General, parks, and the school. This sentiment was mirrored with bike infrastructure as well, with some suggestions calling for extra-wide sidewalks to accommodate both user types. Participants also indicated that the street network throughout the city is in a poor state, with potholes needing to be repaired and brick streets needing to be updated.

## **Character**

Participants overwhelmingly indicated that they would like to see more outdoor spaces, activities, and 'things-to-do' in Harper. Suggestions included creating more shopping and entertainment opportunities, citywide festivals or events, and additional dining establishments like a brewery or a fine dining restaurant. Additional feedback revealed interest in recreational amenities including bike and walking trails, pickleball courts, and even a lazy river. Participants also indicated that existing parks and community centers could be better developed to accommodate community wide events.

When asked about how Harper can improve its overall appearance, participants acknowledged that several buildings along major corridors need to be updated or redeveloped. This primarily included the downtown, along Main Street and North Central Street, the fairgrounds, and the old cement plant. Vacant buildings and unruly lawns were called out as an eyesore, needing more maintenance and upkeep.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WORKSHOP**

The comprehensive plan workshop took place from July 24-26, 2023, at the Westview Lodge, located at 1300 North Westview, Harper, Kansas 67058. The workshop included a stakeholder session, a public open house, a city staff meeting, and closed studio time for the planning team. The feedback and discussions from this workshop provided key insights for the development of the Plan's frameworks and recommendations.

## **Purpose and Quick Facts**

A comprehensive planning workshop was designed and executed as an in-person opportunity for community members, stakeholders, and city staff members to set the tone for the direction of the comprehensive plan and delve into the community's vision for the future of Harper. The primary objectives of the workshop were to reveal insights into the intricacies of the community, begin crafting a vision for the future, and create consensus-built ideas to guide the development of the Plan. The workshop was designed to foster conversations and reveal overarching community goals.

In addition to providing a dedicated time and space for community members to participate actively in the planning process, this time is also important for the planning team, allowing them the opportunity to listen intently to what the community hopes to achieve from the project. Although the facilitated dialogue and exercises provide rich input, the simple act of participating in conversations with community members, city staff members, and city leadership was invaluable to shaping the content of the Plan.

## **Day One**

### Introductory Presentation

The planning team presented an overview of the comprehensive planning process to the stakeholder group, outlining what a comprehensive plan is and is not, and what the workshop hoped to accomplish. The planning team also presented an existing conditions analysis to the stakeholder group. This analysis provided a thorough analysis of the city's existing land uses, demographic and employment trends, and the residential market.

### SWOT Exercise and Prioritization

Once the existing conditions were presented to the stakeholders, the planning team facilitated a SWOT exercise, prompting stakeholders to identify Harper's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Once the stakeholders listed out their comments for each of those four categories, the planning team prompted stakeholders to work together in small groups to identify three priorities for each category, allowing stakeholders to prioritize the most critical strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Harper.

A SWOT analysis can be conducted as an individual or as a group. It is an activity that asks participants to think critically about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that a community faces. In this instance, participants were asked to consider the following:

- Strengths – things that Harper does well, that you like about Harper, and that you think make it a great place to live or visit.
- Weaknesses – things that Harper lacks, things that are in bad shape, or make Harper a less enjoyable place to live or visit.
- Opportunities – things that Harper has the chance to do in order to make it a better place to live or visit; chances for Harper to improve.
- Threats – things that threaten Harper's longevity, success, or prosperity; things that need to change or Harper will be in a bad state.

### Topic-Based Station Questions

The final activity prompted stakeholders to move about the room and answer pertinent questions about land use, transportation, and community character, arranged in those three stations throughout the room. Sticky notes and sticky dots were provided at each station, allowing stakeholders to document their responses to the stations' questions on the posters.

## **Day Two**

### Planning Team Production Time

The planning team spent the majority of the second day on July 25, 2023, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in a closed studio period. The planning team absorbed and analyzed the responses from the stakeholder group. The planning team also used this time to create concepts and recommendations for the land use, transportation, and character frameworks, as well as prepare the space for the public open house later that evening.

