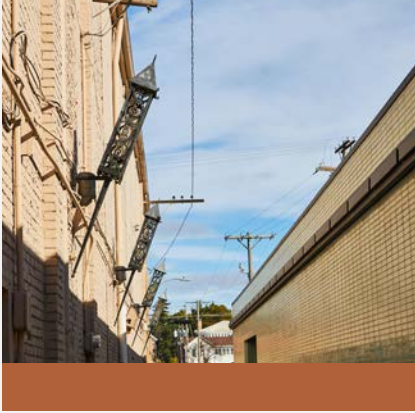




# atchison, kansas

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

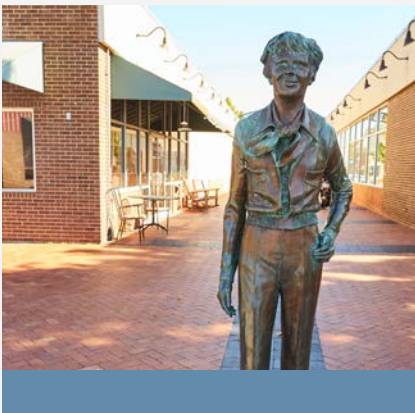
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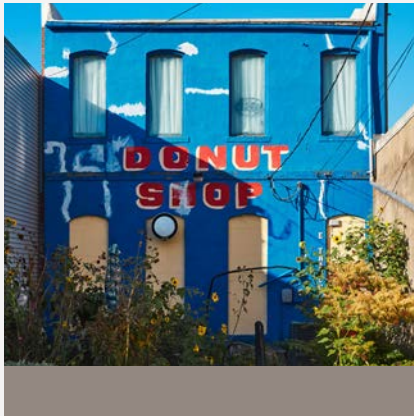


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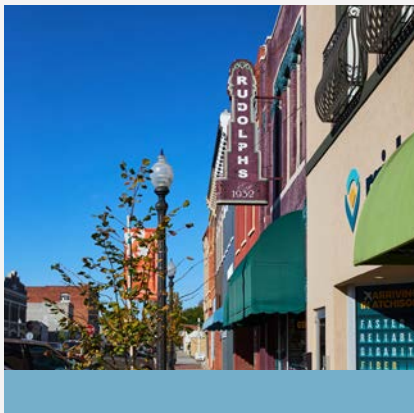
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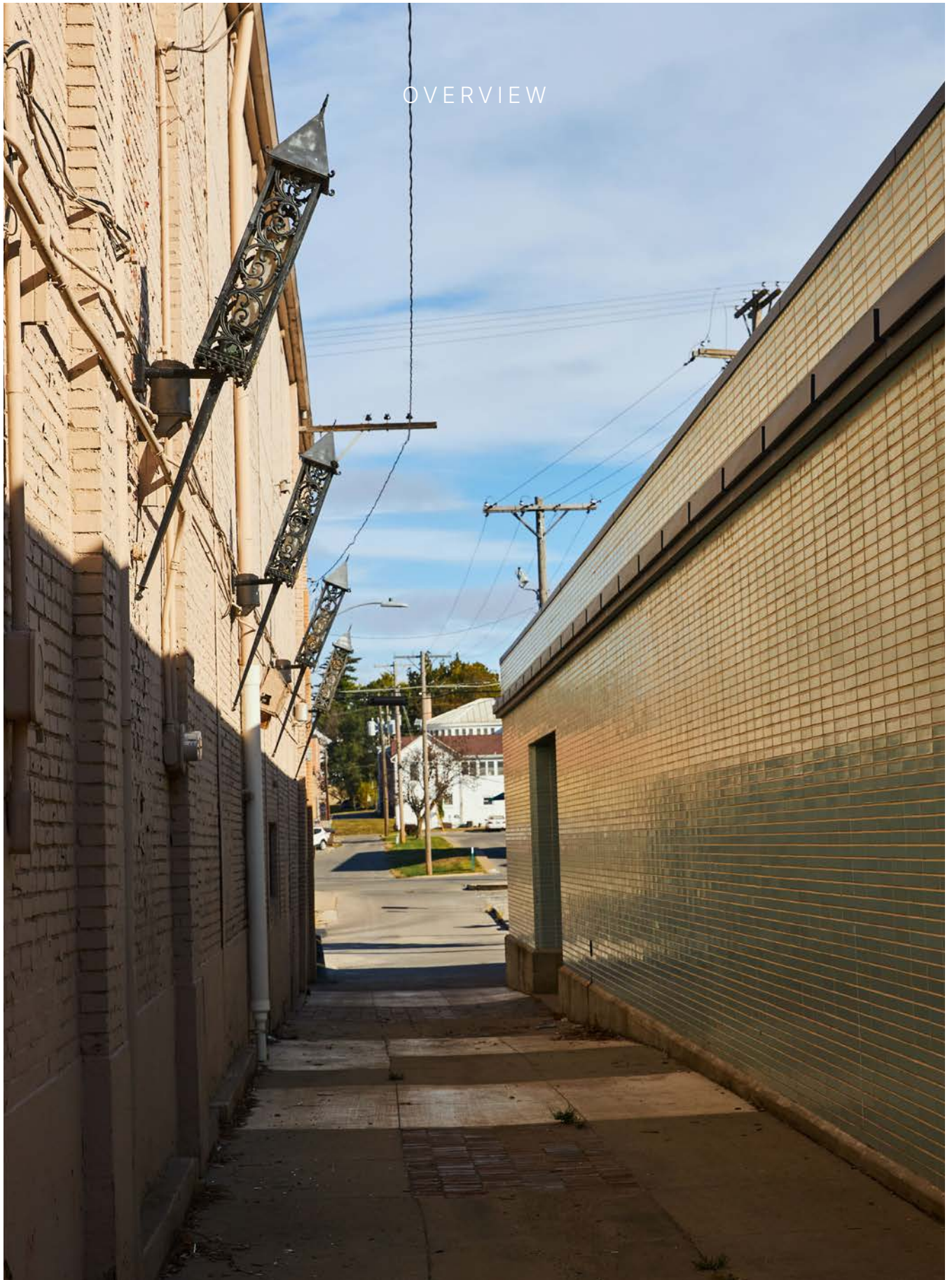
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OVERVIEW



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# overview

In October 2020 the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD) launched the Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge (RPIC) to provide technical assistance and planning support to foster placemaking and spur economic development in rural communities. USDA RD selected five technical assistance providers from across the country to assist identified communities with preserving cultural and historic structures, enhancing capacity for broadband access, and supporting the development of transportation, housing and recreational spaces, among other things.

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In collaboration with USDA RD, [Atlas Community Studios](#) and [McClure](#) partnered to launch the [Midwest Placemaking Innovation Accelerator](#) to develop placemaking action plans and provide implementation technical assistance to three rural communities, including: [Allen County, Kansas](#), [Atchison, Kansas](#), and [Sheffield, Iowa](#).

**The project team is implementing the strategic process in four phases between January 2021 - September 2022:**

## 01.

**Visioning & Public Input:** Host visioning sessions for the steering committee and public, facilitate focus groups and one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, and solicit feedback via online survey(s).

## 02.

**Community Assessment:** Compile and analyze quantitative and qualitative data, determine emerging themes, identify potential project concepts, and assess the viability of priority projects/initiatives.

## 03.

**Placemaking Action Plan:** Define priority projects/initiatives, identify key partners, determine programming, estimate capital and short-term operating costs, and curate a list of public and private funding sources to consider for implementation.

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## 04.

### **Implementation Technical Assistance:**

Prioritize projects/initiatives, identify fundraising coordinator(s), build cross-sector partnerships, identify implementation committee members, determine viable funding opportunities to implement priority projects/initiatives, and establish a timeline to execute.

---

The overall goals of the placemaking process are economic and social development, increased population and tourism, and improvement to quality of life standards.

Atchison's placemaking action plan focuses on three key priorities:

- Housing
- Economic Development
- Downtown Revitalization

The final deliverable for Atchison is a designed PDF including all information gathered, the full action plan with next steps for implementation, and appendices with additional resources for each priority area. Additionally, Allen County will receive an abbreviated version of the PDF in the form of a custom website with a unique domain to highlight significant components of the placemaking action plan for consumption by the broader public.



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# about atlas community studios

Atlas Community Studios was founded by a small, diverse group of creative problem-solvers and entrepreneurs looking for the opportunity to advance the economic prosperity of small and rural communities across the country. With decades of combined experience spanning both the public and private sectors, the Atlas team specializes in strategic planning, economic development, and creative placemaking. Atlas helps communities plan for development and growth through collaborative strategic planning and simple-to-execute, realistic strategies. The Atlas team's portfolio of work includes more than 47 action-oriented plans in rural communities across 19 states and one Canadian province, including a town as small as 80 people and a state with nearly 3 million residents.



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# about mcclure

McClure is a civil engineering company with the mission to make lives better. And we achieve this by thinking like owners. We do whatever it takes to get your job from concept to completion. We help clients navigate opportunities like funding and building public support for a project. Always adding value and imagining what's possible. Our engineering and planning expertise includes transportation, aviation, structures, water, wastewater, stormwater management, land development, landscape architecture, construction observation, administration, surveying, and community development. Since 1956, McClure has grown to a firm of nearly 200 professionals in ten offices located in Ankeny, Carroll, Clive (headquarters), North Liberty, Fort Dodge, Carroll, and Sioux City, Iowa; North Kansas City, Macon, and Columbia, Missouri; and Lenexa, Kansas. McClure has 60 Registered Professional Engineers, 12 Registered Land Surveyors, one Registered Landscape Architect, four LEED Accredited Professionals, one Certified Envision Sustainability Professional, and one AICP Certified Planner.

INTRODUCTION



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# introduction

The Atchison Placemaking Action Plan process includes a holistic analysis of key trends, opportunities, and challenges the community faces to achieve a prosperous economic and social future. Quantitative research is combined with comprehensive stakeholder outreach to ensure that Atchison's strategic priorities reflect the community's vision and goals.



# planning & technical assistance process

## **STEERING COMMITTEE**

- The City of Atchison assembled a project steering committee comprised of 13 individuals with backgrounds ranging from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.
- The steering committee has convened or been updated quarterly for to assist with oversight of the placemaking process and to ensure the development of the action plan is community-centered and in alignment with countywide priorities.
- The Atlas/McClure team convened the steering committee for its first official meeting in February 2021 to provide an overview of the RPIC initiative and the scope of work for the placemaking process before facilitating a visioning session to solicit input about the region’s assets, challenges, and opportunities related to housing and economic development.
- During the Atlas/McClure team’s first site visit in July 2021, the Core Group met to discuss emerging themes stemming from the public visioning sessions, public input meeting, and focus groups.

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

- The Atlas/McClure team facilitated two open-invitation public visioning sessions via Zoom in April 2021.
- In July 2021, the Atlas/McClure team visited Atchison for the first site visit to tour the community, attend meetings with key stakeholders, facilitate focus groups, and meet with the Steering Committee Core Group.
- An online community survey was released in July 2021 and generated 309 responses.

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## **FOCUS GROUPS**

- In July 2021, the Atlas/McClure team facilitated three in person focus groups with an emphasis on topics such as housing, economic development, workforce training and education, cultural amenities, entrepreneurship, and downtown revitalization.
  - Focus Group 1: Downtown Main Street Board
  - Focus Group 2: Major Employers
  - Focus Group 3: Housing - Builders and Developers
- Overall, more than 30 individuals participated in the focus group meetings.

## **COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**

- The community assessment report features high-level quantitative trends for Atchison compared to three peer communities (Ottawa, Parsons and Winfield, KS), Atchison County, the State of Kansas, and the United States.
- The report also incorporates key themes from the stakeholder input conducted to date to determine assets and challenges related to housing, workforce development, downtown development, and overall quality of life amenities.
- In addition to the quantitative data and stakeholder input analysis, the Atlas/McClure team conducted topical research to contextualize the key trends and issues affecting Atchison which ultimately informs the strategic opportunities and priority project concepts in the placemaking action plan.

## existing reports & studies

The following reports and studies helped inform the findings of the Community Assessment and will be considered for incorporation into the placemaking action plan as necessary:

- [Atchison 2020 Strategic Plan \(2020\)](#)
- [City of Atchison Comprehensive Plan \(2016-2030\)](#)
- [City of Atchison Infill Housing Development Guide \(2020\)](#)
- City of Atchison Housing Strategic Plan (2020)
- [A Housing Study of Atchison, KS \(2019\) - NOVOGRADAC](#)
- [EDAG Strategies and Priorities](#)
- 2021 Main Street Application
- [Downtown/Riverfront Design Standards \(2000\)](#)
- Kansas Main Street Design Standards (Updated 2021)
- [Neighborhood Revitalization Plan - Atchison County, Kansas \(2021\)](#)
- [Mo-Kan Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy - 5 year plan \(2020\)](#)

### DATA SOURCES

The community assessment report utilizes a variety of data indicators to examine Atchison's competitiveness as a place to live, work, and do business. The Atlas/McClure team sourced data primarily from the U.S. Census Bureau and other public sources including the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).



## **CENSUS ESTIMATES**

The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey that collects and produces information on social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics for communities throughout the United States. While the survey is annual, data indicators for communities with fewer than 65,000 residents are typically provided as five-year averages in order to increase statistical reliability and reduce margins of error.

The tradeoff is that ACS 5-Year Estimates are less current. For instance, 5-Year Estimates from the 2019 ACS are derived from 60 months of data collected between 2015 and 2019. Because Atchison has a population of fewer than 65,000 residents, this assessment exclusively uses 5-Year Estimates for ACS data indicators. To improve the readability of the document, ACS data indicators are typically labeled as being from a single year (e.g. 2018); readers should be aware that these data indicators in fact represent estimates for a longer period of time.

## **COMPARISON GEOGRAPHIES**

Atchison, KS is the primary geographic unit of analysis in this report. However, to provide additional context, data indicators for Atchison are benchmarked against the United States, the State of Kansas, and three comparison counties: Winfield, Ottawa, and Parsons, KS. Comparison areas were chosen by the Atlas/McClure team, and are intended to provide context and perspective on Atchison trends but will not influence the determination of strategic priorities or project/initiative concepts.

### Comparison communities:

- Winfield, KS - pop. 11,700 (An hour outside of Wichita)
- Ottawa, KS - pop. 12,625 (An hour outside of Kansas City)
- Parsons, KS - pop. 9,600 (Not near a major metro area)

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## **LOCATION QUOTIENTS**

A key concept utilized in the data analysis section of this report is Location Quotients (LQ). They are used to determine the relative concentration of an economic sector or occupation in Atchison versus the nation as a whole. They are essentially a shorthand used to convey whether the community has a local advantage or disadvantage for a particular segment of the economy or an occupation.

- An LQ of 1.0 indicates that the local and national concentrations are the same.
- An LQ above 1.0 means that the community has a competitive advantage over the United States. In other words, there are more individuals working in this sector than the average community nationwide.
- An LQ below 1.0 means that the community is underserved for that employment sector versus the national average. In other words, there are fewer individuals working in the community versus the United States. This implies that some of these jobs are being sourced from outside the local economy.



*Jerry's Abgain*  
Restaurant & Bar

5th St  
Kansas Ave

A.L. 5915  
MASONIC  
\* TEMPLE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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# executive summary

The Atchison Placemaking Action Plan process includes a holistic analysis of key trends, opportunities, and challenges the community faces to achieve a prosperous economic and social future. Quantitative research combines with comprehensive stakeholder outreach to ensure that Atchison's strategic priorities reflect the community's vision.

