



# COMMUNITY VISION PLAN



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## CO-CHAIR LETTER

As we embarked on this journey in the Fall of 2018, we didn't know exactly where the roadmap was headed or what our final destination would look like. When we began, there was a common theme and that was the desire for a united vision for our community. The dreamers, the realists, and the "do-ers" were then enlisted to help us form the roadmap to our community's future.

The community was invited to participate and share their perspectives, and in true Great Bend fashion, many showed up. Over 200 people showed up to participate in two community meetings, a Steering Committee of over 50 members contributed over the course of five meetings, and over 500 residents voiced their opinions through community and business surveys. In all honesty, we were blown away with the energy and passion exhibited by the community.

In a collaborative fashion, many community members made connections with fellow residents and discussed innovative ideas for our future. They brainstormed numerous solutions and opportunities that our community could focus on over the next 20 years to make **Great Bend - Better than Great!**

As Warren Buffett once said, **"Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago."** Whether you joined us to create your 'shade,' or perhaps you wanted better 'shade' for your co-workers, grandchildren or neighbors, we are grateful for your energy and passion in making our community better.

Now is the time to put our plan in motion. Great Bend will always be great, but with your help, it will certainly be BETTER THAN GREAT!



Mark Mingenback  
Better than Great Co-Chair



Regan Reif  
Better than Great Co-Chair

# VISION HISTORY

*What do we want Great Bend to be in the future? And, how do we get there?*

These are the questions that the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development and the Barton County Young Professionals asked themselves as they reflected on the state of our community. These are the questions that energized this community to work together to create a Community Vision Plan for Great Bend’s future and economic prosperity.

Since 2006, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development has secured \$22.5 million dollars in public and private funding for various economic development programs that have resulted in \$191 million dollars in capital investments and the creation of over 1,200 jobs in the Great Bend community. Additionally, the Chamber secured Great Bend as one of two recipients of a transload facility in the state of Kansas, and secured \$900,000 in private investment for the E-Community Entrepreneurship

program. To supplement these incredible accomplishments and significant contributions to our local economy, we must continue to seek additional layers of investment and community improvement, both of which are critical to making Great Bend a thriving micro-region.

Thanks to a grant from the Harms Trust, our community was able to embark on a multi-phase process to understand current trends, identify our current strengths and challenges, and with both of these in mind, brainstorm ideas of what we want to see for our future.

This community-led effort produced a tag line and logo, resulting in a branded identity, which will serve as the compass in the decision processes for our community as we move forward and work together to make **Great Bend - Better than Great!**

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# VISION USE

Our Community Vision Plan is a description of what Great Bend could look like and how it might feel in



the future. It is intended to offer future opportunities and be the path for the continued success of our community

over the next ten to twenty years, guiding the decision-making of our government, businesses, and citizens according to the stated goals and objectives of the community.

The six goals outlined in this plan are all of equal importance to the prosperity of Great Bend. We

recognize that they are interconnected on so many levels and that each contributes in their own way to positive improvements for our community. Quality of life cannot be separated from economic vitality – we can only achieve our economic goals if we simultaneously address those goals that improve the quality of life for all of our residents.

Implementation of this plan in an effort to achieve our goals will not happen overnight. However, we can take initiative and begin tomorrow by starting the conversations and laying the necessary groundwork. This will require collaboration – working with our neighbors, extending a hand to a new face, connecting agencies of similar interests – a proactive spirit and approach, and most importantly, a united community to create a bright future for Great Bend.

## VISION CONTEXT

Much of the engagement and planning process was informed by current trends, data and forecasts, provided by the Wichita State University W. Frank Barton School of Business Center for Economic Development and Business Research. While Great Bend serves as a micro-region for Barton County and the neighboring communities, we experience many of the same issues facing much of rural America. What's next after oil, how do we address

our aging population, how do we combat declining population, what are the changes to the market and technology in the agriculture industry, how is retail changing, and how can we address issues of mental health and addiction? The understanding of such topics and issues was just the starting point for helping guide our conversations and brainstorming in an educated manner.

## VISION PROCESS

Community engagement was central to understanding what it takes to make **Great Bend - Better than Great**. The input provided and the ideas generated through the engagement process are at the heart of our Community Vision Plan.

With the help of Shockey Consulting, we were able to create a wide-reaching and inclusive process that generated great conversation amongst friends, neighbors, and even those who hadn't met before, bringing together people from all throughout our community for a common purpose – the betterment of our future.

Our Steering Committee, comprised of 55 community leaders, met five times over the course of the planning process to develop the vision, goal and strategy framework for the Community Vision Plan. The members offered a wealth of knowledge and utilized their vast expertise and backgrounds to help represent the many interests of Great Bend: the business community, the Hispanic community, professional services, real estate and development, education, oil and agriculture, senior care, medical care, mental health and community services, faith organizations, government, community safety, and recreation.

The community had the opportunity to participate in two Visioning Workshops, which gathered over

200 of our residents, and through a community and business online survey, which received 540 collective responses. Because the community is multi-cultural, materials were developed in both English and Spanish.

The engagement posed a number of questions during the multi-phase process:

- *How should we get started?*
- *Where are we now and are we ready for what is on the horizon?*
- *Who are we and where do we want to go?*
- *What could the future look like and what impacts will different scenarios have?*
- *How will we reach our desired future?*

Regardless of their means of interaction, all participants were encouraged to think broadly and bring their best ideas, all-the-while learning about current trends and their relevance to and impact on Great Bend.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## Co-Chairs:

Mark Mingenback & Regan Reif

## Steering Committee:

Dr. Rick Abel	Andrew Erb	Joshua Leu	Elaine Simmons
Joe Andrasek	Ryan Fairchild	Nels Lindberg, DVM	Paul Snapp
Aaron Andrews	Rebecca Ford	Desa Marmie	Chad Somers
Krystall Barnes	Kendal Francis	Sally Mauler	Kevyn Soupiset
Robert E. Bauer	Brandi Gruber	Jason Mayers	Julie Spray
Mark Bitter	Megan Hammeke	Luke McCormick	Chad Steffan
Joe Boley	Tammy Hammond	Quenla McGilber	Scott Stinemetz
Taylor Calcara	Anna Hammond-Bodine	Brock McPherson	Khris Thexton
Sheryl Cheely	Ana Hayson	Andy Mingenback	Kenny Vink
AJ Chrest	Baudilio Hernandez	Jon Prescott	Peter Wesner
Sue Cooper	Jane Isern	Rodrigo Razo	Curtis Wolf
Austin Coyan	Michael Johnson	Douglas Reiser	
Gaila Demel	Kevin Keller	Jennifer Schartz	
Jake Deutsch	Julie Kramp	Lacey Schofield	

## Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development Staff:

Jan Peters, President & CEO  
Laura Blankenship, Director of Business Development  
Megan Barfield, Member Relations Director

### Photo Credits:

Great Bend Chamber of Commerce  
Shockey Consulting Services, llc



## OUR VISION

In 20 years, we are...

A diverse community of **welcoming, engaged people** leading Great Bend to shine as a regional **economic, educational, and cultural center** offering an **energetic and inclusive** experience built on a **unique community spirit**.



# COMMUNITY VOICE

*What People Said*



## CONNECTING PEOPLE

People are wired for human connection. It is as essential to our individual well-being as food, water, warmth, and security. There is a growing body of evidence that our brains actually work better to solve problems when we are interacting and experiencing togetherness. People who live in communities with strong social and physical connections are happier, live longer, and have a sense of pride, satisfaction, and accomplishment. To survive and thrive, Great Bend leaders must build a stronger sense of community and place. People of different cultures, generations, genders, and interests must be physically, socially, and emotionally connected. Strategies identified in this plan intend to strengthen and spread a sense of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the community, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through a commitment to be together.



*When we connect people together physically, socially, and spiritually, our community is much more than the sum of its parts.*

Rebecca Ford, Catholic Charities of Southwest Kansas



## INSPIRING EACH OTHER

Communities stay static when the dialogue revolves around "our limitations," "we can't do that," and "we've always done it this way." Communities evolve when leaders emerge to inspire each other along the path to success. Inspiration awakens us to new possibilities by allowing us to think beyond our everyday experiences and limitations. Inspiration propels a person from apathy to possibility and transforms the way we perceive our capabilities for a brighter future. Strategies identified in this plan are intended to build a community culture of inspiration and innovation. Great Bend has a long history of people who implemented their ideas for the betterment of the community and the world! Who will be inspired next to innovate and make an impact?



*Great Bend is a city of strong, intelligent, hard-working and high-performance people. All we need is the spirit of communication to build mountains.*

Doug Reiser, Central Kansas Oilfield Services, Inc.

# COMMUNITY VOICE

What People Said



## TARGETING OUR INVESTMENTS

Communities with limited resources must decide where to spend their time and money to get the largest, long-term return on investment. Communities that understand how trends will create challenges and opportunities can focus on long-term investments that impact the ability to succeed in the future. Great Bend leaders choose to focus on specific initiatives that promote community well-being because they will contribute to local economic sustainability.



*We can't be everything to everyone. Being strategic is about focusing on what we should do and what we should stop doing.*

Paul Snapp, First Kansas Bank



## GROWING OUR RESOURCES

Businesses locate and expand in a community because there are a strong demand and close proximity to the market; availability of raw materials and infrastructure; a favorable economic policy of the government; demographics; and readily available talent/workforce that fills the need at low labor costs. The community would like to diversify the economy further. The plan includes practical business attraction strategies that target companies that fill a gap in meeting the needs of local residents, provide goods or services existing businesses or industries need to purchase, or complement our growing specialty markets. A significant emphasis is on growing our own businesses, whether through fostering entrepreneurship or helping existing businesses expand. The strategies focus on the education and creativity of the folks who already live in Great Bend and the surrounding area. When we support a locally owned business and help it improve and expand, we not only generate jobs, but also generate a return on investment that has a high likelihood of being spent with the community.



*We need to shift the culture that Great Bend is 'mine' to Great Bend is 'ours'. It's best to invest in anyone in town that wants to do better - the more we help everyone, the better off we'll all be. Blessing one can bless us all.*

Quenla McGilber, Circles of Central Kansas and Barton County Health Department





A diverse community of **welcoming, engaged people** leading Great Bend to shine as a regional **economic, educational, and**

# GOAL Diversify the Great Bend economy.

## BASELINE:

6,908 people are employed across 10 employment sectors in Great Bend.

(source: [factfinder.census.gov](https://factfinder.census.gov), 2018)

Great Bend has 60 employers with 50 or more employees.

(source: Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development, 2018)

**By 2030** we will add one additional industry.

**By 2040** we will add two more additional industries.

## Context

Population is declining in both Great Bend and Barton County, which is consistent with most rural counties in Kansas and the greater Midwest. Economic factors such as jobs and housing have had an impact on population rates. The population in Barton County is forecasted to continue to decline between 0.5% and 1% over the next 50 years, while Kansas' total population is anticipated to increase by 22% over the next 50 years. Decreased population suggests limited workers in the future, which directly impacts the ability to attract new business.

Economic diversification is critical to sustaining a community. The agriculture and oil industries are currently important economic drivers for both Great Bend and the greater Barton County region, with Barton County being home to the second largest cattle producer in the country. However, changes in weather patterns, forecasted water depletion in the neighboring Ogallala Aquifer and the local Great Bend Prairie Aquifer, changes in agricultural technology and economics that have increased the number of large corporate farms that require fewer farmers, and shallow oil fields that are not suitable for fracking are all factors that will result in significant changes to both the agriculture and oil industries, especially in Great Bend.

