

# ATCHISON

## STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Developed in partnership with the City of Atchison, The Economic Development Advisory Group (EDAG), The Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce, and Locally Atchison Main Street Board.*

*This project was in collaboration with USDA Rural Development, Atlas Community Studios and McClure through the Midwest Placemaking Innovation Accelerator.*

# HOUSING





# HOUSING OVERVIEW

Key observations regarding the local housing challenges for Atchison were identified in the Community Assessment that include the following:

- The cost to build new housing continues to outpace the wages for a majority of residents
- Low valuations of the aging housing stock are negatively impacting outside investors from developing in Atchison
- 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.


The [2019 Housing Study](#) and adjoining [2020 Housing Strategic Plan](#) also provided further data to help bring context to these challenges facing Atchison along with an extensive list of recommendations. Of that list, the City has seen great progress in a short amount of time with the creation of the Vacant Property Ordinance, expanding code enforcement, and expansion of more market rate homes with the buildout of the Arbor Lane subdivision.

In response to key trends and challenges, **the following strategic priority** was identified:

**Pursue a multi-pronged approach to encourage housing redevelopment and the construction of new housing units in existing neighborhoods including 5 Strategic Opportunity Areas.**

## STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- ▶ **Establish greater public awareness of local resources**
- ▶ **Expand Code Enforcement**
- ▶ **Establish a rental housing registry**
- ▶ **Create a Housing Revolving Loan Fund**
- ▶ **Be open to new technologies or construction methodologies**

 **The following sections** will delineate the strategies and funding resources for Atchison to consider as local leaders collaborate to support the housing needs of the community. This information is intended to be a continuation of the City's existing housing initiatives, as previously mentioned, and encourage further action to support new housing development.



### ► ESTABLISH GREATER PUBLIC AWARENESS OF LOCAL RESOURCES

One of the easiest and most attainable action items is to better promote what you already have. [The REDO Atchison Initiative](#) provides access to local tools and resources to restore and preserve Atchison’s housing stock.

The site even includes a video tutorial for accessing the [Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Rebate Program](#). Greater marketing of this information can help prepare interested contractors and homeowners to secure financing and purchase a home when it becomes available.

In addition to local resources, make sure to include information on state and federal programs such as Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope (CASH Kansas) that supports low-to-moderate income (LMI) households save enough money for a down payment. It’s also important to consider programs that support those households who make above the “affordability” threshold but still have challenges finding decent housing to meet their limited budget. The content can be placed on the REDO Atchison’s webpage as the one-stop shop for all things housing.

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Major employers should also play a role in promoting these programs to grow the local workforce. They could consider hosting informational meetings and promoting these programs via their respective websites. Special incentives could also be offered to attendees to encourage participation in these programs should the employee follow-up.

### ► EXPAND CODE ENFORCEMENT

One of the most arduous tasks in a community is ongoing maintenance throughout the hundreds of parcels. The task of ensuring tidy properties in smaller communities is complicated by the personal relationships that abound in these places. It can be difficult for staff to require neighbors, family members, or friends to clean up their properties but is most certainly a necessity for the greater good of the community.

### ONE OF THE FIRST STEPS TO BEGIN THIS EXPANSION OF CODE ENFORCEMENT IS AN EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN.

Past efforts by the City have included removal of blighted structures and complaint driven code enforcement. More recently the City enabled a more targeted approach of cleaning up particular high-profile corridors in the community upon the direction of City Commissioners as well as patrolling for deferred lawncare/noxious weeds. The City also established a Vacant Housing Ordinance to register vacant properties and disincentivize unutilized houses. These

efforts have proven successful in the short term, but further efforts are desired by local leaders and supported by the public.

One of the first steps to begin this expansion of code enforcement is an educational campaign. This should be a multi-faceted campaign, with details on what the City plans to focus its efforts on so property owners can make improvements ahead of rolling out enforcement. From there, additional collateral should include information on resources to help community members unable to address maintenance needs, including volunteers through Habitat for Humanity and students at Benedictine College. A final educational brochure should focus on enforcement measures the City may use to address lingering issues; however, prevention of these issues should be the focus.