## KEY TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

The following key trends and challenges emerged from the quantitative and qualitative research conducted for this Community Assessment.

- 01.** The cost to build new housing continues to outpace the wages for a majority of residents
- 02.** Low housing valuations of the aging housing stock are negatively impacting outside investors from developing in Atchison
- 03.** Proximity to larger metropolitan areas is both a benefit and a challenge for employers. Job opportunities are available, but lack of housing options creates significant barriers to recruitment and retention.
- 04.** Downtown has seen significant growth and redevelopment but requires continued strategic focus, and collective action, to unlock full potential.
- 05.** Higher education, history and paranormal activity are unique draws to Atchison. Leverage existing strengths for continued growth.

## **FUTURE VISION**

The purpose of a vision statement is to inform and shape future investment, policies, programs, and planning efforts to ensure the will of its residents is represented in the decision-making process.

Based on the responses received during this stakeholder input phase, and to compliment/summarize the previously created statements in the Comprehensive Plan (2016-2030) and the Strategic Plan (2020), the project team suggests the following vision statement in regards to this plan:

***Atchison is a strong and growing, people focused community collaboratively leading for all to thrive and prosper.***

## **STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY AREAS**

Several potential strategic opportunity areas emerged from quantitative research and stakeholder feedback. The following opportunity areas and potential projects/initiatives align with the bright and thriving future Atchison residents desire.

Strategic opportunities include:

- ✓ Pursue a multi-pronged approach to encourage housing redevelopment and the construction of new housing units in existing neighborhoods
- ✓ Build a coalition of public and private partners to design an equitable workforce development ecosystem that benefits employers, job seekers, and workers in Atchison
- ✓ Strengthen downtown through strategic partnerships, programming and smart policy to protect existing characteristics, add vibrancy, and increase sense of place.



## SWOT ANALYSIS

### STRENGTHS

- History
- Downtown revitalization
- New Holiday Inn, YMCA and renovated Fox Theater downtown
- Strong major employers including a Fortune 500 company
- Proximity to Kansas City & St. Joseph
- Education - Benedictine College, Highland Community College
- Strong Chamber, new Main Street Community, Economic Development Advisory Group (EDAG)
- Variety of available incentives, grants and loans for business expansion, relocation or development
- Transportation Access - Airport, Highway, Riverfront
- Infrastructure improvements
- Strong tourism including variety of museums and historical markers
- Health care access - Hospital
- Small town charm. Family friendly community
- Architecture, old historic homes. Cheap houses / lots
- Variety of available housing programs and resources. Opportunity zone.
- Strong local leadership and community involvement
- Locally owned restaurants.
- Arts and culture
- Events and activities



### WEAKNESSES

- Destination attractions in the downtown district
- Lack of variety in housing styles and price points - both rental and for purchase
- Blighted and abandoned properties
- Divided community - wide gap between the haves and have nots
- Lack of public transportation options
- Desire for more social infrastructure
- Historic lack of connectedness between downtown businesses and community organizations
- Connection between Benedictine College and downtown district, broader community

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## **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Expanded collaboration between downtown business entities
- Potential additional incentive programs for development
- Riverfront activation
- Stronger connection between Benedictine College and the broader community
- Beautification downtown

## **THREATS**

- Proximity to Kansas City and Saint Joseph - makes it harder to compete for talent. People are willing to drive.

KEY TRENDS & CHALLENGES



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# key trends & challenges

The following key trends and challenges emerged from the quantitative and qualitative research conducted for this Community Assessment.



# 01. THE COST TO BUILD NEW HOUSING CONTINUES TO OUTPACE THE WAGES FOR A MAJORITY OF RESIDENTS

This statement was true prior to the COVID-19 pandemic hitting our shores and is even worse today. There are a number of contributing factors to the growing cost of construction including material prices, infrastructure buildout, the price/availability of land, and labor shortages. While land costs may be more affordable in Atchison, all other factors are difficult to overcome when wages aren't keeping up with these costs.

Since 1960, median home prices increased 121% nationwide, but median household income only increased 29%. Renters are also struggling with the median gross rent increasing by 72%, more than twice the growth seen by adjusted incomes, making renting costlier than ever and saving for a future home difficult if not impossible.

**FIGURE 1** | GROWTH RATE OF MEDIAN HOME PRICES V. MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES V. MEDIAN RENTS NATIONWIDE



Note: All of the values are indexed to 1960. Chart only includes data for depicted years.

Source: 1960-2000 Decennial Censuses and 2008, 2010 and 2017 American Community Surveys

The City completed an [extensive housing study](#) in 2019 with the aid of Novogradac Consulting. The study provided an in-depth look into the housing challenges and opportunities in Atchison. Of special interest is the wage of occupations for Non-Metropolitan Areas. The mean hourly wage across all occupations was \$18.86, which translates to an annual wage of \$39,220. The classification with the lowest average hourly wage is food preparation and serving-related occupations at \$9.95 per hour, while the highest average hourly wage of \$41.31 is in the management sector.

Employers that participated in conversations for the Midwest Placemaking Innovation Accelerator project included Atchison Hospital, Bradken, MGP Ingredients Inc., and the school district. The typical hourly wage for job openings as noted by these participants was \$20 an hour which equates to \$41,600 a year or a gross monthly salary of \$3,467. While this is a decent income for an individual, the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) considers a two-person household with an income of \$41,700 as low income and eligible for housing assistance.

The Novogradac report also highlighted Atchison as a place with a low cost of living. The report provided the cost of living in five similar sized cities in the region. The following chart shows the average cost of living for each index including food, housing, utilities, transportation along with the overall cost of living in each city, relative to the national average, which is 100. Overall, Atchison had a rating of 78 with the host of housing yielding the lowest score at 45.1.

<b>COST OF LIVING INDEX</b>					
	<b>Atchison, KS</b>	<b>Lansing, KS</b>	<b>Kearney, MO</b>	<b>Leavenworth, KS</b>	<b>St. Joseph, MO</b>
<b>Population (2010 Census)</b>	<b>11,021</b>	<b>11,947</b>	<b>8,381</b>	<b>35,251</b>	<b>76,780</b>
Overall	78	97.2	109.2	88.5	80.6
Grocery	102.2	92.9	92.9	92.9	92.9
Healthcare	97.8	97.5	103	97.5	110.4
Housing	45.1	94.2	126.9	68.6	49.4
Utilities	104.3	101.6	99.3	102.2	103
Transportation	75.5	99.3	106	94.2	81.6
Miscellaneous	95.8	99.3	101.5	99.6	85.2

Source: www.bestplaces.net, October 2019



While housing affordability can be considered a positive, it doesn't take into account the quality of the housing product being offered. The median value of an owner-occupied home in Atchison is \$89,900 versus \$151,900 at the statewide level. For rental housing, the median monthly cost is \$615 per month versus \$850 at the statewide level. Both indicators demonstrate affordability, but the significant gap is also an indicator that there is a higher incidence of lower quality housing products bringing down this figure. Furthermore, these affordability indicators factor heavily into what home builders are willing to invest in renovating the existing housing stock and to build new units.

The income disparity between renters and owner-occupied households is further highlighted by the number of households classified as "cost burdened". The definition of a cost burdened household is allocating 30% or more of your overall income towards housing related expenses (i.e. rent or mortgage and utilities). The US Census data shows that a total of 17.9% of owner-occupied households in Atchison are cost burdened while the total of renter-occupied households equals 29.8%. The figure for owner-occupied housing is on par with Atchison County (16.3%) and the statewide figures (16.8%). However, renters align at the county level (28.2%) but are much higher at the statewide level (40.3%). Again, the low cost of housing, specifically for renters, misrepresents Atchison as a community without a housing issue.

The primary findings of the report included a breakdown of housing need by type. The study identified four categories of housing needs in Atchison:

**Moderate Income Owner-Occupied Single-Family Homes**

Targeted at households making \$50,000 and \$99,999. These moderate-income homes would likely contain two to three-bedrooms, contain 650 to 1,408 square feet depending on the number of bedrooms, and be priced between \$150,000 and \$225,000.

**Low Income Renter-Occupied Housing Developments**

Approximately 58.7 percent of renter-occupied households within the city of Atchison earn less than \$40,000 annually resulting in a general lack of supply for these low-income renters. The addition of low-income multifamily units to the housing supply would help alleviate the current and future need for affordable housing in the area.

**Moderate Income Renter-Occupied Townhouse & Duplex Developments**

Approximately 24.8 percent of renter-occupied households within the city of Atchison earn between \$40,000 and \$59,999, again, resulting in a limited supply of rental options at this price point in good condition. These moderate-income townhouse and duplex units would likely contain two to three-bedrooms, contain 650 to 1,000 square feet depending on the number of bedrooms, and be rented between \$575 and \$725.

**Senior Housing**

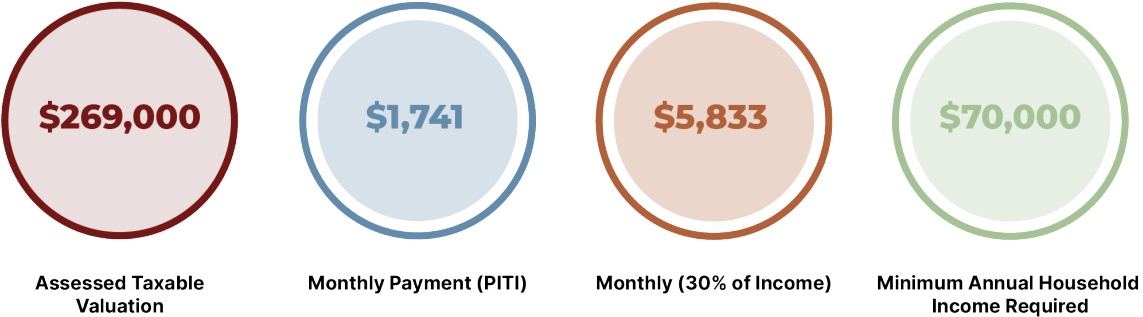
The number of senior households, ages 65 and older, is predicted to grow to 1,182 households by 2024 with a nearly 50 percent of senior households earning below \$40,000. The report noted Atchison could support an additional senior LIHTC development of approximately 10 to 15 units. Owner-occupied condominiums or townhomes that offer less upkeep and maintenance for seniors that currently own larger single-family homes could be well received in the area. The report suggested age-restricted one to two-bedroom units approximately 600 to 900 square feet with attached parking would be well received.



Some recent developments in town will help to address the needs outlined in the 2019 report. In particular, the Lofts at 832 was rewarded \$570,000 in Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) to provide 41 new affordable units. The project will include studio, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom units with rents starting at \$500/month. The deficit of Low-Income Renter and Senior Housing market will be largely taken care of as a result of this one project. However, the moderate-income renter- and owner-occupied housing options continue to go unanswered.

The Arbor Lane addition at Brookdale subdivision will add 48 new residential lots to the community. The city provided \$1.2 million in support via general obligation bonds to help pay for the infrastructure costs of these newly created lots. The developer will sell the lots will sell for a minimum fee of \$25,000 each to offset these infrastructure costs borne by the city. Homes are not yet available for purchase, but a quick estimate could help determine what the resulting housing unit could cost.

**GROSS INCOME REQUIRED TO BE ABLE TO AFFORD TOTAL HOUSING COSTS (PITI)**



According to Forbes, the current average cost to build a new 2,000 square foot home in the state of Kansas is estimated at \$207,120 or \$104 per square foot. Once you add the cost of land (~\$25,000 or 10%-15%), realtor fees (6%), and the builder's profit (10%), the final sale price would be \$269,000. If a buyer chooses to purchase this home and make a 5 percent down payment - typically the minimum amount allowable- he or she would need to have \$13,450 in cash for the down payment plus \$6,725 to pay toward closing costs (2.5%). The remaining mortgage balance would be \$255,550. A mortgage with the dynamics listed below would cost the end buyer \$1,741 in total monthly expenses per month which would require a minimum household income of \$70,000.

Estimated monthly payment (PITI\*): \$1,741 (30-year fixed loan at 3.25% w/ 5% down payment)

- \$1,148 - Principal & Interest
- \$362 - Property Taxes (calculated for Atchison property taxes)
- \$100 - Homeowners Insurance
- \$132 - PMI insurance (if down payment is less than 20%)

\*PITI - Monthly payment including principal, interest, homeowner's insurance and property taxes.  
Source: Fannie Mae Homebuying Financial Calculator; tax levy data via Atchison County Appraisers Office

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While a portion of the moderate-income households who are seeking an owner-occupied product could afford this home, seniors seeking owner-occupied options are not being met by the Brookdale addition. Further development opportunities need to be targeted at these two groups, especially seniors.

The 2018 ETC Institute Community Survey further supports this effort to provide more attainable housing options. A total of 686 citizens completed the survey via direct mail and online. Of that total, only 26.7% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of housing options in Atchison. When presented with a variety of housing product options, 59% of residents felt that entry-level single-family homes were the most needed housing product in Atchison. This was followed by 49% in support of mid-range single-family homes, 48% in support of senior housing (independent living) and 47% in support of apartments or lofts. Participants could select up to three housing product options.

As part of the Midwest Placemaking Innovation Accelerator (MPIA) effort, a new community survey was conducted during the months of July and August of 2021. A total of 298 responses were collected. Of that

total, 64% of respondents stated they had trouble, or knew someone who had trouble, finding appropriate housing in Atchison. When residents were asked about what type of housing was most needed in the community, the majority of residents (75.4%) said single family homes. The next biggest reported need was rental housing (roughly 48% of respondents). The price range for these housing products was broad from middle- to higher-end rentals to the need for “low maintenance, affordable” units. When for-sale housing products were mentioned, the price points ranged from \$160,000 to \$400,000; however, the predominant response targeted options on the more affordable side of the spectrum. Overall, the responses from MPIA’s 2021 community survey reaffirmed the findings from the 2018 ETC survey highlighting a demand for more housing options to meet the needs of the low to moderate income households in Atchison.

**64%**

**OF RESPONDENTS STATED  
THEY HAD TROUBLE, OR KNEW  
SOMEONE WHO HAD TROUBLE,  
FINDING APPROPRIATE HOUSING  
IN ATCHISON.**



## 02. LOW HOUSING VALUATIONS OF THE AGING HOUSING STOCK ARE **NEGATIVELY IMPACTING** OUTSIDE INVESTORS FROM DEVELOPING IN ATCHISON

When considering strategies to provide more affordable housing units in a community, renovating existing housing stock is one of the most recommended solutions. However, a developer or contractor seeking favorable returns on their investments are challenged with the current housing market in Atchison. Even though the City has put together some great incentives and other local tools to help bridge the gap, investors only have to go a short distance to the KC-metro to find projects with higher returns and less risk.

The median home value in Atchison increased 6.3% from \$84,600 in 2010 to \$89,900 in 2019 (American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates 2010, 2019). The median home value in the state of Kansas increased by 33.1% during the same 10-year period from \$122,600 in 2010 to \$163,200 in 2019 (American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates 2010, 2019).

Blighted properties are a major contributing factor to these low

valuations. Blight can be defined as properties that are dilapidated or poorly maintained. In many instances these properties are uninhabitable and have been vacant for years but that is not always the case with some residents living in substandard conditions to afford living in the house. Besides being an eyesore for neighbors, blighted properties directly impact a community's sense of pride, lower a visitor's impression of the community, potentially contribute to increased crime rates, and decrease surrounding property values. Blighted properties further stress the local government operations as they require city services such as waste cleanup, pest control, police, and fire without contributing much value to the city's overall tax base.

