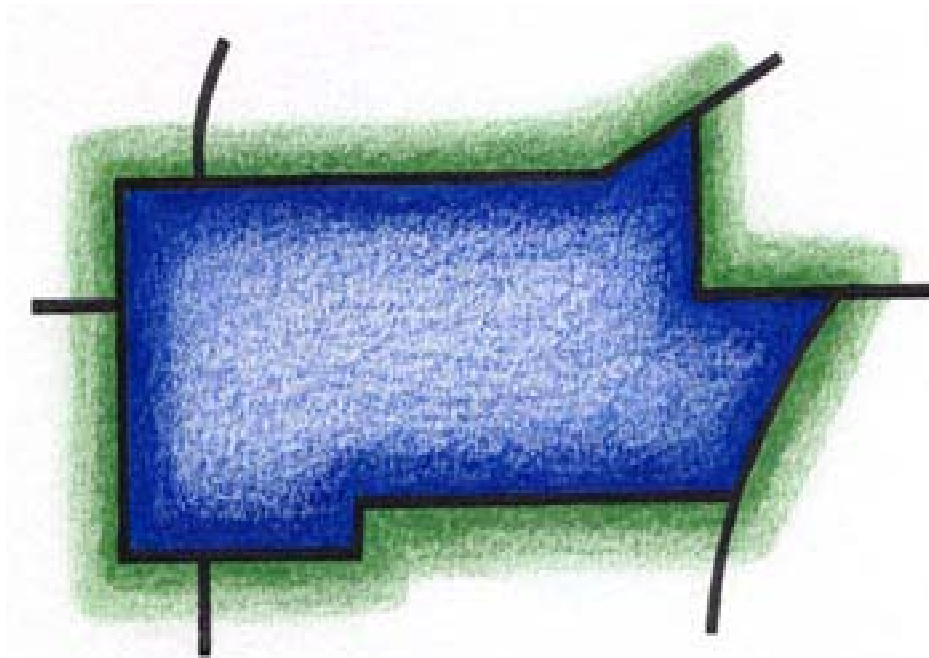


Olathe Original Town Central Core



Neighborhood Action Plan



City of Olathe
Planning Services
2003

Central Core
Neighborhood
Committee

Central Core Neighborhood Plan

City of Olathe Original Town
**Central Core
Neighborhood Plan**

2003

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Executive Summary

The Central Core Neighborhood Action Plan was written by the Central Core Neighborhood Committee, with staff support from the Olathe Development Services Department. The neighborhood committee held its first meeting on February 11, 2002. The plan was approved at a neighborhood meeting on June 2, 2003, accepted by the Planning Commission on June 23, 2003, and accepted by the City Council on July 15, 2003. It is the second neighborhood plan in the city.



The purpose of the Neighborhood Action Plan is to encourage continued revitalization efforts, provide insight and guidance to the City Council and other city staff, and improve communication between neighborhood residents, business owners, city staff and officials.

Neighborhood Vision Statement

The Central Core is a well-maintained and historic old neighborhood nestled in the middle of Olathe, with a thriving mix of business, government, residential, and diverse cultures together in harmony. The Central Core contains homes with unique character and diversity of architectural styles. The Central Core is enlivened and enhanced by a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment, architecturally correct buildings, a neighborhood school, and a community center. The Central Core neighborhood visualizes cultural and entertainment attractions, a walking tour and lit walking paths, architecturally-themed streetscape, railroads used for commuter rail, not freight, parking garages, and more small businesses that serve the neighborhood. The Central Core works in cooperation with the City of Olathe, Johnson County, the Kansas School for the Deaf, and other institutions to make the neighborhood a vital part of Olathe and Johnson County.

Neighborhood Demographics

- ◆ Neighborhood population: 2,187
- ◆ The Central Core is the smallest Original Town neighborhood in terms of population.
- ◆ A majority of households are one-person households.

Neighborhood Land Use

- ◆ 55% of land in the Central Core is residential.
- ◆ The Central Core has a greater percentage of commercial land use than any other Original Town neighborhood.



Neighborhood Housing

- ◆ 85% of housing units in the Central Core are single-family homes.
- ◆ 71% of single-family homes are valued between \$50,000 and \$100,000.
- ◆ The average age of homes in the Central Core is 75 years.



Neighborhood Infrastructure

- ◆ There are approximately 28 lane miles of streets in the Central Core neighborhood.
- ◆ Between 1998 and 2001, the city spent \$1.49 million on street rehab projects in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation

- ◆ Santa Fe, a major east-west arterial street, divides the neighborhood into two parts.
- ◆ Two stops of The Jo, Johnson County Public Transit, are located in the Central Core.

Neighborhood Safety

- ◆ Crime in Original Town declined or was steady in the first half of 2002, as compared to the first half of 2001.
- ◆ Per capita crime in Original Town, or the number of crimes committed per 1,000 residents, is similar or less than per capita crime in Olathe as a whole.

Neighborhood Parks & Open Spaces

- ◆ Mill Creek Park is the only city park located in the Central Core neighborhood. It contains one of the four public swimming pools in the city.
- ◆ The Johnson County Courthouse Plaza, located in the heart of the neighborhood, is the annual home of Johnson County Old Settlers' Days.



Introduction

The foundation for Olathe's neighborhood planning programs is the Original Town Enhancement Plan, developed in 1996. The purpose of OTEP was to identify ways the city could work in cooperation with area residents to enhance and revitalize the area, for residents, businesses, and visitors. The OTEP planning process resulted in the formation of the first neighborhood committees in Original Town neighborhoods, and eventually led to the development of the first neighborhood plan accepted by the City Council, the Westview Neighborhood Action Plan.

Neighborhoods are both a geographic area and an abstract part of the community. Neighborhoods are the building blocks of the city, and they are also groups of people who make up a person's community.

Neighborhood boundaries may look very concrete on a map, but in reality they are much harder to define. Neighborhood boundaries are not hard edges. People living on the Central Core side of Cedar Street probably feel the people living on the Water Works side are still part of their neighborhood. The neighborhood boundaries set in the Original Town Enhancement Plan are guidelines. These boundaries are an attempt to define which areas of Original Town share unique challenges or opportunities.

A neighborhood plan is a document written by neighborhood residents and business owners that provides an examination of the past, an overview of present conditions, and a vision for the future of the neighborhood. It serves as both a guide for improvements and a forum for local participation. Neighborhood plans encourage the continuation of revitalization efforts, provide insight and guidance to the City Council and other city staff, and improve city services to the neighborhood by improving communication between neighborhood residents and city staff and officials.

The neighborhood planning process in Olathe calls for neighborhood plans to be accepted by the City Council as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan. This procedure is different from city adoption of the plan. The neighborhood plan that is accepted by the Council is used as guidance from the neighborhood, providing a voice to neighborhood concerns. It is not given the force of law. The neighborhood plan is implemented by both the city and the neighborhood, working as partners.

Planning Process

The planning process for the Central Core began with a neighborhood meeting to introduce the idea to residents and solicit members for a new neighborhood committee. Seventeen people volunteered to join the neighborhood committee to write a neighborhood action plan.

The Central Core Neighborhood Committee held its first meeting on February 11, 2002, with eighteen people in attendance, and held bi-monthly meetings thereafter. Initial

meetings focused on neighborhood conditions, with a variety of city staff presenting information and answering questions. After each presentation, the neighborhood committee brainstormed a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) facing the neighborhood regarding each topic. This phase of the planning process concluded with a neighborhood bus tour in July 2002 to help everyone see the connections between the various conditions.