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Beyond building greater public awareness around these efforts, the City needs to consider hiring additional staff to expand enforcement operations. To make this work most impactful, the City should continue to target specific neighborhoods, corridors, and community gateways rather than a scattershot approach throughout the community. This focused effort will yield faster, more concentrated results, building additional buy-in for further enforcement work.

### ► ESTABLISH A RENTAL HOUSING REGISTRY

Coupled with expanding code enforcement is an emphasis on rental properties. Many of the properties with the most citations are not owner-occupied housing, but rental units with absent or complacent landlords. This issue is not unique to Atchison; however, it is certainly more prevalent compared to other similar-sized communities. The adoption of the Vacant Property Ordinance is a great start and implementing a rental registry is a logical next step in the process to hold landlords accountable.

#### **THE GOAL OF THE RENTAL REGISTRY IS TO ASSURE PROPERTY OWNERS ARE PROVIDING A SAFE, HABITABLE RENTAL UNIT TO THEIR TENANTS.**

It should be prefaced, there are many good and decent rental property owners in Atchison. The goal of the rental registry is to assure property owners are providing a safe, habitable rental unit to their tenants and not intended to be punitive to well-managed properties.

The City should help provide simple procedures to help property owners register their rental units and charge a modest fee only necessary to cover the program expenses, primarily the cost of a biennial inspection. A City employee could be appointed to oversee inspections for both the rental registry program as well as a more expanded code enforcement program. Another option is to contract these inspections with a third-party service provider.

Another component of this program could be establishing a process to support tenants who report serious safety and health issues in their rental unit. For some renters, they feel like they cannot report major issues such as mold or roof leaks for fear of being evicted. Local housing service providers can help provide

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guidance on how best to protect these tenants ahead of a complaint to avoid retaliation from a landlord. The City may also provide some form of resource to help a landlord with a first-time offense to help remedy the issue.

Lastly, the rental registry could also be used to promote and celebrate well-managed properties with some sort of score or seal of approval after an inspection. Properties that have made this list could be posted publicly so potential renters know which properties have passed the City's inspection for basic living standards. Property owners could see this seal of approval as a benefit to help differentiate themselves from other available rental units.

### ► CREATE A HOUSING REVOLVING LOAN FUND

The Covid-19 Pandemic has brought about new challenges in all facets of life including home construction. Supply chain issues have plagued the lumber and steel industry with extensive lead times and pricing spikes that have increased the overall cost to build a new home. Continued factory closures abroad coupled with international conflicts continue to hinder the ability for developers to make a project work anywhere, especially in rural areas.

### THE PURPOSE OF THE RLF IS TO HELP BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE COST TO BUILD AND THE EXPECTED RETURNS OF THE FINISHED PRODUCT.

To achieve affordable rental or new home prices, Atchison should consider creating a [revolving loan fund](#) (RLF). The purpose of the RLF is to help bridge the gap between the cost to build and the expected returns of the finished product. Financing is dependent upon demonstrating positive returns to the developer so that they may be able to pay their debt service. If these returns fall short, banks and other lenders will require additional equity upfront to reduce the risk of default on their loan.

By creating a local RLF, the City and its partners can offer short-term capital to developers at discounted rates. Then the developer repays that loan over a five- or ten-year period so that the funds will be available to future developers. A developer could also refinance their completed project with a local lender with the potential to pay back the RLF sooner so that it could be repurposed for other projects.

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After speaking with local business leaders, there is interest in creating such a fund to support new housing development. Participating businesses may require the end user to be a new or existing employee to assure direct benefits to their bottom line. Negotiations with a prospective developer may help determine the arrangement that best suits the situation.

Gov. Laura Kelly signed the state's FY2023 budget with funds to support the creation of a [housing revolving loan fund program](#). The RLF program would target further development of workforce housing in rural areas. Details are forthcoming on the program; however, being proactive and creating a local pilot program may help demonstrate Atchison's ability to effectively execute a RLF and garner support for additional funds from the state.