In the future, most jobs will require strong technical skills, something that Great Bend is already very

familiar with. Great Bend is home to Jack Kilby – an electrical engineer who realized the first integrated circuit for Texas Instruments which led to his invention of the handheld calculator and the thermal printer, and later received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2000. Great Bend is also home to Skip Yowell, another innovator who put his technical and outdoor skills to use to help co-found JanSport, the nation's largest maker of backpacks.

## 2018 Employment Sectors



and cultural center offering an energetic and inclusive experience built on a unique community spirit.

**2018 Major Employers**

- 1 USD 428 SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
700 EMPLOYEES
- 2 BARTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
545 EMPLOYEES
- 3 WAL-MART SUPERCENTER**  
375 EMPLOYEES
- 4 GREAT BEND REGIONAL HOSPITAL**  
342 EMPLOYEES
- 5 ROSEWOOD SERVICES**  
280 EMPLOYEES
- 6 REDBARN PET PRODUCTS**  
263 EMPLOYEES
- 7 SUPERIOR ESSEX**  
259 EMPLOYEES
- 8 VENTURE CORPORATION**  
200 EMPLOYEES
- 9 BARTON COUNTY**  
199 EMPLOYEES
- 10 DILLONS**  
175 EMPLOYEES
- 11 INNOVATIVE LIVESTOCK SERVICES**  
170 EMPLOYEES
- 12 CITY OF GREAT BEND**  
160 EMPLOYEES
- 13 SUNFLOWER DIVERSIFIED SERVICES**  
142 EMPLOYEES
- 14 GREAT BEND HEALTH & REHAB CENTER**  
138 EMPLOYEES
- 15 CUNA MUTUAL RETIREMENT SYSTEMS**  
132 EMPLOYEES
- 16 FULLER INDUSTRIES**  
130 EMPLOYEES
- 17 GREAT BEND COOP**  
127 EMPLOYEES
- 18 SOUTHARD CORPORATION**  
105 EMPLOYEES

**GREAT BEND HAS 60 EMPLOYERS  
WITH 50 OR MORE EMPLOYEES**



Mike Johnson, M&M Equipment

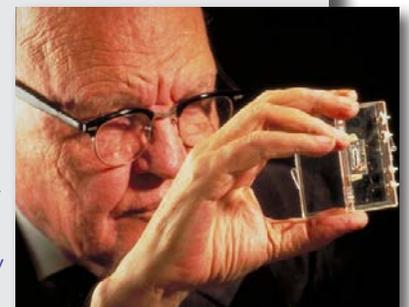
**Community Highlights:**

- » Agriculture & Oil Manufacturing
- » Central Kansas Development Inc. (CKDI)  
Helps entrepreneurs and business leaders finance new opportunities to promote economic development in Great Bend and the surrounding area.

- » Home to Second Largest Cattle Producer, Innovative Livestock Services, Inc.
- » Legacy of Jack Kilby, inventor of the integrated circuit and Nobel Prize Winner



"I think the varied background in the beginning were a plus. It took a while for people to understand what they were trying to do and get started, but it did provide for a lot of new ideas."



- » Legacy of Skip Yowell, co-founder of JanSport
- » Micro-Region for Barton County



A diverse community of **welcoming, engaged people** leading Great Bend to shine as a regional **economic, educational, and**

# GOAL Increase the pull factor.

**BASELINE:**

Barton County has a pull factor of 1.12 and Great Bend has a pull factor of 1.49.

(source: [www.ksrevenue.org/prpullfactor.html](http://www.ksrevenue.org/prpullfactor.html), 2018)

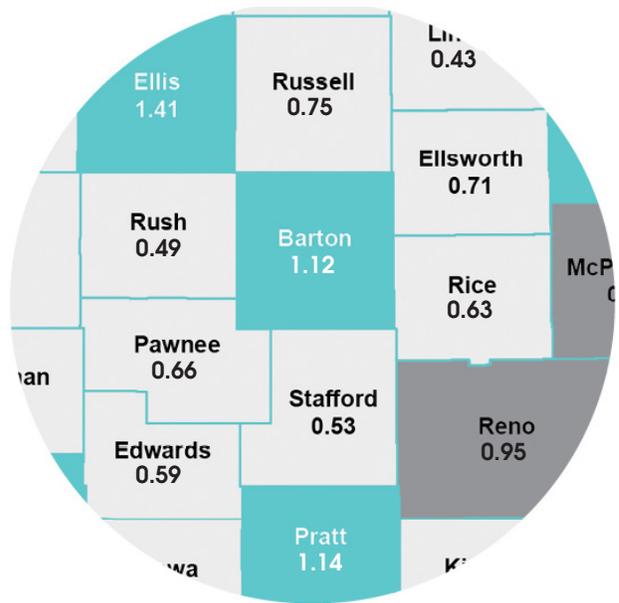
**By 2030** we will increase the pull factor to 1.75.

**By 2040** we will increase the pull factor to 1.9.

**Context**

Retail is changing across America as customers reshape retail trends in ways that benefit our most innovative and local independent stores. Big box retail is on the decline as customers are switching to online shopping and small retailers. It is projected that in five years, the trend to buy local will surpass buying online, which would benefit retailers selling online from places with lower rents.

Great Bend is a regional retail center for the surrounding area with a pull factor of 1.49, which compares to Barton County’s pull factor of 1.12. A pull factor higher than 1.0 indicates the city or county is attracting retail sales. The day time population of Great Bend grows because it is a regional employment center, which means there are potentially more people to buy local goods and services in Great Bend each day. Continuing the recent efforts to revitalize downtown will emphasize Great Bend as a draw for both local residents and surrounding communities.



**BARTON COUNTY**

**1.12**

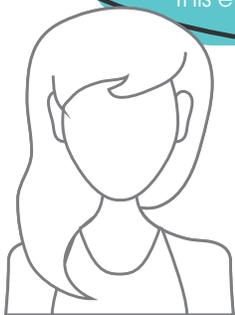
A pull factor higher than 1.0 indicates a county is attracting business.

County per capita sales tax divided by the state per capita sales tax.

**Barton County – 1.12**  
Great Bend – 1.49

and **cultural center** offering an **energetic** and **inclusive** experience built on a **unique community spirit**.

Great Bend is already a regional shopping destination. Online shopping and demand for retail services are changing what people purchase in Great Bend. We **need to develop unique businesses** and take advantage of relatively low overhead costs to succeed in this evolving market.



Sally Mauler, The Buckle



### Community Highlights:

- » Community Amenities:
  - B-29 Memorial Plaza
  - Cheyenne Bottoms
  - Great Bend Brit Spaugh Zoo
  - Great Bend Events Center
  - Great Bend Sports Complex
  - Kansas Wetlands Education Center
  - Quivira National Wildlife Refuge
  - Shafer Art Gallery
  - SRCA Dragstrip
  - Veterans Memorial Park
  - Wetlands Waterpark
- » Community Events:
  - Art & Wine Walk
  - Cinco de Mayo Festival & Parade
  - Farmer’s Market
  - Great Bend Airfest
  - Great Bend Farm & Ranch Show
  - Healing Hearts Ranch Rodeo
  - Home for the Holidays Festival & Parade
  - June Jaunt
  - Party in the Park
  - Rosewood Rodeo
  - Trail of Lights
  - Zoo Boo
- » Downtown & Community Reinvestment:
  - Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
 

Provides tax rebates on the additional property taxes that might be incurred as a result of constructing new buildings or making improvements to existing ones, whether residential, commercial, or industrial. There are two target areas with the plan: primary and secondary. Property located in the primary target area is eligible for tax rebates over a 10-year period, where property located in the secondary region is eligible for tax rebates over a 5-year period.
  - Opportunity Zones
 

Designates two census tracts in Great Bend as eligible to receive private investments through Opportunity Funds, which are created through reinvestment of capital gains, allowing investors to receive tax benefits.

A diverse community of **welcoming, engaged people** leading Great Bend to shine as a regional **economic, educational, and**

# GOAL Increase the number of living wage jobs.

## BASELINE:

As of June 2019, Barton County had an unemployment rate of 3.0%.

(source: [fred.stlouisfed.org](http://fred.stlouisfed.org), 2019)

The median household income in 2018 was \$44,397 with a per capita income of \$23,897, compared to Barton County numbers of \$46,959 and \$24,555, respectively.

(source: [factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov), 2018)

**By 2030** we will increase the average annual earnings per capita to \$30,000 by supporting local employers to offer more jobs at higher wages.

**By 2040** we will increase the average annual earnings per capita to \$35,000, to meet the average for rural workers in America, by supporting our local employers to offer more jobs at higher wages.

## Context

While there is good news in a low unemployment rate in Barton County, the problem is that there are limited workers for existing employers.

Additionally, earnings are declining, and wages are stagnate across America, especially in rural areas. The average rural worker earns \$35,000 per year, compared to the average worker earnings in Great Bend of \$23,897. The fact that the median household income in Great Bend is \$44,397 suggests that most households are two-income households.

The national minimum wage is \$7.25/hour. For a family of four (2 working adults + 2 children), it is calculated that the living wage is \$14.34/hour/working adult. Conversely, for a family of four with only 1 working adult, it is calculated that the living wage is \$23.73/hour/working adult.

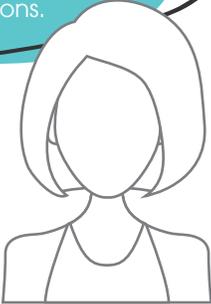
## Living Wage

### AVERAGE SCENARIO:

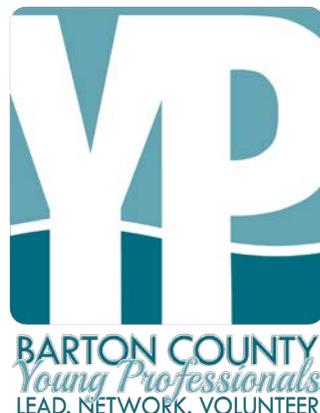


and cultural center offering an energetic and inclusive experience built on a unique community spirit.

**Employment challenges**  
 (unemployment, underemployment and/or lack of a trained workforce) must be **addressed through partnership** – employers, education and the community sitting at the table together to identify the needed skills sets, plans for training programs to support the desired outcome and recruitment strategies to fill the positions.



Elaine Simmons,  
 Barton Community College



**Community Highlights:**

- » Barton County Young Professionals  
 Fosters business and social networking among the over 700 working individuals that make up their membership.
- » Great Bend Municipal Airport  
 Hosts long runway facilities and serves as a mid-America refueling location, with the unique history of once serving as a B-29 Superfortress base during World War II.
- » Great Bend Transload Facility  
 Enables the transfer of cargo between rail and trucks.
- » KANSASWORKS  
 Connects job seekers and employers.



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# GOAL Increase the education and training attainment level.

## BASELINE

Great Bend has a high school graduation rate of 83%.

(source: [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com), 2018)

35.9% of the Great Bend population 25 years and over possesses some college or Associate's degree, compared to 37.4% for Barton County.

17.6% of the Great Bend population 25 years and over possesses a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 17.8% for Barton County.

(source: [factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov), 2018)

Barton Community College awarded 349 certificates in the 2017-2018 academic year, compared to the 539 Associate's degrees awarded.