The second phase of planning involved writing a neighborhood vision statement and reviewing the SWOT issues to develop a list of key issues facing the neighborhood. Once the list of key issues was completed, the neighborhood committee hosted a neighborhood meeting to present their work and hear feedback from other neighborhood residents. The two council members representing the 2 wards covering the Central Core neighborhood also attended.

The neighborhood meeting attendees added three key issues to the list and indicated their priorities among the issues through dot polling. In general, the meeting showed support among neighborhood residents for the work done thus far, and encouraged the neighborhood committee to keep working on the plan.

Envision Olathe Downtown & the Central Core Neighborhood Action Plan

The Central Core Neighborhood Action Plan was developed concurrently with the Envision Olathe Downtown plan. The two plans deal with some of the same areas, but were written by different groups of people to address different issues.

The Central Core Neighborhood Plan focuses mainly on the residential neighborhood surrounding downtown. It also focuses on maintaining and improving the quality of life expected by neighborhood residents. However, downtown Olathe, as the center of the Central Core, is very important to neighborhood residents, and some ideas and suggestions for downtown are included in this document. In addition, some ideas from the Envision Olathe Downtown plan are referenced in this plan, as they are supported by the neighborhood.

While the Envision Olathe Downtown plan and the Central Core Neighborhood Plan are complementary, they are also separate. Implementation of the Central Core Neighborhood Plan depends on leadership from the neighborhood. Implementation of the Envision Olathe Downtown plan requires the action of the City Council and other city leaders for success.

Neighborhood Vision

The neighborhood vision serves three main purposes:

- Describe the Central Core neighborhood for life-long residents, newcomers, the City Council, and people interested in the area
- Envision possibilities for the future of the neighborhood
- Provide a foundation for the “Key Issues” of the plan

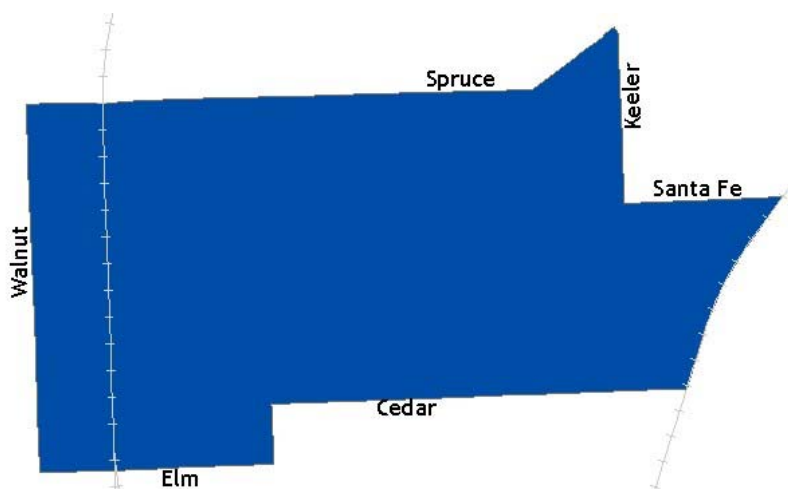
The Central Core is a well-maintained and historic old neighborhood nestled in the middle of Olathe, with a thriving mix of business, government, residential, and diverse cultures together in harmony. The Central Core contains homes with unique character and diversity of architectural styles. The Central Core is enlivened and enhanced by a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment, architecturally correct buildings, a neighborhood school, and a community center. The Central Core neighborhood visualizes cultural and entertainment attractions, a walking tour and lit walking paths, architecturally-themed streetscape, railroads used for commuter rail, not freight, parking garages, and more small businesses that serve the neighborhood. The Central Core works in cooperation with the City of Olathe, Johnson County, the Kansas School for the Deaf, and other institutions to make the neighborhood a vital part of Olathe and Johnson County.

Neighborhood Profile

The Central Core neighborhood is located at the heart of Olathe and Johnson County. It is one of the six Original Town neighborhoods, and surrounds the downtown area. The neighborhood is bisected by Santa Fe, the main east-west arterial street through Olathe. The neighborhood is easily accessible from both Interstate 35 and Kansas Highway 7 via Santa Fe.

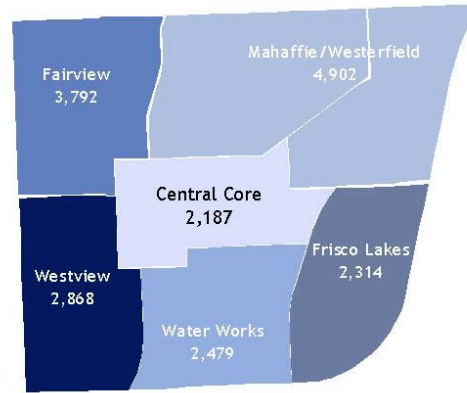
Neighborhood boundaries were established as part of the Original Town Enhancement Plan. The boundaries are Spruce Street and Kansas City Road on the north, Keeler Street and the railroad tracks on the east, Cedar and Elm Streets on the south, and Pine Street on the west.

Downtown Olathe is located in the heart of the Central Core Neighborhood, with residential areas surrounding it. The neighborhood has a high concentration of commercial and office developments due to Downtown and the Santa Fe corridor.

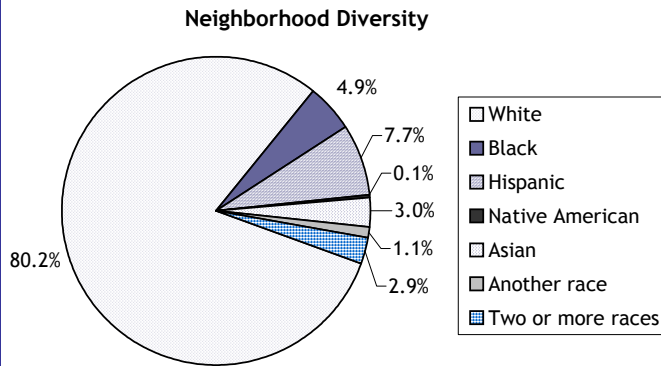


Demographics

According to the 2000 US Census, there are 18,542 residents of Original Town Olathe. The census counted 92,962 residents in the entire city, making Original Town 20% of Olathe's population. The population of the Central Core is 2,187, making it the smallest of the six Original Town neighborhoods in population.



As Olathe has grown in size, it has become more diverse racially and ethnically. The same is true in the Central Core neighborhood. Nearly 20% of Central Core residents are of a minority race or ethnicity.



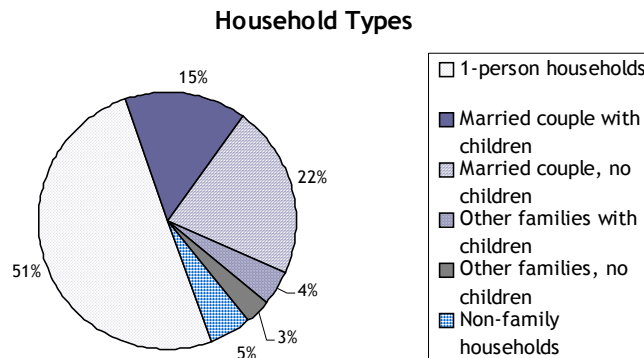
Source: 2000 U.S. Census. Note: Hispanic is considered an ethnicity, not a racial classification. For the purposes of this chart, people who indicated Hispanic ethnicity are not counted in another racial category.

This makes the neighborhood more diverse than Olathe as a whole, with an overall population that is 86% Caucasian. Hispanic residents are the largest neighborhood minority population, comprising nearly 8% of residents.