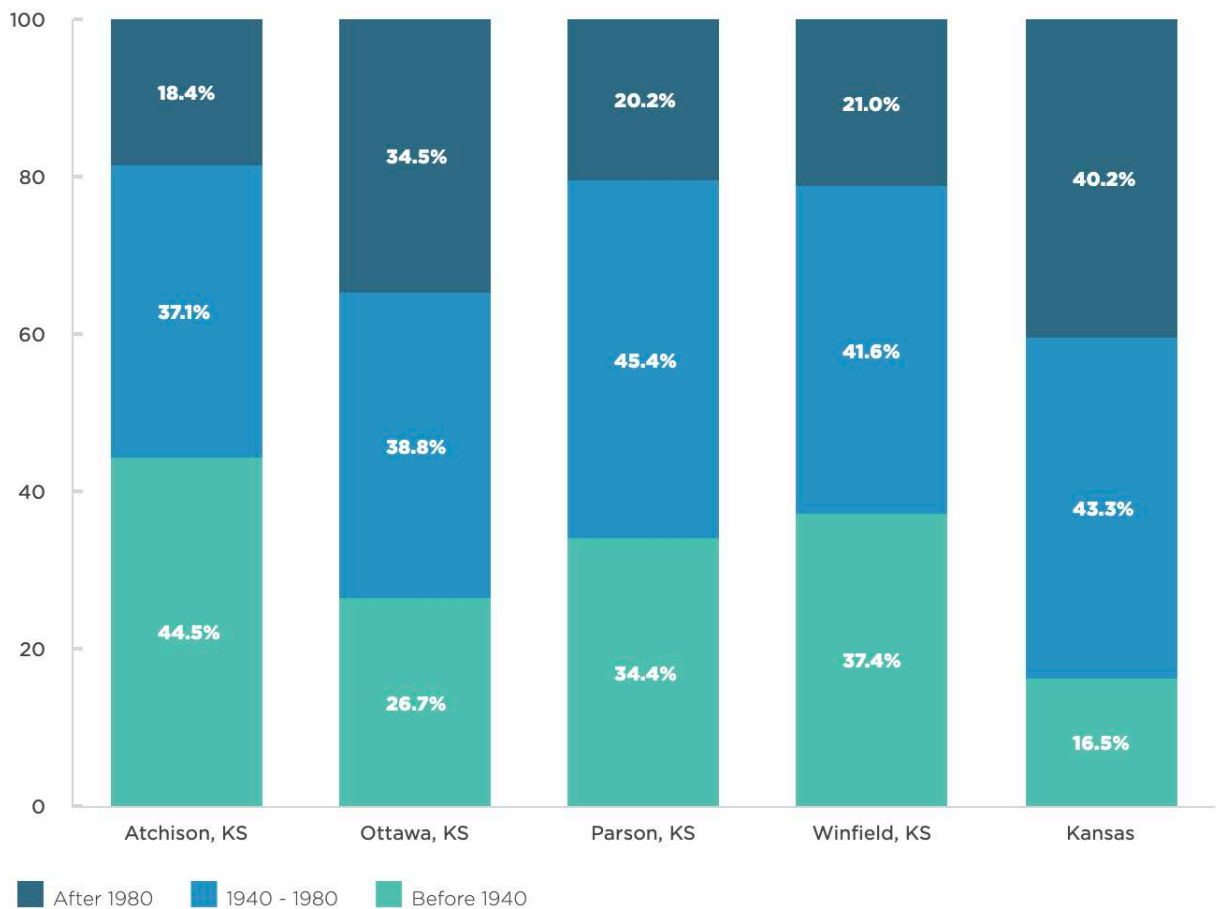
While not all older homes are in poor condition, many have outdated electrical, plumbing, and mechanical systems that do not meet current building code standards. This may result in less energy-efficient heating and plumbing systems which increases the utility costs to

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the homeowner. Older houses may also be too small or poorly laid out to fit the needs of today's housing market which impact the ability of Atchison to attract new residents. For instance, many older homes have a single bathroom to serve an entire family while most people expect at least two bathrooms in their house.

According to the US Census, Atchison has an existing housing stock total of 4,356 housing units. Of those units, 44.5% was built prior to 1940 compared to only 16.5% statewide. Atchison also has the largest share of homes in this pre-1940s category relative to the comparison cities – Ottawa, Parsons, and Winfield. Furthermore, Atchison has the lowest share of newer homes - built after 1980 - totaling 18.4%. Breaking down the housing stock to homes built after 2010, Atchison has experienced the greatest share of new growth at 1% or 43 new housing units relative to the comparison cities of Ottawa (0.5% or 26 units), Parsons (0.7% or 37 units), and Winfield (0.6% or 32 units).

### Age of Housing Stock





To make older housing stock appeal to buyers, the homeowner or an investor must make substantial improvements. Those with the means to take out renovation loans can make the improvements themselves. Investors and contractors have also seized the opportunity to purchase a portion of the aging housing stock to make necessary repairs and open them up as rental units which has aided the workforce housing segment of the market. The flip side of the coin, these investors can purchase these available units as soon as they hit the market or even prior to being made available publicly which hinders the ability of some individuals who are seeking the opportunity to access homeownership and make Atchison home for the long term.

Both homeowners and rental property investors can take advantage of the current incentives offer by the City of Atchison such as the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP). The NRP is intended to promote revitalization and development by focusing rehabilitation, conservation, and redevelopment within a designated area by offering property tax rebates to owners who complete certain improvements or renovations of property.

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Atchison’s NRP program has three rebate schedules for residential units: (1) any residential project in a core neighborhood, (2) a renovation project or (3) new construction project located outside the designated core neighborhoods. The minimum threshold for a property owner to receive a rebate on any residential unit is an investment of \$5,000 and a property valuation over \$100,000. These property tax rebates are applied on the increase in appraised as designated by the county appraiser over a period of seven to 15 years; see the varied rate schedules shown below:

	Core Neighborhood	Non-core Neighborhood	
	Any Residential	Rehab	New Residential
<b>Year 1</b>	95%	95%	95%
<b>Year 2</b>	95%	95%	95%
<b>Year 3</b>	95%	95%	75%
<b>Year 4</b>	95%	95%	55%
<b>Year 5</b>	95%	80%	45%
<b>Year 6</b>	95%	60%	35%
<b>Year 7</b>	95%	50%	25%
<b>Year 8</b>	95%		
<b>Year 9</b>	95%		
<b>Year 10</b>	95%		
<b>Year 11</b>	80%		
<b>Year 12</b>	70%		
<b>Year 13</b>	60%		
<b>Year 14</b>	40%		
<b>Year 15</b>	20%		

Based on the rebate schedule, the homeowner who purchased the new home for \$269,000 could receive a total of nearly \$20,000 in property tax rebates over the seven-year period. However, if this same newly constructed home were built in

*continued on the next page >*



a core neighborhood, the property owner could see a total tax rebate of nearly \$57,000 over the 15-year period, nearly three times the benefit of the non-core neighborhood home. While there have been a handful of new homes built in the core neighborhoods, new homebuyers primarily prefer to be located in newly built subdivisions on the edge of town.

Renovations on an existing home can also produce a sizable rebate for a homeowner. For instance, building out a new addition with a kitchen and bathroom remodel could increase the home’s value by \$50,000 - from \$80,000 to \$130,000. The homeowner would receive a total tax rebate of over \$5,000 through the seven-year period. However, if a property owner in a core neighborhood completes a similar renovation, he or she would receive a total rebate of nearly \$11,200 over the entire period. Again, these incentives are targeting improvements in the core neighborhoods where the oldest homes with the most need of repair are located.

#### NRP TAX REBATE - NEW CONSTRUCTION

	Non-core Neighborhood				Core Neighborhood			
	Rebate Share	Current Value	New Value	Annual Rebate	Rebate Share	Current Value	New Value	Annual Rebate
		\$15,000	\$269,860			\$15,000	\$269,000	
<b>Year 1</b>	95%	\$276	\$4,962	\$4,452	95%	\$276	\$4,946	\$4,437
<b>Year 2</b>	95%	\$276	\$4,962	\$4,452	95%	\$276	\$4,946	\$4,437
<b>Year 3</b>	75%	\$276	\$4,962	\$3,515	95%	\$276	\$4,946	\$4,437
<b>Year 4</b>	55%	\$276	\$4,962	\$2,577	95%	\$276	\$4,946	\$4,437
<b>Year 5</b>	45%	\$276	\$4,962	\$2,109	95%	\$276	\$4,946	\$4,437
<b>Year 6</b>	35%	\$276	\$4,962	\$1,640	95%	\$276	\$4,946	\$4,437
<b>Year 7</b>	25%	\$276	\$4,962	\$1,172	95%	\$276	\$4,946	\$4,437
<b>Year 8</b>					95%	\$276	\$4,946	\$4,437
<b>Year 9</b>					95%	\$276	\$4,946	\$4,437
<b>Year 10</b>					95%	\$276	\$4,946	\$4,437
<b>Year 11</b>					80%	\$276	\$4,946	\$3,736
<b>Year 12</b>					70%	\$276	\$4,946	\$3,269
<b>Year 13</b>					60%	\$276	\$4,946	\$2,802
<b>Year 14</b>					40%	\$276	\$4,946	\$1,868
<b>Year 15</b>					20%	\$276	\$4,946	\$934
	Total Rebate			\$19,916	Total Rebate			\$56,977

## NRP TAX REBATE - RENOVATION

	Non-core Neighborhood				Core Neighborhood			
	Rebate Share	Current Value	New Value	Annual Rebate	Rebate Share	Current Value	New Value	Annual Rebate
		\$80,000	\$130,000			\$80,000	\$130,000	
<b>Year 1</b>	95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873	95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873
<b>Year 2</b>	95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873	95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873
<b>Year 3</b>	75%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873	95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873
<b>Year 4</b>	55%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873	95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873
<b>Year 5</b>	45%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$735	95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873
<b>Year 6</b>	35%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$552	95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873
<b>Year 7</b>	25%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$460	95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873
<b>Year 8</b>					95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873
<b>Year 9</b>					95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873
<b>Year 10</b>					95%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$873
<b>Year 11</b>					80%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$735
<b>Year 12</b>					70%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$644
<b>Year 13</b>					60%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$552
<b>Year 14</b>					40%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$368
<b>Year 15</b>					20%	\$1,471	\$2,390	\$184
	Total Rebate			\$5,240	Total Rebate			\$11,216

Based on the conversations with local contractors and investors, clearing and transferring the title to a new owner is one of the primary challenges of addressing blighted properties. A title that is not cleared is usually not insurable, and if it is not insurable it has little if any value to prospective owners. One of the more common scenarios for residential units is properties being handed down from generation to generation without the appropriate legal proceedings or recorded documentation of the transfer. Conveyance of such properties, known informally as “heir property,” requires involvement of all possible heirs which makes the transfer of title difficult, especially if the family has moved out of the community.

The City of Atchison Land Bank can help aid the conversion of such properties back into productive use. The land bank has the authority to evaluate and apply appropriate strategies to address a cloudy or uncleared title, although it can be a lengthy process. Land banks also have the ability to remove unpaid property taxes and any penalty or liens applied to the property.

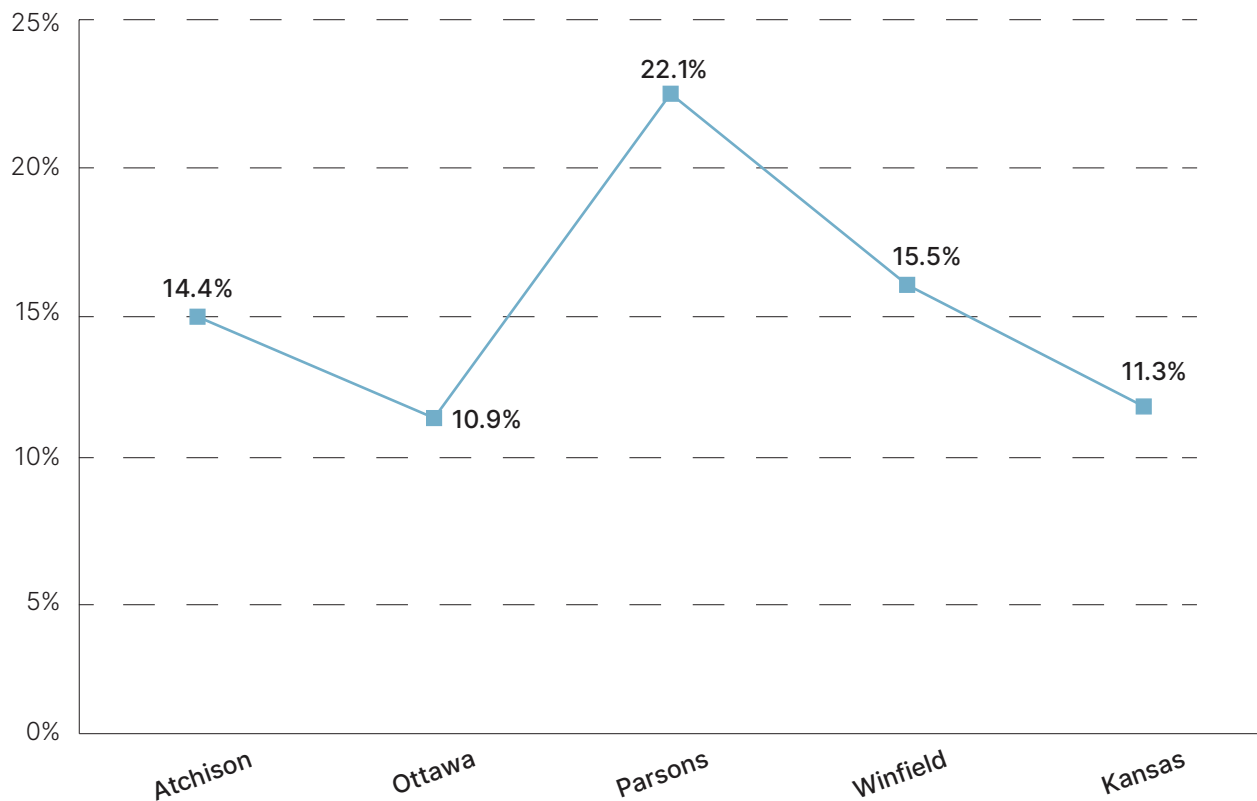
The City of Atchison Land Bank currently has 40+ parcels available for redevelopment primarily located in and around downtown and on the north end of town. In the downtown area, these lots mainly consist of existing parking lots which could be a prime location for further mixed-use development with commercial or office on the main floor and residential above. The lots on the north end are a collection of vacant lots, many located on the same block, ideal for a crew to build multiple units at once. Getting properties renovated and back into productive use is the primary purpose of the land bank. Some property owners like to use the investment strategy of purchasing property at a low cost and holding it for a handful of years until opportunity strikes allowing them to make a strong return on their investment. During this holding period they are responsible for upkeep such as mowing and



making sure the property is not a danger to the public. In some cases, these investors are willing to sell their property to support new housing but others continue to hold onto the property in hopes of a future payday. The larger issue is once a blighted property goes into extended periods of disrepair, the structure becomes financially difficult to justify a full renovation and it is demolished resulting in a vacant lot. A common scenario for this situation is an elderly family member goes into a nursing facility or passes away and the property is put into a trust among multiple owners. This group owners may or may not be local and are unsure what to do with the home. The property then sits shuttered for years with deferred maintenance such as fixing leaks in the roof or broken windows allowing wildlife and the elements to take over.