(source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2019)

## By 2030 we will

- increase our high school graduation rate to 90%.
- increase the percent of population possessing some college or Associate's degree to 40%.
- increase the percent of population possessing a Bachelor's degree or higher to 20%.
- increase the number of students completing certificate programs at BCC by 25%.

## By 2040 we will

- increase our high school graduation rate to 95% to match the state goal.
- increase the percent of population possessing some college or Associate's degree to 45%.
- increase the percent of population possessing a Bachelor's degree or higher to 25%.
- increase the number of students completing certificate programs at BCC by 50%.

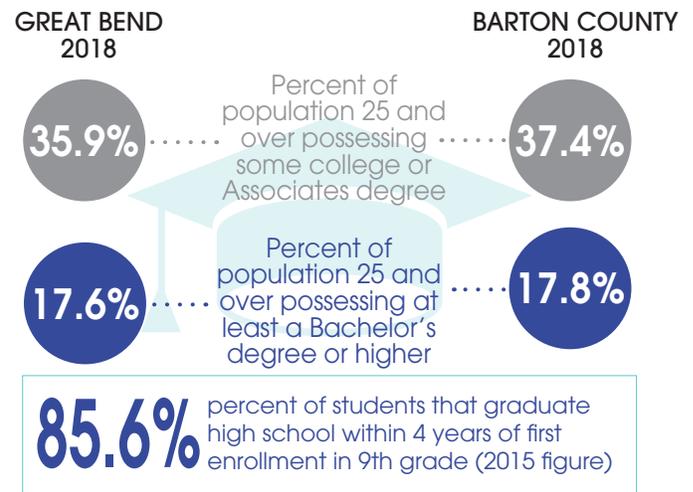
## Context

Great Bend has a strong education system with excellent public and private schools. Despite this, the number of school-aged children is declining. Over the past 18 years, the number of school-aged children in Great Bend is down by 9%.

Of the community's population, 36% have some college or an Associate's degree, which is higher than the national average for rural America (30%). However, Great Bend, like much of rural America, has experienced 'Brain Drain' as a result of young people moving away for education opportunities and not returning for employment after completion. Creating a sense of place, providing a high quality of life, and offering affordable housing can reverse this trend and create 'Brain Gain,' bringing in highly educated and trained young people.

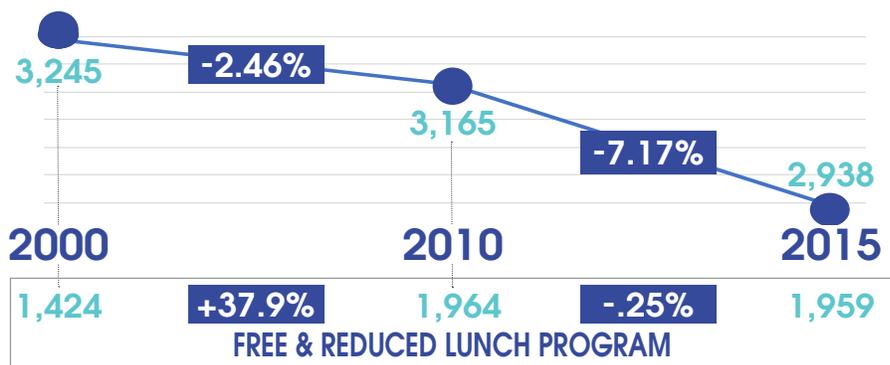
Barton Community College (BCC) is a major asset for Great Bend. As more students are enrolling in four-year

degree programs throughout the country, the nation is experiencing a steep decline in available workforce for our trade industries (HVAC, electricians, mechanics, etc.). Fortunately, BCC offers training and certificate programs in 26 areas of study.



and cultural center offering an energetic and inclusive experience built on a unique community spirit.

Number of school-aged kids



Barton Community College has certificate programs available in **26 PROGRAMS OF STUDY**

Barton Community College: Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of General Studies, certificated in a variety of vocational areas (business, technology, health care and public safety)

**5** PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS **1** MIDDLE SCHOOL **1** HIGH SCHOOL **2** PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS **1** PRIVATE SCHOOL **1** COMMUNITY COLLEGE

We must provide **equitable education** for all of our residents as it is the foundation to ensuring Great Bend's prosperity for future generations. We have a responsibility as a community, whether it be **implementing early education programs** in our grade schools, or **encouraging training** in critical industries to **support our local economy**.



Gaila Demel, United Way of Central Kansas

**Community Highlights:**

- » Barton Community College
  - Offers options for Associate's degrees across 117 programs of study and certification in 26 training programs.
- » Barton County Academy
  - Offers high school diploma completion and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs.
- » Building Bridges Program
  - Works to identify what schools should be teaching students to prepare them for the workforce through a partnership between the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development, Kansas WorkforceONE, and Great Bend High School.
- » Project Lead The Way
  - Provides transformative learning experiences for K-12 students and teachers in the Great Bend school district (USD 428) and creates an engaging, hands-on classroom environment that empowers students to develop in-demand knowledge and skills they need to thrive.
- » Reality U
  - Provides a real-world, interactive exercise for 8th grade Great Bend students to teach money-management and budgeting skills through programming by the United Way of Central Kansas.
- » Volunteers in Action / Retired Senior Volunteer Program
  - Connects retired seniors and working professionals with community volunteer opportunities.
- » Xello
  - Helps students identify and learn the tools to be future ready through an engaging, online college and career readiness software.

A diverse community of **welcoming, engaged people** leading Great Bend to shine as a regional **economic, educational, and**

# GOAL Reduce the percentage of population living below the poverty level.

## BASELINE:

In 2016, 19.3% of the Great Bend population lived below the poverty line, 28.1% were under 18 years old and 15.6% were over the age of 65.

(source: [factfinder.census.gov](https://factfinder.census.gov), 2016)

**By 2030** we will reduce our population living below the poverty line to 15%.

**By 2040** we will reduce our population living below the poverty line to 10%.

## Context

Poverty refers to a deficit in any number of life circumstances whether it be financial, physical health, transportation, education, or social capital. Those living in poverty don't have access to many of the services or opportunities that many Americans take for granted. Federal and state workforce and services are declining despite the increased demand for social services.

Unemployment in Great Bend is low. People are employed, but the number of people in poverty is still growing. Businesses cannot expand because there are no workers to fill jobs and it is difficult to attract new businesses if there is no available workforce. The challenge in this economy is not too few jobs, but too few jobs with wages and benefits that provide a path out of poverty. People in low paying jobs don't have the job skills needed for higher paying jobs, and child care is not readily available or affordable in many instances.

In Great Bend, of those in poverty, 1,844 are White, 1,045 are Hispanic or Latino, 57 are Black or African American, and 57 are Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Much of the poverty in the community is concentrated in the eastern part of Great Bend, east of Washington Street, west of Frey Street, south of 17th Street and north of Railroad Avenue. Compared nationally, this area is in the 90th percentile of population for low income households, children under 17, and people without a high school diploma, while

ranking in the 80th percentile for speaking English less than well and not having a vehicle. In other words, this section of Great Bend is highly susceptible to these social vulnerabilities.

Compared to the living wage of \$14.34/hour/working adult in a household of 4 (2 working adults + 2 children), a wage of \$6.03/hour/working adult is considered to be at the poverty level. And, to ensure a family of 4 with only one working adult is above the poverty level, the working adult must make a wage above \$12.07/hour.

## 2018 Household Income

GREAT BEND	
Median household income	\$44,397
Per capita income	\$23,897

BARTON COUNTY	
Median household income	\$46,959
Per capita income	\$24,555

2016 Percent below poverty line: 19.3% ALL, 28.1% UNDER 18, 15.6% 65+

and cultural center offering an energetic and inclusive experience built on a unique community spirit.

### Living Wage

AVERAGE SCENARIO:



**MINIMUM WAGE \$7.25/HR**

People in poverty experience challenges in life making it difficult to work. The lack of reliable transportation, available child care, and solid family and community support structures impacts our community and business success.

**Reducing poverty helps our workforce be more productive** today, as well as helping our next generation of children see success and strive for greater things. Working to reduce poverty is not just a good moral thing to do, but an important driver of our business development and growth.



Pete Wesner, CUNA Mutual

### Community Highlights:

- » Catholic Charities of Southwest Kansas  
 Serves those in need in the 28 southwest Kansas counties, honoring human potential through service, advocacy and invitation, in the spirit of the Gospel.
- » Circles of Central Kansas  
 Gives people a road map out of poverty through the joint efforts of the Barton County Health Department, the 20th Judicial District Community Corrections, the Esdack Program at the Barton County Academy, and the Kansas Kids at Gear Up.
- » Community Development Block Grants  
 Provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs through a flexible program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- » Golden Belt Community Foundation  
 Provides non-profit organizations in central Kansas with a permanent source of support and serves as a vehicle for charitable giving for donors to support programs like the Come Home Reverse Scholarship.
- » United Way of Central Kansas  
 Improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities to advance the common good alongside their partners:
  - Barton County Young Men’s Organization
  - Barton County Youth Care
  - Camp Pawnee
  - Caring Hands Daycare Larned Kansas
  - Catholic Charities of Southwest Kansas
  - Central Kansas CASA, Inc.
  - Central Kansas RSVP/Volunteers in Action
  - Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation of Kansas
  - Child Abuse Prevention Education
  - Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library
  - Eldercare, Inc.
  - Ellinwood Heritage Senior Center
  - Family Crisis Center
  - Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland
  - Great Bend Children’s Learning Center
  - Habitat for Humanity
  - Hoisington Commission on Aging
  - Hoisington Community Food Bank
  - Hoisington Historical Society
  - Hoisington Toys for Tots
  - Immediate Intervention Programs
  - Meals on Wheels
  - Salvation Army-Barton & Pawnee Counties

A diverse community of **welcoming, engaged people** leading Great Bend to shine as a regional **economic, educational, and**

# GOAL Improve the health and safety of the community.

## BASELINE:

Barton County ranked #67 out of 105 counties for health outcomes.

Barton County ranked #84 out of 105 counties for health factors.

(source: [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org), 2018)

Great Bend has a crime index rate of 48.8 per 1,000 residents – compared to the Kansas crime index rate of 32.14 per 1,000 residents.

(source: [www.accesskansas.org](http://www.accesskansas.org), 2018)

## By 2030 we will

- improve our health outcome ranking to #62 out of 105 counties.
- improve our health factor ranking to #79 out of 105 counties.
- reduce our crime index rate to 40 per 1,000 residents.

## By 2040 we will

- improve our health outcome ranking to #57 out of 105 counties.
- improve our health factor ranking to #75 out of 105 counties.
- reduce our crime index rate to be below the state average.

## Context - Health

The generation born today will most likely have a shorter lifespan than previous generations. Many health factors can be attributed to this – obesity, inactivity, mental health and substance abuse. Barton County has historically ranked lower than state averages for many of these health factors.

The rise in the use of methamphetamine and marijuana contributes to much of today’s substance

abuse and overdoses, especially in rural America, in addition to those individuals reportedly struggling with alcohol addiction.

The lack of insurance coverage and declining access to medical professionals, services and treatment facilities greatly impact much of rural America, including Barton County.

## 2018 Health Rankings - Barton County

Compared to 105 Kansas counties

### HEALTH OUTCOMES

**#67** OVERALL

**#33** LENGTH OF LIFE

**#85** QUALITY OF LIFE

### HEALTH FACTORS

**#84** OVERALL

**#84** HEALTH BEHAVIORS

**#43** CLINICAL CARE

**#85** SOCIAL & ECONOMIC FACTORS

**#68** PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

\*source: [countyhealthrankings.org](http://countyhealthrankings.org)

#9

OUT OF

10

“HAPPIEST CITIES IN KANSAS”

Only in Your State (2017)

and cultural center offering an energetic and inclusive experience built on a unique community spirit.