Olathe is a popular place for young families to settle, and this popularity is reflected in the median age of city residents: 30.8 years. This is quite a bit younger than the median age for the United States, at 35.3 years. In the Central Core neighborhood, the

median age is 34.5 years. This statistic shows that the neighborhood has a higher number of older residents than Olathe at large. Age figures for the neighborhood show that there are more than twice as many residents aged 19 or younger as there are residents aged 65 or older.

However, household statistics show that only 19% of households are families with children. One-person households make up a majority of the Central Core.

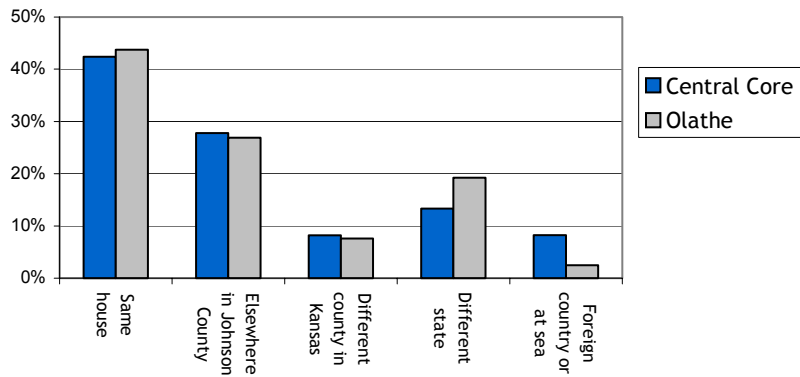


Source: 2000 U.S. Census

One measure of neighborhood stability is how long residents have lived in the Central Core. The US Census shows that 43% of Central Core residents lived

in the same house between 1995 and 2000, while another 28% lived in another house in Johnson County. Comparing these numbers to those for Olathe as a whole shows that the Central Core neighborhood experienced a very similar level of stability since 1995.

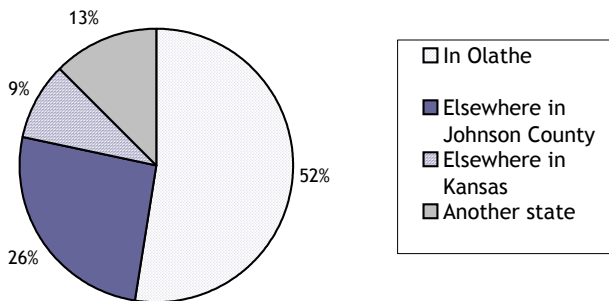
Residence in 1995



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Another interesting statistic regarding the

Place of Work



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

residents of the Central Core neighborhood is where they work. Nearly 80% work in Johnson County, and a majority work in Olathe. This percentage is higher than for the city at-large, as only 34% of all Olathe residents work in Olathe.

These demographic statistics combined illustrate the character of the neighborhood. Overall, it is a stable area, populated by a wide variety of

people. This diversity contributes to the character of the Central Core.

Key Issue

The health of the Central Core is maintained and enhanced by diversity of use and people.

Goal & Action Step

Goal: Maintain awareness of the neighborhood’s population.

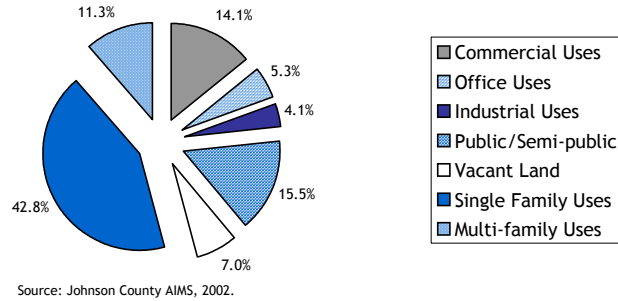
- ◆ Get yearly updates on statistics and demographics from the Planning Division.

Land Use

The 278 acres of land in the Central Core contain a greater diversity of land uses than any other neighborhood in Original Town. This diversity is partly because the Central Core contains Olathe's downtown area, a civic hub of city and county government offices. The variety of land uses in the Central Core is one strength of the neighborhood.

Land use describes the way a property is developed and used. Land uses are divided into 5 major categories: residential uses, commercial uses, industrial uses, public and semi-public uses, and agricultural or vacant land.

Central Core Land Uses by Acreage

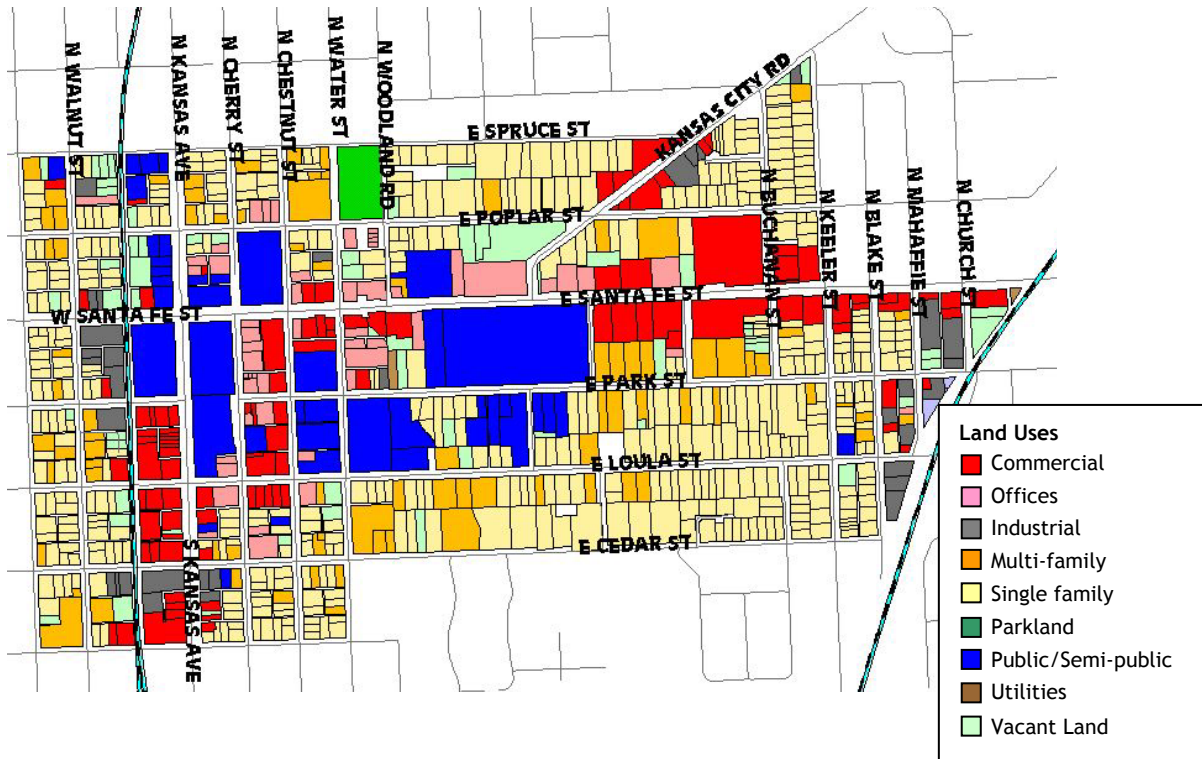


Residential Uses

Residential uses, including both single-family homes and multi-family developments, make up a majority of the acreage in the Central Core. Residential uses are discussed in more detail in the Housing Conditions section of this plan.

Commercial Uses

Commercial land includes a wide variety of uses. Office buildings, retail stores, medical offices, and service businesses can all be found in commercial areas. The major commercial area of the Central Core is downtown Olathe, with a concentration of commercial buildings surrounding the Johnson County and City buildings. Commercial and office uses account for just under 20 percent of land in the neighborhood.



