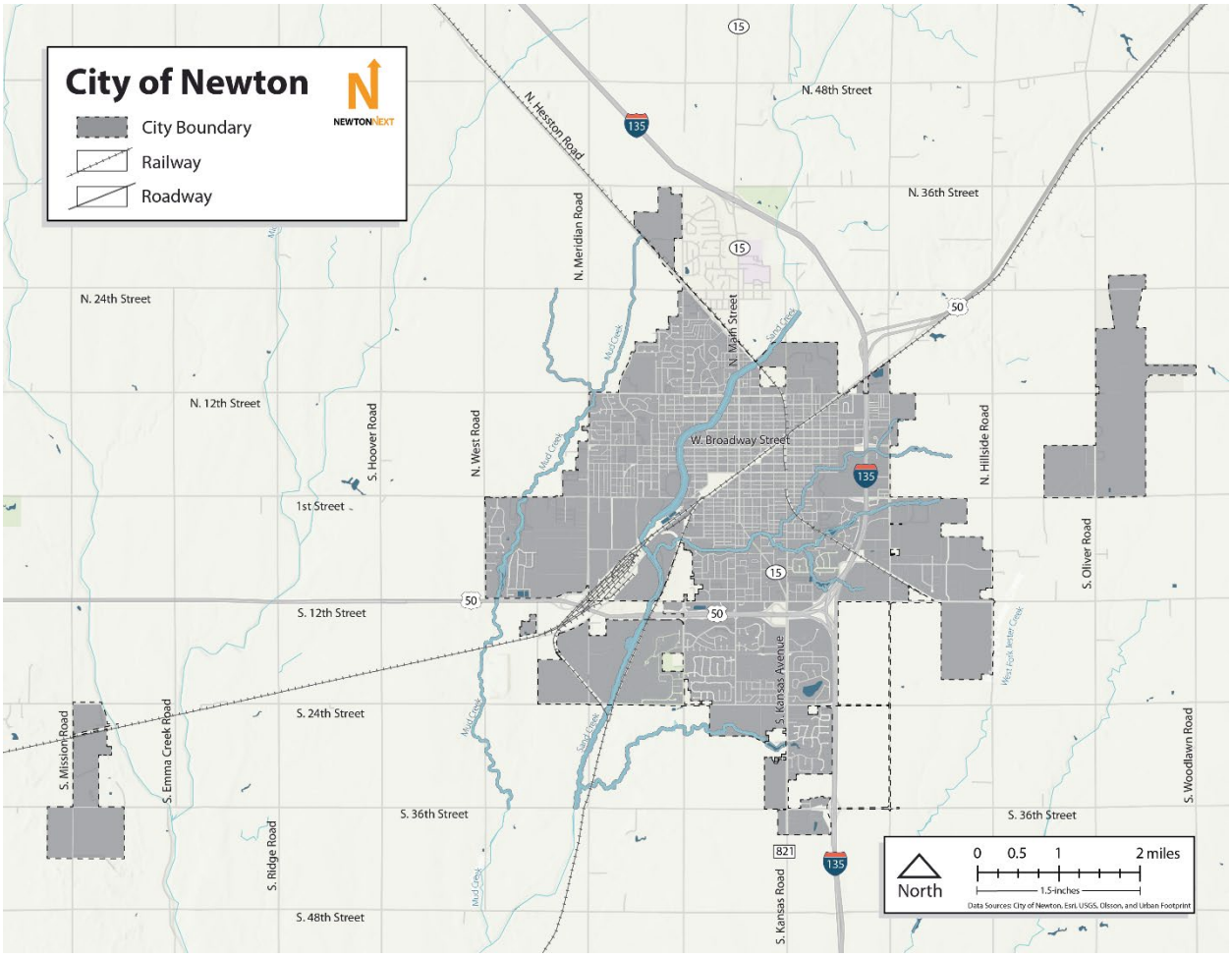
PART 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Existing Conditions Assessment serves as a foundational element of Newton's Comprehensive Plan update, offering an understanding of the city as it exists today. This report establishes a baseline understanding of the community by documenting community facilities, land use patterns and places, transportation networks, and natural resources, all crucial for identifying strengths for the community to build on. The information in this report has been gathered from a variety of sources and is intended to guide thoughtful, inclusive decision-making throughout the planning process. As Newton navigates the possibilities of growth and investment in the community, this snapshot offers context for strategic recommendations that will shape the city's future, preserving what makes Newton unique while preparing for a resilient and vibrant tomorrow.

PLANNING AREA



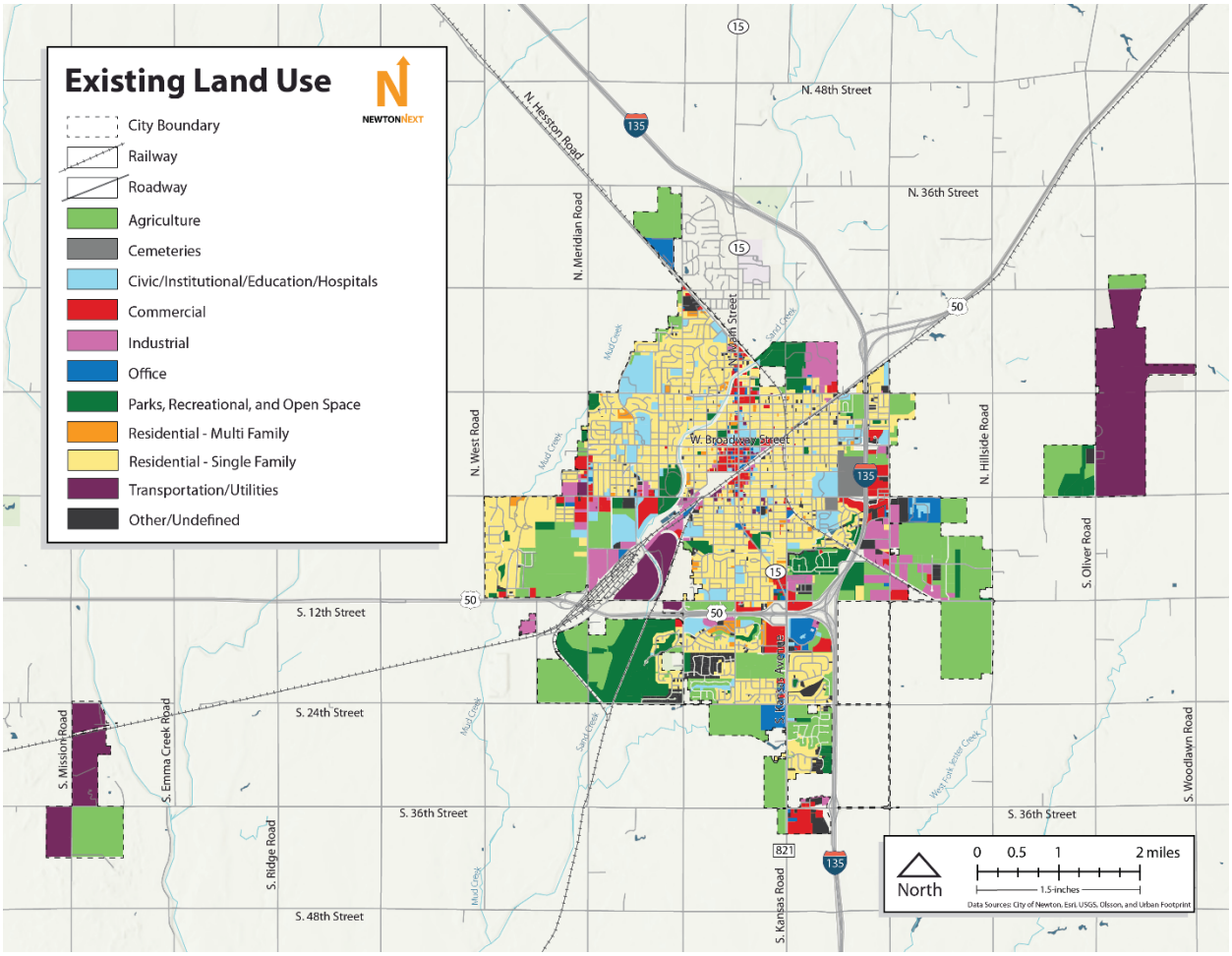
Newton, Kansas is located in Harvey County and serves as the county seat. The city encompasses 14.57 square miles of land and is bordered to the north, with North Newton situated along its northern boundary. The community is strategically positioned at the intersection of Interstate 135, U.S. Route 50, and U.S. Route 81, making it a key transportation hub in central Kansas. Newton was founded in 1871 and incorporated in 1872. Its growth has historically been tied to its role as a railroad center, particularly with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway. Over the years, Newton has expanded its boundaries through annexation, a process governed by Kansas law (KSA 12-520). This law allows for various types of annexation, including unilateral annexation under specific conditions, consent annexation with landowner approval, and county-approved annexation via the Board of County Commissioners. Key criteria for annexation include adjacency to existing city limits, land use, and size, agricultural land over

21 acres requires owner consent, and noncontiguous land may be annexed with county approval. Highway rights-of-way can only be annexed if adjacent property is also annexed.

Newton's annexation activity has been relatively modest, focusing on logical extensions of infrastructure and services. The city uses GIS mapping tools to manage and visualize its current boundaries and annexation potential, ensuring that growth aligns with community needs and planning goals.

LAND USE ASSESSMENT

EXISTING LAND USE



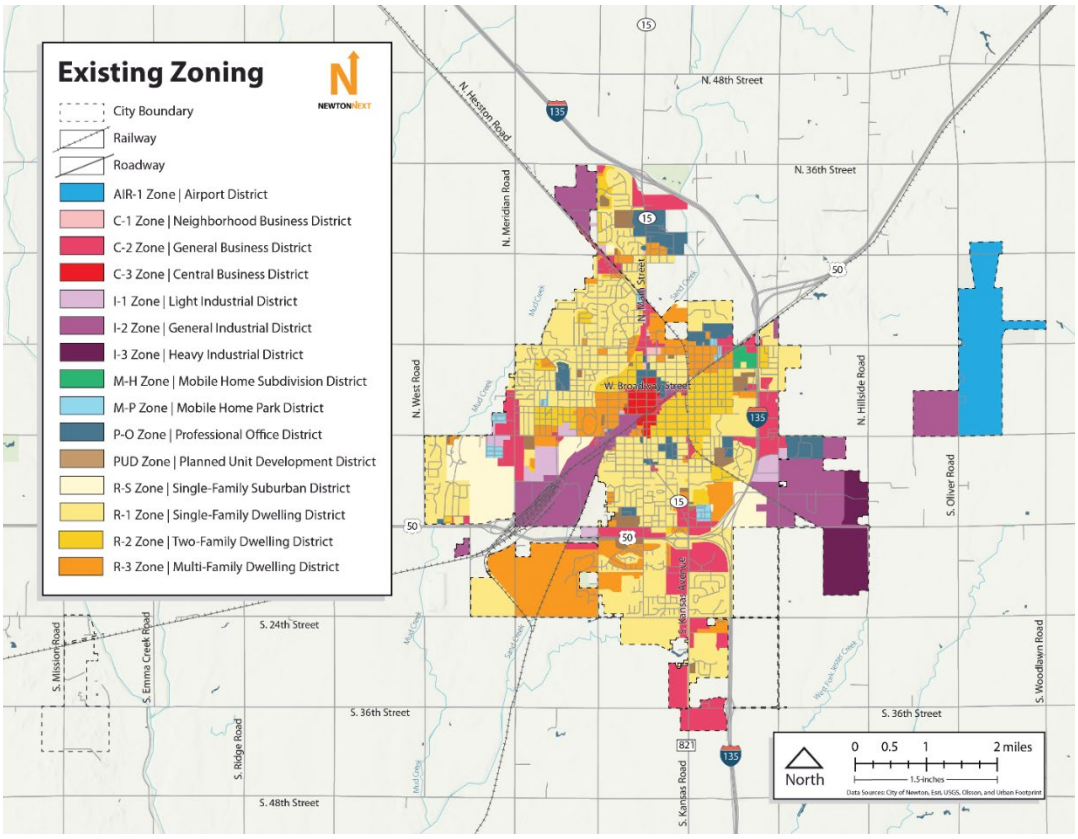
The map above illustrates Newton's existing land use throughout the city organized by general use categories.

Newton's land use pattern reflects the structure of a traditional Midwestern town, anchored by a historic downtown core and surrounded by walkable neighborhoods primarily composed of single-family residences. This central area is designated mostly as "commercial" land use, and is located north of the railroad tracks near W Broadway Street. Downtown spans roughly ten blocks with a mix of retailers, restaurants, cafes, galleries, and service-oriented businesses, forming the cultural and commercial heart of the community.