### **Public Open House**

The public open house took place from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on July 25, 2023, and featured the concepts and recommendations that were generated from the planning team's closed studio. Additionally, the stakeholder's responses from the previous day's session were available for review by the public. Members of the public were prompted to contribute their own responses to the existing collection of responses at each topic station.

## **DAY THREE**

### Planning Team Production Time

The planning team took the morning of the third day of the workshop from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for further closed studio time to review and document additional public feedback from the previous day's open house and make appropriate adjustments to concepts shown at the public open house.

### City Leadership Meeting

The final component of the workshop was the city leadership meeting from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. on July 26, 2023, in which the planning team met with city leadership to discuss the public feedback received and walk through the adapted concepts for land use, transportation, and character. Members of city leadership were able to provide their thoughts and concerns with the planning team to be factored into the development of the Plan.

# FULL DOCUMENTATION OF RESPONSES

## Land Use

- Question 1 – What land uses would you like more of Harper?  
Place a green dot on this sheet corresponding to these land uses.
  - Small / Neighborhood Commercial – 5 dots
  - Large Commercial – 0 dots
  - Public Buildings / Institutional – 2 dots
  - Single Family Residential (Single Houses) – 11 dots
  - Attached Residential (Townhomes, Duplexes, Condos, etc.) - 10 dots
  - Urban / Multi-Story Residential (Apartments with 2+ Stories) - 1 dot
  - Parks / Green Space / Public Space – 4 dots
  - Business / Employment – 8 dots
  - Industrial – 3 dots
  - Mixed Use – 5 dots
- Question 2 – Which places or land uses in Harper are misplaced or don't match the surrounding area?
  - Old Red Mix Plant
  - Wellness Center
  - Old Hospital
  - Empty buildings all along Central / Main
  - Dilapidated buildings on Main / Central
- Question 3 – Where should future housing be located? What kind of housing should be developed?
  - We need all types rentals – to new housing
  - Need quality affordable housing and fixing up of old houses
  - Main street for apartments. We need all types
  - More middle income housing - \$100,000, \$150,000
  - East of ballfield single family, Main & Central off of intersection a block or 2, apartments or duplexes
  - Just fix up the dozens of old & dilapidated houses all over town
- Question 4 – What are the important landmarks, attractions, or destinations in Harper?
  - Park/pool, fair, small business, Dollar General, Ball fields
  - Ballfields, Brick streets, Fountain, Murals, Park/Pool, Fish water towers
  - Keep & maintain the brick streets
  - We don't have any!
- Question 5 – What areas in Harper need to be updated or redeveloped?
  - Main Street, North Central
  - Fair barn & grounds, fountain, downtown
  - Fairgrounds & downtown
  - Brick streets
  - Old cement plant
  - Downtown
  - East of ball fields could be a lake or a walking park or something
  - Pave the streets that have curb & gutter already
  - Museum art depot
- Question 6 – Where do you consider the “heart” of Harper?
  - Downtown, the park, red bricks, museum, art depot, stand pipe, fountain
  - 160 & Casey's
  - The heart is downtown!
  - It shouldn't be, but the bulk of activity & traffic is between Ron's Garden & Ricke's on the highway. Needs to be at the sports complex & “downtown.”
  - Downtown brick streets lead to the heart of downtown
  - All the businesses along the highway

- Question 7 – What attractions, entertainment opportunities, programs, and events would you like to see in Harper that do not currently exist?
  - Movie theater or arcade
  - Destination location or business
  - Arcade or yard games by Rolla Rena
  - Airport hangers
  - Art gallery, more shops, more festivals
  - Big Billboard on & 4 Corners of Harper listing business in Harper
  - Destination shopping & restaurants
  - Axe throwing, arcade, green space, live entertainment w/ yardgame activities, shopping, restaurants
  - Niche shopping, arts & crafter businesses
  - Restaurants
  - Food truck event – Sunday?
  - Pocket parks
  - Give Wichita a reason to come here!
- Concept Map Question 1 – Do you agree with the draft future land use framework? Why or why not?
  - Looks good
  - Focus on the now problem
  - No. More commercial downtown, heart of town
  - No you have all downtown you need to fix before you start
  - Yes! Revitalize downtown & develop a cleanup160 corridor
  - Yes
- Concepts Map Question 2 – Tell us specifically, what you would change.
  - Yes. Apartments some duplexes large apartments for those are older & have money to downsize.
  - Residential needs to be affordable.
  - Do not displace anyone or claim imminent domain