The US Census shows Atchison has a vacant housing stock of 626 units accounting for 14.4% of all housing units, slightly higher than the statewide figure of 11.3%. The peer community of Parsons has both the highest total number of vacant units with 1,158 vacant or underutilized properties and the highest share with 22.1% of the community's housing total.

Community	Number of vacant housing units
Atchison	626
Ottawa	614
Parsons	1,158
Winfield	784
Kansas	144,070



The parcel data provided by the Atchison County Appraiser was studied to highlight redevelopment opportunities throughout the county. The data notes a total of 427 vacant lots totaling 202 acres of land or 4.9% of the total land mass within the city's corporate limits. Of those vacant lots, 313 parcels accounting for 86 acres or 42% of all vacant area within the corporate limits are located within the designated core neighborhoods or "Targeted Areas" eligible for expanded incentives through the NRP.



### **03. PROXIMITY TO LARGER METROPOLITAN AREAS IS BOTH A BENEFIT AND A CHALLENGE FOR EMPLOYERS. JOB OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE, BUT LACK OF HOUSING OPTIONS CREATES **SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS** TO RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.**

Atchison is extremely lucky to have many local major employers who are deeply rooted in the community. During the Major Employer Focus Groups, participants were asked to think about what barriers currently exist that would take their company/organization to the next level, if removed.

The largest challenge across the board to attract and retain quality workforce was housing. All participating employers noted repeated experiences where an applicant accepted an offer and then later turned it down due to the inability to find an appropriate place to live in Atchison.

Most employers actively and regularly try to assist new hires with finding local housing. Due to all the reasons listed above, many employees are unsuccessful. If they keep the job, they will need to commute. Amberwell Health noted that even though they are steadily growing, over 60% of their employees live outside the county.

The most sought after types of housing by new hires included 1-2 bedroom rental apartments (especially pet friendly units) for young professionals, and 2-3 bedroom houses with garages for families. Both categories' existing options are mostly outdated, low quality or in need of a significant amount of work.

Regional proximity to larger cities such as Kansas City, St Joseph, Topeka and Lawrence was cited as both a major benefit and a major challenge. The positive is the ability to attract talent from a larger market area, the challenges include competing with higher wages and benefits available to job seekers in these areas, not to mention a variety of amenities, better quality and availability of housing options.

Knowing they can't compete on a wage level, many employers stressed the importance of selling culture, both of the company and the community as a whole, to job seekers.

Considering employers compete on all levels for top talent, and today's workforce is highly mobile, this is a smart strategy as Atchison has a lot to offer. A community's overall competitiveness is dependent on a variety of factors including its quality of life characteristics such as housing, education, healthcare, broadband connectivity, recreational amenities, downtown vitality, and more.

When asked what they believe employees value most about the region and community employers mentioned rural, small town lifestyle but access to an airport and larger cities as well as diversity and a



walkable downtown. What's missing was identified mostly as more variety in amenities, specifically restaurants, breweries, family friendly spaces, year round social activities and outdoor trails/recreational opportunities.



Even with local assets like Benedictine College and Highland Community College, retaining students to residents and young professionals in Atchison seems to be a challenge except for the local school system which is aided by a teacher education program in partnership with Benedictine College. An interesting footnote however is that many employ Benedictine graduates who have eventually come back to

Atchison some time after graduation. This population seems to be high quality employees who feel deeply passionate about the community.

This is definitely a low hanging fruit opportunity for recruitment, especially given recent COVID inspired migration patterns of people leaving larger cities and seeking high quality of life, low cost of living, amenities and proximity to larger communities. One

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opportunity to support and nurture growth, connection and development of this population is an organized Young Professionals group for Atchison.

Further along the lines of education, there was a desire for more meaningful partnerships between the school system and local businesses for mentorship and employment opportunities and skill up training programs. High School students might be unaware of local opportunities or lack professional experiences/ references.

It was mentioned that economic status was also a challenge as students who have means typically travel in the summer and employment is difficult, where students on the lower socioeconomic scale stay and have limited local employment or professional development opportunities.

When asked what skills are missing in applicants, employers noted mostly soft skills, communication and sometimes basic computer skills depending on the position but especially for entry level and laborer workers.



## **SWOT ANALYSIS**

### **STRENGTHS**

- Strong major employers with competitive pay, benefits
- Active Economic Development Advisory Group (EDAG)
- Available business incentives and small business loans for growth and development
- City investment in planning - updated strategic plan
- Educational opportunities for High School students through Highland Community College Technical Center - graduate HS with a certificate sponsored by the state of Kansas
- HCCTC - graduates are in high demand. 100% placement rate.
- Ongoing education available through Benedictine College and HCCTC
- Relatively stable population trends
- Proximity/access to larger markets
- Innovative, forward thinking local leadership
- Strong local engagement by young professionals
- Geographic location - easy to access via highway. Proximity to Kansas City
- Strong K-12 public school system
- K-Masters private catholic education available
- Variety of local amenities including restaurants, recreation, activities and events.
- Transportation access via highway and airport
- Improved public infrastructure
- Large population of workers commuting into the community for jobs

### **WEAKNESSES**

- Recruitment is difficult due to housing challenges
- Lack of quality, available housing
- And variety of styles and price points - for sale and rent
- Many sub-par rental units
- High turnover at most major employers
- Lack of skilled workforce to fill available positions
- “Job hopping” between employers
- Limited capacity for code enforcement
- Lack of affordable, reliable childcare options
- Required drug testing can be a barrier for employment
- Higher unemployment rate than the state

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## OPPORTUNITIES

- Residential, workforce housing
- Retain and attract back Benedictine College alumni to stay or return post graduation
- Young Professionals Network
- Partnerships between school and local businesses - mentorship opportunities, skill up programs, employment opportunities
- Expanded workforce educational opportunities and professional development
- Workforce attraction efforts targeted to remote workers
- Additional incentive opportunities for growing businesses
- Continued downtown revitalization
- Attract current commuters into town to relocate to Atchison
- Promotion of low cost of living, high quality of live and significant business development /expansion as well as home redevelopment incentives
- Apply for federal and state funding grants to support priority projects

## THREATS

- Proximity to Kansas City - hard to compete with higher paying wages in larger metro
- Wide variety of housing available in KC
- Aging near retirement population

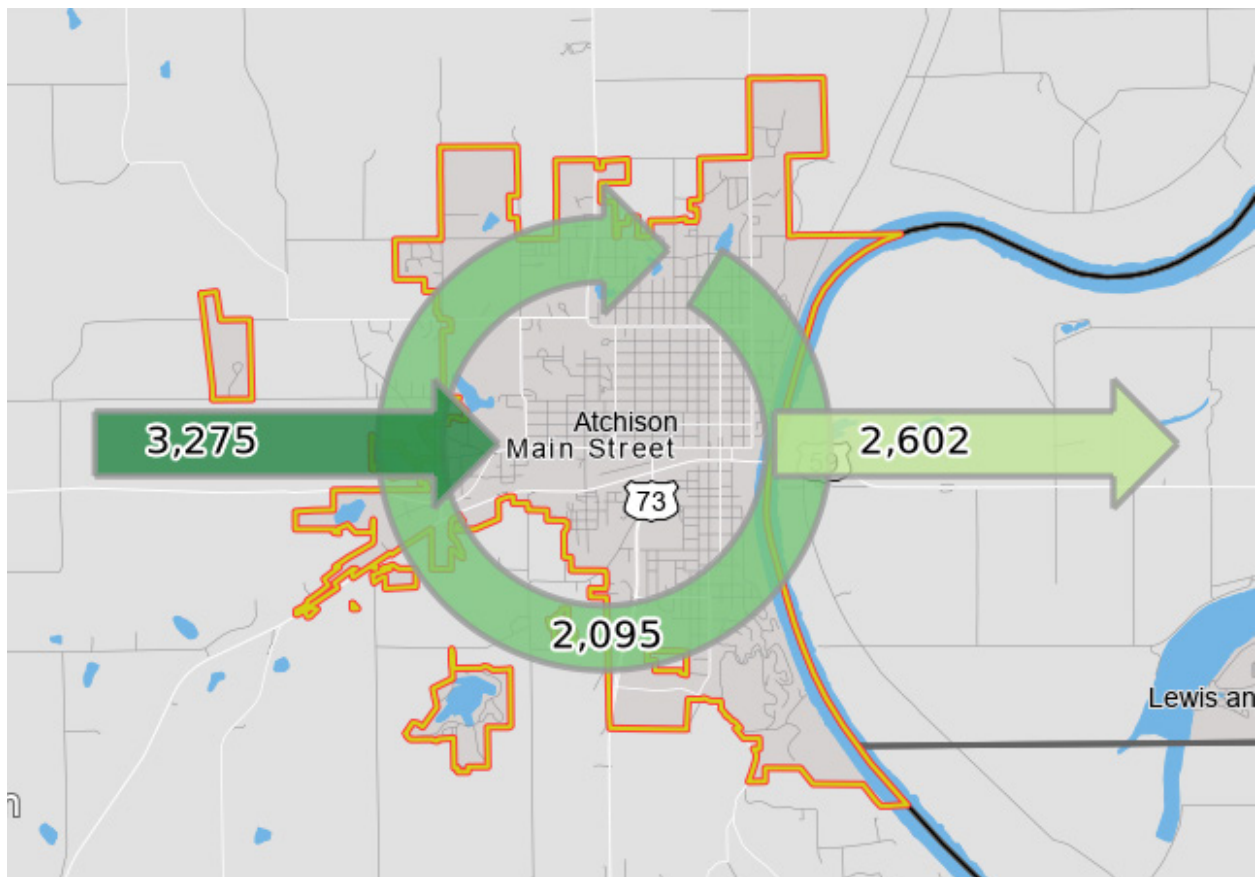


## INFLOW-OUTFLOW ANALYSIS

According to the U.S. Census On the Map tool, employers in Atchison draw 61% (3,275 people) of their talent from outside of the city and 39% (2,095 people) of employment is from people who both live and work within the community.

In addition to those employed in Atchison, there are also 2,602 people who live within the city but are employed outside of the city. Meaning Atchison is struggling to provide jobs to its existing residents, due to the influx of employees from outside the community and outflow of residents seeking employment outside Atchison (most likely to larger cities).

Although a company's talent pool is not necessarily limited to the location of their office or plant, regions like Atchison need to position themselves so that they can increase their area's workforce capacity to the extent that they can continue to support existing industries and hopefully attract more to do business there.

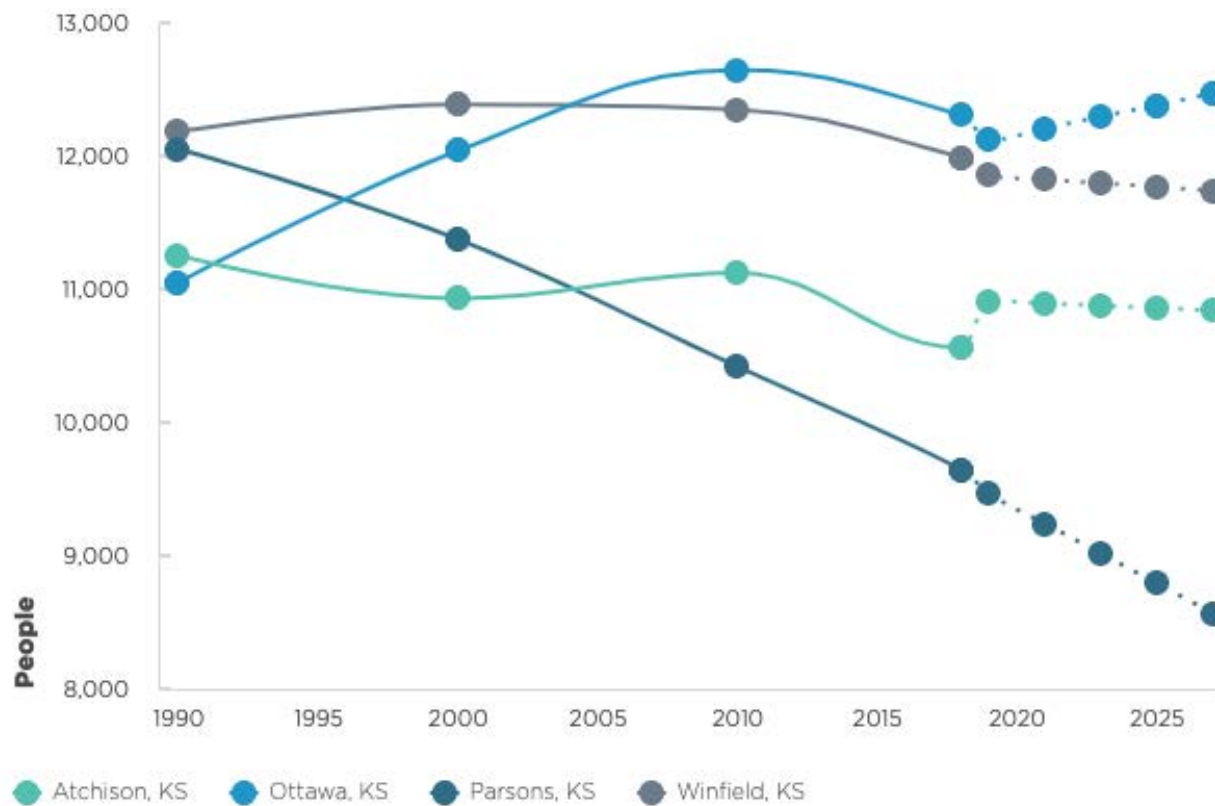


## TOTAL POPULATION

A good indication of current and future workforce capacity is to analyze existing conditions and past trends. Atchison's population has fluctuated between 10,500 and 11,500 since the 1990s, dropping slightly in the past decade (3.8%) and is projected to remain relatively stable over the next five years.

These trends are similar to comparison communities, Winfield and Ottawa, which also geographically benefit from being within an hour of a metropolitan area. Statewide, Kansas grew by 3% from 2010 to 2020, most of which was in urban areas.

The five fastest growing counties in Kansas are Pottawatomie, Johnson, Wyandotte, Leavenworth and Douglas. These areas grew by 10.4% on average, are all located in the northeast part of the state, and are all urban except for Pottawatomie. While trends are telling, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the way people work and where they chose to live. Atchison's proximity to both Kansas City and Saint Joseph is a major benefit to attract these new remote workers.