Outside of the downtown, Newton's urban form transitions into a mix of walkable residential neighborhoods and more auto-oriented development, with commercial and industrial uses concentrated along major corridors such as 1st Street, Kansas Avenue, and Washington Road. These corridors accommodate a range of goods and services, often in larger formats suited to vehicular access. Commercial activity is further organized into nodal shopping areas at key intersections, including W 1st Street and S Meridian Road, S Kansas Avenue and Medical Center Drive, S Kansas Avenue and SE 14th Street, Washington Road and SE 10th Street, I-135 and 1st Street, and 12th Street and Route 15 (North Main Street). These nodes serve as regional and community-scale destinations. In addition, Newton features smaller "neighborhood hubs" that offer more walkable, localized destinations outside the downtown core, such as those at 17th and North Main Street, South Kansas Avenue and SE 2nd Street, and Washington Road and SE 6th Street.

Areas near the city's outer edges, particularly to the south and east, contain significant tracts of undeveloped agricultural land. These areas present opportunities for future development, whether for residential expansion, employment centers, or conservation-based uses, which would be defined as an outcome of the planning process.

CURRENT ZONING DISTRICTS



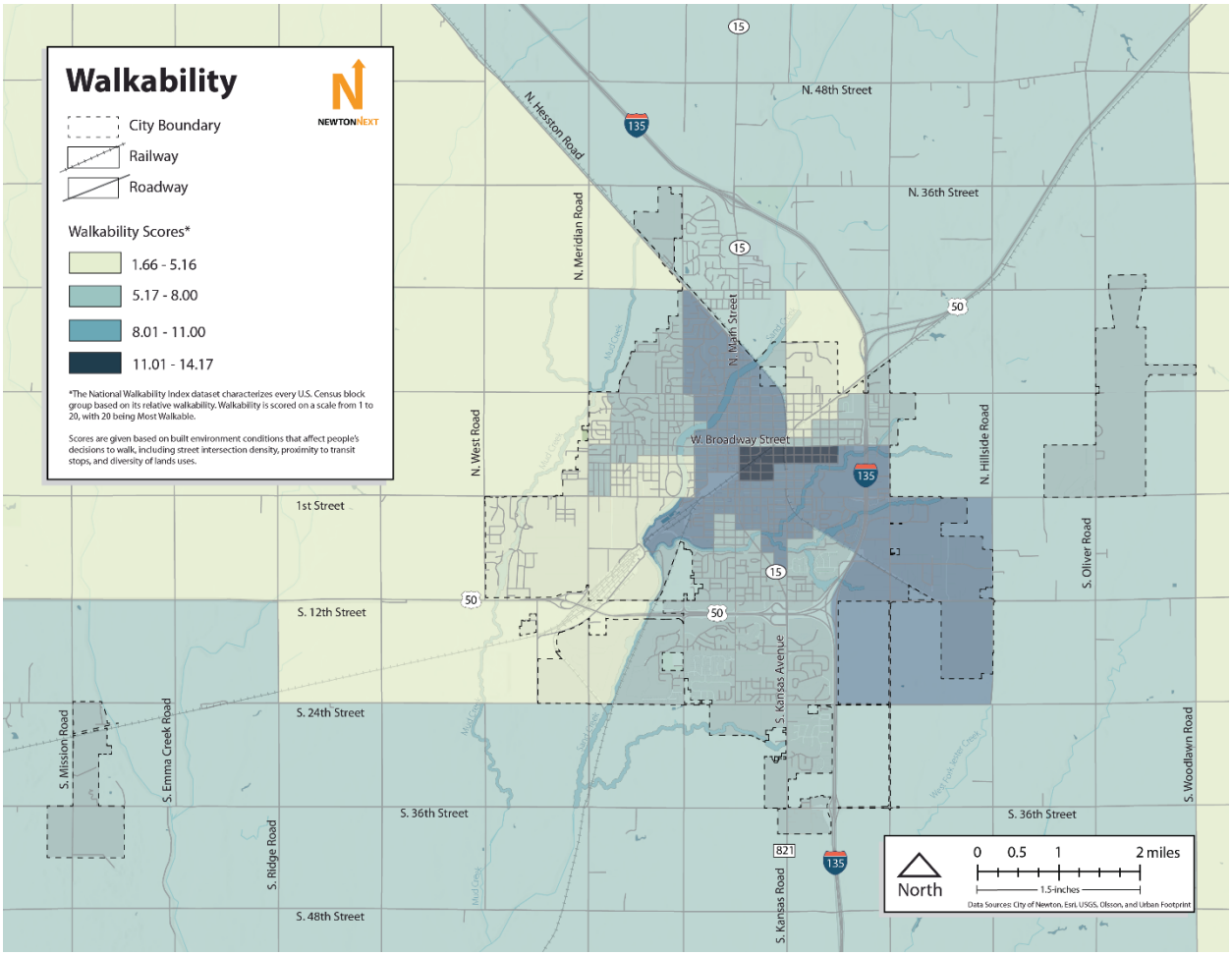
The City's zoning districts include residential categories like Single-Family Suburban (R-S), Single-Family Dwelling (R-1), Traditional Residential (R-T), Two-Family (R-2), and Multi-Family options (R-3 and R-3 Flexible). Commercial zones range from Professional Office (P-O) and to Neighborhood (C-1), General (C-2), and Central Business (C-3) districts. Industrial classifications include Light (I-1), General (I-2), and Heavy Industrial (I-3). Specialized residential zones include Planned Unit Development (PUD), and Mobile Home districts (M-H and M-P). Overlay districts such as Flood Plain (F-P) and Historic and Cultural (H-D), along with the Airport Zoning District (AIR-1), provide additional regulatory layers for specific areas.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LAND USE AND ZONING?

Generally, the Existing Land Use Map is consistent with the Zoning Designations. However, these maps do not account for the recommendations that will be outlined in a Future Land Use Map. The Future Land Use Map, developed during the Comprehensive Plan update, serves as a bridge between existing land use and zoning regulations. While the Existing Land Use Map shows current conditions, the Future Land Use Map will illustrate the official recommendation for how land should be used in the future,

based on community input and professional guidance. This may be different from the existing land use as well as the zoning. One key distinction between existing land use and current zoning lies in areas shown as "agricultural" on the Existing Land Use Map. Newton does not have agricultural zoning districts within city limits, so these areas are already zoned for specific uses despite appearing agricultural. As the Future Land Use Map is developed, special attention will focus on these undeveloped areas to ensure recommended land uses reflect community input and professional analysis. This approach helps align future zoning decisions with long-term goals and community priorities.

WALKABILITY SCORE



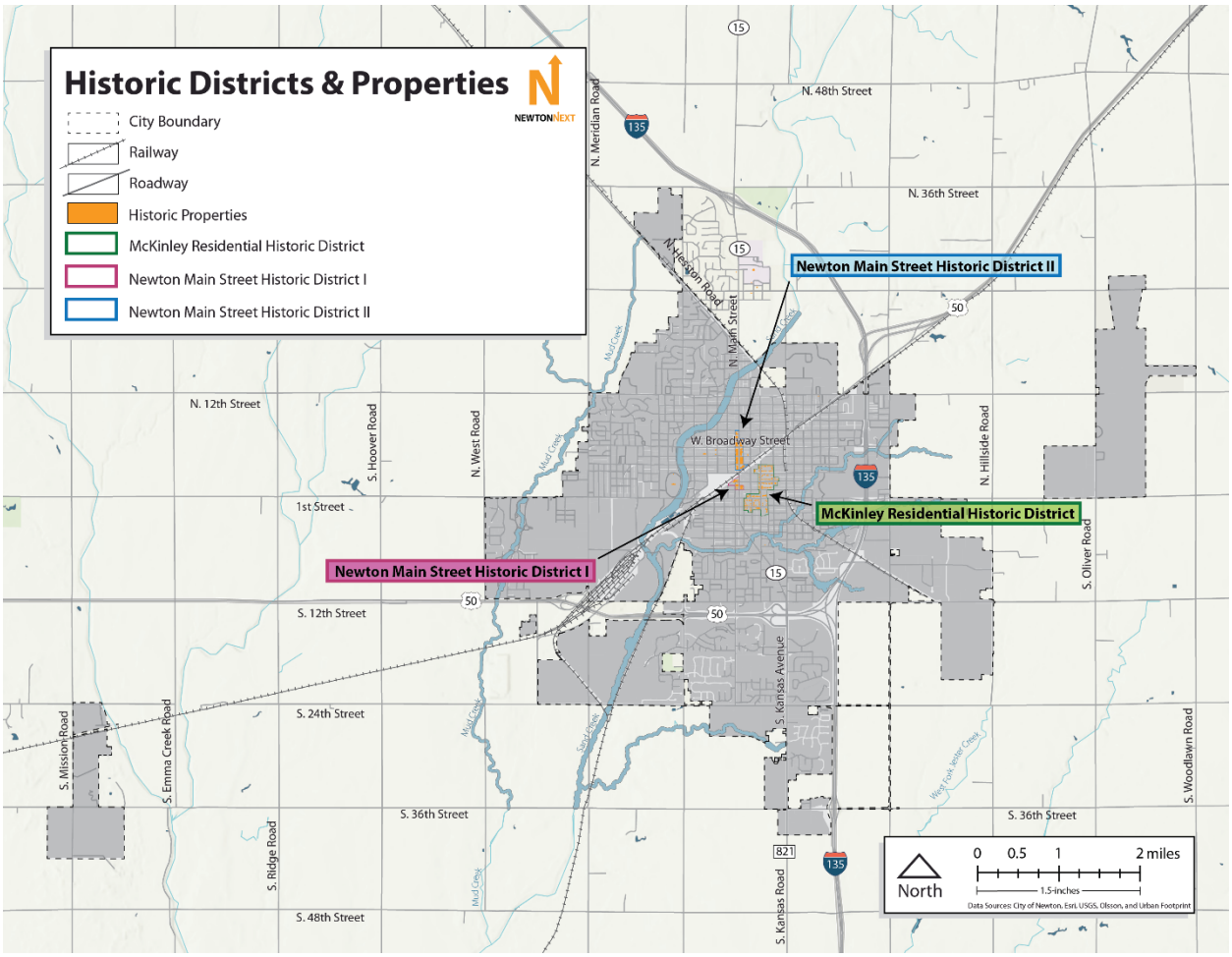
Mapping walkability can help identify emerging character areas where walkability could be enhanced through targeted interventions like infill development, sidewalk improvements, or mixed-use zoning. It

supports the development of a future land use map by highlighting areas with potential for pedestrian-oriented growth. It also reveals opportunities for sustainable development, especially in lower-scoring zones where walkability improvements could reduce car dependency and promote healthier, more connected neighborhoods. The walkability map of Newton, Kansas (above) provides a visual representation of how conducive different parts of the city are to walking, based on the National Walkability Index. The scores range from 1.66 to 14.17 on a scale of 1 to 20, with higher scores indicating greater walkability. These scores are derived from built environment factors such as intersection density, proximity to transit stops, and land use diversity. The map also includes city boundaries, railways, and roadways, which help contextualize walkability in relation to transportation infrastructure.

Key Observations:

- Central Newton, particularly the historic downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, shows the highest walkability scores (dark blue areas), reflecting a traditional urban form with mixed uses, grid-like street patterns, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.
- Intermediate zones (medium and light blue) surround the core and likely include older residential areas and some commercial corridors with moderate walkability.
- Outlying areas, especially toward the southern and eastern edges, are marked in light green, indicating lower walkability. These areas are likely more auto oriented, with fewer intersections, larger and more spread out sites, and limited transit access.

HISTORIC PROPERTIES & DISTRICTS



Newton is home to several historic properties and districts that preserve the city's architectural and cultural heritage, an essential foundation for identifying emerging character areas and informing future land use planning. These mapped resources offer valuable insight into distinctive place types across the community. Historic districts and individual properties represent areas with strong identity and architectural cohesion, making them possible candidates for preservation-focused zoning overlays, design guidelines that reinforce historic character, and public realm improvements that enhance walkability and cultural visibility.

In addition to their preservation value, these areas also reveal opportunities for thoughtful development. Potential strategies include infill development that complements the existing historic fabric, revitalization

of underutilized historic properties, and cultural programming or tourism initiatives that celebrate Newton's heritage.

- McKinley Residential Historic District – Located in the southeastern part of Newton's downtown, this district features early 20th-century homes, including homes of the historic founders of Newton, and reflects the city's residential development patterns.
- Newton Main Street Historic District I – Situated in the southern portion of downtown, this area includes historic commercial buildings and civic structures that contribute to Newton's traditional downtown character.
- Newton Main Street Historic District II) – Found in the northern part of downtown, this district complements District I and may include additional historic storefronts, public buildings, and cultural landmarks.