In the Central Core, commercial uses take two distinct forms. Some are contained in buildings that were clearly built for that purpose, such as the office buildings on Cherry Street. However, others are housed in buildings that appear to have been residential in the past. In the Central Core, many law offices can be found in former homes. Most of these converted offices are located in the transition area around downtown, where commercial uses gradually give way to residential uses.

While most of the existing transition area businesses are compatible with homes next door, the spread of businesses into the residential areas of the neighborhood is a concern. If businesses are displacing families, then these transition area businesses may weaken the fabric of the neighborhood. Businesses locating in the downtown transition area may also be incompatible with residential neighbors. On the other hand, businesses may attract visitors to the neighborhood, and the proximity of the Central Core to Downtown Olathe is one reason some neighborhood residents choose to live here. It is important for the city and the neighborhood to carefully observe the location of businesses in the area and take steps to address any negative results.

Industrial Uses

Industrial uses occupy just 4% of land in the Central Core, making this land use the smallest category in the neighborhood. Most of this industrial land is used for warehousing. The land use map shows that industrial uses in the neighborhood are clustered near the railroad tracks on both the eastern and western ends of the neighborhood.



Public & Semi-Public Uses

The Central Core neighborhood has a greater concentration of public and semi-public land uses than any other neighborhood, due mainly to the concentration of city and county buildings in downtown. Besides government buildings, this category includes schools, churches, charitable institutions, parks, and libraries – uses that invite the public inside. Fifteen percent of the Central Core is public or semi-public space. In addition to city and county buildings, the Kansas School for the Deaf is a major presence in the neighborhood. The KSD campus, located between Santa Fe and Park Streets, includes classroom buildings, dormitories, athletic and playground spaces, and the new Deaf Cultural Center.



Vacant Land

The incorporated area of Olathe includes a great deal of vacant land. Over time, most of this land will probably be developed, as property owners respond to economic or personal opportunities. In contrast, there are very few vacant lots in the Central Core neighborhood. However, seven percent of Central Core acreage is vacant, providing room for new homes, offices, and other buildings while currently providing the neighborhood the benefit of additional green space.

Zoning

All land in the Central Core falls into one of Olathe's zoning districts, which dictates what is allowed to be built. The main zoning districts in the Central Core include four commercial zones (C-0, C-1, C-2, C-3), two industrial zones (M-1, M-2), and four residential zones (R-1, R-2, R-4, R-5). The City of Olathe first established its zoning categories in 1954.

In addition to these zoning districts, there are two overlay districts in the neighborhood. One is the Central Business District, which regulates development in downtown. The other is the Original Town Overlay District. The Original Town Overlay established the architectural review requirement for all construction in the Original Town neighborhoods, to ensure that development is consistent with the character of the area.

Key Issues

- ◆ The history of the Central Core is important and should be spotlighted to all area residents.
- ◆ The Central Core has lost most of its historically significant buildings, which makes those that remain even more important.
- ◆ A balance between business, residents, and government in land use is vital to the Central Core.
- ◆ Some existing commercial land uses are not conducive to a neighborhood environment.
- ◆ The Central Core could learn from other communities about what works with downtown and surrounding residences.
- ◆ Architecture of commercial & government buildings has not been consistent in historical design or had any historic theme, which causes the Central Core to lack a historic theme.

Goals & Action Steps

Goal: Discourage or prohibit commercial uses not conducive to the neighborhood environment.

- ◆ Keep out and remove industrial land uses.
- ◆ Encourage new businesses in the neighborhood to realize a balance of land uses.
- ◆ Develop a method to track neighborhood businesses.

Goal: Preserve, enhance and add to the historical character of the Central Core.

- ◆ Develop and implement a historically themed streetscape including lighting, signage, seating areas, landscaping, sidewalks, waste receptacles, and trail connections.
- ◆ Provide a financial vehicle to allow businesses to remodel existing facades to enhance a historic theme in the Central Core.
- ◆ Require new construction and all signage to adhere to the historic theme.
- ◆ Preserve the downtown locations of the post office and library; enhance the library facility and services.

Goal: Existing footprints of parking should not be enlarged.

- ◆ Encourage new parking to be integrated in new development with commercial space.
- ◆ Encourage all new development to include structured parking.

Goal: Consider governmental incentives to encourage redevelopment.

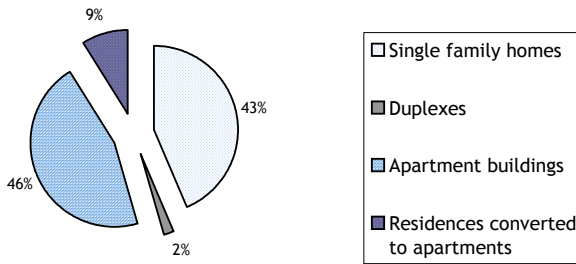
- ◆ Encourage the city to implement the Neighborhood Revitalization Act to benefit homeowners and businesses.
- ◆ Encourage the city to use its condemnation power only as a last resort.
- ◆ Identify and offer incentives for downtown retail businesses.

Housing Conditions

The Central Core has a wide variety of housing options available to residents, from apartment buildings to single-family homes. The Central Core neighborhood is unique because it contains a nearly even number of apartment units and single family homes. The high variety of housing may contribute to the neighborhood's diversity by offering something for everyone, from renters to owners and large families to single people.



Residential Units by Type



Source: Johnson County AIMS, 2002.

Another unique characteristic of the Central Core is the number of housing units that are rental properties. The Central Core has the greatest number and the greatest percentage of rental units, both apartments and single-family homes, than any other Original Town neighborhood. Sixty percent of all housing units are rental units. Only one other neighborhood, Waterworks, also has a majority of rental units. While the

tendency may be to view the high number of rental units as a neighborhood weakness, it is important to remember that the neighborhood still shows a similar level of stability as the entire city, as shown in the neighborhood demographics.

Along with the variety of housing types available, the Central Core is also full. Of the 1,074 housing units in the neighborhood, only 4.7% are vacant. While this number is slightly higher than the overall city vacancy rate, it is still a positive indication of the demand for housing in the neighborhood. This vacancy rate is in keeping with the other Original Town neighborhoods. The Central Core ranks in the upper half of Original Town vacancy rates with the Westview neighborhood at 5.1% and Frisco Lakes at 4.2%.

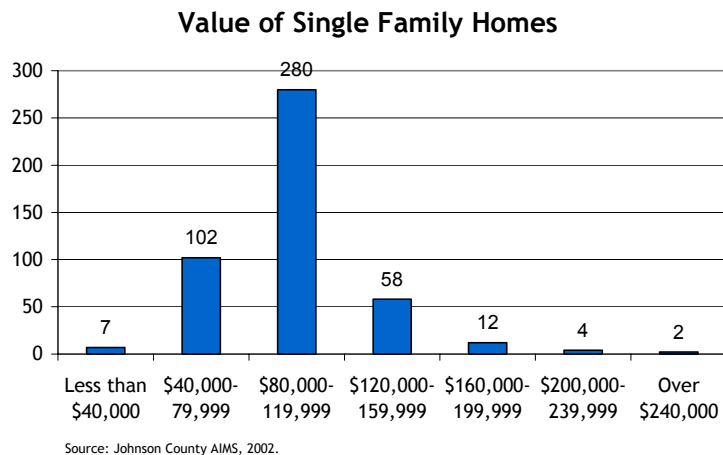
Single-family homes

Olathe is the fastest growing city in Kansas, with new home construction occurring constantly. In contrast, new single-family homes in the Central Core neighborhood are rare, as there are few vacant lots on which to build. Nearly 90% of Central Core homes



were originally built before 1980. The median year built, which is the year at the halfway point between the oldest house and the youngest house in the neighborhood, is 1920.