Sources: US Census Bureau; US Census Bureau ACS 5-year

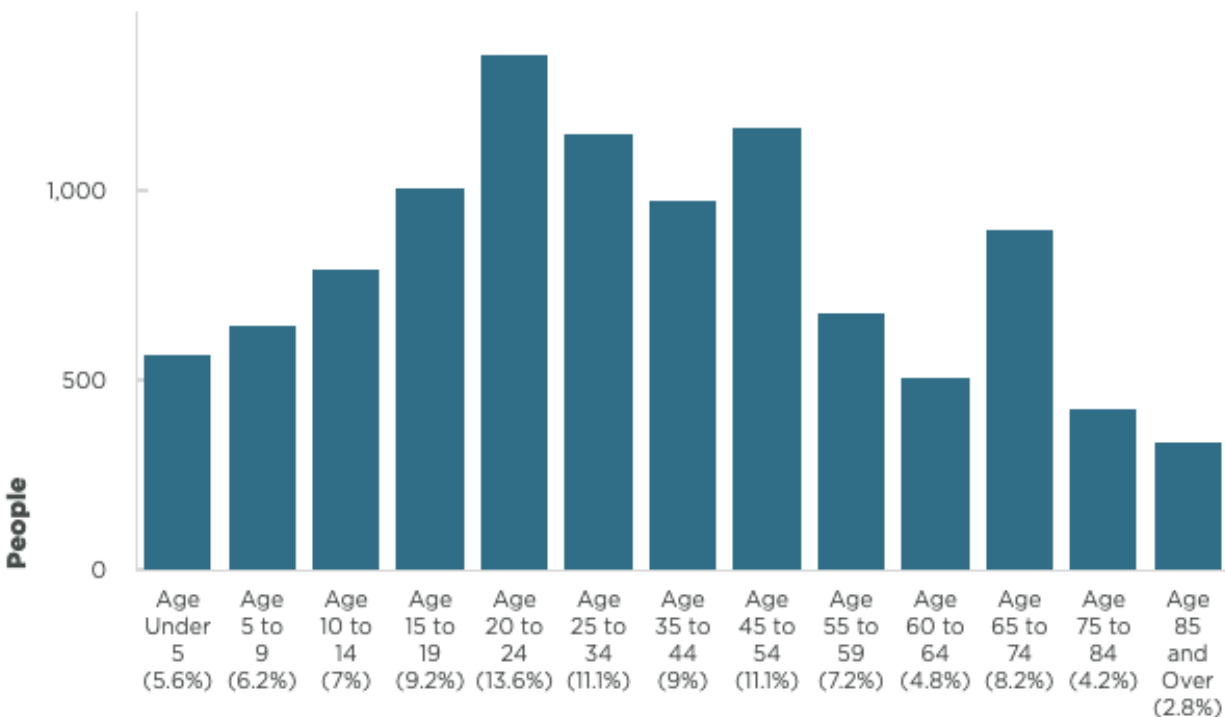


## POPULATION BY AGE COHORT

In the U.S., the median age of the labor force is 42 years old, and prime working age cohorts are between 25 to 54 years old. Within this range, Atchison experienced slight growth between 2010-2019, only in the 25-34 age range (+0.5%), and lost population in the 35-44 (-1.1%) and 45-54 (-1.5%) age cohorts, respectively. Additionally, on both ends of this target age range (25-54), Atchison is growing with college and young professionals aged 20-24 (+1.8%), only slightly outpaced by the 55-59 age range (+2%), which saw the largest growth overall.

The growth in the 20-24 year old cohort is promising and likely due to student enrollment at [Benedictine University](#). All three comparison communities in this age range saw almost no change over the same time period (+/-0.1%) and all three communities are home to private universities and/or community colleges ([Ottawa University](#) and [Mary Grimes School of Nursing](#) in Ottawa, [Southwestern College](#) in Winfield, and [Labette Community College](#) in Parsons).

### Age Totals



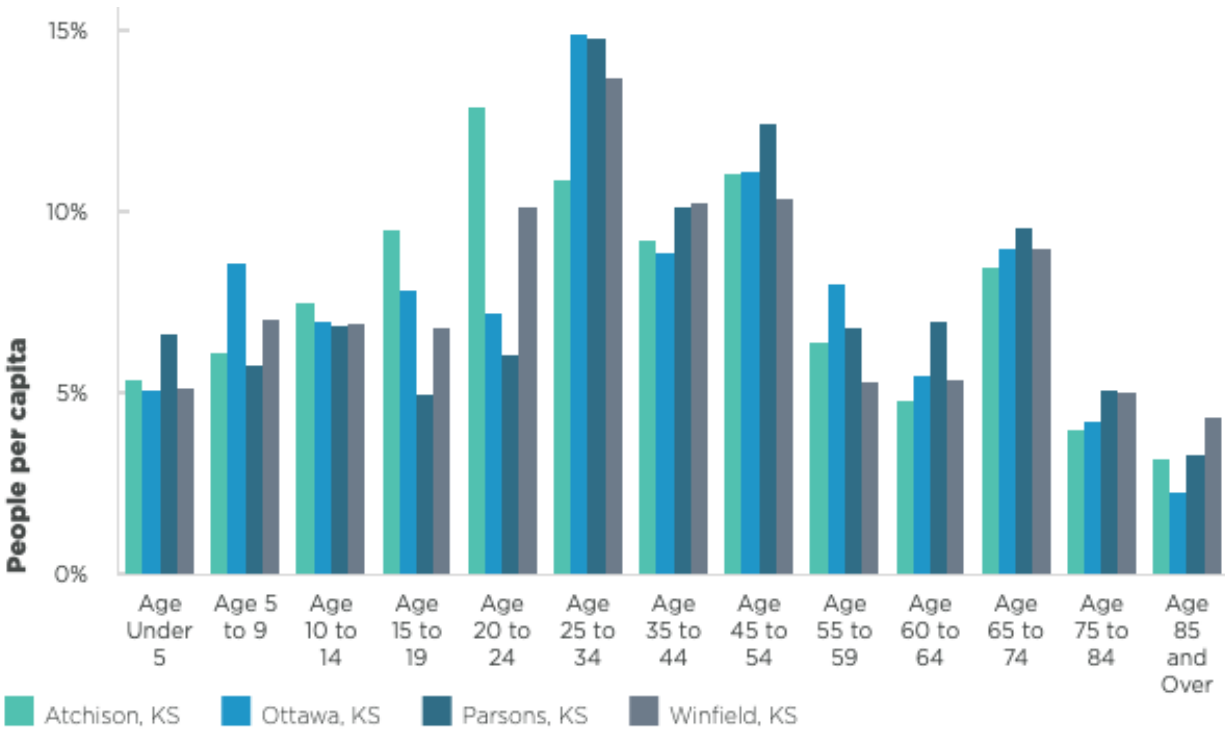
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2016-2020



Atchison's retirement aged population of 65-74 years old is the third fastest growing cohort (+1.2%), which could pose challenges for employers. However, the continued growth of Benedictine University is a significant asset. If Atchison can retain a portion of the student population post-graduation or entice them to return in the near future, this could be a significant growth area for the community and local employers.

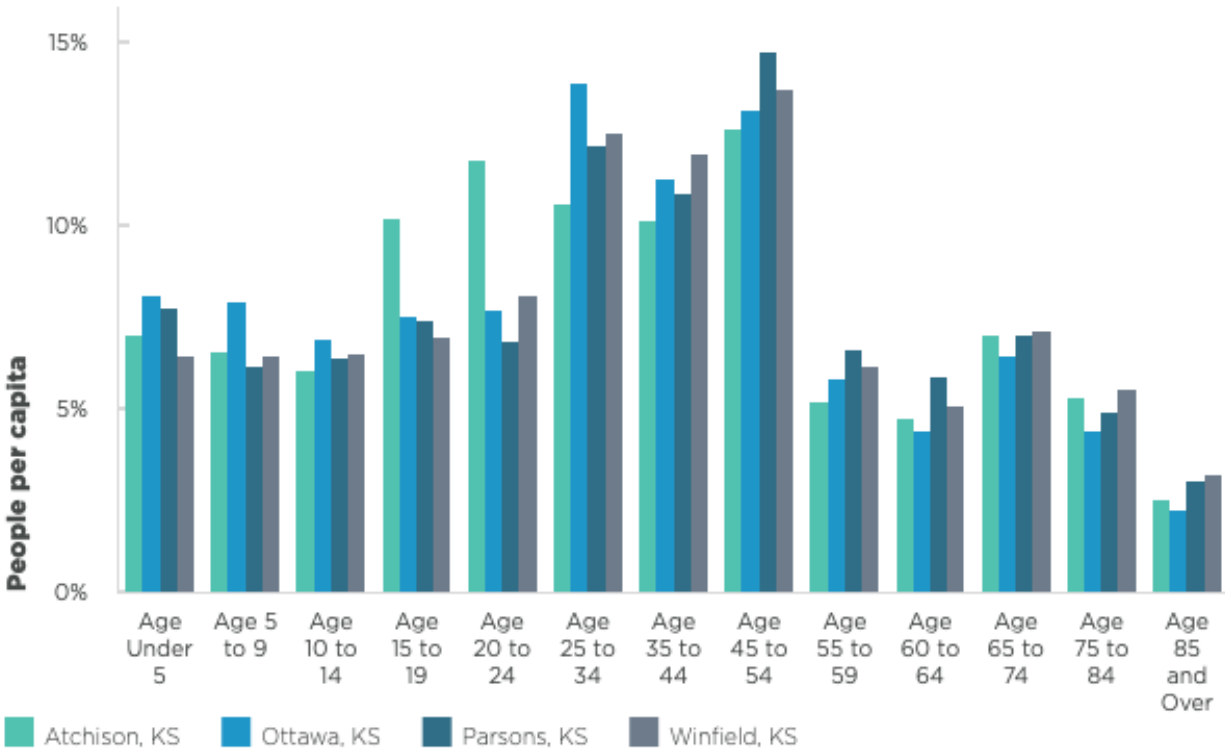
Overall, the Atchison population trends by age cohort parallel those of their three peer communities, Atchison County, the state of Kansas, and the nation, which all realized the greatest losses in the 45 to 54 years old age cohort during the same period.

### Total Population by Age (2015-2019)



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2016-2020

### Total Population by Age (2010)



Sources: US Census Bureau 2010

## MEDIAN AGE

Atchison's median age is significantly younger than all three comparison communities, Atchison County, the state of Kansas and the United States.

Median age is an important indicator of the age distribution of a population as it represents the midpoint, there are equal numbers of people who are older as there are younger than this number.

<b>Median Age</b>	<b>Years</b>
Atchison, KS	32.7
Ottawa, KS	34.5
Parsons, KS	38.5
Winfield, KS	35.0
Atchison County, KS	37.1

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2016-2020

## EMPLOYED

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employment is defined as "having worked at least one hour as a paid employee during the survey week of reference" which includes persons on vacation or extended leaves of absence. In comparison to its three peer communities, Atchison ranks third in percentage of employed individuals (as of November 2021), and is slightly above the U.S. and slightly below Atchison County.

<b>Employment/Population Ratio</b>	
Atchison, KS	58.0%
Ottawa, KS	62.4%
Parsons, KS	63.4%
Winfield, KS	53.2%
Atchison County, KS	61.1%
Kansas	63.2%
United States of America	59.6%

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2016-2020



**UNEMPLOYED**

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), a person is classified as unemployed if they “had no employment during the survey week of reference, were available to work, and had made efforts to find employment in the four weeks prior to the survey.”

Atchison has the second highest percentage of unemployed individuals overall, including comparison communities, Atchison County, the State of Kansas, and the U.S., as of November 2021.

**Unemployment Rate**

Atchison, KS	5.3%
Ottawa, KS	4.0%
Parsons, KS	3.4%
Winfield, KS	5.5%
Atchison County, KS	3.8%
Kansas	4.1%
United States of America	5.4%

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2016-2020

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<b>Total Population</b>	<b>People</b>
Atchison, KS	10,561
Ottawa, KS	12,308
Parsons, KS	9,648
Winfield, KS	11,990
<b>Total Employed</b>	<b>People</b>
Atchison, KS	4,830
Ottawa, KS	5,985
Parsons, KS	4,802
Winfield, KS	5,046
<b>Total Unemployed</b>	<b>People</b>
Atchison, KS	272
Ottawa, KS	248
Parsons, KS	167
Winfield, KS	294

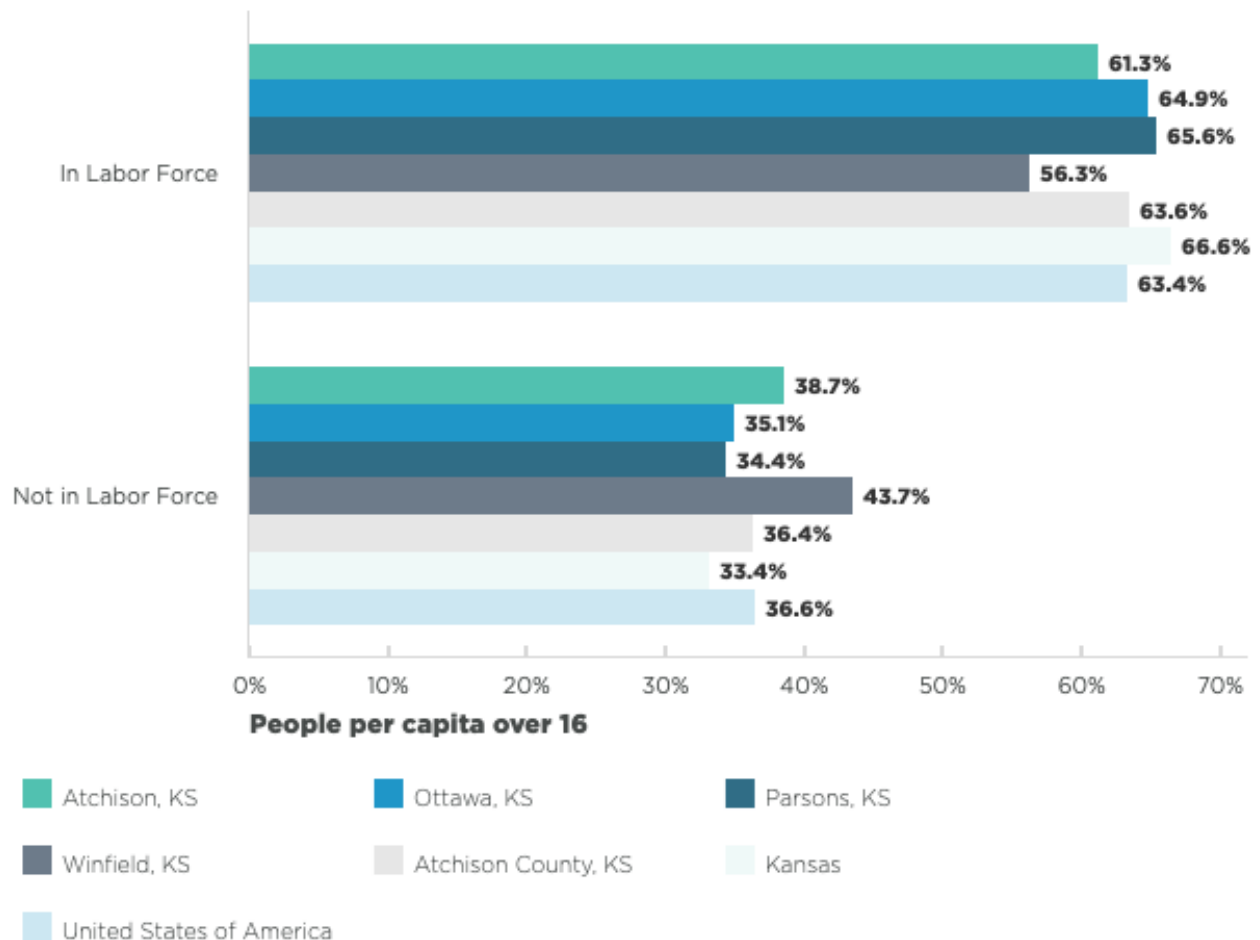
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2016-2020

## LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the labor force participation rate is defined as “the percentage of the civilian non-institutional population 16 years and older that is working or actively looking for work.” It is an important labor market measure because it represents the relative amount of labor resources available for the production of goods and services.

In comparison to its three peer communities, Atchison ranks third highest labor force participation rate at 61.3% of its population (16 years and older) either working or actively looking for work. This rate is in line with Atchison County (63.6%), but is less than the State of Kansas (66.6%) and the nation (63.4%) respectively, which demonstrates some inefficiencies in the regional labor market.