### ► BE OPEN TO NEW TECHNOLOGIES OR CONSTRUCTION METHODOLOGIES

The cost of construction continues to increase due in large part to the rising cost and limited availability of labor and materials. Now is the time to pivot and consider new ways to build the housing needed in rural communities.

Modular homes have been around for a long time as an alternative for areas with little or no builders available. These homes are constructed with traditional stick-built methods but in a climate-controlled, factory setting. The finished product is then moved and assembled on the site of the customer's choosing. One of the major benefits of this construction method is having a central location for construction crews to work instead of traveling to each site.

Modular homes are typically ordered directly from the consumer, not built on spec or by a developer to sell. With that said, the proposed housing task force could help secure funding to place deposits on a number of houses so the modular builder can start construction and then presell these homes before they are completed. However, the current challenge modular builders are facing is no different than traditional builders: the demand is high for this product and these modular builders are feeling the strain building homes as fast as they are ordered while dealing with material shortages.

Another option is applying truly novel construction methods through the use of academic-led construction methods. Kansas State University's Net Positive Studio focuses on creating affordable, efficient housing to be constructed for no

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more than \$150,000. The students prefabricated wall panels in factory settings — similar to modular construction — which allowed for less-skilled crews and volunteers to puzzle-piece the finished product on-site. What sets this apart from other similar homes is the design incorporating passive solar and other technologies that can provide a lower monthly cost to the end user.



[Stafford County Economic Development](#) commissioned the most recent home to be built in St. John as a rental property for its local workforce. The three-bedroom, two-bathroom home is nearly 1,100 square feet of finished space. Bedrooms were kept small to accommodate larger communal areas, including the kitchens and living rooms. And while it has a slightly smaller footprint than other new construction homes, the design provides built-in furniture and other space-saving techniques to make the most use of its space.

The newest technological advancement in construction to consider is 3D printing. The technology overlays numerous layers of concrete-like material on top of another to create the structure of the building. One of the many benefits of 3D printed houses is the need for less labor to construct the framework of homes as well as a quicker construction time. Once the equipment is all set up and ready to go, the home can be built within 12 hours of operation. The timber roofing is placed on the structure, and then electrical, plumbing, and other finishing contractors take over to complete the build.

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The City of Valley Center, KS, a suburb of Wichita, is piloting the first 3D printed homes in the state in partnership with CC3D. The current 3D printed home can be built about 10 to 15% cheaper and can be finished two to four weeks faster than traditional homes. When complete, there will be a total of 100 rental housing units on the site with a mix of duplex and single-family detached product types.

## BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES

*There are a number of great examples to highlight for the proposed strategies. The following are provided as a starting point for reference.*

### **RENTAL REGISTRY PROGRAM |**

KANSAS CITY, KS & LAWRENCE, KS

Major cities typically have well-established rental registry programs; however, they may be more regulated than what Atchison wants to consider. [The Unified Government of Wyandotte County \(Kansas City, KS\)](#) and the [City of Lawrence, KS](#) are two examples that have great resources available to help build a framework for Atchison's Rental Registry Program. Both programs highlight information beneficial to landlords and tenants. The City of Lawrence even has an [interactive map](#) showing the location of rental properties in good standing with the local licensing program.

### **SEED FUNDING PROGRAM |**

WINFIELD, KS

Alternative Program: One example of a program similar to a RLF is in Winfield, KS. Local business leaders pooled their resources and came up with \$300,000 to support a new housing development incentive targeted at developers. Five developers were selected to receive up to \$60,000 as seed funding to build a certain number of units. The primary requirement was these resulting units were to be rented by employees of participating businesses.

While this program proved successful in building new housing units, the results were limited to those few units built. Had Winfield created a true RLF, developers would have access to this capital for future projects.

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# PARTNERSHIPS

At a minimum, the following organizations should be substantially engaged in the City of Atchison’s housing efforts. Together, as a coalition, the leaders from these organizations should determine who else needs to be involved and what their role should be to advance collective priorities, programs and initiatives, and significant projects.