The appraised values for single-family homes in the Central Core neighborhood span a very wide range. Most homes fall into the \$80,000 to \$119,999 range, and the average home value is \$97,376. The large number of homes in this range provides great opportunities for first-time homebuyers. With higher-end homes also available in this neighborhood, many ownership opportunities are available.



Key Issues

- ◆ There is a lack of incentives for homeowners to make improvements and environmental upgrades to existing properties or to encourage people to move into the Central Core.



- ◆ Poorly maintained properties and old or missing sidewalks, curbs, and narrow alleys detract from the desirability of the neighborhood. Poorly maintained properties keep many people from moving into the Central Core.
- ◆ Programs must be made available so properties can be maintained and enhanced.
- ◆ Rental housing is not maintained as well as it should be. Some rental properties are exceeding occupation limits per dwelling. The conversion of single-family dwellings

to multi-family units is not desired by the neighborhood.

- ◆ Tax incentives are important for maintenance and enhancement of historic design and remodeling.

Goals & Action Steps

Goal: Encourage new residents to move into the Central Core and encourage property owners to maintain property by offering new financial incentives.

- ◆ Provide incentives for improvement of property.
- ◆ Maintain focus on code enforcement in the Central Core.

Goal: Prohibit conversion of single-family houses to multi-family dwellings.

- ◆ Encourage converted dwellings to return to single-family homes.
- ◆ Encourage mixed-use developments that are sensitive to their surroundings.

Goal: Existing housing in the neighborhood should be protected from demolition.

- ◆ Encourage the city to condemn housing only as a last resort.
- ◆ Housing units that are removed through demolition and redevelopment should be replaced by the same type of housing.

Infrastructure

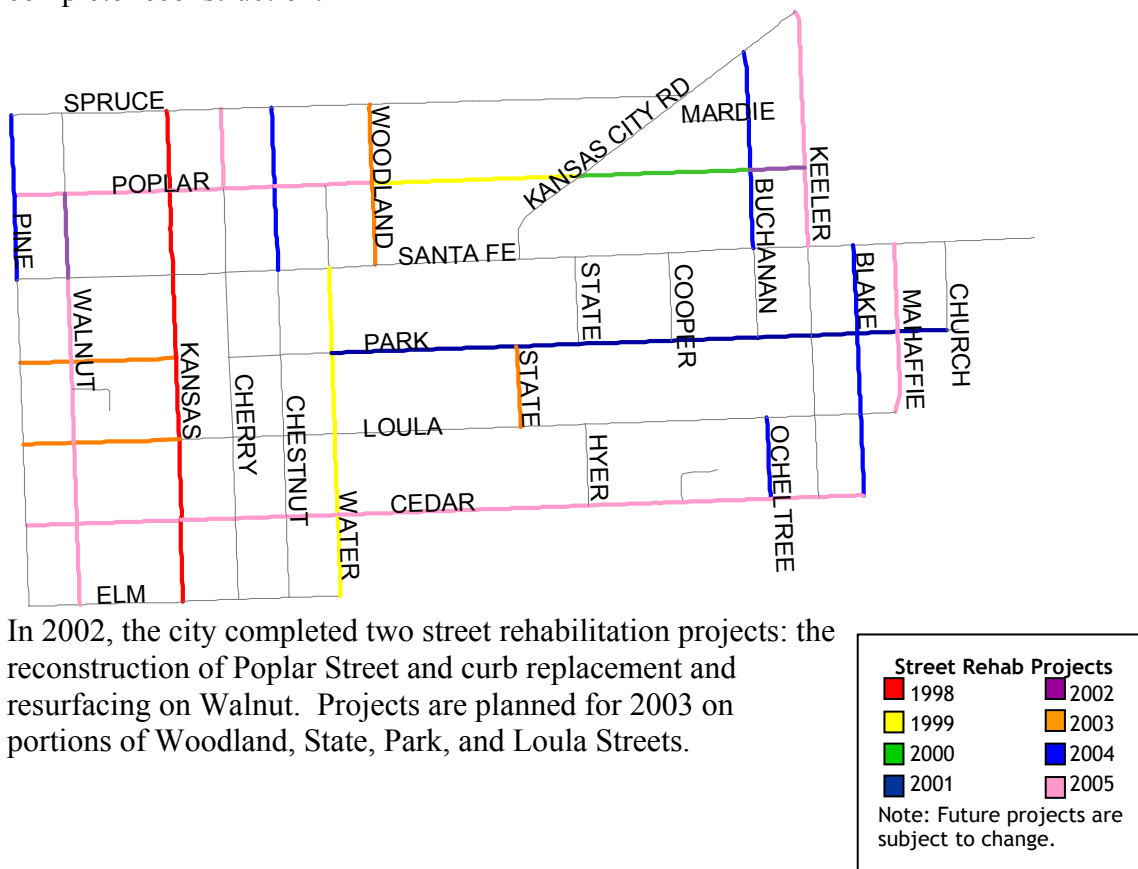
Infrastructure is a critical part of a neighborhood, but it is easily overlooked. Infrastructure is found throughout the Central Core: streets, sidewalks, curbs, sewer lines, storm drainage, alleys, utility lines, and street lights are all part of the neighborhood infrastructure. These components form the physical foundation of the neighborhood.



Most of the Central Core infrastructure is maintained by the city Public Works department, which plans when maintenance projects are performed throughout the city. One criteria used for planning maintenance is the condition of infrastructure. The Public Works department considers the Central Core infrastructure to be in good condition, on average.

Streets

Streets are the biggest category of neighborhood infrastructure. The Central Core contains approximately 28 lane miles of streets, and 75% of those miles are residential streets. Between 1998 and 2001, the city spent \$1.5 million on street rehab projects in the Central Core. Street rehab projects range from minor resurfacing of streets to complete reconstruction.



In 2002, the city completed two street rehabilitation projects: the reconstruction of Poplar Street and curb replacement and resurfacing on Walnut. Projects are planned for 2003 on portions of Woodland, State, Park, and Loula Streets.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are an important piece of neighborhood infrastructure. City standards call for sidewalks to be installed on at least one side of each residential street. Most areas of the Central Core have sidewalk on one or both sides of the street. Less than five percent of neighborhood blocks are missing sidewalks. Streets currently missing sidewalks include Spruce Street between Woodland and Kansas City Roads, Cedar Street between Keeler and Blake Streets, Water Street between Poplar and Santa Fe Streets, Ocheltree Street between Loula and Cedar Streets, Keeler Street between Kansas City Road and Santa Fe, and portions of State Street near Loula Street and Hyer Street near Cedar Street.

Alleys

Alleys are rare in Olathe as a whole, but many blocks in the Central Core still use the alleys that were established when Olathe was first platted into blocks and lots. These alleys usually take an “H” shape that allows each lot alley access. Alleys are considered part of the public right-of-way, and are maintained by the city.

While some alleys in downtown are paved, the city maintains most alleys as gravel. As streets are rebuilt throughout the neighborhood, new curb cuts and concrete aprons have been added to the alley entrances.

City crews maintain alleys, generally by regrading the alley surface. Adjacent property owners should assist in alley maintenance by ensuring that tree branches do not hang into the driving area and that debris is not allowed to accumulate.

The Central Core Neighborhood Committee identified five “alley issues” for improved communication between neighborhood residents and city staff. The five alley issues include alley standards (whether or not alleys should be paved), curb cuts and aprons, a designated city staff person for alley repair, clear responsibility for alley maintenance, and improved alley drainage.