### Participation in Labor Force (2016-2020)



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## NUMBER OF JOBS

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program, the total number of jobs available in Atchison was 5,206, as of 2020. Although this number is significantly lower compared to Parsons, KS (7,314), it is relatively similar to the comparison communities, Ottawa, KS (5,912), and Winfield, KS (5,907), respectively.

### Number of Jobs

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Atchison, KS	5,206.3
Ottawa, KS	5,912.8
Parsons, KS	7,314.0
Winfield, KS	5,907.3

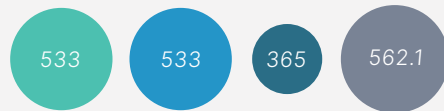
Sources: LODES Version 7.5 2019

## NUMBER OF JOBS BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program, the largest industry sectors in Atchison by number of jobs are educational services (1,331), manufacturing (930), health care and social assistance (791), accommodation and food services (533), and retail trade (416).

● Atchison, KS
 ● Ottawa, KS
 ● Parsons, KS
 ● Winfield, KS

### Accommodation & Food Service



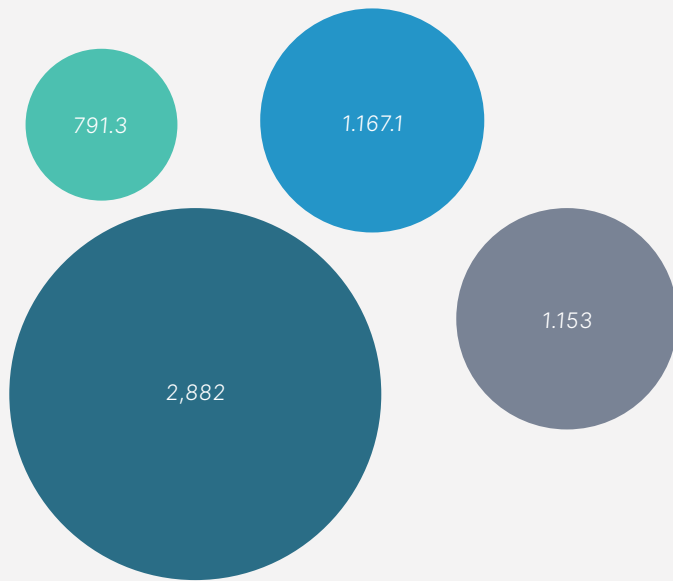
### Finance & Insurance



### Administrative Support & Waste Management



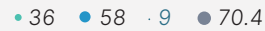
### Health Care & Social Assistance



### Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting



### Arts, Entertainment & Recreation



### Construction



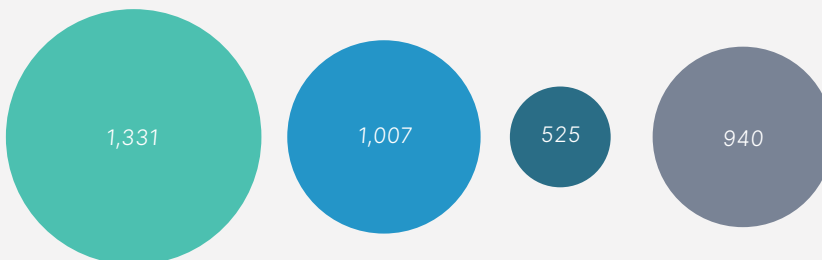
### Information



### Management

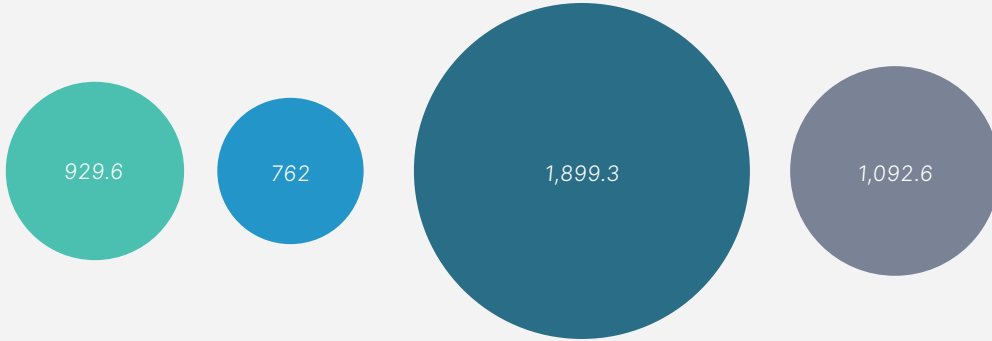


### Educational Services



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**Manufacturing**



**Mining, Oil & Gas**

0 0 0 22

**Retail Trade**



**Other Services**

93 137 91.3 57.4

**Transportation & Warehousing**

9.1 59.4 162 18

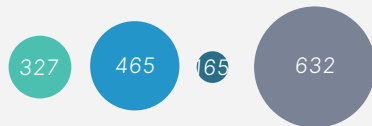
**Professional, Technology & Science**

76 131 48 140

**Utilities**

14 16.1 18 0

**Public Administration**



**Wholesale Trade**

65.6 166 56 172

**Real Estate**

44 25 15 13



## EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRY BY HOME LOCATION

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, employment industry by home location “represents the count of civilian employed people age 16 and over by thirteen employment industries” in a specific geography. In the American Community Survey (ACS) for 2016-2020, Atchison had 540 individuals employed in the manufacturing industry yet the previous data indicator demonstrated 930 manufacturing jobs available in the community. All things being equal, Atchison likely has a skills gap shortage in the manufacturing industry by 390 (+/-) unfilled jobs.

● Atchison, KS

● Ottawa, KS

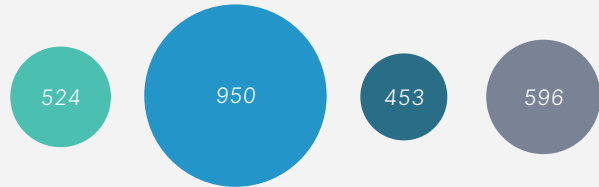
● Parsons, KS

● Winfield, KS

### Agriculture, Fishing & Mining

● 127 ● 86 ● 89 ● 127

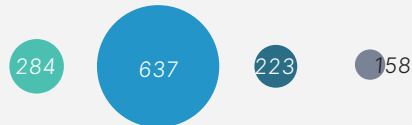
### Retail Trade



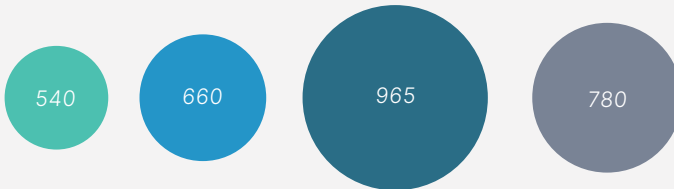
### Construction

● 297 ● 377 ● 224 ● 164

### Transportation



### Manufacturing



### Wholesale Trade

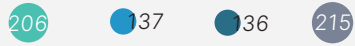
● 74 ● 513 ● 82 ● 97

### Information

● 93 ● 71 ● 93 ● 49

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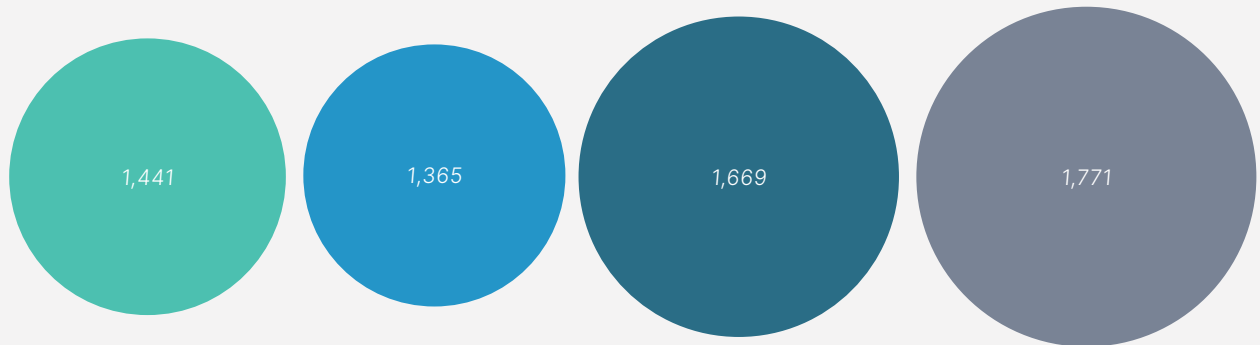
**Finance & Insurance**



**Scientific & Professional**



**Education & Health Care**



**Arts, Food & Entertainment**



**Public Administration**



**Other Services**





## AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGES BY INDUSTRY

NAICS	Industry	Empl	Current			10-Year History			5-Year Forecast			
			Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth	
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	970	\$41,568	1.41	408	5.6%	471	226	233	12	0.2%	
31	Manufacturing	653	\$82,929	1.70	-552	-5.9%	301	122	209	-31	-1.0%	
72	Accommodation and Food Services	605	\$14,353	1.65	142	2.7%	534	222	279	34	1.1%	
44	Retail Trade	515	\$25,106	1.05	-121	-2.1%	279	145	183	-48	-2.0%	
61	Educational Services	404	\$44,155	1.07	-178	-3.6%	173	88	95	-11	-0.6%	

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## **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (25 YEARS AND OLDER)**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) for 2016-2020, 40.2% of individuals ages 25 years and older graduated with a high school diploma. Atchison has an impressive rate of its population receiving a high school diploma.

Unfortunately, there is a significant drop when examining the rate of how many continue to pursue further education after graduation. Only 19.2% have taken some college courses but do not have a degree, with even less than that (7.5%) completing an Associates Degree. However, 14.7% graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree. Overall, the state of Kansas has a more educated population with 42.8% having graduated with either an Associates Degree, Bachelor’s Degree, or Graduate Degree, compared to Atchison with 33.5%. In comparison to its three peer communities, Atchison is positioned similarly when it comes to educational attainment.

### **Educational Attainment - Less than 9th Grade**

---

Atchison, KS	2.7%
Ottawa, KS	1.9%
Parsons, KS	3.8%
Winfield, KS	4.3%
Kansas	3.5%
United States of America	4.9%

### **Educational Attainment - 9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma**

---

Atchison, KS	4.4%
Ottawa, KS	4.8%
Parsons, KS	7.8%
Winfield, KS	5.1%
Kansas	5.2%
United States of America	6.6%

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**Educational Attainment - High School Degree**

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Atchison, KS	40.2%
Ottawa, KS	32.5%
Parsons, KS	31.6%
Winfield, KS	28.9%
Kansas	25.8%
United States of America	26.7%

**Educational Attainment - Some College**

---

Atchison, KS	19.2%
Ottawa, KS	28.1%
Parsons, KS	23.4%
Winfield, KS	24.9%
Kansas	22.8%
United States of America	20.3%

**Educational Attainment - Associate's Degree**

---

Atchison, KS	7.5%
Ottawa, KS	10.2%
Parsons, KS	11.3%
Winfield, KS	9.7%
Kansas	8.8%
United States of America	8.6%

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**Educational Attainment - Bachelor's Degree**

---

Atchison, KS	14.7%
Ottawa, KS	13.1%
Parsons, KS	12.4%
Winfield, KS	16.0%
Kansas	21.5%
United States of America	20.2%

**Educational Attainment - Graduate**

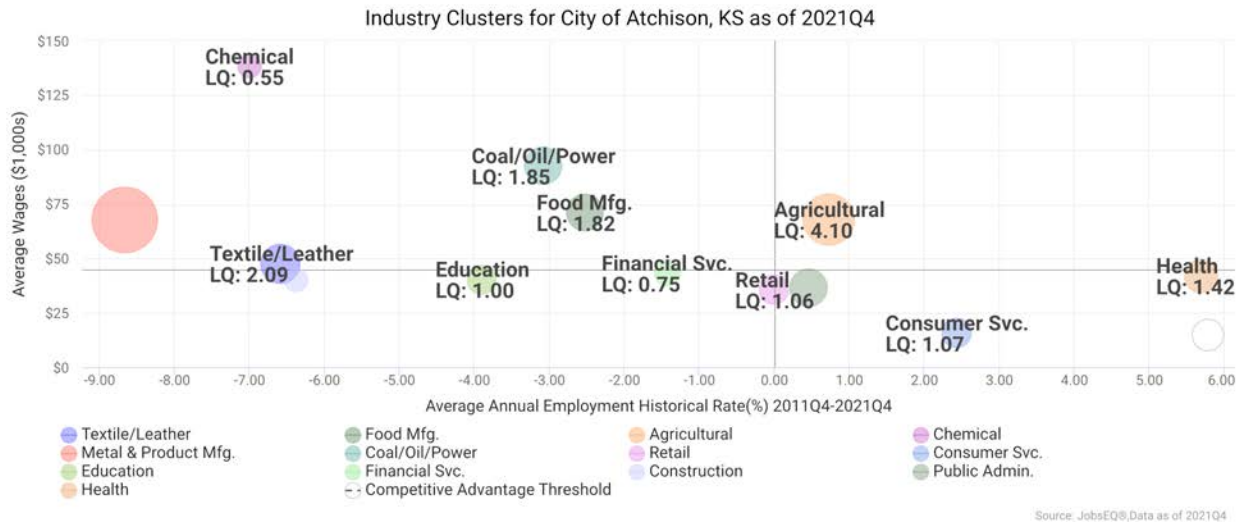
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Atchison, KS	11.3%
Ottawa, KS	9.4%
Parsons, KS	9.6%
Winfield, KS	11.0%
Kansas	12.5%
United States of America	12.7%

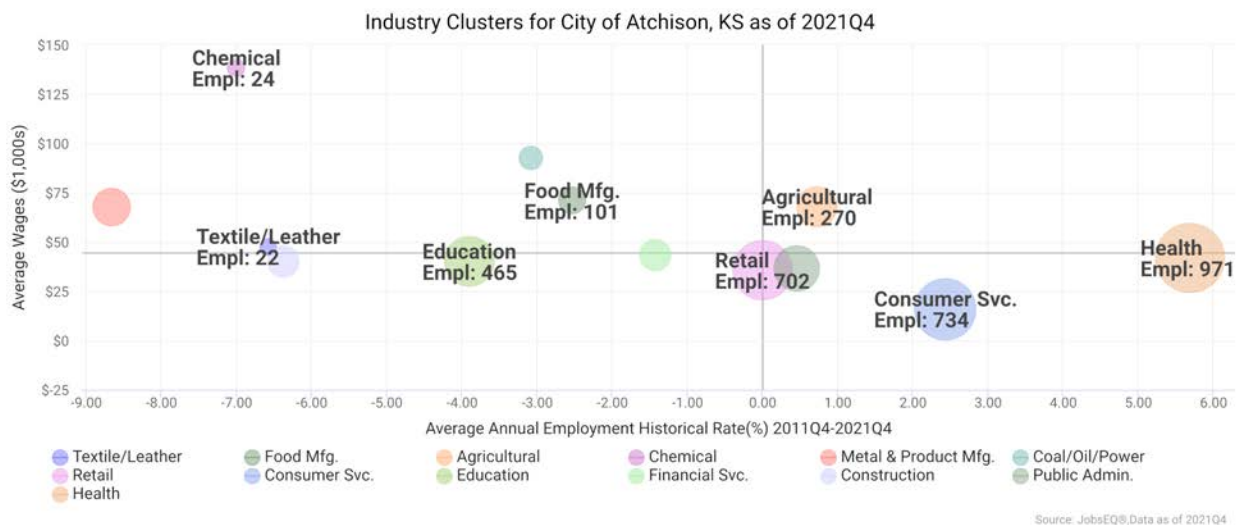
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2016-2020

## INDUSTRY CLUSTERS - HISTORICAL

According to JobsEQ, industry clusters can form and grow because of a region's competitive advantage - resources such as location, trained labor, and education systems. If a regional industry group has a location quotient of 1.25 or higher, it is considered to possess a competitive advantage in that industry.