### Kansas Health Matters - Barton County



source: Kansas Health Matters, Healthy People 2020 Progress Tracker - [Kansashealthmatters.org](http://Kansashealthmatters.org)

### Context - Safety

Historically, Great Bend has been perceived by some as an unsafe community, in large part due to news coverage. Over the last decade, crime has been

trending down, and while the crime index is still higher than the state average, many feel that Great Bend is a safe place to raise a family.



Quality of life is important to employers when considering whether to expand or locate in a community. **Health and safety are basic needs** but have a **direct impact on job creation and business success**. Employees that are not healthy and safe cost employers billions every year.”



Mark Mingenback, Brentwood Builders LLC

We must recognize the importance of **addressing the mental health** of our residents. There is a direct correlation linking improved access to and integration of mental health services into emergency response departments and the **overall safety of a community**.



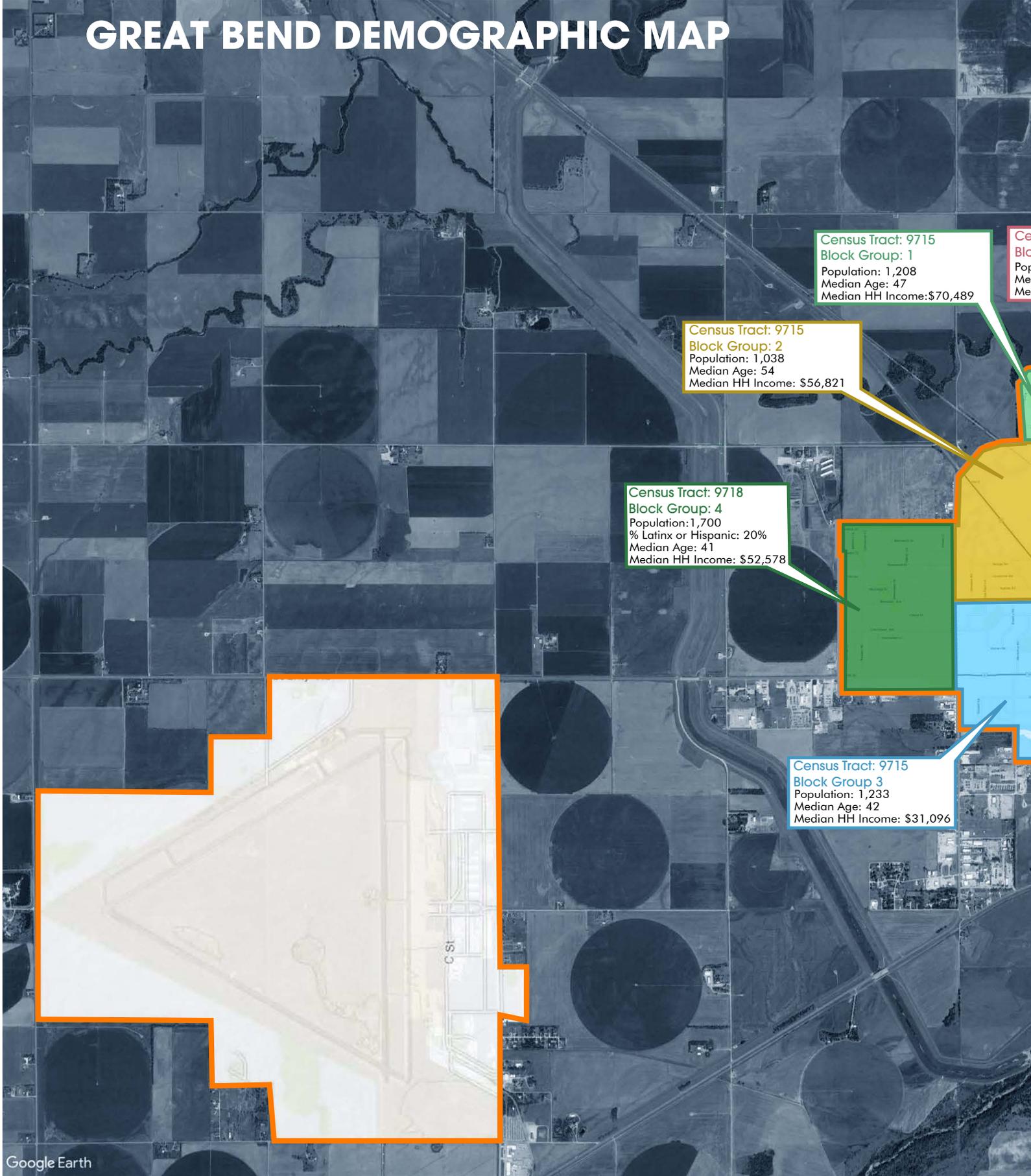
Luke McCormick, Great Bend Fire Department

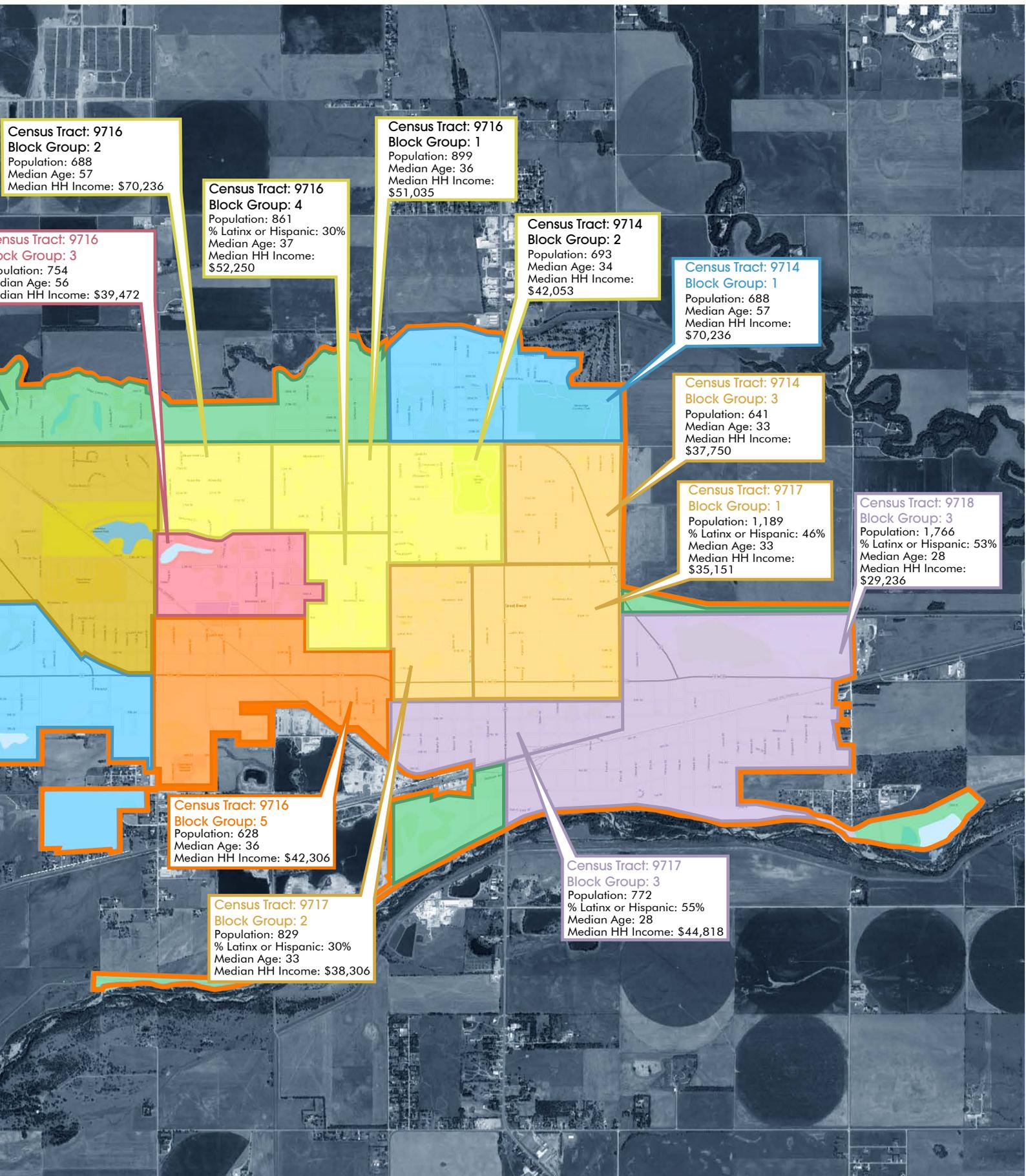
### Community Highlights:

- » Avenues for Change
  - Provides services to meet therapeutic needs through a client-centered, strengths-based, and trauma-informed approach.
- » Central Kansas Dream Center
  - Provides the people they serve with a sense of physical, spiritual, and emotional security.
- » Central Kansas Partnership – Be Well Barton County
  - Advocates for rural communities through various programs:
    - Barton County Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan
    - Suicide Prevention Programming
    - Breastfeeding Coalition
    - Drug & Alcohol Prevention Programming
    - Food Assessment Task Force
- » Great Bend Campus at the University of Kansas Health System
  - Offers medical services to the Great Bend and surrounding region at three locations: Great Bend Campus, Great Bend Family Medicine, and the St. Rose Medical Pavilion.
- » Kansas South Central Healthcare Coalition
  - Assists with preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities related to healthcare organization disaster operations.
- » Oxford House
  - Provides housing for those in drug and alcohol rehabilitation.
- » Rise Up Central Kansas
  - Educates the community on trauma informed care to create connections for a compassionate culture.
- » The Center for Counseling & Consultation
  - Provides professional, licensed mental health services to the Great Bend and surrounding community.