Key Issues

- ◆ Enhancements to the Central Core should support the historic character.
- ◆ Residential and commercial alleyways are in poor condition and many alleys are unpaved.
- ◆ The condition of some curbs and sidewalks is poor and in need of repair. Sidewalks and curbs are missing on one side or both sides of some narrow streets.
- ◆ Rainwater stands on Woodland Road between Santa Fe and Spruce Streets.
- ◆ The infrastructure of the Central Core must be improved. Well maintained infrastructure improves image and value of homes and businesses.
- ◆ Decorative trash cans along walkways



would help control littering.

- ◆ Buried power lines are more desirable than overhead lines.

Goals & Action Steps

Goal: Improve infrastructure of neighborhood.

- ◆ Install curbs, sidewalks, and streetlighting in areas where they are lacking.
- ◆ Enhance facilities for the farmers market in downtown.
- ◆ Make installation of new sidewalks & curbs a higher priority than repair of existing
- ◆ Clarify and address the 5 alley issues.
- ◆ Improve Woodland Street to eliminate standing water and improve drainage.

Goal: Establish and implement downtown streetscape improvements with historic theme.

- ◆ Use distinctive period streetlighting throughout the neighborhood to highlight major thoroughfares and improve neighborhood identity.
- ◆ Erect signs identifying neighborhood and historic locations and events.
- ◆ Extend downtown streetscape treatments into the residential areas of the neighborhood.

Goal: Remove overhead utilities and relocate them underground.

- ◆ All new development or redevelopment should include underground utilities.
- ◆ Encourage the city and utility companies to work together to bury overhead utility lines.

Parks & Open Spaces

The Central Core is home to a variety of open spaces. One city park is located in the neighborhood – Mill Creek Park, which occupies a full city block between Spruce, Woodland, and Poplar Streets and Mill Creek. This park is home to one of four city swimming pools, which was remodeled and updated in 2001 using Park Sales Tax money. Mill Creek Park also offers tennis courts and playground equipment for residents to enjoy.



Another neighborhood open space is the Johnson County Courthouse Plaza. This space, located between the Johnson County Courthouse and Administration Building, was created by closing one block of Park Street. It includes a fountain and gazebo, and is used for a variety of public events, including lunchtime concerts during the summer and other community gatherings.

The Courthouse Plaza is also the home of Johnson County Old Settlers Days, the largest festival in Johnson County. Old Settlers Days brings thousands of visitors to the area during the first weekend in September for a carnival, parade, craft and food booths, music, and fun. Old Settlers Days is over 100 years old.

Future projects that effect the Central Core neighborhood include a Kansas City Road trail connection and a downtown Town Square, proposed as part of the Envision Olathe Downtown plan.

Key Issues

- ◆ Additional walking and bicycle paths could greatly improve the desirability of the Central Core. Sidewalks and walking paths that are safe and well-lit enhance the area.
- ◆ Mill Creek Park expansion and improvements, along with more trail connections to North Streamway trails, are desired.

Goals & Action Steps

Goal: Develop the Mill Creek corridor into a streamway trail.

- ◆ Use the Millcreek Center as an anchor for the Mill Creek Trail.
- ◆ Tie Mill Creek Trail to other trails in Olathe.
- ◆ Connect Mill Creek Trail to a Town Square via a promenade.
- ◆ Encourage selective commercial development fronting the trail and promenade.



Goal: Improve Mill Creek Park.

- ◆ Add lighting along park paths.
- ◆ Preserve the history of the Central Core with a storyboard at Mill Creek Park that gives a capsule history of Old Olathe.
- ◆ Improvements in Mill Creek Park should maintain Central Core theme.

Goal: Encourage the development of a downtown Town Square.

Goal: Develop downtown alleys as green spaces for pedestrian traffic.

- ◆ Include appropriate landscaping, seating, trash receptacles, and lighting that matches the Mill Creek corridor.

Goal: Develop city-owned lot at Loula & Water Streets as a park/green space.

- ◆ Include landscaping etc. that match the downtown theme.
- ◆ Connect this space to Mill Creek trail.

Goal: Vacant land created by the removal of railroad tracks should be redeveloped as green space and trails that connect to existing trails such as Mill Creek Trail and North Streamway Trail to create a walking and biking loop.

Goal: Encourage the city and property owners of Hycrest to preserve the property as is.

Neighborhood Safety

Neighborhood safety is an important quality of life issue. If a neighborhood is a dangerous place, or residents and visitors feel unsafe in the area, then the overall quality of life suffers, and residents, business owners, or those thinking about locating in the neighborhood may be driven away.

Fortunately, residents of the Central Core feel safe in their neighborhood. This feeling of safety is verified by crime statistics provided by the Olathe Police Department, that show the Central Core is a relatively safe place. The statistics presented here are for Original Town as a whole, including all 6 neighborhoods.

Comparing statistics for the first half of 2001 and the first half of 2002 shows that the number of crimes committed was either steady or decreased in 2002.

Comparing per capita crime rates also shows that Original Town is a safe area. Per capita crime rates are figured by dividing the total number of crimes by the population, and multiplying by 1,000. This provides a number of crimes per 1,000 residents. Comparing per capita crime rates for Original Town and Olathe as a whole shows that Original Town crime rates are either the same as or lower than those for Olathe.

2002 Crime	Olathe per capita	Original Town per capita
Aggravated Assault	2.00	3.07
Arson	0.27	0.22
Auto Thefts	1.93	1.78
Robbery	0.29	0.38
Rape	0.53	0.65
Burglary	2.96	2.70
Theft	26.24	24.16

Source: Olathe Police Department.

Key Issues

- ◆ Attractive, historically-themed pedestrian lighting would enhance safety and image.
- ◆ Neighbors knowing each other in the Central Core helps the residents feel safe.
- ◆ The perceived lack of safety and rundown appearance of downtown and the neighborhood scare people away.

Goals & Action Steps

Goal: Improve the perception of safety in the neighborhood.

- ◆ Increase police presence in Mill Creek Park and neighborhood trails through foot and bicycle patrols.
- ◆ Place emergency call boxes throughout the Central Core, including in Mill Creek Park and downtown.
- ◆ Increase level of pedestrian lighting throughout Central Core.

Goal: Encourage Police Advisory Committee to address the unique safety concerns of downtown.

- ◆ Meet with representatives of the Central Core to develop plan and point out areas of concern.

Goal: Encourage neighbors to get to know each other in the Central Core.

- ◆ Encourage more neighborhood groups including neighborhood watch groups, block parties, emergency preparedness groups, and neighborhood beautification projects.
- ◆ Assist the city with neighborhood maintenance and safety by informing them of concerns and needs.

Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation

The Central Core neighborhood is at the center of Olathe and is bisected by Santa Fe Street, one of the city's main east-west arterial streets. Traffic issues are an ongoing concern for residents of area, as traffic has a big impact on the quality of life experienced by neighborhood residents.

The Central Core is like many other neighborhoods in that one of the top traffic concerns of residents is speeding on residential streets. In the Central Core, this problem is sometimes caused by "commuter traffic" speeding down residential streets as an alternative to Santa Fe or another larger street. Traffic speeds are a particular concern on Park Street, which is wider than other residential streets because it was once the main street running through Olathe. The Kansas School for the Deaf is located on Park Street, and speeds are a safety concern for KSD students.

Traffic concerns also have an impact on people walking or bicycling through the neighborhood. The Central Core Neighborhood Committee identified Santa Fe Street as a barrier between the north and south sides of the neighborhood. Fear of the traffic keeps pedestrians from walking along or attempting to cross Santa Fe.

Parking and public transportation are important issues facing downtown. Both issues are much larger than one neighborhood, as they involve many people other than neighborhood residents. In particular, public transportation through The Jo is a county-wide concern. These issues are also addressed in the Envision Olathe Downtown Plan.