Industry Clusters by LQ - Historical



Industry Clusters by Employment - Historical

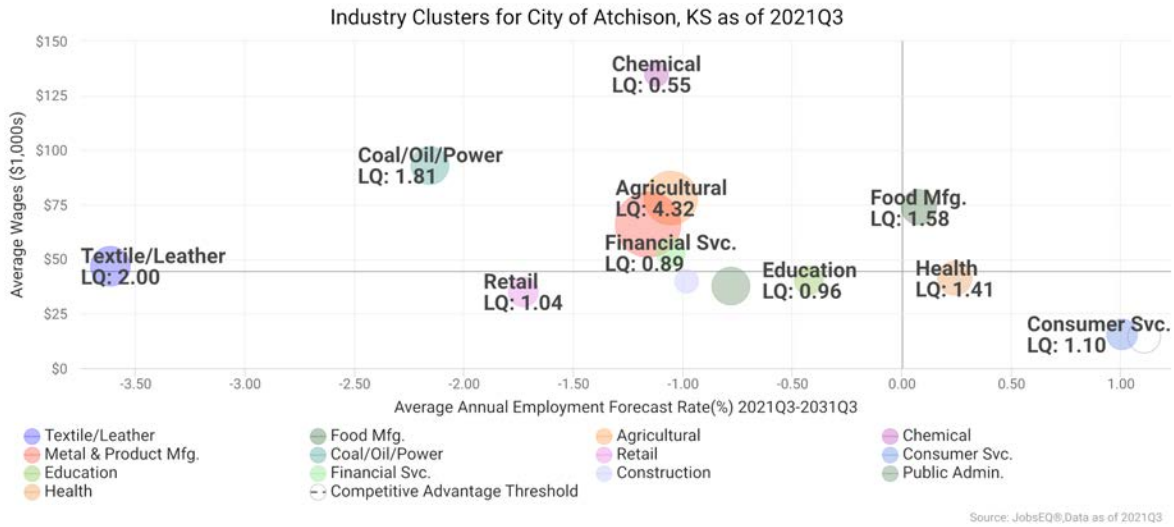
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During the past 10 years, the industry clusters that have had the greatest impact on Allen County's economy are the following:

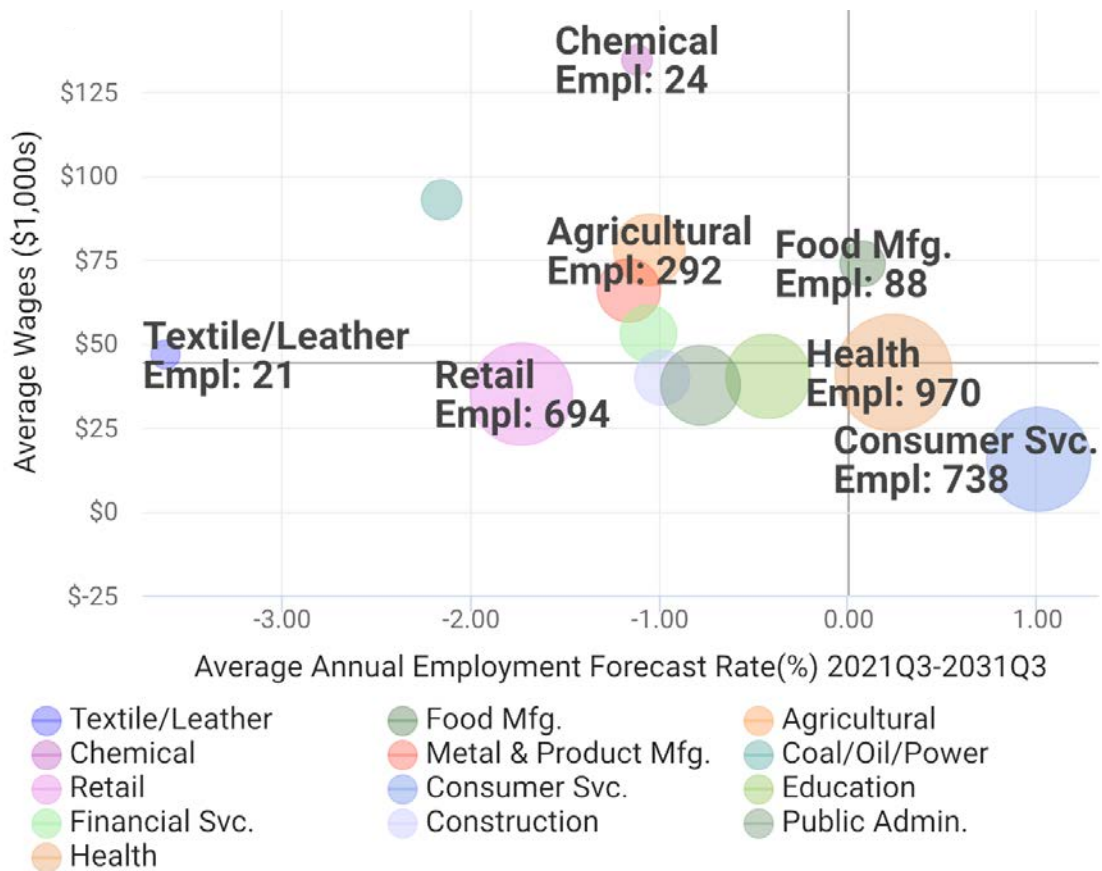
<b>Industry</b>	<b>LQ</b>	<b>Avg. Employment</b>	<b>Avg. Wages</b>	<b>Growth Rate</b>
Utilities	2.45	60	\$91,836	(3.6%)
Manufacturing	1.70	653	\$82,929	(5.9%)
Public Administration	1.69	385	\$38,212	0.6%
Accommodation & Food	1.65	142	\$14,353	2.7%
Healthcare & Social Assis.	1.41	970	\$41,568	5.6%
Ag, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	1.28	83	\$36,075	(3.8%)

## INDUSTRY CLUSTERS - FORECAST

Looking ahead, JobsEQ baseline data indicates three industry clusters in Atchison will add jobs in the future (Food Manufacturing, Health, and Consumer Services).



Industry Clusters by LQ - Forecast



Industry Clusters by Employment - Forecast

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## SKILLS GAPS

According to JobsEQ, a skill gap is defined as the difference between the supply and demand for a skill. This can be measured by percentage or a job count (where the job count is relative to occupation demand). Positive gaps are surpluses of a skill and negative gaps represent a shortage of a skill. Skill supply is collected from candidate resume data; demand (openings) is collected from job ads.

According to the data as of Q2 - 2021, Atchison is experiencing significant skills gaps in occupations related to merchandising, food service, and food preparation.

Skill	CANDIDATES	OPENINGS	GAP
	#	#	#
Merchandising	3	16	-13
Food Service	4	9	-5
Food Preparation	7	12	-5
Hospitality	5	10	-4
Personal Computers (PC)	5	8	-3
Mathematics	7	10	-3
Manufacturing	10	12	-2
Basic Life Support (BLS)	5	7	-2
Power Tools	2	4	-2
The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	1	2	-2
Plumbing	6	5	2
Teaching/Training, Job	6	5	2
Microsoft Word	13	11	3
Sales	12	8	3
Microsoft Outlook	13	9	3
Working With Children	7	4	3
Cash Handling (Cashier)	18	15	4
Microsoft Excel	29	25	4
People Skills	9	4	5
Microsoft Office	33	22	10

Source: JobsEQ®



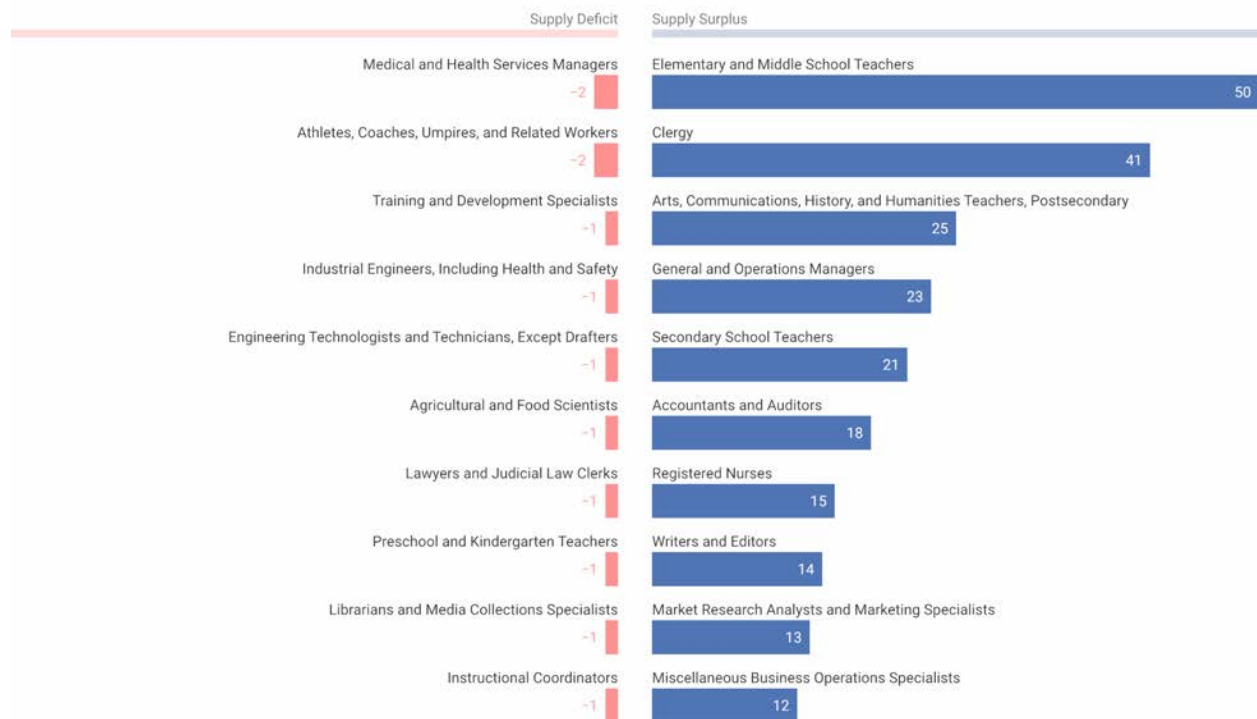
## AWARD GAPS

According to JobsEQ, this data indicator demonstrates the difference between the number of awards awarded (which are post-secondary certificates or degrees) and the occupation demand in Atchison. Negative values represent the gap, or shortage, of degrees being awarded in Atchison to meet the demand for these occupations. The positive values represent the surplus of awards meaning that the number of awards awarded are greater than the target range of demand for Atchison.

According to the data as of Q2 - 2021, Atchison is experiencing a major surplus of post-secondary certifications or degrees being awarded to meet the demand for certain occupations related to elementary and middle school teachers, clergy, arts/communication/history/humanities/teachers, general and operations managers, and secondary school teachers. This surplus of jobs related to education is most likely due to Benedictine College and Highland Community College Technical Center being located in Atchison.

### Award Gaps

Atchison, KS μSA, Two-Year Degree or Higher Only



Source: JobsEQ®  
Data as of 2021Q4



**04. DOWNTOWN HAS SEEN SIGNIFICANT GROWTH AND REDEVELOPMENT BUT REQUIRES CONTINUED STRATEGIC FOCUS, AND COLLECTIVE ACTION, TO UNLOCK FULL POTENTIAL.**

From the boom days in the late 1800's to the devastating floods of the 1950's, Urban Renewal in the 1960's to the hindering impacts of the pedestrian mall decades later, renovations and then demolition, Downtown Atchison has been through a lot throughout its rich history.

After significant recent efforts to remove the pedestrian mall and concrete awnings, improve streets, sidewalks and facades, and reopen the street to cars and multi-modal transportation

Downtown Atchison feels like it is entering a new and critical phase of its story.

Paired with the momentum of being designated as a Main Street Community and the activation of Locally Atchison, the city is in a great position to continue to reinvest in itself and build a vibrant, attractive and thriving downtown.

## **SWOT ANALYSIS**

### **STRENGTHS**

- Active Chamber and new Main Street community board
- Variety of retail, very few vacancies
- Downtown redevelopment
- Facade grant program
- Many locally owned restaurants & coffee shop
- Very few commercial vacancies
- Art and Cultural amenities
- Grocery store
- Riverfront
- New state of the art YMCA and Holiday Inn, redeveloped Fox theater
- Beautiful buildings
- Events and activities
- Plenty of parking
- Walkable
- Large geographic footprint - lots of opportunity for development
- Some downtown living options
- Strong tourism draws

### **WEAKNESSES**

- Very few second story living options
- In need of cohesive look/feel
- No strong sense of place
- Lack of public art and greenspace
- Sea of parking lots
- "College town but doesn't act like one"
- Wayfinding signage
- Residual feelings from pedestrian mall removal

### **WEAKNESSES**

- Strengthening collaboration between businesses
- Expanded businesses hours
- Update downtown/riverfront design guidelines to increase the cohesive feel of downtown
- Improve connection between downtown and Benedictine College and its visitors (Chamber is currently building a Downtown passport program for students)
- Student engagement/leadership opportunities with businesses and chamber
- Chamber/EDAG - formalizing entrepreneurial ecosystem with Kauffman FastTrac program
- Strengthening collaboration between civic groups
- Beautification and public art
- Family friendly indoor spaces such as an arcade
- MPG tasting room
- Partner program with Benedictine Brewers
- Historic designation district
- Incentives for development / revitalization
- Local business marketing training
- Leverage tourism draws for further engagement downtown

## **A CULTURE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Finding ways to “engage citizens and hear the needs of the whole community” is a stated goal of the Atchison City Commission. This goal has been continually lived in practice through many various planning, input and assessment processes over the years.

“The planning process is never complete. This Plan owes so much, to the many community members that have invested countless hours, in prior planning documents” This statement from the 2016-2030 Atchison Comprehensive Plan is critical as successful planning should be continuous and always based on community input and engagement.

In 2016 the City of Atchison developed its current comprehensive plan setting a vision for the future and serving as a guidepost for all policy decision making through 2030. The single most important piece of creating the plan was citizen input. The process took multiple years and involved significant input from hundreds of community members. Included in the outcome of the Comprehensive Plan was a set of community goals focused on downtown, entrepreneurship, housing/neighborhoods, and jobs/recruitment.

Then, in 2019 the City of Atchison led its very first Community Strategic Planning process including continued visioning and community engagement.

Through this process the City established five key focus areas and priorities to work on over the next 5 years including; quality of life, housing and neighborhoods, economy, downtown, infrastructure & transportation.

“Atchison’s downtown thrives” is the goal outlined in this plan with the following key strategies:

- Focus redevelopment efforts in downtown Atchison
- Increase economic activity in downtown Atchison
- Improve the appearance and continuity of downtown

With these previous planning efforts Atchison is clearly already on the path to success as many of the identified strategies are already in process or complete.