LAND USE AND INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN NEWTON

Newton faces a complex mix of development pressures and infrastructure limitations that significantly influence its growth trajectory. Infrastructure capacity, particularly in older areas, is a critical constraint. The city's water system, originally built in the late 1800s, cannot fully support anticipated downtown growth. Although a water model helps identify areas needing upgrades, development cannot proceed without adequate capacity. On the east side of Newton, a booster system installed in 2011 pumps up to one million gallons per day, yet current usage is only 300,000 gallons. Industrial expansion will eventually require additional infrastructure, such as a new water tower. Newton's rate structure emphasizes conservation rather than bulk discounts, meaning industrial users pay standard rates for water and sewer based on usage.

Harvey County's growth projections for sectors like agriculture, warehousing, medical, and technology align with Newton's ambitions. New businesses, including tire shops, truck service centers, car washes, and a permanent concrete plant, are increasing water demand. Newton's regional water partnerships also shape its infrastructure strategy. The Water District owns 14 wells that pump to the Mission Plant which is owned and operated by the City of Newton. Newton provides backup water and sewer services as needed to a few neighboring communities.

Housing demand is also rising, driven in part by the expansion of GAF, yet Newton lacks entry-level homes, executive housing, and subsidized options. Current offerings range from custom homes under $400,000 to subdivisions like Fox Ridge at $200,000 or less, but there are few homes below $200,000 and almost none at the $800,000 level sought by executives. Income disparities and stagnant wages in Harvey County, combined with proximity to Wichita, exacerbate these challenges. Without investment in quality-of-life amenities, Newton risks becoming a bedroom community rather than a vibrant employment hub.

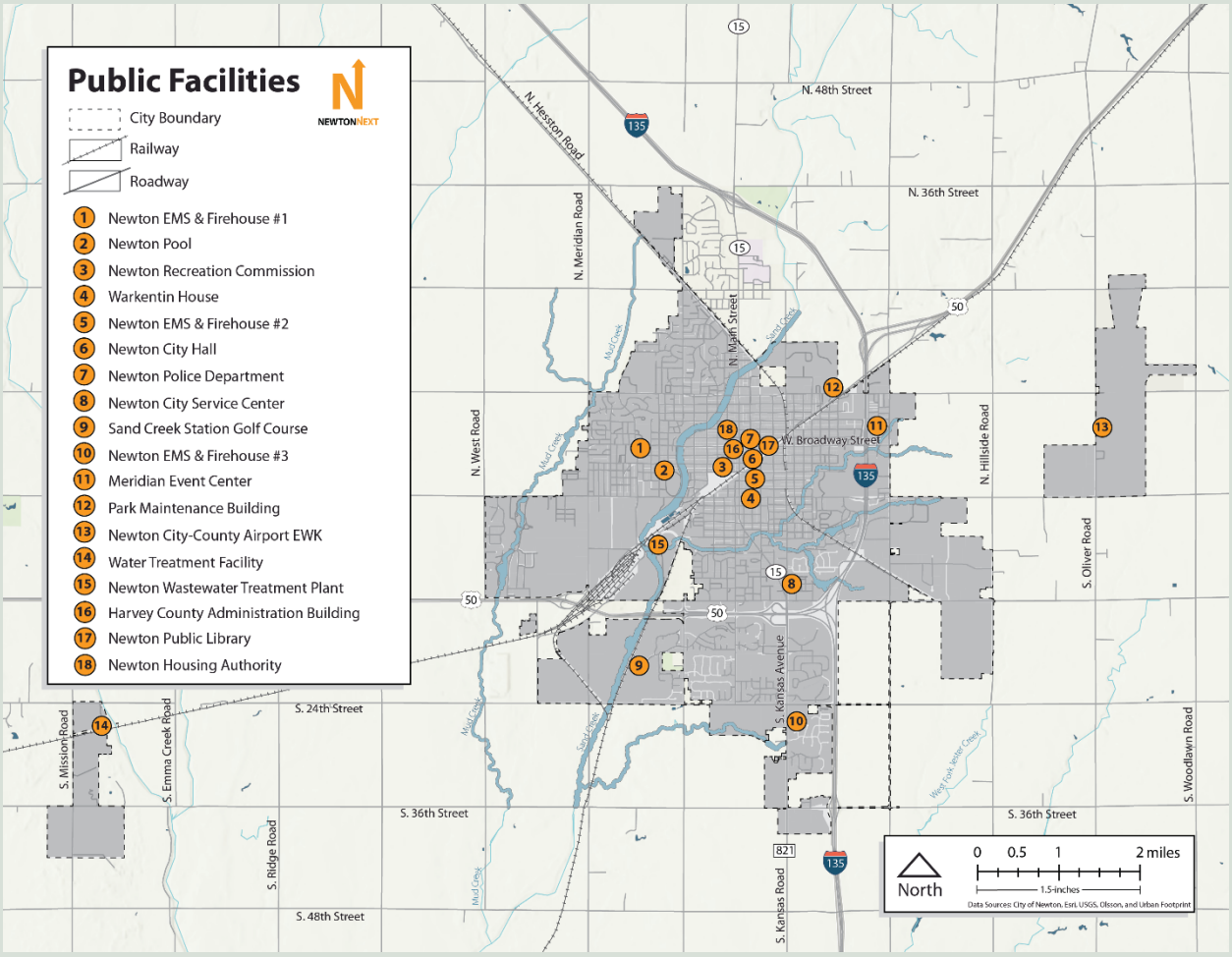
Economic development and placemaking present critical opportunities. Site selectors prioritize lively main streets and lifestyle amenities, yet Newton lacks trendy restaurants, healthy food options, and family-friendly entertainment. Downtown businesses often close on Sundays and Mondays, pushing residents to Wichita for dining and leisure. There is demand for unique destinations such as breweries, cocktail bars, and walkable mixed-use districts that could activate underutilized downtown spaces. Cultural attitudes toward alcohol and community pride, shaped by Newton's Mennonite heritage, are evolving, creating room for new concepts that respect tradition while embracing change.

While infill development is relatively straightforward, new growth especially in downtown poses significant challenges. The historic core (approximately from 1st to 8th Street and Ash/Elm to Walnut) requires major upgrades to water, sewer, storm drainage, brick streets, and traffic signals. Funding mechanisms such as TIF districts or RHIDs could help, but require broad stakeholder buy-in. Public perception often assumes the city should bear all costs, despite most properties being privately owned. Incremental improvements are possible, but economies of scale favor comprehensive approaches. The city is actively marketing redevelopment sites near the historic depot, including a property slated for demolition. A downtown development plan from 2009 provides a framework, and a new RFP aims to attract investment for these strategic locations. Recent residential growth has primarily consisted of duplexes and triplexes, while downtown revitalization efforts focus on mixed-use projects with residential units above commercial spaces. Although zoning allows these developments, costs and code requirements such as fire suppression systems pose challenges.

New roadways and residential subdivisions are also shaping growth patterns. While the roadway network currently appears strong, lifecycle costs present long-term challenges. Asphalt roads last 25-30 years, while concrete can last 40-50 years, though at 20-30% higher upfront cost. The City encourages concrete for durability, but both materials are allowed under current standards. Impact fees have not been widely implemented, leaving infrastructure costs largely on the City rather than developers. Future policy discussions will need to balance development incentives with sustainable funding strategies. Residential

growth is concentrated in the south, particularly south of Highway 50, where proposals for new subdivisions are emerging. While annexation is not required for southern expansion, east and west growth would require annexation. A satellite wastewater plant will eventually be needed to support southern development. Infill development remains easier, but new growth faces infrastructure constraints, especially downtown, where water and sewer systems dating back to the late 1800s cannot fully support revitalization without upgrades. A water model helps identify capacity needs, and a new sewer and water master plan is expected soon to replace the 2020 plan.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES



GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

The map above identifies both city and Harvey County government buildings throughout Newton's city limits. They include the following:

1. Newton EMS & Fire House #1 (1015 W Broadway St, Newton, KS 67114)
2. Newton Pool (401 Santa Fe St, Newton, KS 67114)
3. Newton Recreation Commission (415 N Poplar St, Newton, KS 67114)
4. Warkentin House (211 E 1st St, Newton, KS 67114)
5. Newton EMS & Firehouse #2 (200 E 3rd St, Newton, KS 67114)
6. Newton City Hall (201 E 6th St, Newton, KS 67114)
7. Newton Police Department (120 E 7th St, Newton, KS 67114)
8. Newton City Service Center (1100 S Kansas Ave, Newton, KS 67114)
9. Sand Creek Station Golf Course (920 Meadowbrook Dr, Newton, KS 67114)
10. Newton EMS & Firehouse #3 (2520 S Kansas Ave, Newton, KS 67114)
11. Meridian Event Center (1420 E Broadway Ct, Newton, KS 67114)
12. Park Maintenance Building (1010 E 12th St #2831923, Newton, KS 67114)

13. Newton City-County Airport EWK (810 N Oliver Rd, Newton, KS 67114)
14. Water Treatment Facility (8029 SW 24th St, Newton, KS 67056)
15. Newton Wastewater Treatment Plant (802 SW 14th St, Newton, KS 67114)
16. Harvey County Administration Building (800 N Main St, Newton, KS 67114)
17. Newton Public Library (223 E 7th St, Newton, KS 67114)
18. Newton Housing Authority (115W. 9th St, Newton, KS 67114)

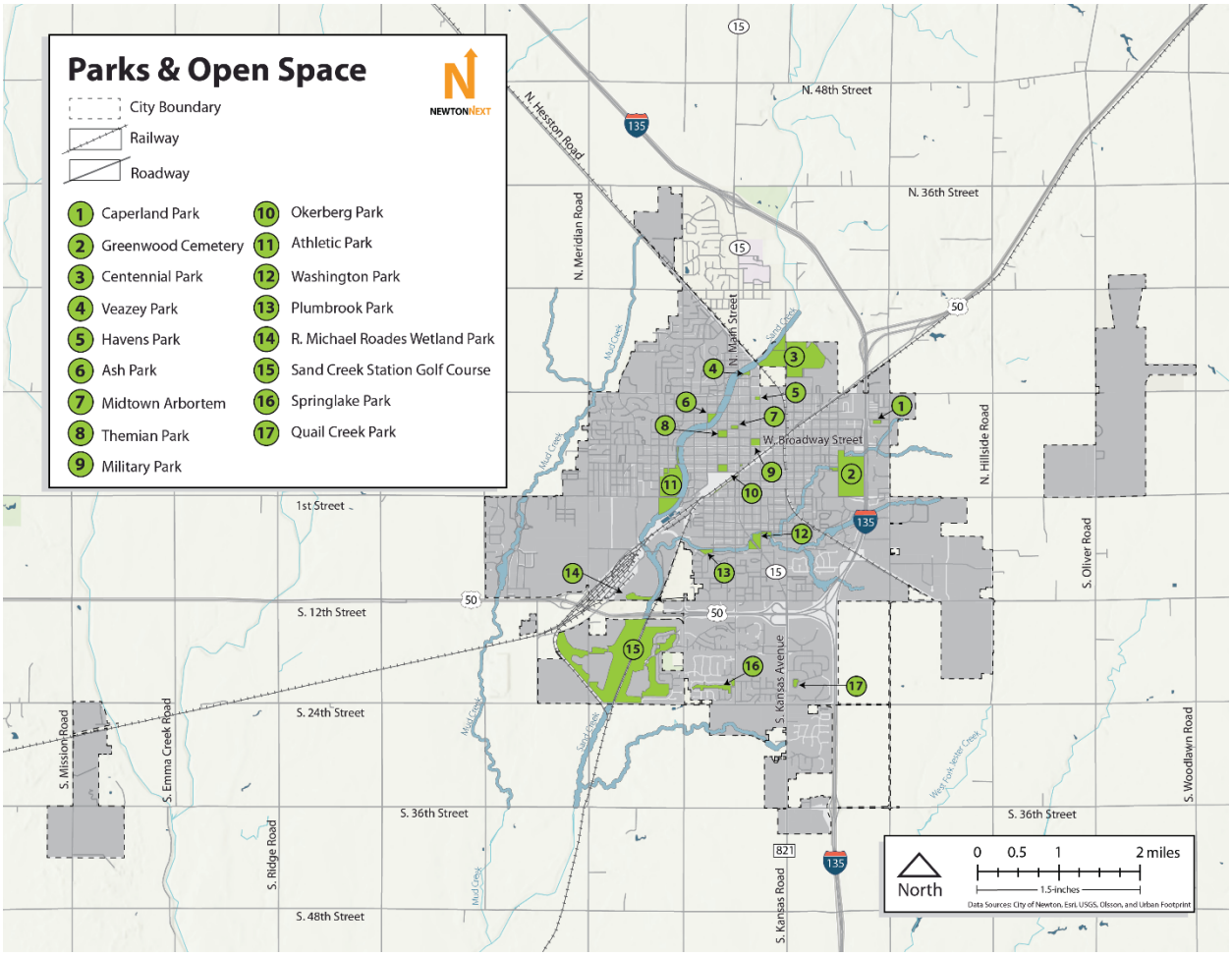
MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENTS

- **Administration:** Leads city operations and implements commission policies.
- **City Clerk:** Provides customer service and records management.
- **IT:** manages the city's digital infrastructure and internal systems.
- **Meridian Center:** the city's publicly managed event and meeting space.
- **Public Works**
    - **Sanitation:** a division of public works which manages trash services.
    - **Wastewater:** a division of public works which manages the collection and treatment of wastewater.
    - **Water:** a division of public works which manages the provision of potable water for customers of the Newton water utility.
    - **Street:** a division of public works managing street maintenance, and snow/ice control.
    - **Engineering:** A division of public works which oversees infrastructure, stormwater, zoning, and building inspections.
    - **Stormwater:** a division of public works which manages water runoff that runs into street storm drains and inlets.
- **Building, Zoning, Planning:** Oversees planning, zoning and strategic growth
- **Parks & Cemeteries:** Maintains parks, cemeteries, and recreational facilities.
- **Finance:** Handles budgeting, payroll, utility billing, and financial reporting.
- **Utility Billing:** manages payment options, account inquiries, and billing assistance for city-provided services.
- **Human Resources:** Manages recruitment, compliance, and employee records.
- **Communications:** Manages outreach, marketing, and public information.
- **Fire/EMS:** Provides fire protection and emergency medical services.
- **Police:** Provides police protection and emergency public safety services.
- **Law:** serves as the primary legal representative of the City and is directly responsible for providing legal representation and legal advice and assistance to the City Commission, officers and employees in the course of their duties

- **Court:** Handles legal violations and court proceedings.
- **Airport:** Supports regional air travel and aviation services.