[City of Atchison](#)

[Atchison County](#)

[Kansas Housing Corporation](#)

[Economic Development Advisory Group \(EDAG\)](#)

[Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce](#)

**Local major Employers**

**Local/Regional Developers**

**Local Banks**

# FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Access to funding is often regarded as one of the greatest barriers to economic and community development efforts. The following is a funding resource roadmap to help guide the City of Atchison as they and strategic partners pursue funding for priority projects and initiatives. It is important to review the program guidelines in detail to ensure it is appropriate for the project/initiative before applying.

Housing Funding Opportunities for Atchison can be found in the Appendix:

[RESOURCE ROADMAP](#)

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT







## WORKFORCE OVERVIEW

Key observations regarding the local workforce challenges for Atchison were identified in the Community Assessment including:

- 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

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

In response to key trends and challenges, **the following strategic priority** emerged for Atchison:

**Build a coalition of public and private partners to design an equitable workforce development ecosystem that benefits employers, job seekers and workers in Atchison.**

# STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- ▶ **Focus on strengthening Atchison’s local workforce to meet the needs of employers**
- ▶ **Build a Young Professionals Network for further engagement opportunities**

↓ **The following sections** will delineate the strategies and funding resources for Atchison to consider as local leaders collaborate to support the workforce development needs of the community. This information is intended to be a continuation of the City’s existing workforce initiatives and encourage further action to support a more cohesive workforce development ecosystem.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### ► FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING ATCHISON'S LOCAL WORKFORCE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS

- Establish a committee of employers, higher education, training providers, K-12, wraparound service providers, and workforce development professionals
- Have the committee work towards establishing more available apprenticeships. Currently, [Bunge Milling](#) is the only employer to offer an apprenticeship program.
- The committee should hold quarterly meetings to continually assess employer needs and the labor market and evaluate performance measurements
- Determine employer needs and skill gaps, identify any existing training and programs to address these needs. If no training programs exist, work with local/regional institutions to modify/create programming that can meet training needs.
- Leverage a variety of training and education methods, including high school students' ability to earn an associate's degree upon graduation
- Develop a robust outreach and recruitment effort to make people aware of local employers, job availability, training and education opportunities connected to these jobs, potential earnings and career advancement, etc.
- Ensure individuals are connected to the training and resources they need to be successful. Since the Community Assessment determined housing was such a barrier to employers hiring workers, the committee should work collaboratively with the City of Atchison on implementing housing strategies that would increase available housing for the local workforce.
- Apply for federal and state grants to support and expand the workforce development ecosystem



## ► **BUILD A YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NETWORK FOR FURTHER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

- Start a student-led coalition that offers workforce development opportunities to high school (and college) students, such as workshops, training, etc. on existing business resources/incentives, entrepreneurship bootcamps, and general career development skills, such as resume building and interviewing.
- Offer specific focus areas, such as small business and entrepreneurship, to allow students to explore starting their own businesses in Atchison
- Partner with local employers to offer shadowing and/or internship opportunities
- Apply for state and local grants to support and expand the coalition activities

## BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES

*There are a number of great examples to highlight for the proposed strategies. The following are provided as a starting point for reference.*

### **MAN-TRA-CON CORPORATION** |

MARION, IL (POP. 16,855)

Man-Tra-Con supports the economic health of southern Illinois by identifying the needs of local employers and, in response, provides services designed to build a quality of workforce. Man-Tra-Con's primary mission is to collaborate effectively with their workforce partners to create quality workforce solutions throughout Local Workforce Area 25, comprising Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Perry and Williamson counties. In addition, Man-Tra-Con collaborates with innovative partners in economic development, healthcare, community and social service and education to create unique solutions to the workforce challenges faced throughout the region.