Key Issues

- ◆ No transit system connects the Central Core to other areas of Olathe or the Kansas City metro area.
- ◆ Northgate is underused as an entrance to the Central Core.
- ◆ Signage of roads serving the Central Core needs to be updated to encourage alternative routes to the area.
- ◆ Traffic congestion into and through downtown along Santa Fe creates a substantial barrier to the cohesiveness of the Central Core.
- ◆ Speeding on neighborhood streets, especially near schools, is dangerous.
- ◆ Adequate peak parking is possible without the loss of further buildings and houses.
- ◆ The lack of parking for city and county government activities forces congestion into the surrounding neighborhoods. Courthouse people park all day in front of businesses, so business customers must park further away.
- ◆ Adequate parking will encourage travel to the Central Core, which could enhance small business customer traffic.

Goals & Action Steps

Goal: Traffic through the Central Core should be slowed down.

- ◆ Add traffic calming techniques along Santa Fe through street improvements.
- ◆ Discourage commuter traffic on residential streets.

- ◆ Follow through on existing bike path plans through the Central Core and the city.
- ◆ Separate bike lanes from motorized traffic.
- ◆ Install signs directing people to the Central Core using alternate routes.
- ◆ Remove one-way streets in the Central Core.

Goal: Pedestrians should be able to cross Santa Fe safely.

Goal: Adequate Parking is possible without the further loss of buildings and housing.

- ◆ Require multi-level parking that is attractive, camouflaged, and/or incorporates ground-floor retail.
- ◆ Find a way to encourage employees to use off-street parking.
- ◆ Provide a safe crossing for Santa Fe to encourage parking north of Santa Fe.

Goal: Improve visibility of public transit that serves downtown Olathe.

- ◆ More visible bus stops, central location for stops in downtown.

Goal: Encourage government entities to take responsibility for traffic & parking congestion.

- ◆ Provide off-site parking and shuttle service for jurors and employees.
- ◆ Encourage carpooling for employees.
- ◆ Consider staggered shifts to decrease parking congestion.
- ◆ Improve enforcement of parking regulations.

Railroad

While railroads were part of Olathe’s historical development, the rail lines passing through the city are now considered a nuisance. The Central Core is directly affected by both of the major rail lines in the city. Many Central Core residents, along with residents of other Original Town neighborhoods, would like the railroad lines relocated away from the city.



Key Issues

- ◆ The problem with the railroad must be addressed and fixed.
- ◆ The railroads detract from the desirability of the neighborhood by creating barriers, excessive sound, traffic congestion, and pedestrian fear.
- ◆ The railroad is a major block in traffic flow within Downtown Olathe. The old Santa Fe tracks have a train interrupting street traffic every half hour at least.

Goals & Action Steps

Goal: Elevation of the eastern tracks and removal of the western tracks from the Central Core neighborhood.

- ◆ Conduct economic study of benefit of removal of railroad tracks.

Politics & Government

Successful implementation of this neighborhood plan depends not only on the leadership of the neighborhood, but also on the support and assistance of the city and county.



Key Issues

- ◆ City follow-through on committee efforts encourages results and satisfaction by taxpayers. Plans must be implemented by City and County.
- ◆ Direct communication between city, county, and Central Core residents and businesses is very important for progress. Cooperation between the city and county governments is essential for future development.

Goals & Action Steps

Goal: Increase cooperation and communication between all government entities, elected and appointed, and the residents and businesses of the Central Core.

- ◆ Form an action committee consisting of neighborhood, city, county, state, school district, and federal representatives to meet on a regular basis, including a public forum, concerning downtown planning and development.

Goal: Encourage the City Council to follow-through on neighborhood plans.

- ◆ Continue to lobby the City Council on action steps.
- ◆ Encourage the City Council to adopt downtown design guidelines.



Key Issues

A neighborhood meeting was held in September 2002 to present the Key Issues and Vision Statement to the neighborhood for feedback and comments. At that meeting, attendees prioritized the key issues using dot polling. Each attendee was given 5 dots to distribute among the most important issues. The results of the dot polling are shown here.

Demographics

- ◆ The health of the Central Core is maintained and enhanced by diversity of use and people. (3 dots)

Land Use

- ◆ The history of the Central Core is important and should be spotlighted to all area residents. (5 dots)
- ◆ The Central Core has lost most of its historically significant buildings, which makes those that remain even more important. (2 dots)
- ◆ A balance between business, residents, and government in land use is vital to the Central Core. (1 dot)
- ◆ Some existing commercial land uses are not conducive to a neighborhood environment.
- ◆ The Central Core could learn from other communities about what works with downtown and surrounding residences.
- ◆ Architecture of commercial & government buildings has not been consistent in historical design or had any historic theme, which causes the Central Core to lack a historic theme.

Housing Conditions

- ◆ There is a lack of incentives for homeowners to make improvements and environmental upgrades to existing properties or to encourage people to move into the Central Core. (4 dots)
- ◆ Poorly maintained properties and old or missing sidewalks, curbs, and narrow alleys detract from the desirability of the neighborhood. Poorly maintained properties keep many people from moving into the Central Core. (5 dots)
- ◆ Programs must be made available so properties can be maintained and enhanced. (3 dots)
- ◆ Rental housing is not maintained as well as it should be. Some rental properties are exceeding occupation limits per dwelling. The conversion of single-family dwellings to multi-family units is not desired by the neighborhood. (1 dot)
- ◆ Tax incentives are important for maintenance and enhancement of historic design and remodeling. (4 dots)

Traffic (3 dots)

- ◆ No transit system connects the Central Core to other areas of Olathe or the Kansas City metro area. (4 dots)
- ◆ Northgate is underused as an entrance to the Central Core.
- ◆ Signage of roads serving the Central Core needs to be updated to encourage alternative routes to the area. (1 dot)
- ◆ Traffic congestion into and through downtown along Santa Fe creates a substantial barrier to the cohesiveness of the Central Core.
- ◆ Speeding on neighborhood streets, especially near schools, is dangerous. (Added by neighborhood meeting)

Parking & Public Transportation (3 dots)

- ◆ Adequate peak parking is possible without the loss of further buildings and houses. (2 dots)
- ◆ The lack of parking for city and county government activities forces congestion into the surrounding neighborhoods. Courthouse people park all day in front of businesses, so business customers must park further away. (1 dot)
- ◆ Adequate parking will encourage travel to the Central Core, which could enhance small business customer traffic. (1 dot)

Railroad (9 dots)

- ◆ The problem with the railroad must be addressed and fixed. (1 dot)
- ◆ The railroads detract from the desirability of the neighborhood by creating barriers, excessive sound, traffic congestion, and pedestrian fear. (4 dots)
- ◆ The railroad is a major block in traffic flow within Downtown Olathe. The old Santa Fe tracks have a train interrupting street traffic every half hour at least.

Infrastructure

- ◆ Enhancements to the Central Core should support the historic character. (12 dots)
- ◆ Residential and commercial alleyways are in poor condition and many alleys are unpaved. (5 dots)
- ◆ The condition of some curbs and sidewalks is poor and in need of repair. Sidewalks and curbs are missing on one side or both sides of some narrow streets. (5 dots + 3 dots)
- ◆ Rainwater stands on Woodland Road between Santa Fe and Spruce Streets. (1 dot)
- ◆ The infrastructure of the Central Core must be improved. Well maintained infrastructure improves image and value of homes and businesses.
- ◆ Decorative trash cans along walkways would help control littering.
- ◆ Buried power lines are more desirable than overhead lines.