It is important to note that Newton, like many cities, faces recruitment and retainment challenges across all departments. A strong team of public staff people are critical for supporting operations of the city's systems and services, including public safety, safe drinking water, sewer treatment, streets, sanitation, engineering, planning and zoning, code enforcement etc.

PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES



- Newton has a unique partnership model for managing parks and recreational facilities. Responsibilities are shared among three entities: The City's Department of Parks and Cemeteries maintain over 670 acres of parks, bike paths, cemeteries, waterways, rights-of-way, and other acreage.

- The Newton Recreation Commission (NRC) operates independently from the City and is funded through two mill levies to manage the Newton Recreation Center. The NRC cannot own property.
- The Public Building Commission (PBC) is a partnership between the Park Commission, the City, and the school district (USD), and funds large-scale repairs for City-owned buildings, such as roof replacements.

Generally, the NRC covers routine maintenance, while the PBC handles specific items. Responsibility for routine maintenance of parks and associated facilities is becoming more explicitly defined through partnership agreements.

Themian Park is owned by the City and maintained by the Newton Recreation Commission (NRC). The park is regularly used by the school district and the downtown district organization, and there is growing interest in making improvements. Because these organizations do not own the park, the City serves as the fiscal sponsor for CDBG applications on their behalf.

A related concern in Newton is the lack of competitive sports opportunities. While some opportunities are provided through NRC and Bethel College, many families travel to northeast Wichita for youth camps and competitive leagues. This gap in competitive sports programming has broader implications: families leave Newton for sports activities, often shopping and spending money in other communities. The expansion of local competitive sports leagues can be achieved through partnerships between NRC and the YMCA.

Department leaders have expressed a need to invest in climate controlled parks shelters with kitchenettes and bathrooms that are wheelchair accessible. These types of amenities would support the community's ability to host competitive sports leagues, though would also require an increased maintenance budget. Leadership and community members have also expressed a desire to create an amphitheater or stage in the downtown area equipped with modern technology.

Although the City has made notable investments in bike trails, it does not currently have a comprehensive Parks & Recreation Plan. Most park improvements have relied on grants and contributions from organizations such as the Lions Club and Rotary Club, rather than consistent funding through the general fund or the Capital Improvement Plan. Parks and recreational facilities are critical to quality of life and influence how residents and visitors perceive the community.

While the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update will not serve as a full Parks & Recreation Plan, it provides an important first step: establishing clear priorities for managing, improving, and expanding park facilities. These priorities can guide future planning, funding strategies, and partnerships to ensure Newton's parks system meets community needs and supports long-term growth.

The table below provides information about ownership versus maintenance responsibilities for specific park facilities:

	Owner	Maintenance
Athletic Park	City	Park/NRC
Caperland Park	City	Park
Centennial Park	City	Park/NRC
Depot Park	City	Park
Girl Scout Little House	City	Park
Havens Park	City	Park
Lincoln Park	City	Park
Midtown Arboretum	City	Park
Midtown Arboretum	City	Park
Newton Pool	City	Park/NRC
Okerberg Park	City	Park/NRC
Springlake Park	City	Park
Washington Park	City	Park/NRC
Military Park**	City	Park
East Park	County	County
West Park	County	County
Roosevelt Park	City	Park
Bike Paths	City	Park
10th and Ash Park	City	Park
Plumbrook Park	City	Park
Quail Creek Park	City	Park

Pod Park	City	Park
Veazey Park	City	Park
Rhoads Wetland Park	City	Park
Themian Park**	City	NRC
Railroad Park	City	Park
Boyd Soccer Fields	USD	NRC
Rodeo Grounds	City	County

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES (PUBLIC AND PRIVATE)

Public Schools *(USD 373 Newton School District)*

Elementary Schools

- Cooper Elementary School, 207 E 8th St, Newton, KS 67114
- Northridge Elementary School, 1900 Windsor Dr, Newton, KS 67114
- South Breeze Elementary School, 1020 Old Main St, Newton, KS 67114
- Sunset Elementary School, 619 Boyd Ave, Newton, KS 67114
- Slate Creek Elementary School, 901 East 4th St, Newton, KS 67114

Middle Schools

- Chisholm Middle School, 900 East First St, Newton, KS 67114
- Santa Fe Middle School, 130 West Broadway St, Newton, KS 67114

High School

- Newton Senior High School, 900 West 12th St, Newton, KS 67114

Alternative Education

- Eby Learning Center I *(Grades 9-11)*, 900 West Broadway St, Newton, KS 67114
- Eby Learning Center II *(Grades 4-8)*, 900 West Broadway St, Newton, KS 67114

Private Schools

- St. Mary Catholic School *(Pre-K-8)*, 101 E 9th St, Newton, KS 67114
- Newton Bible Christian School *(Pre-K-8),* 900 Old Main St, Newton, KS 67114

PUBLIC SAFETY

Current public safety challenges are deeply intertwined with social and behavioral health issues. Current public safety challenges are closely linked to social and behavioral health issues, with high service demands arising from group homes, facilities for individuals with developmental challenges, retirement communities, and transitional housing.

EmberHope, a state-sponsored facility for youth, houses and serves individuals with a wide range of legal and behavioral histories, which can create complex challenges for both schools and law enforcement, creating complex situations for schools and law enforcement.

Newton schools face ongoing behavioral and social challenges, with many students coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The district works to support students through programs aimed at addressing both academic and behavioral needs. The city also hosts the county detention center, a chemical dependency treatment center, and a mental health hospital with a new crisis wing, all of which increase calls for service. A recently relocated homeless shelter and transitional housing programs further add to the demand for social services. Fire/EMS cannot refuse transport, leading to frequent non-emergency calls, particularly from elderly residents with complex health needs.

Infrastructure and facility limitations compound these challenges. While the police department was remodeled five years ago, leadership has expressed a need to increase its current space through the construction of a new station Emergency response can also be complicated by the railroad tracks that currently divide the city. Newton experiences up to 50 train crossings daily, affecting response times.

Fire/EMS stations are aging and landlocked, with the smallest station north of the tracks handling 40% of emergent calls. Upgraded and better-equipped facilities would enhance emergency response times and provide staff with the space and resources needed to operate more effectively. Equipment replacement cycles are carefully managed (fire engines last about 15 years, EMS vehicles eight years, and aerial platforms 20 years), yet funding remains tight. Police vehicles are replaced every three years, but detective cars often remain in service for a decade. Like many communities nationwide, Newton faces challenges in recruiting and retaining public safety personnel. This challenge is compounded by rising costs for vehicles. The cost of police vehicles has doubled in price over the past five to six years, yet funding has not kept pace, requiring the department to do more with limited resources.

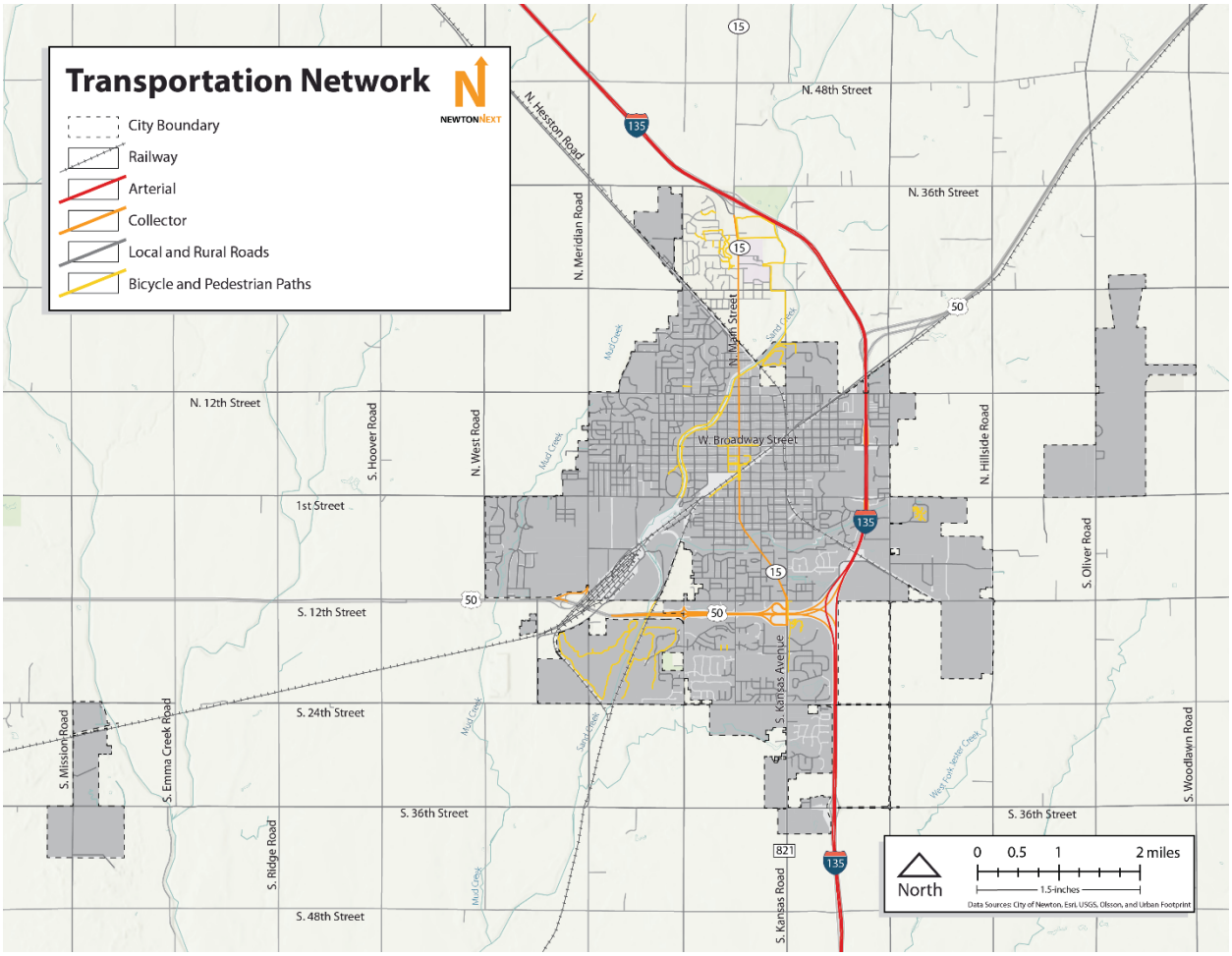
Despite these constraints, Newton maintains strong response times, though simultaneous calls occur nearly 30% of the time.

Both police and fire/EMS departments compete with the Wichita Metro area for talent, while Newton's housing shortage and high rental costs make recruitment even harder. Affordable housing options are limited, and many available units are in poor condition, creating additional socioeconomic pressures. The Fire/EMS department's ability to maintain and improve its facilities and equipment is limited by its reliance on property tax funding, which, while supporting public safety, provides only a finite level of resources. This narrow tax base, combined with rising construction costs and stagnant wages, makes it difficult to expand services without increasing taxes—a politically sensitive issue.