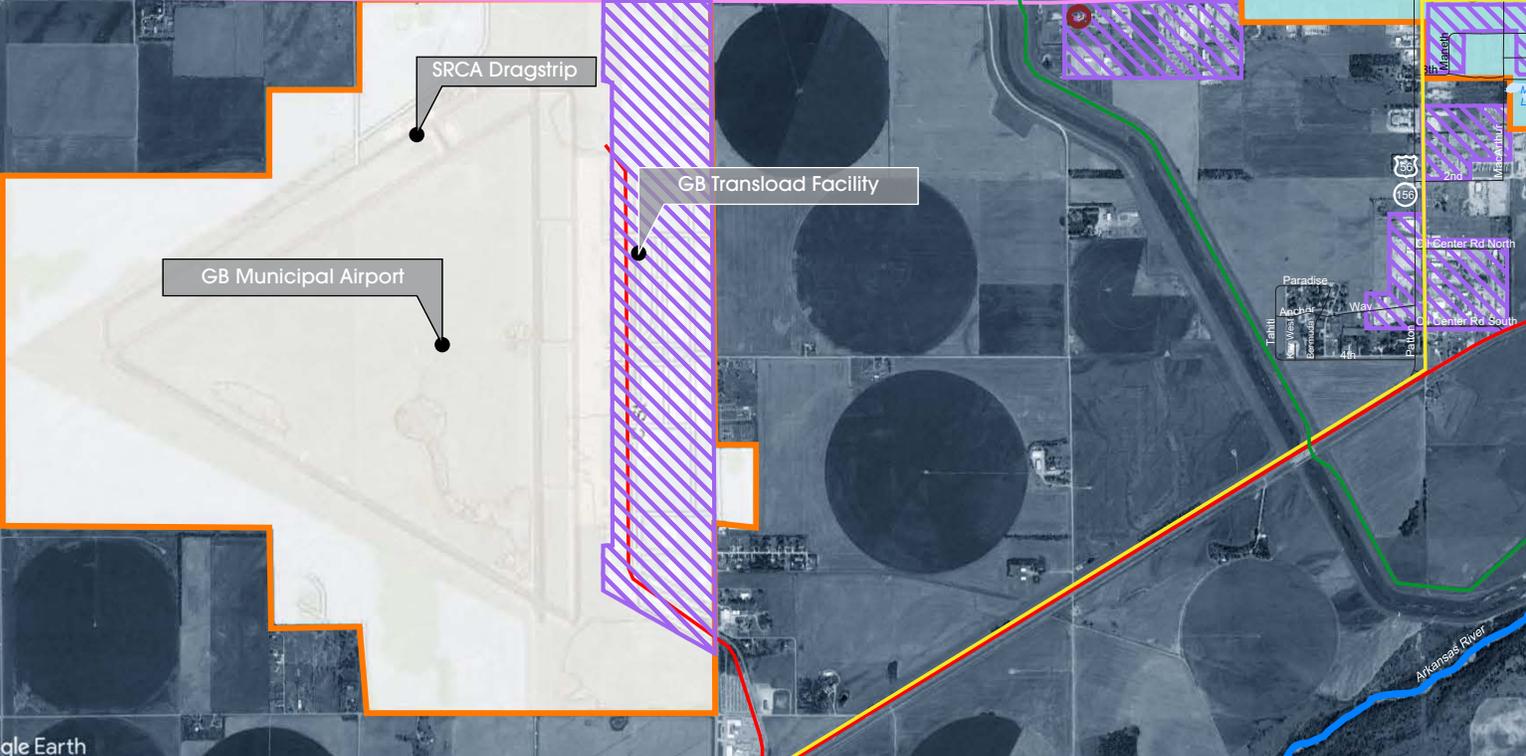
# GREAT BEND DEMOGRAPHIC MAP

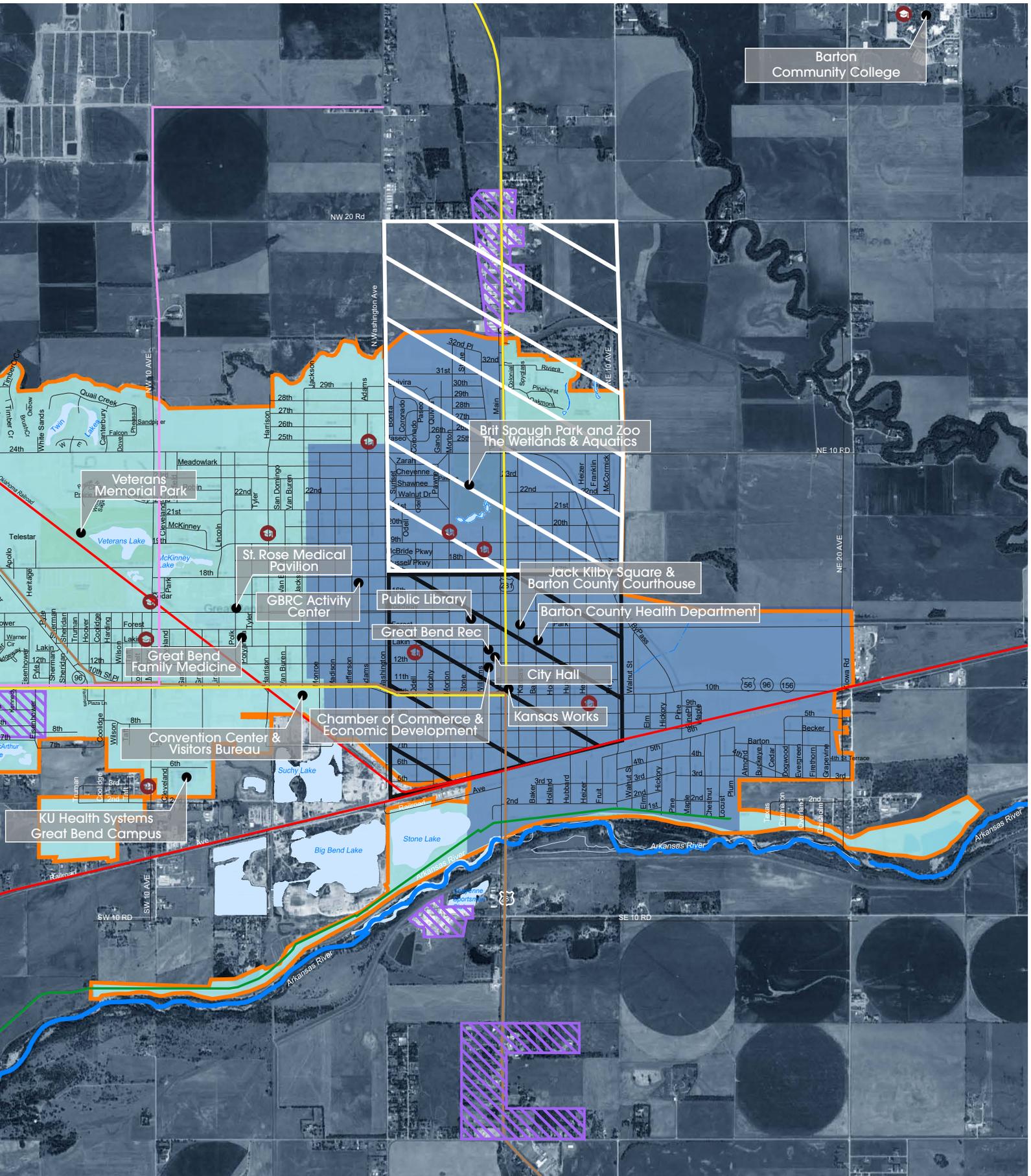




# POINTS OF INTEREST & OPPORTUNITY MAP

-  Schools
-  Railroad
-  City Boundaries
-  Industrial Zone
- Opportunity Zones**
  -  Zone 1
  -  Zone 2
- Neighborhood Revitalization Plan**
  -  Primary Area
  -  Secondary Area
- Recreational Trails**
  -  Hike & Bike Trail
  -  Lake Barton Trail
  -  Trans-America Trail
  -  Discovery Trail





# CHANGING THE CONVERSATION



## Gather Community Together

### Context

Great Bend is a friendly town, but we find we are often a community of communities – there is little structure in place to welcome newcomers to Great Bend, little interaction between our distinct cultural communities, and many of our services, activities, and events operate in silos. We are also a community of many highly-involved and passionate participants. We want a unified community that brings to the table all individuals and organizations to facilitate conversations, shares in the many positive characteristics Great Bend offers, and has a centralized location for community cohesion to take place.

### Community Voice



**Connecting People** of different cultures, geographies, and generations together to celebrate each other.



**Inspiring Each Other** by celebrating a sense of community pride and identity.



**Targeting Our Investments** by activating one location for people to gather regularly.



**Growing Our Resources** by engaging people from all cultures and generations to lead the community.

Our vision is for Great Bend to be a diverse community of **WELCOMING, ENGAGED PEOPLE.**

### Community Catalyst

Continue to energize Jack Kilby Square with leisure, recreation, and cultural activities and events to bring people together from across our community and energize our downtown.



WE GATHER COMMUNITY TOGETHER...	ACTION ITEMS	GOALS						LEAD ORGANIZATION	BY WHEN
		DIVERSIFY ECONOMY	RETAIL PULL FACTOR	LIVING WAGE JOBS	EDUCATION & TRAINING	POVERTY LEVEL	HEALTH & SAFETY		
by investing in the creative culture of our community to capitalize on the relatively low-cost of doing business in Great Bend.	Convene various entities and individuals interested in promoting the creative culture in Great Bend to build relationships and combine efforts (e.g. - Great Bend Community Theater Board, Shafer Art Gallery, Barton Community College visual and performing arts departments, Barton County Arts Council, schools, faith communities, dance studios, artists, etc.).	✓	✓	✓			✓	GBCC	2020
by creating a place in the downtown and throughout the community to create a sense of security but also real reduction in crime. More "eyes on the street" throughout the day and evening help deter illegal activity and bad behavior.	Activate the County Courthouse/Jack Kilby Square with temporary, but consistent, community events to foster a sense of place and encourage community involvement (e.g. - Third Thursdays with food trucks, farmer's market, live music, games for kids).	✓	✓				✓	CITY / BCYP	2020
	Encourage retail business owners to participate in the City's Retail Committee and to work closely with the Community Coordinator to promote "buy local" initiatives and support "pop-up" retail.	✓	✓						CITY
to make business owner connections and share resources and amenities needed for expansion.	Coordinate strategic planning efforts between the City, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce, and the Great Bend Economic Development, Inc. to ensure a unified effort.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	CITY / GBED / GBCC	2020
by instilling a sense of pride and enhancing visitors' perception of our community.	Clean up gateways into the community.		✓				✓	CITY	2025
	Invest in smart-technology and infrastructure.		✓				✓	CITY	2030
	Use Community Development Block Grants to assist those areas of Great Bend that need the most improvement.		✓			✓	✓	CITY	2020
	Invest in public parks, right of way and boulevard beautification projects.	✓	✓				✓	CITY	2030
	Improve communication regarding the Neighborhood Revitalization Program so residents and businesses can make needed improvements to their properties and improve the image and housing stock available.	✓	✓				✓	CITY / GBCC / BCYP / GBED	2020
to invest private dollars of individuals in the community in innovative projects and business expansion.	Collaborate with Central Kansas Development Inc. (CKDI) to establish a grassroots funding initiative that models CKDI's structure to allow for both large and small-scale investors.	✓	✓	✓		✓		CKDI	2020
by creating stronger social connections and programs to reduce drug use, improve mental health, and creatively solve community challenges.	Create a centralized resource phone number to direct residents to the appropriate services available to meet a wide range of needs.				✓	✓	✓	UNITED WAY	2025
to expand funding and support for organizations that lift people out of poverty.	Support local initiatives that encourage the betterment of the Great Bend residents (e.g. - Circles of Central Kansas, Rise Up Central Kansas, Oxford House, etc.).				✓	✓	✓	BCYP	2025