Parks

- ◆ Additional walking and bicycle paths could greatly improve the desirability of the Central Core. Sidewalks and walking paths that are safe and well-lit enhance the area. (8 dots)
- ◆ Mill Creek Park expansion and improvements, along with more trail connections to North Streamway trails, are desired. (Added by neighborhood meeting)

Safety

- ◆ Attractive, historically-themed pedestrian lighting would enhance safety and image. (10 dots)
- ◆ Neighbors knowing each other in the Central Core helps the residents feel safe. (1 dot)
- ◆ The perceived lack of safety and rundown appearance of downtown and the neighborhood scare people away. (2 dots)

Politics/Government

- ◆ City follow-through on committee efforts encourages results and satisfaction by taxpayers. Plans must be implemented by City and County. (2 dots + 5 dots)
- ◆ Direct communication between city, county, and Central Core residents and businesses is very important for progress. Cooperation between the city and county governments is essential for future development. (1 dot)

Action Plan

The goals and action steps identified by the Central Core Neighborhood Committee form the basis of an action plan for the neighborhood. Each action step was prioritized by the committee into one of four timeframes: Immediate term (2003 – 2004), Short term (2005 – 2006), Long term (2007 or beyond), and Immediate/Ongoing (action steps that may be long term, but work should begin immediately). Prioritization was based on both the importance of the action step to the neighborhood and the level of challenge presented by the action step.

As mandated by the City Council in Resolution 02-1108, the Central Core Neighborhood Committee will take a leadership role in implementing the action steps of this plan. While the city cannot fund or implement every action step, this plan will be considered when the Council makes decisions affecting the neighborhood. The Neighborhood Plan serves as the voice of the neighborhood.



Action Plan

Immediate Term Goals

These are goals to be completed in the first year following acceptance of the neighborhood plan.

Date Begun	Date Completed	Action Step	Plan Category
		Get yearly updates on statistics and demographics from the Planning Division	Demographics
		Keep out and remove industrial land uses.	Land Use
		Develop a method to track neighborhood businesses.	Land Use
		Develop a historically themed streetscape, including lighting, signage, seating areas, landscaping, sidewalks, waste receptacles, and trail connections.	Land Use
		Require new construction and all signage to adhere to the historic theme.	Land Use
		Encourage the city to implement the Neighborhood Revitalization Act to benefit homeowners and businesses.	Land Use
		Encourage the city to use its condemnation power only as a last resort.	Land Use
		Encourage converted dwellings to return to single-family homes.	Housing Conditions
		Encourage mixed use developments that are sensitive to their surroundings.	Housing Conditions
		Encourage the city to condemn housing only as a last resort.	Housing Conditions
		Housing units that are removed through demolition and redevelopment should be replaced by the same type of housing.	Housing Conditions
		Make installation of new sidewalks and curbs a higher priority than repair of existing.	Infrastructure
		Clarify and address the five alley issues	Infrastructure

Date Begun	Date Completed	Action Step	Plan Category
		All new development or redevelopment should include underground utilities.	Infrastructure
		Encourage selective commercial development fronting the trail and promenade.	Parks & Open Spaces
		Improvements in Mill Creek Park should maintain Central Core theme.	Parks & Open Spaces
		Include appropriate landscaping, seating, trash receptacles, and lighting that matches the Mill Creek corridor in downtown alleys.	Parks & Open Spaces
		Include landscaping etc. that match the downtown theme in lot at Loula & Water Streets.	Parks & Open Spaces
		Discourage commuter traffic on residential streets.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Follow through on existing bike path plans through the Central Core and the City.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Find a way to encourage employees to use off-street parking.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Encourage carpooling for employees.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Consider staggered shifts to decrease parking congestion.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Improve enforcement of parking regulations.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Meet with representatives of the Police Advisory Committee to develop plan and point out areas of concern.	Safety
		Encourage more neighborhood groups including neighborhood watch groups, block parties, emergency preparedness groups, and neighborhood beautification projects.	Safety

Action Plan

Date Begun	Date Completed	Action Step	Plan Category
		Form an action committee consisting of neighborhood, city, county, state, school district, and federal representatives to meet on a regular basis, including a public forum, concerning downtown planning and development.	Politics & Government

Action Plan

Short Term Goals

These are goals to be completed in the second and third year following acceptance of the neighborhood plan.

Date Begun	Date Completed	Action Step	Plan Category
		Encourage new businesses in the neighborhood to realize a balance of land uses.	Land Use
		Provide a financial vehicle to allow businesses to remodel existing facades to enhance a historic theme in the Central Core	Land Use
		Provide incentives for improvement of property.	Housing Conditions
		Install curbs, sidewalks, and streetlighting in areas where they are lacking.	Infrastructure
		Improve Woodland Street to eliminate standing water and improve drainage.	Infrastructure
		Use distinctive period streetlighting throughout the neighborhood to highlight major thoroughfares and improve neighborhood identity.	Infrastructure
		Erect signs identifying neighborhood and historic locations and events.	Infrastructure
		Extend downtown streetscape treatments into the residential areas of the neighborhood.	Infrastructure
		Use the Millcreek Center as an anchor for the Mill Creek Trail.	Parks & Open Spaces
		Tie the Mill Creek Trail to other trails in Olathe.	Parks & Open Spaces
		Add lighting along park paths.	Parks & Open Spaces
		Preserve the history of the Central Core with a storyboard at Mill Creek Park that gives a capsule history of Old Olathe.	Parks & Open Sapces
		Install signs directing people to the Central Core using alternate routes.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation

Action Plan

Date Begun	Date Completed	Action Step	Plan Category
		Provide a safe crossing for Santa Fe to encourage parking north of Santa Fe.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		More visible bus stops, central location for stops in downtown.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Provide off-site parking and shuttle service for jurors and employees.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Conduct economic study of benefit of removal of railroad tracks.	Railroad
		Increase police presence in Mill Creek Park and neighborhood trails through foot and bicycle patrols.	Safety
		Place emergency call boxes throughout the Central Core, including in Mill Creek Park and downtown.	Safety
		Increase level of pedestrian lighting throughout the Central Core.	Safety

Action Plan

Long Term Goals

These are goals to be completed in the fourth and fifth year following acceptance of the neighborhood plan.

Date Begun	Date Completed	Action Step	Plan Category
		Implement a historically themed streetscape, including lighting, signage, seating areas, landscaping, sidewalks, waste receptacles, and trail connections.	Land Use
		Preserve the downtown locations on the post office and library; enhance the library facility and services.	Land Use
		Identify and offer incentives for downtown retail businesses.	Land Use
		Enhance facilities for the farmers market in downtown.	Infrastructure
		Encourage the city and utility companies to work together to bury overhead utility lines.	Infrastructure
		Connect Mill Creek Trail to a Town Square via a promenade.	Parks & Open Spaces
		Connect open space and Loula & Water Streets to Mill Creek Trail.	Parks & Open Spaces
		Add traffic calming techniques along Santa Fe through street improvements.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Separate bike lanes from motorized traffic.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Remove one-way streets in the Central Core.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation

Action Plan

Immediate/Ongoing Goals

Work on these goals should begin immediately and include a sustained effort.

Date Begun	Date Completed	Action Step	Plan Category
		Encourage new parking to be integrated in new development with commercial space.	Land Use
		Encourage all new development to include structured parking.	Land Use
		Maintain focus on code enforcement in the Central Core.	Housing Conditions
		Require multi-level parking that is attractive, camouflaged, and/or incorporates ground-floor retail.	Traffic, Parking, & Public Transportation
		Assist the city with neighborhood maintenance and safety by informing them of concerns and needs.	Safety
		Continue to lobby the City Council on action steps.	Politics & Government
		Encourage the City Council to adopt downtown design guidelines.	Politics & Government