With ongoing development and constrained funding, technology will play a critical role in supporting public safety. While advanced tools can help supplement staffing, their cost remains a barrier. Future planning will need to balance operational needs and the growing complexity of public safety in a changing community.

Looking to the future, public safety officials anticipate significant impacts from growth and industrial development. After decades of stagnation, Newton is preparing for new projects such as Fox Ridge housing development and the GAF facility, a nationwide roofing materials manufacturer expected to bring 130 employees and increased rail and truck traffic. These developments will influence police & fire/EMS station locations and require specialized training for firefighters, including high-angle and confined-space rescue, as well as additional equipment and staffing. Industrial sites present unique hazards compared to residential areas, and emergency response requirements will demand coordination and mutual aid agreements. Police already rely on mutual aid, and volunteer resources are dwindling. Preliminary discussions are underway to assess emergency needs.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY



ROADWAYS AND STREETS

Newton maintains approximately 150 lane miles of roads, streets, bridges, alleys, public parking lots, and sidewalks. The city's Street Division is responsible for ongoing maintenance, including resurfacing with slurry seal, pothole repair, and curb/gutter replacement. Streets are divided into seven maintenance zones, with one zone addressed each year. Newton is intersected by several key highways and arterial roads that support regional and local mobility:

1. Interstate 135 (I-135)
    - A major north-south corridor connecting Newton to Wichita (south) and Salina (north).
    - Provides access to I-35 via Wichita, linking Newton to the national interstate system.

2. U.S. Highway 50 (US-50)
    - Runs east-west through Newton, connecting the city to Hutchinson (west) and Emporia (east).
    - Serves as a vital freight and commuter route.
3. Kansas Highway 15 (K-15) / Main Street (Old U.S. 81)
    - Passes through Newton from north to south, linking the city to smaller communities and rural areas.
    - A central thoroughfare through downtown Newton, historically part of the U.S. 81 corridor.
    - Connects neighborhoods, businesses, and civic institutions.
4. First Street and Broadway Street
    - Important east-west arterials within the city, supporting local traffic and access to schools, parks, and commercial areas.

Newton is currently conducting a Safe Streets for All Action Plan in collaboration with Harvey County. This plan will provide recommendations intended to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on the community's transportation facilities. This plan is expected to be completed in 2026.

STREETSCAPE DESIGN

This section outlines the standards that currently shape street design in Newton. The city's subdivision regulations establish minimum requirements for new streets, particularly in greenfield developments. These regulations ensure that streets align with topography and are arranged to support continuity and future growth.

Street design standards follow conventional roadway classifications: arterials, collectors, and locals.

- **Arterial Streets:** Designed for high-capacity traffic (approximately 16,000 vehicles per day), arterials require a 100-120-foot right-of-way. They typically include 3-4 travel lanes at 12 feet each, 1-2 turning lanes, and prohibit on-street parking. Sidewalks must be at least five feet wide.

- **Collector Streets:** Serving up to 12,000 vehicles per day, collectors require an 80-90-foot right-of-way with two 11-foot travel lanes, 0-1 turning lanes, and optional on-street parking. Sidewalks must also be at least five feet wide.
- **Local Streets:** Designed for neighborhood traffic (up to 1,500 vehicles per day), locals require a 60-70-foot right-of-way with two 10-foot travel lanes, 0-1 turning lanes, and optional on-street parking. Sidewalks must be at least four feet wide.

A local street can encourage much more than efficient transportation. Public spaces, particularly in downtown and walkable neighborhood contexts, can be designed to encourage social interaction, provide safe play areas for children, and create a sense of community. Today, Newton's standards are generally geared toward prioritizing vehicle movement over placemaking. Downtown appears to have a surplus of surface and street parking, which increase crossing distances and walking distances to destinations. Existing regulations lack guidance on elements that foster sense of place and urban design quality such as narrower lanes, road diets, reduced or reconfigured parking, street trees, and enhanced sidewalks can transform streets into multi-use public spaces rather than mere conduits for cars. While not every street can be designed this way, this represents an opportunity for the community to identify where placemaking elements can be best incorporated into new and existing places.

Currently, street trees are neither prohibited nor required by municipal code. This absence of clear standards along with the lack of guidance on other placemaking elements creates barriers to designing streets that prioritize people over cars.

The street grid network pattern in Newton is a strength, with minimal cul-de-sac and curvilinear street designs throughout the community. This backbone is valuable in the effort to develop more walkable and connected neighborhoods.

ROADWAY MAINTENANCE & GROWTH

As Newton experiences increased growth and development, the community benefits from an expanded tax base and new economic opportunities. However, development outside the existing built environment (commonly referred to as greenfield development) requires the construction of new roadways to provide access. While these projects generate tax revenue, they also create long-term obligations for the City to maintain additional infrastructure, which can significantly impact future budgets.

Lifecycle costs for roadway materials highlight the importance of strategic planning. Asphalt pavement typically lasts 25-30 years, while concrete can endure 40-50 years. Although concrete carries a 20-30% higher upfront cost, its durability offers substantial long-term savings. Newton previously required concrete for new roads but now maintains standards for both materials, strongly encouraging developers to choose concrete for its extended lifespan. Currently, the roadway network is in good condition, but maintenance demands will increase within the next 5-10 years as aging infrastructure reaches the end of its lifecycle.

Funding strategies remain a critical challenge. The City has not historically implemented impact fees for new development, except through petitions, and broader discussions about such fees have been limited. All options are under consideration, but much depends on political will. While City policy states that developers should bear the cost of infrastructure for new projects, this expectation is not consistently met. Funding has not kept pace with the increased cost of materials and other needs associated with recurring maintenance. As Newton continues to grow, ensuring funding keeps up with inflation is critical for ensuring infrastructure remains at a high standard for safety and general transportation needs.

TRAILS, BIKEWAYS, AND SIDEWALKS

Newton boasts more than 8.5 miles of bike and jogging paths that enhance recreation and connectivity throughout the community. Key routes include the scenic Sand Creek Trail, which winds along Sand Creek; the South Kansas Avenue Shared Use Path on the east side of the street; and trails within Springlake Park, Railroad Park, Athletic Park, Centennial Park, and Rhoades Wetland Park. Additional paths at Sand Creek Station Golf Course further expand the city's trail network.

Investment in trails has had strong community support in Newton: in the 2020 survey, 68% of respondents said the City should invest more in walking and biking trails, and about half indicated they would pay higher taxes or fees to fund these improvements.

In early 2025, the City Commission approved moving forward with nearly $3 million in grant funding to extend the Sand Creek Bike Path, a long-standing priority in Newton's capital improvement plan since at least 2007. Although the City's 2024 application for Transportation Alternatives funding through the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) was unsuccessful, KDOT later offered federal Carbon

Reduction Program funds to cover 80% of the project cost. The City will fund the remaining 20%, estimated at $728,000, through bonding, with annual payments of approximately $57,000 over 20 years.

The project will extend the bike path from the Sand Creek dam south along the creek to Southwest 14th Street, closing the final gap in the trail system. Once complete, Newton will feature a continuous off-road path stretching from Sand Creek Station Golf Course on the south end to Bethel College to the north, while also providing direct access to the new Rhoades Wetland Park. The pre-design cost estimate is $3.6 million. Once complete, this extension will serve as a lasting amenity for generations of Newton residents and visitors. This trail is an important backbone for future proposed bikeways, which include east-west bike lanes along 1st Street, Broadway Street, and 12th Street and several miles of shared use path on the south and east sides of Newton.

Sidewalks and crosswalks are common downtown and east of Sand Creek, with significant gaps west of Sand Creek and near many elementary schools. Four lane roads such as Washington Road and 12th Street near Newton High School have limited crosswalks and may act as barriers to people choosing to walk to their destination. KDOT has developed a Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment tool to identify road corridors with elevated safety risks for bicyclists and pedestrians. This tool identifies 22.71 miles of VRU Priority Corridors within Newton and North Newton, with the highest priority segment on Main Street between 6th and 10th Streets.

RAILWAYS

Newton has a rich railroad heritage and remains a key rail hub in central Kansas. Newton was founded as a railroad town in the 1870s, originally serving the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway. The current station building, constructed in 1929-1930, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Railway facilities existing today include:

- **Amtrak – Southwest Chief Line, Newton Station:** Located at 414 N. Main Street, this historic depot serves Amtrak's Southwest Chief, which runs daily between Chicago and Los Angeles. The station includes waiting areas, ticketing, and baggage services, and is the nearest Amtrak stop to Wichita. A bus shuttle connects Newton to Wichita and Oklahoma City via the Heartland Flyer.
- **BNSF Railway – Freight Operations**: Newton is a BNSF Certified Site, supporting freight operations and industrial development. The Sand Creek Facility and rail yard handle commodities like grain, tankers, and refrigerated goods. Newton is one of the few BNSF sites

with a locomotive turntable, used for directional changes. WATCO is the parent company of Newton's short-line railroad, Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad (KO), and a major supply chain company that uses the BNSF interchange point for grain and industrial product shipments.

Newton Station, located at the southwest corner of Main Street and 5th Street, is a historic train depot served by Amtrak's Southwest Chief route. Built in 1930, the depot is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and originally served as a major cattle-shipping point, playing a significant role in Newton's early development. In 1978, Depot Park was established adjacent to the station, creating a welcoming public space with landscaping, decorative features, a fountain, and architectural elements that celebrate the city's history.

Railways in Newton serve as both a strategic economic development asset and a significant barrier to local connectivity. Because rail lines intersect through the center of the city, it is common for traffic to be temporary but frequently stopped by trains. These blockages have long been a source of frustration for residents and a concern for public safety providers. While constructing an overpass has been studied in the past, the proximity of downtown's historic buildings poses a major challenge, as such infrastructure would obstruct building frontages and diminish property values. Key crossings impacted by train delays include Main Street near downtown, 1st Street on the west side, Walnut/Broadway, and 12th, 8th, and 7th Streets on the east side. Currently, overpasses exist on U.S. Route 50 on both the east and west sides of town, providing limited relief.

Newton also contains a short-line railroad, the Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad (KO), extending from the Missouri Pacific McPherson Subdivision route south toward El Dorado. This branch enters Newton from Spencer Road to South Kansas Avenue, continues north to East 12th Street, and veers northwest along Old Highway 81.

PUBLIC TRANSIT AND AIRPORT FACILITIES

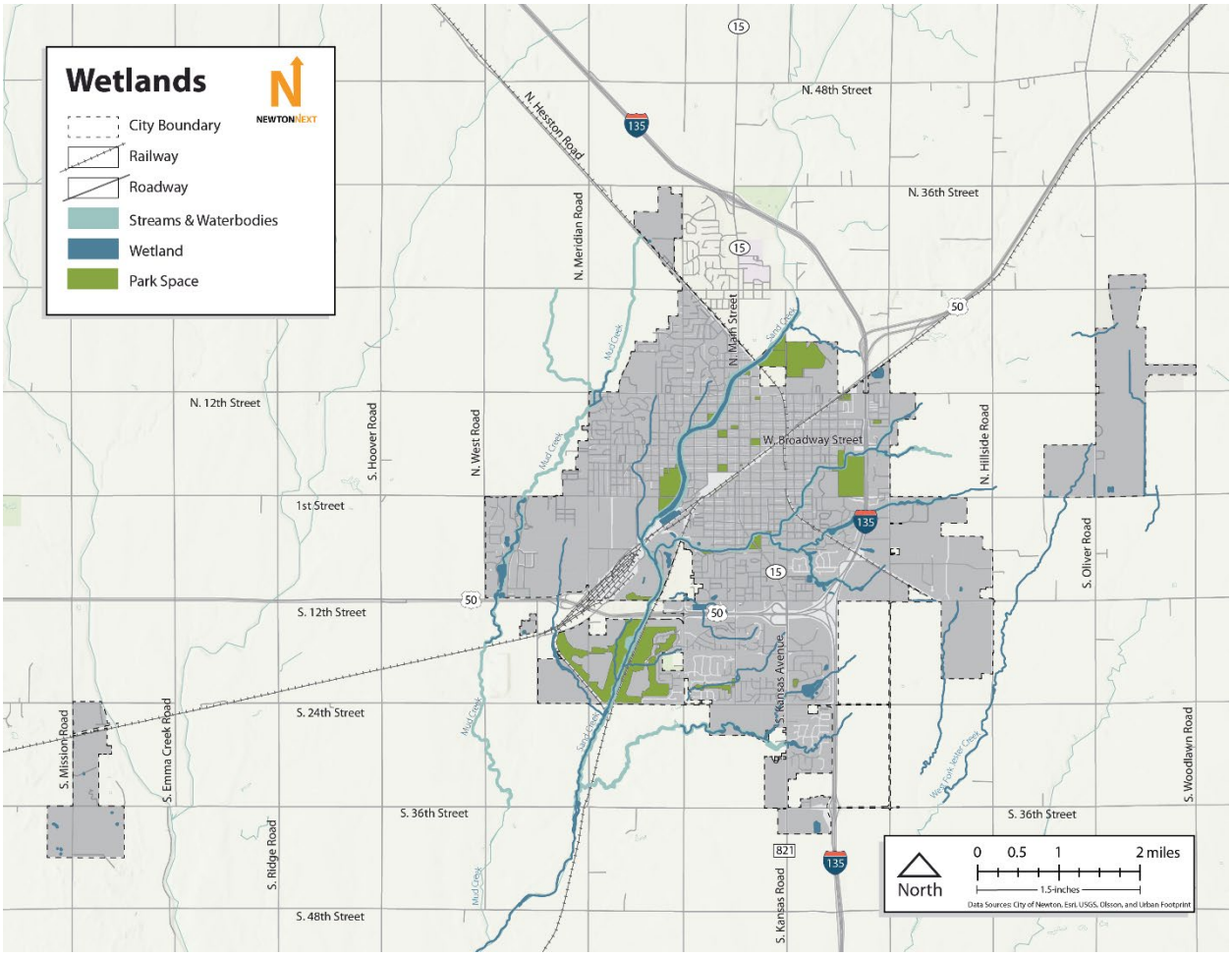
Newton City/County Airport (EWK) serves as a hub for general aviation and regional air traffic, supporting both private and business travel. Located two miles east of Newton on approximately 800 acres, the airport originally operated as a U.S. Navy training facility until the end of World War II. Day-to-day operations are managed by the City's Airport Director. Decisions are made jointly with the County, and a seven-member advisory committee offers insight and perspective on priorities.