### *Transportation*

- Question 1 – Where is it difficult to walk in Harper? Where are missing pedestrian connections?
  - Sidewalks all over town are in bad condition
  - Only places to walk are around park & pool
  - Along highway, Main Street, Center
  - Anywhere east of Central along highway 160, a lot of sidewalks are very run down
- Question 1 (part 2) - Where should we put sidewalks first?
  - Connecting parks
  - To Dollar General
  - Sidewalks 14<sup>th</sup> street
  - Connect hotel to town
  - Village East to Grocery store Dollar General
  - Sidewalks all need help. Connect to parks, grocery, downtown, gas station
  - In front of the school on the highway. All the way N/S & E/W on Central & Main
  - People should be able to walk across town along the highway because of businesses
  - Schools are nearby neighborhoods
  - All along highway needs sidewalks
  - Sidewalks redone on both sides of Main St
- Question 2 – Where is it difficult to bike in Harper? Where are the missing bicycle connections?
  - Same as sidewalks
  - None exist
  - Bike path to school, school to park & ball park
- Question 2 (part 2) - Where should we put bike lanes first?
  - On sidewalks extra wide
  - From the school to neighborhood & downtown & park/pool
  - I don't think we need bike lanes. The streets are good enough & sidewalks are for walking

- Extra wide sidewalks on highway, main and central
- Bike path around town
- Question 3 – Where are missing vehicular connections within or to/from Harper?
  - Sycamore development to 17<sup>th</sup> St
  - Should be able to go from Westview North to Main St
- Question 4 – Where are vehicular connection low quality or poorly maintained (pavement issues, potholes, trash, faded paint, etc.).
  - All over town streets bad
  - Pavements pot holes, trashy non pavement, dirt streets
  - Just North over tracks on central non-dodgable potholes
  - Between Madison & Monroe on 9<sup>th</sup> street is in bad condition
  - All of Ash street except for the 1-way section by the school
  - Why did we only pave half of the highway?
  - Whiskey Road is a mess after rain
  - Farmer's need better streets to get to elevator residential
  - Brick streets are important to our Town need better maintained
  - It would look better just edged and weeds out of Street, start there
- Concept Map Question 1 – Do you agree with the draft transportation framework?
  - Connects community gathering locations park/school/baseball fields
  - Gets all the main thoroughfares & provides a way to get to most of the high traffic areas
  - More sidewalk & bike path off of brick street to parallel street
  - Do kids bike anymore?? I'm old.
  - Remove sidewalks. Replace with bike sidewalk.

- Concept Map Question 2 – Are we missing any critical bike or pedestrian connections?
  - Pine street from Main to the ballfields
  - Sign on Hwy 160 directs to ballfield. Do we need bike or walking path?

### *Character*

- Question 1 – Should new parks or public gathering space be developed in Harper? If so, where?
  - Lazy river, Pickle ball court
  - Outdoor space for bike/walk trail and natural area (star on map)
  - Isaac's Rosalea park developed
  - Community Rec Center
  - Rosalea festival
  - More use of senior center
  - Hispanic festival to encourage connection with large Hispanic community
  - Community center, indoor gym
  - Outdoor space for music, games, gathering
  - Band shell in the park
  - None
- Question 2 – Where do you feel like you've arrived in Harper?
  - Roadside park, over the viaduct, Harper Industries
  - Identified by seeing churches, highway businesses
  - I could do without the blinking speed limit signs
  - Vidock, before rail track, Harper Industries, Highway Park/Airport
  - Mercer's / Misak's
- Question 3 – How/where can we make Harper more beautiful?
  - Start beautifying one building & one house at a time
  - Trash in people's yards. Unmowed.
  - Cleanup & mow ragged yards
  - Fix/remove run-down structures