## VISIONING

When asked during the public visioning sessions, “In a word or phrase how would you describe the [Atchison] downtown district today?,” the responses were dramatically varying between hopeful and pessimistic.

On the optimistic side, the most used words were positive such as; “improving,” “progress,” “growing,” and “hopeful.” On the other end of the spectrum were words like “struggling,” “disjointed,” and “challenged.”

**In a word or phrase how would you describe the downtown district today?**



While some of these responses might be disheartening to those involved with the redevelopment and activation of the downtown district, these words are also highly indicative of change, which Atchison has certainly been doing.

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When asked, “In a word or phrase how do you hope to describe the [Atchison] downtown district in 20 years?,” over one third of respondents used the word “vibrant” followed by “active” and “thriving”. All of the responses included positive descriptions envisioning an attractive destination downtown alive with activity.

**In a word or phrase how do you hope to describe the downtown district in 20 years?**



When thinking about what improvements should be made to enhance the economic and social vitality of downtown Atchison most responses involved social gathering spaces and recreational components such as outdoor dining and green spaces, breweries, food trucks, activating the riverfront, adding an outfitter, as well as the look and visual vibrancy of downtown including building facelifts, a more cohesive feel, wider variety of businesses, expanded hours, public art, more downtown living options.

While many visioning participants showed a desire for more events, amenities and social options, they also stressed the importance of retaining the small town community feel.

There was also suggestions to move professional services off of Commercial and Main Street to make room for more retail, restaurant and amenities. “No more financial advisors or law firms” and “Move non retail businesses off main and commercial streets”.

Selected responses:

- *“More outdoor dining”*
- *“Destination businesses and community attractions to draw regionally.”*
- *“Existing downtown feels drab and unfinished and in cohesive”*
- *“Storefronts restored, set standards where all buildings have to work within. Lighting, sidewalk, curb improvements, downtown housing incentives. Revisit developing parking lots into commercial use buildings.”*
- *“Incentives to draw businesses, small business owners, entrepreneurs to the area”*
- *“Second Story apartments”*
- *“Continued Incentives to help owners invest in their buildings.”*
- *“Build on the parking lots”*
- *“Cohesive feel and look”*
- *“A true sense of place”*
- *“Make it a destination for people outside of Atchison... There simply isn’t enough local population to support better shops and restaurants. It needs to be more of a destinations like Weston.”*
- *“Continued improvement of streetscapes”*
- *“Connectedness, both physically and aesthetically”*
- *“More BC [Benedictine College] pride, businesses embracing the college”*
- *“Revitalize the empty, rundown buildings”*
- *“Improved city planning, HOWEVER, keep the old small town feel”*

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**What improvements should be made to enhance the economic and social vitality of downtown Atchison?**



**AMENITIES - WHAT’S MISSING?**

When considering what type of amenities are needed locally it can be helpful to start by exploring what residents enjoy most when they travel outside of Atchison or what they need to travel outside of the community to do, experience or have access to?

Most Visioning participants noted shopping, restaurants/dining, breweries/wineries, clothing stores, golf, trails, live music and misc entertainment as topping the list of most enjoyed amenities elsewhere.

**What cultural amenities do you enjoy the most when you travel outside of Atchison?**



Following up on entertainment and social opportunities participants were asked to share what type of programming they would like to see in town. Various types of classes and activities such as arts and culinary education, recreational leagues, as well as entertainment including art festivals and live music were shared as a strong interest. There was also a desire for more programs and opportunities for youth.

Selected responses include:

- “Outdoor movies”
- “Art festival on the river or downtown”
- “Community commercial kitchen, cooking classes, make and take classes, live music events”

**What type of specific programming would you like to see offered in Atchison?**



In contrast, many participants stated Atchison already has a wide variety of programming, events and opportunities available.

Local marketing is always a challenge as there are so many avenues of communication now it can be hard to reach all audiences where they are at.

The other challenge in most communities is capacity. This was echoed in stakeholder conversations. Communities need more leaders and volunteers to step up and participate, Atchison is likely no different.

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## **RETAIL TRADE PULL FACTOR**

Active retail is not only the heart of a thriving downtown but extremely critical to the growth of a community as many local services are dependent on revenue generated from sales tax. City Trade Pull Factors (CiTPF) measure the relative strength of the retail business community and serve as an indicator of their ability to attract shoppers.

The CiTPF is determined by the per capita sales tax of a city by the statewide per capita sales tax.

- Values greater than 1.00 indicate that local businesses are drawing in shoppers from beyond their community.
- A value of 1.00 indicates a perfect trade balance
- A value of less than 1.00 indicates retail leakage - meaning more shopping is being lost to other communities than what is being drawn in.
- These numbers serve as benchmarks over time that can painting a picture of local retail health improving, weakening or remaining consistent.

As noted in the Strategic Plan, the FY 2015 CiTPF for Atchison, KS was reported at 0.86, slightly below the average for the previous decade (0.92).

According to the Kansas Department of Revenue Annual report for FY2020 Atchison's Pull Factor is now reported at 1.05. This increase indicates that the community is becoming more efficient and effective at competing for local retail sales.

Comparison Communities Pull Rate (FY2020):

- Winfield 0.86
- Ottawa 1.36
- Parsons 1.08

## **IDENTITY**

During the visioning process participants were asked "Describe Atchison's cultural identity" Considering how they would describe Atchison's uniqueness to someone who has never visited.





Most responses noted its “Rich History” including Amelia Earhart, a “Beautiful, quaint river town with small town charm” boasting “good schools, great local restaurants and beautiful old buildings.” Some mentioned it’s known for “haunted Atchison” but felt it didn’t feel accurate to describe the whole community.

On a less optimistic note many respondents had a hard time describing the city’s identity, said it was “hodgepodge”, or there was none at all. Some said Atchison felt “stuck in the past” or is “trying to regain glory days”.

Selected responses include:

- “Beautiful Missouri River town with lots of history.”
- “I don’t know that we have an identity. Amelia fest or Paoluccis street dance.”
- “One of the oldest cities by the Missouri River, old homes that have great stories behind them, nice little family owned restaurants, home of Amelia Earhart, rich history of railroad, good schools.”
- “Two words. Amelia Earhart.”

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- "It's the complete package: small-town charm with a growing college town feel, tucked in the Missouri river bluffs, close to Kansas City, growing economy and pride"
- "An older city that is trying to regain its glory days prior to the 1950s flooding."
- "Like Goldilocks "it's just right since it's rural because we are on the prairie yet also sophisticated because we have a nationally known Catholic college in town. I would say our best qualities are being genuine, warm, and having natural beauty as a region."
- "Trains, planes and Catholic roots."
- "Atchison also has a tendency to surprise you, whether it's the food or the Fox theater, you never know what you'll find in Atchison"



FUTURE VISION



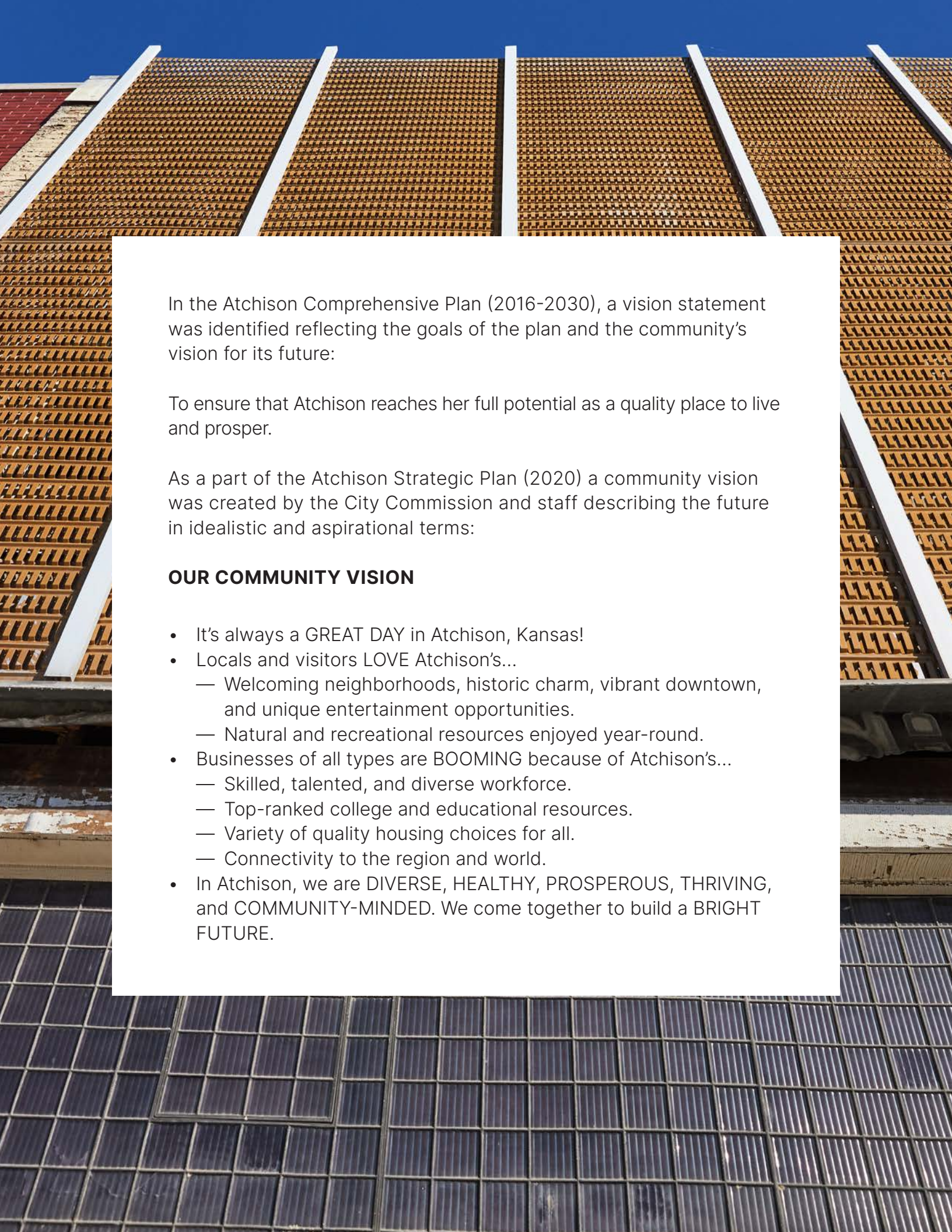
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# future vision

A key pillar of the RPIC initiative is that “placemaking contributes to long-term investment and therefore supports a community’s resiliency, social stability, and collective identity”. Establishing a community’s collective identity and its goals for the future is generally articulated through a vision statement.

The purpose of Atchison’s vision statement is to inform and shape future investment, policies, programs, and planning efforts to ensure the will of its residents is represented in the decision-making process.





In the Atchison Comprehensive Plan (2016-2030), a vision statement was identified reflecting the goals of the plan and the community's vision for its future:

To ensure that Atchison reaches her full potential as a quality place to live and prosper.

As a part of the Atchison Strategic Plan (2020) a community vision was created by the City Commission and staff describing the future in idealistic and aspirational terms:

### **OUR COMMUNITY VISION**

- It's always a GREAT DAY in Atchison, Kansas!
- Locals and visitors LOVE Atchison's...
  - Welcoming neighborhoods, historic charm, vibrant downtown, and unique entertainment opportunities.
  - Natural and recreational resources enjoyed year-round.
- Businesses of all types are BOOMING because of Atchison's...
  - Skilled, talented, and diverse workforce.
  - Top-ranked college and educational resources.
  - Variety of quality housing choices for all.
  - Connectivity to the region and world.
- In Atchison, we are DIVERSE, HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS, THRIVING, and COMMUNITY-MINDED. We come together to build a BRIGHT FUTURE.





During this placemaking process, when the Steering Committee was asked, “How would you describe your long term vision (25 years from now) for Atchison in one sentence?”

Most respondents used the word “thriving” while mentioning downtown development, variety of available housing options, quality paying jobs, a diverse and growing population, attractive to students, professionals, families and tourists.

- “Thriving downtown retail activity, thriving housing and job market”
- “A community that has appeal to students, young professionals and families because of the housing, schools, progressive culture and amenities”
- “Atchison is where you grow a family”
- “Destination town”
- “A thriving economy with quality housing units at all price points, quality job options and dynamic tourist attractions with many options for visitors and residents alike”

Based on the responses received during the stakeholder input phase, and to compliment/summarize the previously created statements, the project team suggests the following vision statement in regards to this plan:

***Atchison is a strong and growing, people focused community collaboratively leading for all to thrive and prosper.***

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY AREAS



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# strategic opportunity areas

Several potential strategic opportunity areas emerged from quantitative research and stakeholder feedback. The following opportunity areas and potential projects/initiatives align with the bright and thriving future Atchison residents desire.



## 01. PURSUE A **MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH** TO ENCOURAGE HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT & THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW HOUSING UNITS IN EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS

- Experiment with existing local resources to help renovate existing homes (i.e. NRP property tax rebate tied to renovation loan repayment plan)
- Promote and educate property owners on the expanded RHID capabilities to renovate and build out upper story housing downtown
- Promote programs like CASH Kansas to help low-to-moderate income households gain access to down payment assistance programs and further access to homeownership
- Expand the municipal land bank scope to renovate blighted properties as both rental units and owner-occupied options
- Work with local business leaders to help provide gap financing to larger housing projects of four or more units to build out workforce housing on infill lots
- Continue to market Atchison to large development firms with the capacity to buildout larger projects and utilize the available vacant lots via the municipal land bank
- Establish and promote a preferred rental housing program for properties that have passed an inspection by a third-party entity
- Hire additional code enforcement officer and continue to clean up programs in targeted neighborhoods with the greatest need
- Establish resources to support renters who report poor property maintenance and are displaced as a result
- Consider a rental registry to keep better track of these properties and inspect the interior every other year to assure each unit meets basic living standards
- Be open to new technologies or construction methodologies, such as 3D printing





## 02. BUILD A **COALITION** OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE PARTNERS TO DESIGN AN EQUITABLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM THAT BENEFITS EMPLOYERS, JOB SEEKERS, & WORKERS IN ATCHISON

- Gap training, development and apprenticeship programs (esp: manufacturing)
- Wrap around services especially to support those pursuing careers in gap industries to obtain employment post-graduation
- Target marketing to recruit Benedictine Alumni and remote workers
- Co-working space for remote employees / families/parents (boomerangs) that are moving back to send their kids to Catholic school
- Continued strategic focus on housing to attract population of local workforce who currently live outside the community
- Build Young Professionals Network for further engagement opportunities



### **03. STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS, PROGRAMMING & SMART POLICY TO PROTECT EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS, ADD VIBRANCY, AND INCREASE SENSE OF PLACE**

- Update the Downtown/Riverfront Design Guidelines (2000) to maintain and preserve aesthetic quality and unique characteristics in the district
- Increase the cohesive feel of downtown
- Encourage and foster collaboration between local businesses, especially in the downtown district, community organizations for events, marketing and expanded businesses hours
- Pursue National Register designation for a historic district
- Beautification and public art to increase sense of place
- Leverage existing tourism for increased downtown visitors
- Improve connection between downtown and Benedictine College and its visitors (Chamber is currently building a Downtown passport program for students)
- Student engagement/leadership opportunities with businesses and chamber
- Chamber/EDAG - formalizing entrepreneurial ecosystem with Kauffman FastTrac program
- Brewery, MPG tasting room, or Partner program with Benedictine Brewers.
- Family friendly indoor spaces such as an arcade
- Continued incentives for development / revitalization
- Local business marketing training