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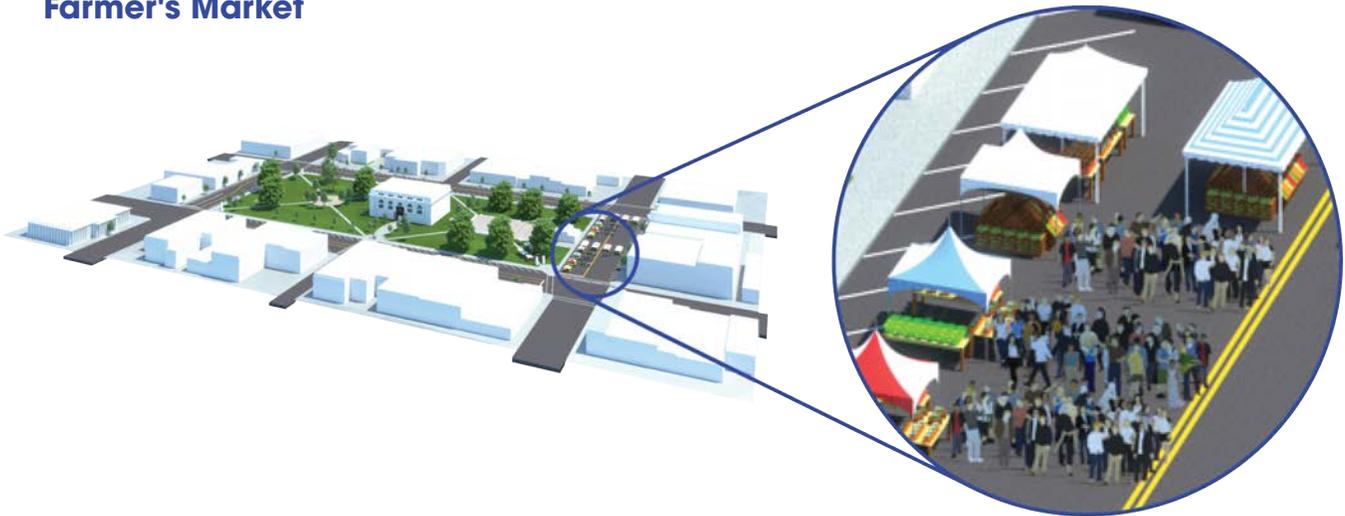
**GBCC** - Great Bend Chamber of Commerce  
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# CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

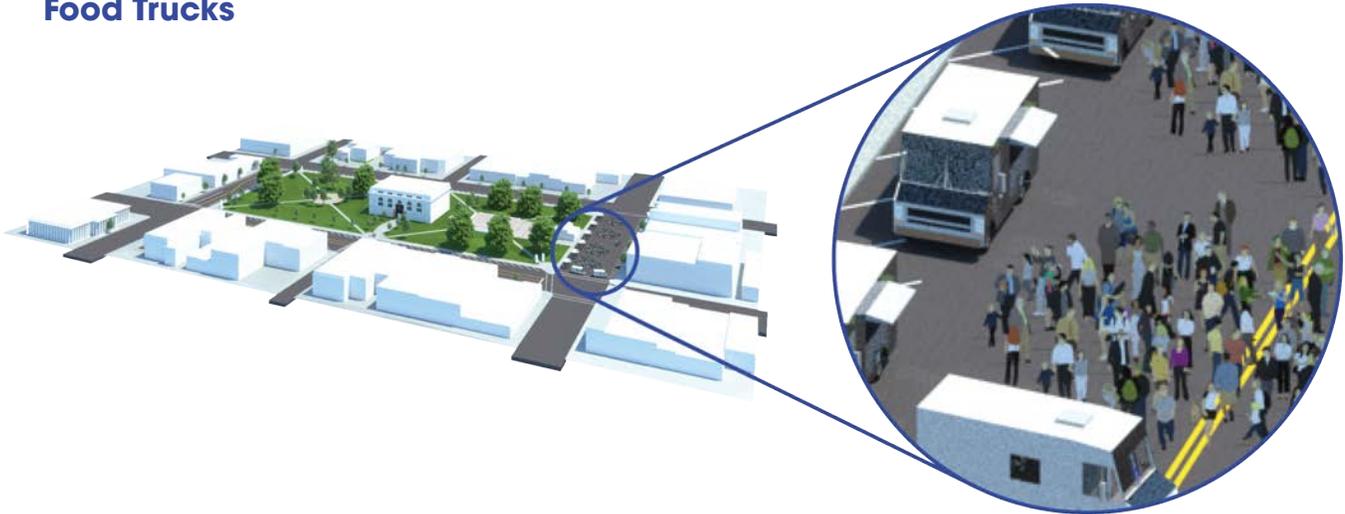


## Gather Community Together

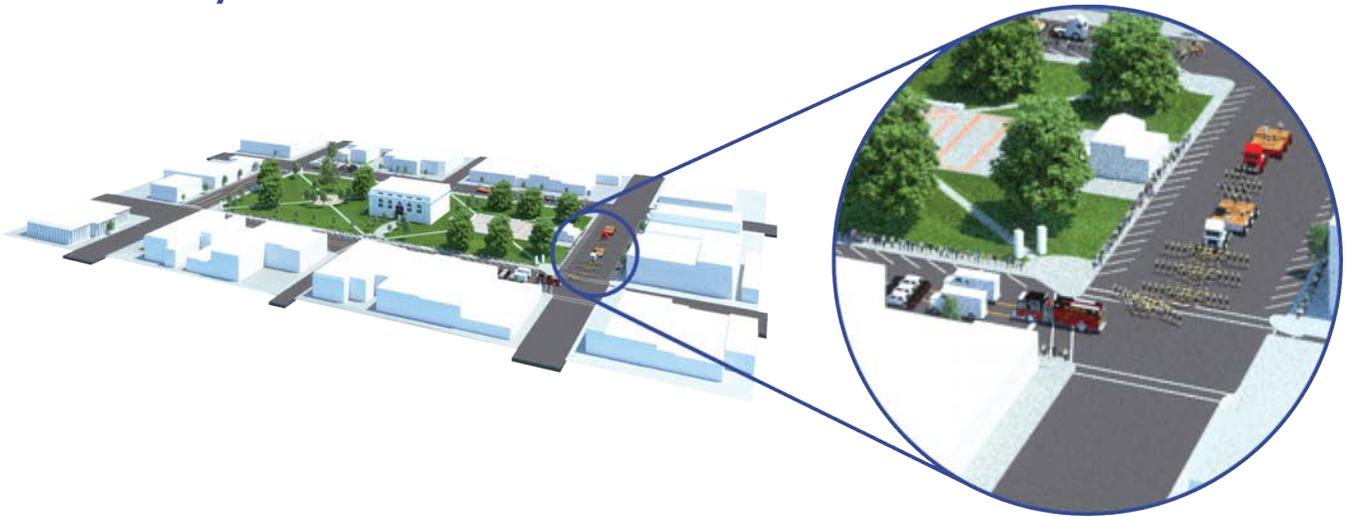
### Farmer's Market



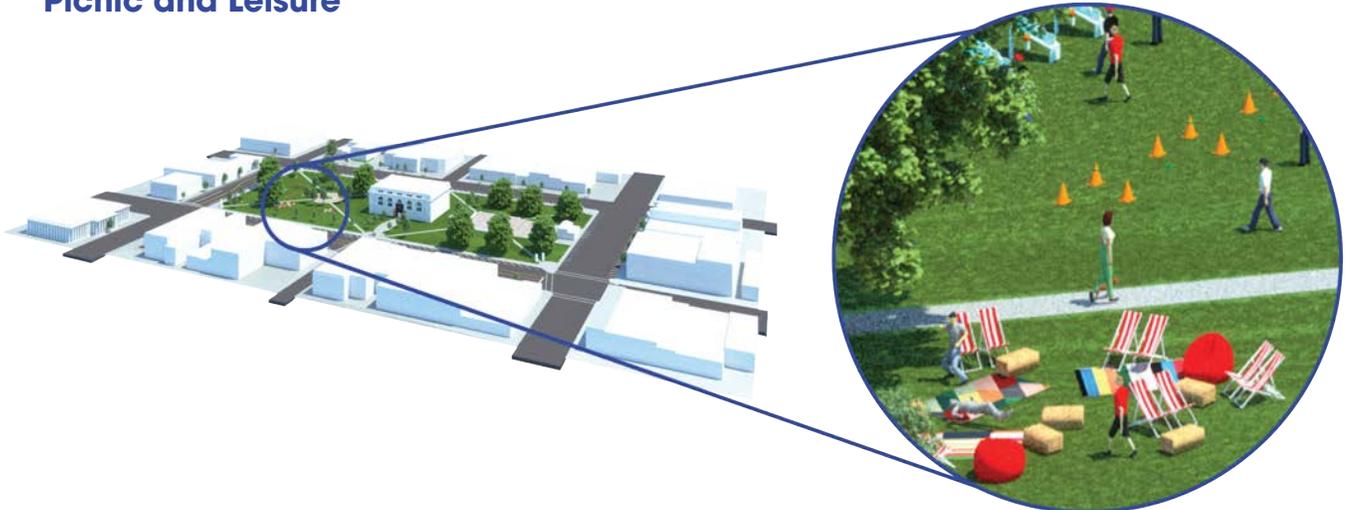
### Food Trucks



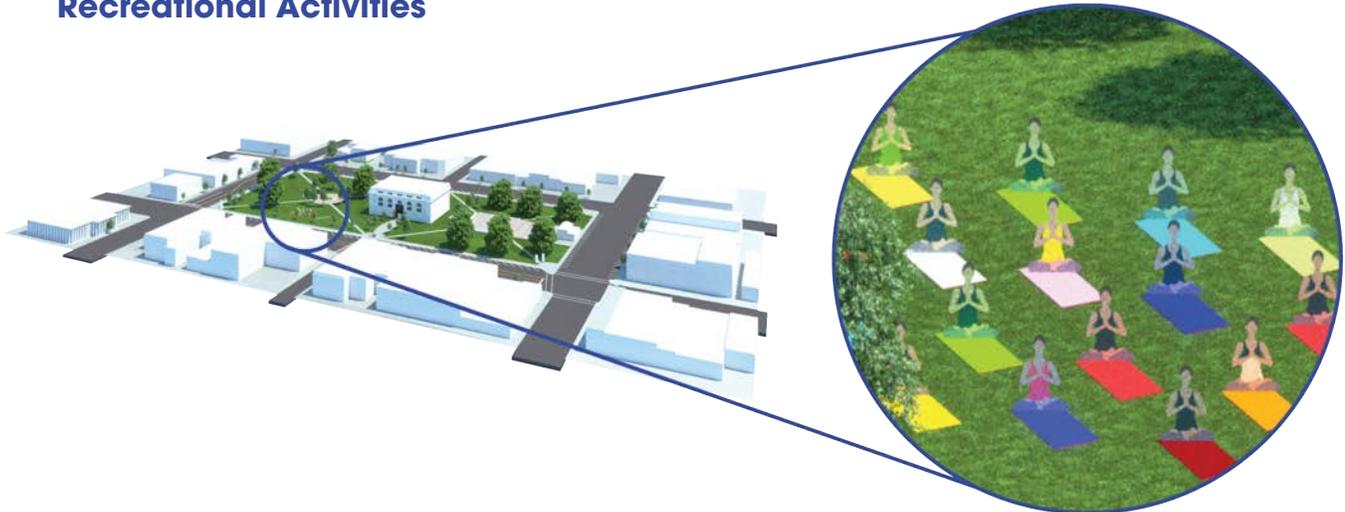
### Community Parade and Festivals



### Picnic and Leisure



### Recreational Activities



# CHANGING THE CONVERSATION



## Improve Communication

### Context

We are a community that provides a great quality of life – Great Bend is a safe place to raise a family, we have wonderful schools for our children, our community offers low-cost living, and we have a strong culture of recreation. It is important to our success and future that we share the story of Great Bend both internally to our own residents, as well as externally to those outside our community; and that all residents serve as stewards of our community through positive communication, even of our smallest achievements.

### Community Voice



**Connecting People** by sharing information.



**Inspiring Each Other** to be stewards of Great Bend by speaking positively about the community and being conscious of what we say.