- Develop business park
- Houses, yards, roads
- Remove Trump & political signage
- Along highways, Center & Main, main roadways
- City could pay homeowners to plant flowers in row
- Old cement plant by viaduct, cover old cement plant on K2
- No Trump flags or signs
- Update or knock old vacant, ran down buildings uptown on Main. Code violations to Oak Street apartments. All are an eye sore and structurally unsafe
- Coming to town over viaduct
- Murals on buildings. Old cement plant torn down at Main St. & highway 2
- Fence post corner parking lot signage
- Mowed greenscapes & yards along highway
- Make people mow their yards
- West View Corner
- Make the highway look nice. Weed eat/lights/sidewalks
- Get rid of abandoned houses
- Question 4 – What would make it more enjoyable to spend time in Harper?
  - More forms or entertainment
  - Destination location/businesses
  - Community events that people will attend
  - Appealing, clean
  - We need something special about this town to bring people in
  - Fine dining steakhouse
  - Events for entertainment & fellowship
  - Brewery
  - Brewery. Community events.
  - Live music opportunities
  - More entertainment options like roller skate
  - Brewery in downtown. Evening dining until 11pm.
- Shopping dining entertainment
- Dining/entertainment open late hours
- Question 5 – What do you want Harper to look like?
  - Clean, family-friendly hometown
  - Green, tidy
  - More homes, clean yards, nice grass, more people
  - Clean
  - Everyone’s yard kept cut & clean
  - A Hallmark Movie
  - Open, green, friendly, inviting, working together w/all
  - Clean, friendly, comfortable
  - Clean, friendly, kind people
  - Like hometown take over HGTV show
  - Give people a reason to come and stay
- Concept Map Question 1 – Do you agree with the draft city character framework? Why or why not?
  - Looks good
  - I like it
  - Like the gateways district, all look fantastic
  - Not large enough for roundabout & trucks
- Concept Map Question 2 – Tell us specifically what you would change.
  - Bulldoze unsightly structures. In downtown make lots available for business
  - Junkhouses. Vacant houses.
  - Ditch the blinking speed limit signs!!
  - Yes!

*What Did We Miss?*

- If you don’t do something to keep the younger community members the town will die sooner rather than later
- These are just notes without action

### *Draft Vision and Values*

- Proposed Vision and Values Question 1 – What would you add or change?
  - Easily walkable, we need more & better maintained sidewalks
  - Roads, sidewalks, attractive downtown open shops
  - Cleaned up neighborhood.
  - Clean well-kept town w/ high standards
  - Apartments and/or housing for small families \* affordable
  - Assisted living housing – Senior downsized housing
  - Housing & destinations for drawing in

### *SWOT Exercise*

- Strengths
  - Landmarks need brought to attention
  - Small town & friendly
  - Everything you need to survive is here
  - Sense of community
  - Multicultural
  - Small town living
  - Family type atmosphere, safe areas 4 children, small town values
  - Supportive
  - Friendly people
  - Awesome sports complex
  - Excellent summer recreation
  - Not too far from Wichita
  - Has great community champions
  - Manufacturing businesses drives economic opportunity
  - People look out for each other, i.e., kids
  - Jobs available
  - Majority have traditional values
  - Keeps ROW mowed & trimmed

- Very proactive with infrastructure
- Relatively safe as far as a person and property
- Most are ready to help a neighbor or stranger
- Safety
- Location
- Excellent Fire department
- Honest people
- Good schools
- Great housing
- No traffic
- Supports (encourages) local business
- Low population
- World presence
- Great city park
- Restaurants good
- Safe park that kids enjoy
- Great pool for kids
- Several mfg businesses
- Small town feel
- Transportation, 3 highways pass through Harper
- Solid leadership
- Newer businesses started by locals DLS, South 50 meat, Isaac Shue is art, Just Us
- Several local, non-chain restaurants
- 2-14-16-42 Highways merge in Harper
- Railroad, Swimming pool, Nice park
- Baseball & swimming pool good
- Close to a big city, but far enough to be a small town
- Great ball park for rec
- Great pool & park
- Good family oriented town, good school, reasonable utilities