#### **Program Highlight**

Aviation Technician Program: Man-Tra-Con partnered with [Southern Illinois University's \(SIU\) Aviation Technologies](#) program and [TRANSFRVR](#), a firm that develops simulation-based training, to co-develop virtual reality (VR) software that helps train students in aviation maintenance. SIU offers the training curriculum and the training is delivered through Oculus headsets and hand controllers. The program provides services to various counties throughout Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri, and is anticipated to impact 600 students with an estimated 370 completing enhanced Aviation Maintenance Technician coursework through VR as a result of a [2020 grant](#) through the U.S. Department of Labor.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### **HINDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE** |

RAYMOND, MS (POP. 2,115)

Serving Claiborne, Copiah, Hinds, Rankin, and Warren Counties Hinds Community College's (HCC) Workforce Division offers a variety of services for career development, workforce training, assessment/testing, and Adult Basic and Continuing Education. HCC is dedicated to providing current and prospective employers in their district with a trained and educated workforce, enabling the district to retain and grow existing businesses and industries as well as to attract new ones.

#### **Academy and Program Highlights**

**Logging Academy:** HCC offers a Logging Academy Program in partnership with Mississippi Logging Association and Mississippi Forestry Commission. The academy is an 8 to 16-week program designed to equip students with little or no experience to become a logging equipment operator with safety certifications as well as Professional Logging Manager (PLM) status.

**Deckhand River Barge Training:** HCC offers a Deckhand River Barge Training Program which prepares students for careers in marine transportation technology. Students may elect to pursue a Career Certificate and/or Technical Certificate (see [Curriculum](#) for download).

**Coding Academy:** The Vicksburg Coding Academy (VCA) was started in 2018 as a joint venture between HCC and the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC). The Academy is a one-year program, cohort model unique to Mississippi. ERDC and HCC worked to develop a curriculum that would satisfy the needs of the community. The VCA has top of the line computers and the latest software to facilitate the learning process. All courses are presented in-person with

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

the same instructor at either ERDC or on the Vicksburg Campus. Once a student successfully learns how to create and write their own programs, they are eligible to sit for the Microsoft Technology Associate certification. While preparing for this certification, students also earn their Career and Technical Certificate through HCC and can elect to continue their education for an Associate's degree. Classes start every Fall, and are complete at the end of the Summer.

**MIBEST:** HCC offers an innovative workforce training program dedicated to preparing people who need help with foundational skills for careers by mixing career training with additional support for math, writing, and reading inside the classroom. If a student has not earned their high school diploma or HSE, HCC's MIBEST program can provide them with a clear path towards higher education. The goals of the MIBEST Program are to:

- Assist students who need to earn their GED to do so while they are also enrolled in college courses focused on preparing them for a career
- Help students to earn one or more certifications that helps them get a better job now with a family sustaining wage
- Allow students to earn college credit that leads to a degree in the future

**Career and Technical Programs:** HCC designed Pathways as a roadmap to show prospective and current students all the different academic and training options available to them. If a student plans to transfer to a university, HCC's program maps ensure they take the right classes. HCC's career and technical programs offer multiple degree and certificate options, each one training students for high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand jobs. By leveraging federal and state funding, as well as tuition revenue, HCC administers 70 career and technical programs, and more than 20 different academic areas of study.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### **EVEREST** |

WATER VALLEY, MS (POP. 3,190)

Mississippi's first rural education and innovation hub, Everest combines technology skills training with a business-ready incubator and a 30,000 sq ft office park available for co-location.

#### **Academy and Program Highlights**

**Base Camp Coding Academy** (BCCA) is a hands-on, challenging, and fun program designed to train recent high school graduates to be software engineers. In an intimate classroom setting, students work with real world technologies to learn the fundamentals of coding, app development and the life leadership skills they will need to be successful in their career and competitive in the job market upon graduation. BCCA is a non-profit, offering a year-long—40 hours each week—program free to their students thanks to the support of Sustaining Sponsors including the MorganWhite Group, CoreLogic, Renasant Bank, and C Spire.