**Targeting Our Investments** by centralizing information.



**Growing Our Resources** by reducing obstacles that limit economic development.

## Great Bend is built on a **UNIQUE COMMUNITY SPIRIT.**

### Community Catalyst

Cultivate a culture of positive Great Bend stewardship to promote and celebrate all of the wonderful community attributes.



WE IMPROVE COMMUNICATION...	ACTION ITEMS	GOALS						LEAD ORGANIZATION	BY WHEN
		DIVERSIFY ECONOMY	RETAIL PULL FACTOR	LIVING WAGE JOBS	EDUCATION & TRAINING	POVERTY LEVEL	HEALTH & SAFETY		
 by marketing the strengths and opportunities in Great Bend.	Develop a unifying tag line and branding for Great Bend (e.g. - #GBPride) for a fresh marketing campaign for the community, which could include a line of Great Bend apparel.		✓				✓	CITY / GBCC	2020
	Evaluate the use of a Community Recruiter and/or PR Professional to help identify what Great Bend is known for and communicate that message to targeted business sectors.	✓	✓	✓			✓	CITY / GBCC	2025
	Reactivate the Ambassador Club to serve as a Welcome Wagon and resource for newcomers to Great Bend, and recruit more young professionals.						✓	AMBASSADOR CLUB	2020
	Create a welcome package for new residents that encourages patronage of local businesses through promotions and discount, provides information about utilities and other community services, offers opportunities for involvement and volunteer service.						✓	AMBASSADOR CLUB	2020
 by promoting the activities and positive news about Great Bend.	Create a centralized bilingual community calendar that is managed and distributed by one entity, but hosts the shared events of all community organizations.						✓	CITY	2020
 by helping encourage small business entrepreneurs.	Bring in state and national speakers to inspire and serve as a resource.		✓	✓	✓			GBCC / GBED	2020
	Continue annual economic outlook summit.				✓			GBCC / GBED	2020
	Expand the Chamber Roundtable meeting offerings with relevant topics in small business development.	✓	✓	✓		✓		GBCC	2020
by strengthening the tie between education, quality of life, and the economy.	Collaborate between the City, CVB, Chamber, and GBED to identify one group to serve as the liaison between the schools, businesses, and community organizations to improve recruitment, retention, and marketing for Great Bend.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	CITY / CVB / GBCC / GBED	2020
	Identify methods to better coordinate BCC Volunteers In Action/RSVP programs to offer a central resource for service opportunities within Great Bend.					✓	✓	BCYP	2020
about public health issues and services to address them.	Support the national Stepping Up resolution to embed mental health services (paramedicine) into emergency response and the criminal justice system.					✓	✓	CITY / COUNTY	2025
	Increase efforts to encourage preventative health services available and use of these services.						✓	BARTON CO. PUBLIC HEALTH	2025
	Increase efforts to explain the importance of mental health as well as physical health.				✓	✓	✓	BARTON CO. PUBLIC HEALTH	2025
	Explore the appropriate use of telemedicine to bring additional expertise and services into the community.	✓					✓	✓	KU MED
to share the success stories of initiatives underway to improve the health and safety of the community.	Educate the community on issues pertaining to poverty, mental health and addiction, and trauma informed care, and highlight those within the community making positive progress.			✓	✓	✓	✓	CIRCLES	2020

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# CHANGING THE CONVERSATION



## Overcome Cultural Barriers

### Context

Great Bend is truly two communities within one, specifically in regard to the division that exists between the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking residents. The divide between these two communities impacts all aspects of Great Bend life. Embracing and celebrating the diversity of our residents will drive growth and provide prosperity, while supporting our vision for a welcoming community to all residents and visitors alike.

### Community Catalyst

Bring two cultures together to be more than the sum of the parts.

We are already a small community and can't afford to be made only smaller by not embracing diversity. We need to fully understand what our cultures can offer one another and our community.

Somos una comunidad pequeña y no podemos permitir hacernos más pequeña por no aceptar la diversidad. Necesitamos comprender totalmente lo que nuestras culturas pueden ofrecer a uno y otro y a nuestra comunidad.



Ana Hayson, Rana Luna Boutique

### Community Voice



**Connecting People** by reducing the language barrier.



**Inspiring Each Other** by learning from each other.



**Targeting Our Investments** by including the unheard voice to grow entrepreneurs and improve economic diversity and prosperity.



**Growing Our Resources** by understanding each other's common interests.



WE OVERCOME CULTURAL BARRIERS...	ACTION ITEMS	GOALS						LEAD ORGANIZATION	BY WHEN
		DIVERSIFY ECONOMY	RETAIL PULL FACTOR	LIVING WAGE JOBS	EDUCATION & TRAINING	POVERTY LEVEL	HEALTH & SAFETY		
by building understanding of people of different cultures.	Implement Family Language Night at the elementary schools to encourage English-speaking and Spanish-speaking families to attend and learn the basics of communicating with each other.		✓	✓		✓	✓	USD 428	2025
	Hold an annual community-wide cultural festival and encourage participation in existing cultural events.		✓				✓	BCYP / CVB	2025
	Partner with the BCC Inclusion and Diversity Team to educate local businesses on the importance of targeting and involving people of all cultures.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BCC / GBCC / GBED	2025
	Offer English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses as well as beginning Spanish language courses through BCC for the business community.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	BCC	2025
 by actively and intentionally including people from all sectors of the community in leadership roles.	Recruit Latinx-owned businesses to join the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce.	✓	✓	✓				GBCC	2025
	Increase diversity among the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors, the Barton County Young Professionals, and other community organizations (e.g. - United Way of Central Kansas).	✓	✓	✓				BCYP	2025
	Develop a Hispanic Committee within the Great Bend Economic Development, Inc. to create a united voice within the business community.	✓	✓	✓				GBED	2020
by reducing barriers to participation.	Encourage patronage of all local businesses (e.g. - offer language translation).		✓	✓				GBCC / GBED	2025
	Ensure that all City and County services are equitable throughout the community, including park and recreational facilities such as Heizer Park.	✓	✓				✓	CITY / COUNTY	2030
	Identify funding to provide bilingual translation services for medical and health service organizations.						✓	KU MED	2025
by hiring an outreach coordinator.	Recruit companies or individuals to provide immigration/refugee services.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	GBCC	2030
	Establish communication and relationships that build trust between cultures.	✓	✓				✓	BCYP	2025
	Recruit certified translators and partner with WSU to offer certified translation programs to allow for equity in City, community, and medical services. Translation service is a growth industry of the future.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	BCC	2030

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# CHANGING THE CONVERSATION



## Close the Generation Gap

### Context

We know that about half of Great Bend’s population is under the age of 24 or over the age of 65, and the population only continues to age. On the other hand, we also witness a growing number of residents ready to retire, and perhaps just as many young professionals making a start in the community. We recognize there is a large gap between these disparate groups regarding their interests, activities, and level of community involvement. However, there is much these various generational groups can offer one another; by providing a conduit to leverage common interests and to share knowledge and experiences, there is opportunity to bridge the generation gap, maintain continuity in business ownership, and keep Great Bend alive.

### Community Voice



**Connecting People** through intergenerational activities to create opportunities for all generations to interact.



**Inspiring Each Other** by sharing stories with each other.



**Targeting Our Investments** by capitalizing on the assets that each generation offers.



**Growing Our Resources** by identifying and nurturing future leaders.

Our vision is for Great Bend to offer an **ENERGETIC** and **INCLUSIVE** experience.

### Community Catalyst

Raise leaders of the future to be effective successors of our business community and cultural agencies.



WE CLOSE THE GENERATION GAP..	ACTION ITEMS	GOALS						LEAD ORGANIZATION	BY WHEN
		DIVERSIFY ECONOMY	RETAIL PULL FACTOR	LIVING WAGE JOBS	EDUCATION & TRAINING	POVERTY LEVEL	HEALTH & SAFETY		
 <p>by establishing mentors for small business owners and developing the next generation of ownership for existing businesses.</p>	Support the success and growth of the Barton County Young Professionals, and identify and groom those individuals well-suited for future business ownership.		✓	✓				GBCC / GBED	2025
	Partner with the University of Kansas Red Tire Program to help match qualified alumni from any regional college or university with businesses whose owners are looking to retire.		✓	✓				AMBASSADOR CLUB	2025
	Offer education to local business owners on succession planning and financial reporting.		✓	✓				GBCC / GBED	2030
<p>by preparing for the changing needs of the next generation of seniors.</p>	Continue to improve services available to seniors, including further enhancements to the Great Bend Senior Center.						✓	CITY	2025
	Offer an abatement program and/or services for those seniors facing property and code violations.					✓	✓	CITY	2025
	Modify the built environment over time so Seniors can age in place.					✓	✓	CITY	2030
<p>by creating intergenerational activities to improve mental health, self-worth, and reduce loneliness.</p>	Implement activities and volunteer opportunities that connect seniors and school-aged children and BCC students in the community (e.g. - Hug-A-Senior Day, Facebook/technology training, Retired Senior Volunteer Program).						✓	GREAT BEND REC / BCC	2025
<p>by encouraging intergenerational collaboration in the workplace.</p>	Create a committee within the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas amongst retirees and young professionals.	✓	✓	✓			✓	GBCC	2020
	Promote and offer financial assistance for BCC's Business Management & Leadership - Entrepreneurial Emphasis online certificate program.	✓	✓	✓	✓			BCC	2025
	Partner with BCC to develop a community leadership training program for Great Bend employees to gain the skills necessary for workplace success.	✓	✓	✓	✓			GBCC	2030

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# CHANGING THE CONVERSATION



## Grow the Workforce of the Future

### Context

In order to grow existing businesses and attract new business, we must recognize the importance of offering an early start and a helping hand – whether it be financially, through services, or mere encouragement – to those in our community who are most in need. Unemployment is low in Great Bend, but we must ensure that we maintain and grow a well-qualified workforce and focus on our youth, the underemployed, and the impoverished. It is our responsibility as a community to enrich these neighbors through a variety of resources – education, mentoring, or employment – so they have the opportunity to become model citizens and positive contributors to Great Bend.

### Community Voice



**Connecting People** to training and incentives offered to support business owners and job seekers.



**Inspiring Each Other** by nurturing entrepreneurs, business ideas and opportunities.



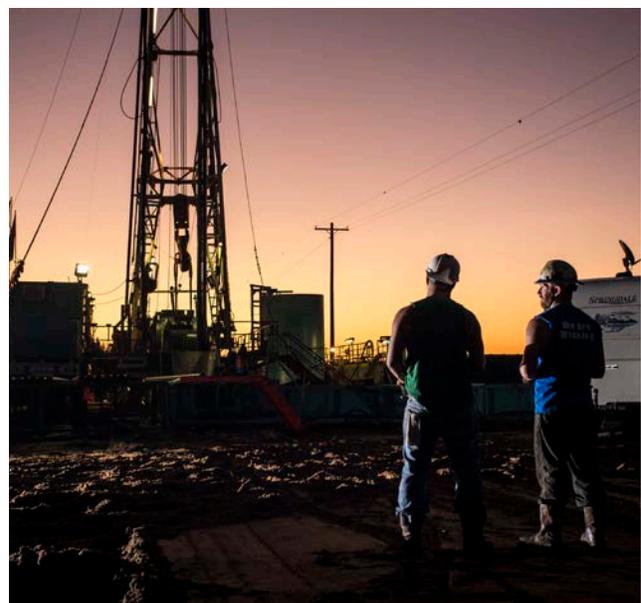
**Targeting Our Investments** by creating a healthy, safe community with a high quality of life to attract and retain workers and by preparing people to compete in our technological society.