EWK is designated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as a general aviation reliever airport for Wichita's Eisenhower National Airport. This designation means EWK helps reduce congestion at major

commercial airports by accommodating general aviation traffic. By doing so, it enables larger airports to operate more efficiently and maintain smoother air traffic flow. As part of this role, the FAA funds improvements at reliever airports to make them more attractive to general aviation pilots. EWK offers a range of services, including flight training, aircraft maintenance and repair, and storage for both private and commercial aircraft further supporting its function as a regional aviation resource.

Newton does not operate a city-run public transit system; however, residents have access to regional transportation services through Harvey County Interurban and other state-supported programs. Harvey County Interurban provides bus and minivan transportation for a variety of needs, including medical and personal appointments, and scheduled recreational outings with no eligibility requirements other than Harvey County residency. Interurban rides are wheelchair accessible and can be scheduled well in advance, and medical trips may be booked up to one year ahead. Service extends beyond Newton, with rides available to destinations such as Wichita, Hutchinson, and other surrounding areas. In addition, OT Cab Company provides on-demand ride services within Newton. Rides are filled on a first-call, first-serve basis, offering flexibility for local travel. Wheelchair-accessible trips are available for Newton-to-Newton rides.

NATURAL RESOURCES



WATER RESOURCES & FLOODPLAINS

Sand Creek is a central waterway that flows through the city and supports recreational trails and green spaces. Sand Creek is one of Newton's defining natural features and serves as a riparian corridor. As a riparian corridor, Sand Creek provides wildlife habitat and migratory routes and offers flood mitigation for the city. The city's water infrastructure includes stormwater systems and wetland areas integrated into parks like Centennial Park, which help manage runoff and support biodiversity.

Newton's floodplain boundaries, which run alongside its creeks and waterways, are mapped using ArcGIS tools provided by the city's Engineering Division and the Kansas Floodplain Viewer. These maps identify Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) and base flood elevations, which are critical for

zoning, permitting, and emergency planning. Floodplain data is used to guide development restrictions and stormwater management practices to reduce flood risk and protect natural habitats.

TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Newton sits within the Central Plains region of Kansas, characterized by gently rolling terrain and prairie landscapes. Elevation maps show subtle variations in topography, with low-lying areas near Sand Creek and higher ground to the west and north. The region's geology includes sedimentary rock formations, loess soils, and glacial drift, which influence soil chemistry, water retention, and vegetation patterns.

FORESTRY AND VEGETATION

Newton's urban forest includes a mix of native prairie grasses, riparian woodlands, and planted shade trees in parks and neighborhoods. The Kansas Ecological System identifies 49 vegetation and land cover types, including grasslands, croplands, and remnant forest patches. Field surveys conducted by the Kansas Biological Survey documented dominant plant species and vegetation health across thousands of sites. Although much of the area is cultivated or developed, the remaining open landscapes continue to support biodiversity, reduce soil erosion and offer opportunities for habitat restoration, education, and conservation partnerships.

PART 2 – SUMMARY OF RELEVANT PLANS AND STUDIES

Part 2 provides detailed summaries of relevant plans, policies, and documents provided by the City of Newton. This report is intended to demonstrate an understanding of past and current initiatives within the community to build from as the Comprehensive Plan is updated.

2010-2030 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The current Comprehensive Plan for Newton, titled "The ReNewton Project," provides a unified set of policies for both the City of Newton and the City of North Newton. Adopted in 2011, the plan was developed through extensive community engagement, including the ReNewton Steering Committee, which originally combined the Newton-North Newton Planning Commission (now split into two separate commissions) and eight additional citizens.

Community Vision and Values. These sections of the plan identifies high level aspirational statements and key priorities for Newton's future. This section serves as a foundational framework for the comprehensive plan. While developing the new plan, we may find that Newton's overall Vision and Values remain largely unchanged. However, this section will likely evolve to reflect new ideas and updated information. Some goals may already be accomplished and no longer require emphasis, while others may shift in priority. Additionally, we may choose to reorganize concepts to present them more effectively.

2010 Vision Statement: The Vision Statement reflects a fundamental desire for the community to grow and expand its tax base, and highlights several objectives for meeting the vision including downtown revitalization, entrepreneurship, employer recruitment, and marketing.

The following Values were also highlighted and expanded upon:

- Vibrant Economy – Diversify the tax base and expand jobs, business opportunities, and services.
- Revitalized Downtown & Newton Main Street Historic District – Encourage reinvestment in downtown through housing in historic buildings, preservation of architecture, active storefronts, and creation of "third spaces." This section references the 2009 Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District.
- Livability – Enhance amenities to attract college students, young professionals, families, and higher-income households.
- Commitment to Education – Invest in high-quality education and strengthen partnerships with Bethel College and Hutchinson Community College.

- Innovations in Transportation – Improve mobility through multimodal systems, including freight, cars, bicycles, electric vehicles, walking, and transit. Highlights include Kansas Logistics Park and undeveloped land near Newton City-County Airport, leveraging its location on the "SuperCorridor" from Canada to Mexico and inland Foreign Trade Zone opportunities.
- Healthy Living – Promote healthy lifestyles through urban design, including "complete streets" that support interconnected movement options.
- Preserving Our Town Character – Ensure orderly growth that maintains Newton's historical identity.
- Housing for All – Diversify housing types and support aging-in-place communities, including investment in older housing stock.
- Visionary Leadership – Emphasize sustained vision and long-term commitment from local leaders.
- Cultural Diversity & Social Cohesion – Foster inclusion and strengthen social bonds among diverse cultural groups.
- Sustainability – Protect environmental resources, promote clean air and water, green architecture, and recycling.
- Community Marketing – Coordinate communication strategies to attract residents, employers, and expand the tax base.

Community Goals. This chapter defines broad policy goals across key themes such as economic development, transportation, sustainability, housing, healthy living, and more. These goals translate community values into actionable direction for decision making.

Key Points highlighted in this chapter include:

- Economic Development- Diversify the tax base and support local businesses.
- Town Growth-Focus on planned expansion, efficient use of infrastructure, and maintaining small-town character.
- Transportation-Improve mobility for all modes, including pedestrians and cyclists.
- Quality of Life and Parks- Enhance amenities that attract residents and support health.
- Housing- Provide diverse, safe, and affordable options.
- Downtown- Reinforce its role as a cultural and economic center.

- Sustainability & Healthy Living- Integrate wellness, environmental responsibility, and resource conservation.
- Cultural Diversity- Promote inclusion and social cohesion.

Preserving Community Character, Neighborhoods, and Downtown. This chapter explores the elements that define Newton's unique character and presents strategies to preserve and strengthen both neighborhoods and the historic downtown district. It includes tools for promoting architectural compatibility, encouraging reinvestment, and supporting neighborhood revitalization. A key distinction from the 2010 comprehensive plan is that this effort focuses solely on Newton, KS. In 2010, Newton and North Newton collaborated on a single, unified plan. While North Newton is not directly included in this plan, its proximity and relationship to Newton remain important considerations, and coordination should occur where it makes sense.

This chapter is broken down into the following topic areas:

- Preserving Community Character
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Newton Downtown District

Key points highlighted in this chapter are:

- Protect and enhance historic character, especially Main Street.
- Promote high-quality community design for both new development and redevelopment.
- Reinforce strong, stable neighborhoods with housing rehabilitation, infill, and code enforcement.
- Support downtown as a mixed-use environment with retail, housing, civic spaces, and pedestrian improvements.
- Preserving the character of neighborhoods
- Promoting multi-mobility through management of street design and development pattern and context transitions
- Promoting community events and activities
- Improving public spaces, especially in downtown
- Improving substandard housing
- Promoting aging in place for senior residents and multigenerational living
- Supporting infill development

- Promoting LEED certification for residential construction

Creating a Livable and Healthy Community

This chapter focuses on quality of life, public health, wellness, cultural diversity, and social cohesion. It emphasizes how land use, transportation, parks, and housing all shape community health.

This chapter is broken down into the following topic areas:

- Quality of Life
- Community Health and Wellness
- Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion

Key Points highlighted in this chapter are:

- Expand and enhance parks, trails, and recreation as health infrastructure.
- Support access to health care, healthy foods, and active-living opportunities.
- Promote inclusive community identity, celebrating cultural diversity.
- Strengthen partnerships among public agencies, nonprofits, and institutions to address social and health issues.
- Foster environments that support physical activity, safety, and mental well-being.
- Build a new public library
- Limit the extent of hospital services in the community
- Improve gateways and entry aesthetics
- Create more infant and childcare options supported through partnerships to address funding
- Enforce ADA standards
- Create a one stop shop center for social services
- Create a Community Health Planning Council

Future Land Use: Principles and Policies

- Establish an urban growth framework to guide orderly, efficient expansion.

- Promote sustainable development patterns with mixed-use and connected street networks.
- Strengthen neighborhood development, including walkability and civic spaces.
- Guide redevelopment of the Kansas Avenue Corridor and the I-135 Commerce Corridor.
- Support industrial and business park development and airport-related uses.
- Incorporate parks and recreation into future growth areas.

Transportation

This chapter evaluates existing transportation challenges and outlines strategies for improving mobility across all modes. It reinforces the need for a balanced transportation system aligned with land use and healthy living.

Key points highlighted in this chapter include:

- Address safety and congestion issues in existing road networks.
- Promote future street connectivity and multimodal design standards.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle systems to support active transportation.
- Coordinate transportation with land-use patterns to reduce trip lengths and enhance access.
- Provide a Future Transportation Map to guide long-term improvements.

Municipal Utilities

This chapter outlines the planning, capacity, and maintenance needs of Newton's water, wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste system. It provides direction for infrastructure to support future growth.

Key points highlighted in this chapter include:

- Ensure reliable water supply and treatment capacity.
- Maintain and upgrade wastewater systems to meet regulatory and future needs.
- Manage stormwater through infrastructure and sustainable practices.
- Continue effective solid waste management and explore efficiency improvements.

2019 HOUSING STUDY

The 2019 Housing Study is a comprehensive housing study and needs assessment prepared by Canyon Research Southwest, Inc. for the City of Newton, Kansas. Its primary purpose is to evaluate the city's existing housing conditions (both for-sale and rental) quantify near-term housing demand, and provide strategic recommendations to guide future housing development. This study is highly relevant to both the update of Newton's Comprehensive Plan and the forthcoming update to its housing and market analysis.

The report offers a detailed demographic and economic profile of Newton, highlighting trends such as a slight population decline since 2010, modest employment growth, and below-average educational attainment and income levels. These factors collectively constrain the city's ability to support new housing construction. The study identifies a growing need for affordable rental housing, entry-level and move-up for-sale housing, and senior housing, particularly as the population of working-age adults (35-44) and seniors (65+) is projected to increase.

Newton's housing stock is characterized by a high proportion of detached single-family homes (80.8%), a relatively old inventory (with nearly half built before 1959), and a limited supply of multi-family and upscale housing. The for-sale market is dominated by homes priced under $200,000, with a notable shortage of new construction and higher-end options. The rental market, meanwhile, is tight, with low vacancy rates and a significant portion of renters spending more than 35% of their income on housing, indicating a strong need for both market-rate and income-based rental units.