- Weaknesses
  - Roads, businesses
  - Blighted downtown

- Not much for entertainment
- Nothing for young families to do
- Downtown looks bad, Rosalea's bad, weakness
- Senior housing, quality apartments, we need some
- Not much for housing
- Street conditions
- Lack of housing, lack of good streets
- Good enough is good enough
- Lack of social activities
- Lack of daycare providers
- Dilapidating buildings downtown
- Many run-down lots/ properties around town
- Lack of housing to draw in young families
- Some folks involved in many groups
- Bad downtown buildings
- Everybody knows everything
- Rec Center
- Fine dining
- No steakhouse
- Not much unity between churches
- Meth & fent
- More high paying jobs in Wichita or KC
- Streets
- Rough looking buildings/homes
- Dilapidated houses
- Run down housing; yards and buildings in need of care; Overgrown bushes at intersections, lots of empty lots
- Lack of available quality housing
- Daycare
- Taxes
- Vacant buildings, houses
- Not a lot of things for kids to do, not enough good & decent housing, some lots and homes are not kept up
- Special taxes, No
- Street repairs

- Opportunities
  - Jobs
  - Update infrastructure
  - Better streets
  - Better housing options
  - Put in a water park at the city park (free)
  - Large nursing home
  - Additional transportation modes, i.e., bus, train
  - Update signage
  - City setbacks are too large
  - Beautification of buildings/structures
  - Culture
  - More assisted living
  - Downtown development or revitalization
  - Community projects, get more people involved.
  - Care for elderly / housing, health, activities
  - Work (jobs available)
  - No multi-bedroom rentals
  - Multistory apts. Rent & rent assistance
  - More homes built
  - Need for daycare
  - Cultural experiences
  - New ballpark facility
  - Agritourism
  - Draw people wanting to leave cities for safer slower lifestyle
  - Clean up properties
  - Artistic opportunities for young people
  - Young entrepreneurs & business owners
- Threats
  - Dilapidated buildings
  - Declining population
  - Property taxes
  - Declining population
  - Property taxes

- Not culturally diverse
- Housing issues need to be corrected
- Nothing to draw younger demographic w/o children
- Don't let highway bypass city
- Poverty
- Small town government
- Lack of usable spaces for new business
- Not working with other communities
- Nothing to draw new business
- Encourage people to clean up property, ie. Homes
- Taxes
- Meth fent
- Lack of desire to change
- Losing the hospital, business development
- Youth flight
- Young people leaving
- Family Dollar, Dollar Tree
- Taxes
- Losing our school like we lost our hospital, losing our younger families
- Housing
- Population decline
- Young families move out
- Lack of services for aging & disabled

*SWOT Prioritization*

- Strengths Prioritized

- Group A:
  - Small town living (slower pace)
  - Good school
  - Good parks & ballfield & pool
- Group B:
  - Parks & rec
  - Safe
  - Jobs Available

- Group C:
  - Activities for Kids sports complex
  - Presence of Manufacturing
  - Safety
- Group D:
  - Location/highways
  - Parks/rec/pool
  - Safety

- Weaknesses Prioritized

- Group A
  - Poor streets & roads
  - Empty business lots & unkept lots
  - Good plan for city
- Group B
  - Rundown roads & buildings
  - Daycare
  - Lack of Housing
- Group C
  - Streets
  - Dilapidated housing
  - Affordable housing
- Group D
  - Dilapidated buildings lots/streets
  - Lack of housing
  - Downtown

- Opportunities Prioritized

- Group A
  - Job opportunities
  - Housing development for new housing & families
  - Need for better school opportunities
- Group B
  - Elderly care
  - Rentals/new homes
  - Hunting

- Group C
  - Cultural-Arts
  - Assisted Living
  - Manufacturing job growth
- Group D
  - Beautification
  - Development
  - Housing
- Threats Prioritized
  - Group A
    - Lack of housing
    - Too much low-income housing
    - Property cleanup
  - Group B
    - Declining population
    - Meth
    - Housing issues
  - Group C
    - Declining population
    - Property taxes
    - Loss of school
  - Group D
    - Property cleanup
    - Lack of attractions
    - Housing