**Growing Our Resources** by creating opportunities for all people to allow them to reach their full potential.

### Community Catalyst

Prepare people that already live in Great Bend to be successful contributors to the workforce of the future.



WE GROW THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE...		GOALS						LEAD ORGANIZATION	BY WHEN
		DIVERSIFY ECONOMY	RETAIL PULL FACTOR	LIVING WAGE JOBS	EDUCATION & TRAINING	POVERTY LEVEL	HEALTH & SAFETY		
ACTION ITEMS									
 <p>by recruiting qualified workers, specifically people who grew up in Barton County and enticing them to move back.</p>	Offer a debt forgiveness program to support the effort to re-recruit college graduates who are originally from Great Bend.	✓	✓	✓				CKDI / GOLDEN BELT COMM. FOUNDATION	2025
	Identify students at colleges and visit them a year or two before graduation about returning to Great Bend upon graduation.	✓	✓	✓				BCYP / USD 428	2020
<p>by building on the legacy of Jack Kilby, Nobel Prize winner, to create a community business culture around technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship.</p>	Institute a Manufacturing Day for high school students to tour major manufacturing companies to highlight technology and innovation careers.	✓		✓	✓			USD 428	2020
	Partner with BCC to build a technology training center in Great Bend to create technical workers of the future (e.g. - learn 3D printing so goods can be produced locally rather than shipped in).	✓		✓	✓			CKDI	2025
 <p>by increasing the local workforce capacity.</p>	Provide incentives for families relocating to Great Bend.		✓					GOLDEN BELT COMM. FOUNDATION	2025
	Remove barriers to safe, suitable, attainable housing.		✓			✓	✓	CITY	2025
	Increase resources to train and retain law enforcement and mental health providers.			✓	✓		✓	CITY / COUNTY	2025
	Make resources of KANSASWORKS available to expand workforce training services for Great Bend employers.			✓	✓			GBCC	2020
	Work with businesses and employees to recruit family members of employees to move to Great Bend to help fill job openings.		✓	✓				GBCC / GBED	2020
	Provide access to child care for low-income and working families.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	UNITED WAY	2025
 <p>by connecting employers with qualified workers.</p>	Connect Great Bend businesses with KANSASWORKS resources and the American Job Centers Workforce System of partners and network of services to deliver a qualified workforce through matching services, supporting businesses, growing economies, and achieving prosperity for all.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		GBCC	2020
<p>by making business owner connections to remove barriers for expansion.</p>	Share program information with employers such as Federal Bonding and Work Opportunity Tax Credit.	✓	✓	✓				GBCC / GBED	2020
<p>by sharing resources and amenities needed for business expansion or lower costs.</p>	Create a small or entrepreneurial business incubator and co-working space that provides shared services and amenities necessary to run a business.	✓	✓	✓				CKDI	2025
	Create a co-working space for non-profit agencies.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	UNITED WAY	2025
<p>by giving children a head start to academic progress and learning important social skills needed for future employment.</p>	Implement early childhood education programs in the Great Bend school district.				✓			USD 428	2025
<p>by more closely connecting our education system with future job requirements.</p>	Provide high school students with local internship and mentoring opportunities (e.g. - Building Bridges Program), and improve career counseling within the schools.			✓	✓	✓		USD 428	2025
	Convene businesses to identify the job skills needed in the future and align curriculum K-12 so graduates have these skills.			✓	✓	✓		USD 428	2025
	Align certificate offerings and trade programs at BCC with job market.			✓	✓	✓		BCC	2025

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# CHANGING THE CONVERSATION



## Improve Mobility & Accessibility

### Context

We value the importance of universal mobility and accessibility for all ages and abilities. There is a very real need within Great Bend to make improvements to our infrastructure, so we have the necessary connections in place to meet the needs of our residents and visitors to get them where they're going and to improve the transport of goods. Additionally, there is a need to provide equitable opportunities to those with disabilities and those without cars in our community. Technological service and connectivity are also a critical piece to the community infrastructure conversation, and we are committed to making the necessary investments to keep up with the latest advancements. These improvements can only contribute to the economic benefit and improved quality of life for Great Bend.

### Community Catalyst

Take better advantage of Great Bend's central U.S. location by modernizing existing transportation and communication infrastructure to enhance mobility and accessibility of goods and people, and to meet the demands of rapidly changing market needs.



### Community Voice



**Connecting People** through a complete transportation system.



**Inspiring Each Other** to include all ages and abilities.



**Targeting Our Investments** to capitalize on our existing transportation network.



**Growing Our Resources** through the attraction of more frequent visits to existing businesses from customers already in Great Bend.



WE IMPROVE MOBILITY & ACCESSIBILITY...	ACTION ITEMS	GOALS						LEAD ORGANIZATION	BY WHEN
		DIVERSIFY ECONOMY	RETAIL PULL FACTOR	LIVING WAGE JOBS	EDUCATION & TRAINING	POVERTY LEVEL	HEALTH & SAFETY		
by maintaining the Airport runway in good condition to attract businesses that benefit from long runway facilities in the middle of the U.S.	Explore using the Airport for regional inspection station, aviation tool rebuilding, and/or maintenance facility.	✓	✓	✓				CITY / GBCC / GBED	2025
 by taking advantage of the transload facility to grow our manufacturing businesses.	Modernize the rail facilities to enhance the ability to move goods.	✓	✓	✓				GBCC / GBED	2030
by improving transportation options.	Leverage public transportation services to create a community on-demand ride share program, allowing residents to get around Great Bend safely and conveniently.		✓				✓	CITY / SUNFLOWER DIVERSIFIED / ROSEWOOD SERVICES	2020
	Create a more robust and frequent transportation connection between Barton Community College and downtown Great Bend so students can access services, employment and retail.		✓					CITY / SUNFLOWER DIVERSIFIED / ROSEWOOD SERVICES	2020
	Support legislation for the development of the Northwest Passage highway, a critical regional link for Central Kansas, to improve transportation of people and goods.	✓	✓					CITY / GBED / GBCC	2030
	Improve and expand the biking and walking infrastructure.		✓				✓	CITY	2030
for people of all ages and abilities.	Continue to promote city-wide walkability of sidewalks to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Explore alternative funding sources such as KDOT's Safe Routes to School Program to help with the cost.						✓	CITY	2030
by improving access to markets, goods and services.	Develop an app (e.g. - 'Buy Great Bend') that encourages shopping local and micro-fulfillment, where local goods can be delivered on-demand to local residents.		✓					BCYP	2025
	Evaluate public / private partnerships to expand broadband access to grow the ability to sell goods via internet / phone app and offer mobile work options.	✓	✓	✓				CITY	2025

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# CHANGING THE CONVERSATION



## Explore New Opportunities

### Context

Growth within any community is not possible without looking to new opportunities. We reflect on our strengths and successes that have made us the Great Bend of today. However, there is opportunity to fill gaps to meet the needs of our local residents, provide goods or services that our existing businesses and industries need to purchase, and complement our growing specialty markets now and into the future. Our community is fortunate to have a significant amount of private capital available, as is evident in our cash-flush bank deposit records, which can be utilized for investment in community projects and economic development initiatives. We are committed to pursuing innovation and creativity in the realms of community projects, events, business opportunities, public spaces, and technology so we may capitalize on the potential that exists to make Great Bend - Better than Great!

### Community Catalyst

Build on the legacy of former Great Bend innovators to maintain a position at the leading edge of change – identify market needs, embrace diversification, and nurture creativity. Leverage the local agricultural conditions and transload facility to develop an industry around hemp growth, fiber production, and export.

### Community Voice



**Connecting People** by connecting knowledgeable business people together.



**Inspiring Each Other** by including a culture of healthy competition and support for each other.



**Targeting Our Investments** by identifying and building upon the strengths of Great Bend.



**Growing Our Resources** by creating a pro-business environment.

## Wealth Indicator

### BANK DEPOSITS (IN MILLIONS)

BARTON  
COUNTY

978

KANSAS\*

711

\* average of all counties

Our vision is for Great Bend to shine as a regional **ECONOMIC, EDUCATIONAL, and CULTURAL CENTER.**

**WE EXPLORE NEW OPPORTUNITIES...**

**ACTION ITEMS**

**GOALS**

DIVERSIFY ECONOMY	RETAIL PULL FACTOR	LIVING WAGE JOBS	EDUCATION & TRAINING	POVERTY LEVEL	HEALTH & SAFETY
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**WHO**

**WHEN**



by recruiting companies that: fill a gap in meeting the needs of local residents; provide goods or services existing businesses or industries need to purchase; and/or complement our growing specialty markets now and as they transform due to future trends.	Hire a consultant to work with the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce to advise on the identification of new industry appropriate for Great Bend.	✓	✓	✓		✓		GBCC	2020
	Target businesses, in partnership with the Kansas Department of Commerce, that may be looking for a new home either as a result of being located in a unfriendly business environment or in an area of high living costs.	✓	✓					GBCC / GBED	2020
by identifying what is next for agriculture and determine suitability for Great Bend.	Explore hemp and other drought-resistant crops for production and processing in and around Great Bend.	✓	✓	✓		✓		GBCC / GBED	2020
by continuing to invest and revitalize downtown Great Bend.	Offer more BCC courses in downtown Great Bend.		✓					BCC	2025
	Develop a market study and incentives package to develop housing in downtown buildings.		✓					CKDI	2025
	Form a venture capital group to invest in the designated Opportunity Zones.	✓	✓	✓				CKDI	2025
	Hold investor workshops to illuminate opportunities and make introductions to entrepreneurs.	✓	✓	✓				CKDI	2020
	Provide incentives to offset the redevelopment costs in downtown.	✓	✓	✓				CITY / GBED	2025
by capitalizing on retail pull factor to raise additional sales tax funds for community improvements.	Identify capital improvement program prioritized to achieve goals in this plan.	✓	✓				✓	CITY	2025
by creating additional industrial development sites.	Annex industrial land into city limits.	✓	✓	✓				CITY	2025
	Extend infrastructure and utilities to industrial sites.	✓	✓	✓				CITY	2025
by partnering with the University of Kansas Health System and their purchase of the community health care and medical facilities.	Create a regional health care training system for central and western Kansas.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	KU MED	2025
to attract visitors and enhance quality of life for residents with regional and national events, natural resources, promoting venues unique to Great Bend.	Recruit businesses and events to take advantage of Great Bend and Barton County's outdoor recreation and natural resources.		✓				✓	CVB	2025
	Build on Skip Yowell's legacy, co-founder of JanSport, to hold an annual outdoor show.		✓					CVB	2025
	Improve public access to Arkansas River.		✓				✓	CITY	2030
	Build on the hunting and fishing culture and establish rentals, guide services, and lodging for the region.	✓	✓					CVB	2025
	Improve access and services to support outdoor recreational opportunities that attract more highly skilled workers.			✓			✓	CITY	2030
	Implement the Hike and Bike Improvement Plan.		✓	✓			✓	CITY	2030

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## THANK YOU

This Community Vision Plan would not be possible without the generous support and funding provided by the Harms Trust. Thankfully, they understood the need for community improvement and had the vision to make this a reality. It is with sincere gratitude that the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development, the Barton County Young Professionals, and the entire community of Great Bend commit to fulfilling the directive of the Harms Trust and make **Great Bend - Better than Great!**