The study forecasts demand for 175 to 270 new housing units between 2018 and 2023, split roughly 55% owner-occupied and 45% renter-occupied. It also identifies specific pricing segments for new housing, with the strongest demand expected for homes priced between $150,000 and $249,999 and rental units under $1,000 per month. The report emphasizes the importance of strategic development, including the use of city-owned land, incentives for builders, and partnerships with non-profits to deliver affordable and diverse housing options.

BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

The 2015 Bicycle Master Plan is a comprehensive planning document developed as part of the "ReNewton Project" for the City of Newton, Kansas and City of North Newton, Kansas. The goal of this plan was to enhance bicycle infrastructure and promote cycling as a viable mode of transportation through strategic investments across both cities. It includes detailed assessments of existing conditions, public input, crash data, infrastructure gaps, and regulatory frameworks, culminating in a phased implementation strategy for a citywide bicycle network.

The plan emphasizes five overarching goals: eliminating bicycle-related crashes, increasing the viability of cycling for everyday trips, improving community health, ensuring equitable access to facilities, and promoting bicycling as a community asset. To achieve these goals, the plan recommended a phased implementation strategy over ten years, with an estimated total cost of $9.3 million. It proposes a network of bike lanes, shared-use paths, and signage improvements, with specific recommendations for road diets to safely accommodate cyclists without significantly impacting vehicular traffic. The plan also includes design standards for bicycle facilities, parking, and signage, and recommends permanent bicycle count stations to monitor usage over time.

High-priority corridors (Phases 1 and 2) focus on centrally located routes that connect major destinations such as schools, parks, and commercial areas, and provide exclusive bicycle facilities where possible. The plan highlights guiding redevelopment of Kansas Avenue corridor and the I-135 commerce corridor. Later phases (3-5) extend the network to peripheral areas and undeveloped corridors, ensuring citywide connectivity. The plan also calls for rightsizing certain streets such as converting W 12th Street from four lanes to three with bike lanes to improve safety and accommodate cyclists without compromising vehicular traffic flow. The total estimated cost is approximately $9.3 million over ten years. Shared-use paths along Sand Creek and South Kansas Avenue are recommended for extension, while new paths are proposed along corridors like Spencer Road and SW 24th Street to link residential areas with employment and recreation centers.

Beyond infrastructure, the plan stresses bicycle parking improvements like high-quality racks and on-street bike corrals to support short-term and long-term parking needs. It also recommends enhanced signage and pavement markings for wayfinding and safety, integration of bicycle facilities into new developments, and adoption of "complete streets" principles in zoning and subdivision regulations. Public awareness campaigns and branding efforts, such as "Bike Newton," are encouraged to promote

cycling culture. Finally, the plan suggests installing permanent bicycle count stations to monitor usage trends and evaluate the impact of new facilities over time

Overall, the Bicycle Master Plan provides a comprehensive, data-driven roadmap for creating a safer, healthier, and more connected bicycle network. The plan emphasizes incremental implementation, cost-effective design, and integration with broader community goals related to health, land use, transportation, and economic vitality. .

S. KANSAS TRAFFIC STUDIES

The South Kansas Avenue Traffic Studies – 14th to 24th and 24th to 36th – are comprehensive traffic studies conducted to analyze existing transportation conditions, forecast future traffic volumes, and recommend infrastructure improvements along South Kansas Avenue from SE 14th Street to SE 36th Street. They are directly aligned with the goals and policies outlined in Newton's Comprehensive Plan, The ReNewton Project: Comprehensive Plan (2010–2030).

SOUTH KANSAS AVENUE – 14TH TO 24TH STREET

The first report for South Kansas Avenue, focusing on the corridor between 14th Street and 24th Street, was officially adopted in December 2012. The study emphasizes the importance of aligning infrastructure upgrades with anticipated commercial and residential development, including the Kansas Logistics Park, and highlights the need for connectivity between neighborhoods and commercial areas.

The report provides two primary recommendations:

1. Site Access and Network Circulation: The report calls for development along the corridor to provide additional connections to surrounding collector and local roadways. This strategy would prevent funneling all traffic onto South Kansas Avenue and create more options for access.
2. Future Infrastructure within the South Kansas Avenue Right-of-Way: The report recommends installing traffic signals at two intersections: the US-50 westbound ramp terminal and Windward Drive East/New Northern Road. A traffic signal has been installed at US-50, but not at Windward Drive. Instead, access at Windward Drive has been restricted to right turns onto South Kansas Avenue due to a median installation.

Additionally, the report identifies deficiencies in internal circulation, particularly at three-legged "T" intersections, which will likely warrant traffic signals in the future. The most significant recommendation

affecting vehicle travel was to align Windward Drive West with Windward Drive East and add a third lane in each direction from that intersection north to 14th Street. This recommendation appears to have been implemented.

The report also recommends investing in pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the corridor, including requiring developers to add facilities on the west side of the street where they were lacking. Today, this gap has mostly been filled, as sidewalks have been added on the west side of the street, though gaps remain near the Walmart site and closest to 24th Street. The report also recommended pedestrian crossings at Medical Center Drive.

SOUTH KANSAS AVENUE – 24TH AND 36TH STREET

The second report for South Kansas Avenue focuses on the segment between SE 24th Street and SE 36th Street and was officially adopted in October 2013. This study builds upon the first report and continues the analysis southward. Like its predecessor, it evaluates existing conditions and the potential impacts of future development.

The report identifies major potential improvements to South Kansas Avenue in this area, including reconfiguring the roadway from a four-lane undivided highway to a four-lane divided roadway with traffic signals and turn bays at key intersections. While roundabouts were considered as a possible intersection treatment, they were ultimately not recommended. As of 2025, this section of South Kansas Avenue remains a four-lane undivided highway, as significant development has not yet occurred to justify the level of investment needed to manage increased traffic.

As development progresses, the report recommends installing signalized intersections in accordance with MUTCD standards and the guidance of a traffic engineer. Potential future signalized intersections along South Kansas Avenue include SE 24th Street, Glen Creek Street, Autumn Glen Parkway, a new east-west roadway (Connection G), and SE 36th Street. As of 2025, no signalized intersections have been constructed in this portion of South Kansas Avenue.

The study also anticipates opportunities to improve network redundancy by extending Old Main Street, which runs parallel to South Kansas Avenue, as a collector street as development occurs. This extension would provide an additional north-south connection in the area. Duncan Street is also identified as a potential north-south collector street on the east side of the corridor, though its extension would only provide connectivity south of SE 24th Street and must integrate with planned subdivision development.

Both studies provide data-driven insights into how South Kansas Avenue can evolve to support the city's vision for growth, livability, and transportation innovation. The recommendations align with ReNewton's goals for walkability, connectivity, and sustainable development, offering a clear roadmap for infrastructure investment that supports both current needs and future aspirations. Incorporating these findings into the Comprehensive Plan ensures that land use and transportation planning are integrated, responsive to community input, and strategically positioned to guide Newton's development through 2030 and beyond.

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

The Downtown Master Plan is a comprehensive redevelopment strategy for the Newton Downtown Redevelopment District, prepared in 2009 by Skinner Design Studios and collaborators. It serves as a visionary and practical guide for revitalizing Newton's downtown core, bounded by 9th Street to the north, 1st Street to the south, and Walnut and Ash Streets to the east and west. The plan is rooted in extensive community engagement, historical analysis, and urban design principles, and it outlines a series of development models, infrastructure improvements, and policy recommendations aimed at transforming downtown into a vibrant, walkable, and economically resilient district.

The document identifies key "activators" (such as the Newton Public Library and proposed venues like a downtown farmer's market and theater), interpretive plazas, and walkability enhancements as central to creating a dynamic urban experience. It proposes a Context Driven Vision (CDV) that emphasizes local identity, cultural heritage, and community interaction. Specific development models include mixed-use infill, alley revitalization, a reinterpretation of the historic roundhouse, courthouse and government center enhancements, and a multi-purpose venue space. Streetscape improvements, traffic calming, and sustainable landscaping are also detailed, along with a phased action plan and a planning matrix that outlines implementation strategies, timelines, budgets, and funding sources.

The plan's relevance to updating Newton's Comprehensive Plan is significant. It provides a detailed framework for aligning land use, transportation, economic development, and cultural preservation goals within the downtown area. It also introduces the concept of forming a Community Development Corporation (CDC) to lead redevelopment efforts, a model that could be expanded citywide. By integrating the Downtown Master Plan into the broader Comprehensive Plan, Newton can ensure that downtown revitalization efforts are coordinated, community-driven, and sustainable, supporting long-term growth, livability, and civic pride.

MAIN STREET SURVEY

The Downtown Newton Community Survey, conducted by Main Street America in 2024, gathered feedback from 895 respondents to understand perceptions, behaviors, and aspirations for the downtown district. Respondents included residents, visitors, business owners, and property owners, offering a comprehensive view of current conditions and future opportunities. Most respondents do not live downtown but interact with the area as visitors or employees. 79 percent visit regularly, and 91 percent live within 15 minutes of downtown. Nearly half visit weekly, and 28 percent visit daily, with most driving alone and reaching downtown in five minutes or less.

Business owners expressed concerns primarily about attracting new customers, retaining existing ones, and staffing challenges. Other issues included the cost of building maintenance and competition from online retailers. Comments highlighted the need for better signage for businesses off Main Street and interest in an entertainment district designation. Property owners identified the cost of maintaining buildings, deteriorating public infrastructure, and neglect of neighboring properties as top concerns. While many were not interested in advancing their own building improvements, the most popular projects included upper-floor renovations, roof repairs, and window replacements. Over half of property owners were unaware of resources offered by the Choose Newton Main Street program.

Visitors reported that their top reasons for coming downtown were shopping for fun, attending events or festivals, and accessing public services such as the library and city hall. Dining and business services also ranked highly. When asked about preferred times to visit, respondents overwhelmingly favored evenings after 5 p.m., followed by mid-morning hours. Saturdays were the most popular day, followed by Fridays and Sundays. Desired business types included casual or family restaurants, breweries or distilleries, and family entertainment venues such as arcades or escape rooms. Other interests included boutiques, arts venues, and coffee shops.

The most significant issues identified in downtown were a lack of businesses suited to respondents, too many vacant storefronts, and businesses not open during preferred hours. Railroad crossings were frequently cited as a barrier to access, and limited evening activity was noted as a challenge. Regarding housing, 30 percent of respondents expressed interest in more downtown housing, while nearly half were unsure. Factors that would make living downtown more desirable included more things to do, livelier activity, and extended business hours. Cleanliness and crime were not considered major barriers.

Respondents demonstrated a strong emotional connection to Newton, with 71 percent having lived in the community for more than 10 years. Seventy-one percent agreed or strongly agreed that they feel

emotionally connected to the city. Comments reflected nostalgia for a vibrant downtown, frustration with train delays, and a desire for more social spaces and evening activities.

Based on these findings, several potential recommendations emerge. Business development should focus on attracting restaurants, breweries, and entertainment venues to activate evenings and weekends. Shared food spaces and family-friendly attractions could further enhance downtown's appeal. Property support efforts should expand awareness of Choose Newton Main Street programs and offer incentives for upper-floor renovations and building upgrades, while addressing infrastructure improvements. Marketing strategies should promote downtown as a destination for shopping and festivals, improve signage for off-Main businesses, and develop evening events to match visitor preferences. Housing strategies should encourage mixed-use development and upper-floor residential conversions, ensuring options are safe, modern, and affordable. Access improvements should explore solutions for railroad crossing delays and enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety. Finally, community engagement should prioritize inclusive social spaces and family-friendly activities, fostering partnerships between business owners, property owners, and city leadership to align priorities.

HISTORIC GUIDELINES AND DOWNTOWN HISTORICAL RESOURCES SURVEY

The Newton C3 Survey (October 2024) is a historic and cultural resource survey of the Central Business and C-3 District in Newton, Kansas. Funded by a Historic Preservation Fund grant from the Kansas State Historical Society, the project aimed to update the inventory of historic commercial buildings and assess the potential expansion of the Newton Main Street Historic Districts I and II. The survey covered 193 parcels, including previously unsurveyed properties, existing district buildings, and those listed in the Kansas Historic Resources Inventory (KHRI) but not formally evaluated. The study expanded the period of significance from 1953 to 1978 to capture mid-century and modern-era resources, noting that many buildings retain strong architectural integrity and reflect Newton's evolution in commerce, government, and design.

The methodology followed national and state preservation standards, including field surveys, photography, archival research, and architectural integrity assessments. Properties were evaluated based on seven integrity criteria: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The survey area spanned from 8th Street to 1st Street (north to south) and Oak Street to Poplar Street (east to west), encompassing a mix of commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings.

Key findings highlight the need to broaden historic contexts beyond architecture to include social and cultural narratives, particularly contributions from Mexican, Chinese, and African American communities, which have been historically underrepresented. The report emphasizes the Mexican American community's deep ties to the Santa Fe Railroad and its cultural imprint through housing, religious institutions, and social organizations. Institutional buildings such as hospitals, schools, and churches were also identified as significant anchors of community life. Recommendations include expanding the existing historic districts' boundaries and period of significance, developing multiple-property documentation forms, and integrating diverse cultural histories into preservation planning. Additionally, strategies for infill development and placemaking are proposed to counteract the prevalence of parking lots and enhance downtown vitality. Overall, the survey underscores Newton's layered heritage and calls for inclusive preservation efforts that honor both architectural and social histories.

CHOOSE NEWTON

Choose Newton is the official community promotional website for Newton, Kansas, designed to showcase the city's marketing initiatives, seasonal and annual events, and local amenities. The site serves as a hub for residents and visitors to explore everything Newton has to offer, including local attractions and dining, retail, and business opportunities.

A few highlights include:

- **Passport to Newton**: A seasonal guide that highlights summer activities, camps, festivals, and events in one convenient location.
- **Community Calendar**: A comprehensive listing of local events, including concerts, trivia nights, story times, and registration deadlines for recreational programs.
- **Sand Creek Trail**: Promoted as a scenic destination for outdoor exploration and recreation.
- **Downtown Engagement**: Initiatives like "Connect Downtown" encourage collaboration among local businesses and promote events such as Third Thursday.
- **News & Updates**: Regular announcements about upcoming events and opportunities to get involved in community life.
- **Visitor Resources**: Information on restaurants, shopping, lodging, Amtrak services, and more to support tourism and hospitality.

Choose Newton also features community-focused webpage with a variety of resources in an effort to attract new residents. Some of the options to explore include:

- **Love, Newton**: A campaign mirroring the statewide Love, Kansas campaign (an effort through the Kansas Department of Commerce to attract additional residents to the State of Kansas). The Love, Newton portion of the website features email and text templates for residents to share and attract new residents.
- **Call Newton Home**: Provides an overview of different housing options such as historic homes, multifamily, senior living, and southside neighborhoods to showcase the City's housing options.
- **Schools**: Provides information about options for educational institutions in Newton, including USD 373.

The downtown webpage promotes Newton's downtown as an attractive place for business owners to locate and for visitors to visit. This webpage and its tabs include maps of Downtown, the Main Street Annual Report, small business resources, and a list of events unique to Downtown Newton. Choose Newton acts as a virtual gateway to experience Newton's community. From local events to business resources, it connects residents, businesses, and visitors with everything that the community has to offer.

2022 SUBDIVISION CODE AND ZONING CODE

The Newton Subdivision Code and Zoning Code are foundational regulatory frameworks adopted by the City of Newton, Kansas in 2022. Together, they establish the legal and procedural basis for land development, use, and subdivision within the city limits. These documents are highly relevant to the process of updating Newton's Comprehensive Plan, as they codify the city's current development standards, priorities, and regulatory mechanisms.

The Subdivision Code governs how land is divided and prepared for development. It outlines procedures for platting, design standards for infrastructure (such as streets, sidewalks, and utilities), and requirements for public improvements. It also includes provisions for lot splits, mergers, and variances, ensuring that land development aligns with Newton's goals for orderly growth, connectivity, and public safety. The code emphasizes compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan, requiring that subdivisions support the city's long-term vision for land use, infrastructure, and environmental stewardship.

The Zoning Code complements the Subdivision Code by regulating land use and building form across various zoning districts. It defines permitted uses, bulk regulations, design standards, and procedures for

special use permits and planned unit developments (PUDs). The code also includes provisions for emerging housing types such as tiny homes and flexible multi-family developments, reflecting Newton's evolving housing needs. Additionally, it addresses signage, parking, landscaping, floodplain management, and historic preservation, key elements that shape the city's built environment and community character.

Both codes are directly tied to the Comprehensive Plan through their stated purposes and procedural requirements. They operationalize the goals of the plan by translating policy into enforceable standards. For example, subdivision approvals must demonstrate consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and zoning amendments require findings related to neighborhood character, public health, and infrastructure capacity. As Newton updates its Comprehensive Plan, these codes provide a baseline for evaluating current practices, identifying regulatory gaps, and proposing policy changes that can be implemented through future code amendments.

In summary, the 2022 Subdivision and Zoning Codes are essential tools for guiding Newton's growth and development. They reflect the city's current planning philosophy and provide the regulatory structure needed to implement the updated Comprehensive Plan. Their integration into the planning process ensures that future development is aligned with community goals, infrastructure capabilities, and environmental considerations.

2025 ADOPTED BUDGET

The 2025 adopted budget for Newton includes seven sections: (1) Budget Process & Policies; (2) Financial Plan; (3) Budget Summaries; (4) General Fund; (5) Other Governmental Funds; (6) Enterprise Funds; (7) Other Funds.

BUDGET PROCESS & POLICIES

The City of Newton's budget process is overseen by a five-member City Commission, and the City Manager and Finance Director responsible for preparing and presenting the annual budget in accordance with Commission policies. The budget follows a calendar year cycle and integrates both short- and long-term strategic planning.

Kansas state laws govern the process, including the Cash Basis Law, which prohibits creating financial obligations without sufficient funds on hand, except in emergencies through "no fund warrants." Internal

accounting controls are maintained to safeguard assets and ensure accurate financial reporting, based on the principle of reasonable assurance. Expenditures must be authorized within an approved budget that does not exceed anticipated revenues and carry-forward balances. State law requires a balanced budget for tax-levying funds, meaning revenues and available cash must be equal to city expenditures. Additionally, SB 13 introduced the Revenue Neutral Rate (RNR), limiting property tax increases without prior notice and a public hearing; exceeding the RNR requires a resolution after such a hearing. Budget amendments are permitted under State Statute 79-2929 for non-property tax revenue increases and only in exceptional circumstances, following public notice and hearing requirements.

The budget development calendar typically runs through August, involving departmental meetings, valuation assessments, public hearings, and final adoption.

The City uses banking services for routine transactions, checking accounts, and short-term investments. Interest earned is based on short-term U.S. Treasury bill rates. Extra funds are invested in local banks or the Kansas Municipal Investment Pool (KMIP), which is managed by the State Treasurer and backed by federal securities. Before using the Pool, the City must first offer funds to local banks; if they match the Pool's rate, the money stays local. All investments must be fully secured by federally guaranteed collateral.

The city also maintains a five-year long-range financial plan and a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) led by the Public Works Director. Large capital projects are typically financed through municipal bonds with maturities aligned to the asset's useful life, often front-loaded to reduce long-term taxpayer burden.

Oversight includes annual independent audits and established purchasing guidelines. The City's Fund Balance Policy requires minimum reserves of 15% for the General Fund, 5% for other funds, and a 1.25x debt service coverage for enterprise funds. Property taxes are calculated using the mill levy, which is based on assessed property values determined by the County Appraiser's Office. These values vary between residential, commercial, and agricultural use.

The City's fund structure includes governmental funds (e.g., General Fund, Library, Special Revenue), proprietary funds (e.g., Waterworks, Solid Waste), and fiduciary funds, which are held in trust and not used for operations. Each fund type serves specific financial and operational purposes, ensuring transparency and compliance with legal and fiscal responsibilities.

FINANCIAL PLAN

The Financial Plan serves as a strategic roadmap for managing municipal finances over a five-year period. It combines forecasting and policy guidance to help the City Commission, staff, and residents understand how resources are allocated, what services are funded, and how revenues are generated.

The plan is structured into four phases: 1) mobilization, which puts into place resources needed to undertake planning, preliminary analysis, and other elements intended to support the scope of the effort; 2) analysis, which focuses on the city's financial position; 3) decision, where strategies and plans are created; and 4) execution, which involves action on the plan.

The plan uses various forecasting methods to project revenues and expenditures. It identifies key revenue sources such as property taxes, sales taxes, franchise fees, and service charges, with property taxes being the largest contributor. The 2025 mill levy is set at 71.361, slightly reduced from the previous year. Expenditures are categorized into personnel services, contractual services, commodities and supplies, vehicle operations, capital outlay, and transfers. Personnel services represent the largest expense, followed by debt service and other contractual obligations.

Each fund (General, Library, Airport, Special Liability, and Debt Service) is analyzed for fiscal health and challenges. For example, the General Fund faces pressure from economic conditions and limited flexibility for emergencies, while the Library Fund must manage debt from a recent facility upgrade. Enterprise funds, including Water, Wastewater, Sanitation, Golf, and the Meridian Center, are self-supporting and rely on user fees. These funds face challenges such as rising operational costs, infrastructure maintenance, and compliance with state mandates.

The Water and Wastewater Funds are particularly impacted by infrastructure needs and regulatory requirements, with rate increases planned to maintain financial stability. The Sanitation Fund, supported by refuse collection fees, and the Golf Fund, buoyed by strong customer loyalty and event hosting, also require careful monitoring. The Meridian Center Fund, supported by bond revenues, is positioned for growth through increased community engagement and event hosting.

BUDGET SUMMARIES

The City of Newton's Budget Summaries document provides a comprehensive overview of revenues and expenditures across all operating funds for fiscal years 2022 through 2025. It includes actual figures for 2022 and 2023, and adopted budgets for 2024 and 2025.

Overall Trends

- Total Revenues increased from $50.87 million in 2022 to a projected $56.36 million in 2025.
- Total Expenditures rose from $52.38 million in 2022 to $59.89 million in 2025.

Major Revenue Sources (Includes interfund transfers from and to other funds)

- Taxes are the largest revenue source, growing from $17.84 million in 2022 to $21.88 million in 2025.
- Other significant sources include:
    - Charges for Services: $2.13 million in 2025
    - Waterworks Revenue: $5.86 million in 2025
    - Wastewater Revenue: $7.38 million in 2025
    - Transfer In: $7.4 million in 2025
    - Golf Course Revenue: $1.94 million in 2025
    - Meridian Center Revenue: $465,000 in 2025 (includes transfers)

Major Expenditure Categories (Includes interfund transfers from and to other funds)

- Personal Services (e.g., salaries and benefits) are the largest expense, increasing from $20.5 million in 2022 to $26.26 million in 2025.
- Contractual Services follow, rising to $17.17 million in 2025.
- Other categories include:
    - Commodities & Supplies: $3.17 million
    - Vehicle Operating: $1.17 million

- Capital Outlay: $519,200
- Transfers Out: $11.61 million

Fund Highlights

- General Fund: Largest operating fund, with 2025 revenues at $25.17 million and expenditures at $26.32 million.
- Enterprise Funds (Waterworks, Wastewater, Solid Waste, Golf Course, Meridian Center) are self-supporting and show steady growth.
- Bond & Interest Funds support debt service obligations, with increasing expenditures reflecting capital financing needs.
- Special Revenue Funds (e.g., Alcohol/Drug, Parks & Rec, Convention & Visitors) maintain consistent funding levels.

This summary reflects a fiscally active city with growing revenues and expenditures aligned with service expansion and infrastructure investment.

GENERAL FUND

The City of Newton's General Revenue Summary outlines actual and adopted revenue figures across various categories for fiscal years 2022 through 2025. The total general revenue has steadily increased from $21.05 million in 2022 to a projected $25.17 million in 2025. The largest revenue source is taxes, which have grown from $14.99 million in 2022 to an adopted $18.65 million in 2025, reflecting consistent increases year over year. Charges for services also contribute significantly, with a peak in 2023 at $2.5 million, followed by a slight dip and recovery to $2.13 million in 2025. Other categories such as intergovernmental revenue, licenses and permits, fines and penalties, and other revenue remain relatively stable, with minor fluctuations. Transfers in (funds moved from other accounts) vary more significantly, peaking at $3.1 million in 2024 before dropping to $2.49 million in 2025. Overall the data reflects a healthy and growing revenue base, with taxes and service charges as the primary drivers. The General Fund is broken down into the following departmental budgets:

- Administration
- Building Maintenance
- Cemetery
- Engineering
- Finance
- Fire/EMS
- Information Technology
- Law
- Parks
- Police
- Streets

Other Governmental Funds. This section provides detail into specific Governmental Funds tied to particular uses. This includes:

- Airport
- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Library
- Special Alcohol & Special Highway
- Special Liability & Special Parks
- Special Law Enforcement

Enterprise Funds. This section outlines details about the following Enterprise Funds for Newton, Kansas:

- Meridian Center
- Sand Creek Golf Course
- Sanitation
- Service Center
- Wastewater
- Water

Other Funds. This section outlines details about the following Other Funds for Newton, Kansas:

- Bond & Interest
- Cemetery Endowment
- Rural Housing Incentive Districts
- Community Improvement District
- Municipalities Fight Addiction