### **GREATER NEW ORLEANS INC.** |

NEW ORLEANS, LA (POP. 383,997)

Greater New Orleans, Inc. (GNO Inc.) is the regional economic development nonprofit organization serving the [10-parish region](#) of Southeast Louisiana. GNO Inc.'s mission is to create a region with a thriving economy and an excellent quality of life, for everyone. To achieve this goal, GNO, Inc. pursues a two-pronged strategy:

#### **Business Development**

*Attract, retain, and develop the businesses that will employ the region's future workforce and drive the economy forward*

#### **Business Environment**

*Propose, promote, and facilitate policies and programs that improve the overall conditions under which businesses operate*



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

GNO, Inc. works together with the business community; local, state, and federal governments; and other regional stakeholders to coordinate, consolidate, and catalyze action on key issues and opportunities that maximize job and wealth creation and retention, are relevant to their region as a whole, and create systematic impact.

### Program Highlights

**Mechatronics Apprenticeship Program:** The Mechatronics Apprenticeship Training Program’s curriculum is designed to enhance and prepare an apprentice to be fully qualified in multiple aspects of advanced manufacturing technology. The two-year commitment provides both technical classroom instruction and on-the-job training using an earn-while-you-learn model with training costs covered completely by the employer. Once assigned to an employer, apprentices earn a paycheck while learning on-the-job. Apprentices alternate between eight weeks of classroom work and eight weeks at their chosen company for the duration of the program. Participants in the program gain experience in a wide range of core competencies including motor controls, basic machining (mill, lathe, drilling, tapping, etc.), blueprint reading, functions of electrical and electronic systems, and much more.

- Partners include GNO Inc., Northshore Technical Community College, Nunez Community College, Delgado Community College, Elmer Chocolate, Laitram, and Zatarain’s.
- For more information, check out [this video](#) for an overview of the program.

## PARTNERSHIPS

At a minimum, the following organizations should be substantially engaged in Atchison’s workforce development efforts. Together, as a committee, the leaders from these organizations should determine who else needs to be involved and what their role should be to advance collective priorities, programs and initiatives, and significant projects

[City of Atchison](#)

[Atchison County](#)

[Highland Community College Technical Center](#)

[Benedictine College](#)

[Atchison Public School District](#)

[MGP Ingredients](#)

[Atchison Hospital | University of Kansas](#)

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Access to funding is often regarded as one of the greatest barriers to economic and community development efforts. The following is a list of agencies/ organizations and funding programs Atchison is eligible for and should consider pursuing at some point in the future. It is important to review the program guidelines in detail to ensure it is appropriate for the project/initiative before applying.

Workforce Development funding opportunities for Atchison can be found in the Appendix: [RESOURCE ROADMAP](#)



# **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**



## DOWNTOWN OVERVIEW

Key observations regarding downtown revitalization for Atchison were identified in the Community Assessment including:

- Downtown has seen significant growth and redevelopment but requires continued strategic focus, and collective action, to unlock full potential

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

In response to key trends and challenges, the following **strategic priority** was identified:

**Strengthen downtown through strategic partnerships, programming and smart policy to protect existing characteristics, add vibrancy, and increase sense of place**

# STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY AREA

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- ▶ **Update the Downtown/Riverfront Design Guidelines (2000) to maintain and preserve aesthetic quality and unique characteristics in the district**

↓ **The following sections** will delineate the strategies and funding resources for Atchison to consider as local leaders collaborate to support the workforce development needs of the community. This information is intended to be a continuation of the City's existing workforce initiatives and encourage further action to support a more cohesive workforce development ecosystem.



► **UPDATE AND ADOPT THE DOWNTOWN/RIVERFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES TO MAINTAIN AND PRESERVE AESTHETIC QUALITY AND UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS IN THE DISTRICT**

Over the last 25 years there has been a significant amount of attention, planning and successes around the development and restoration of the Atchison Downtown/Riverfront District. One example is the [Downtown/Riverfront - Facade & Signage Design Guidelines](#), released in May 2000, intending to further historic preservation, rehabilitation and maintenance of properties within the targeted district, and create a consistent architectural character that would become a recognizable theme for the designated area.

Today, while these guidelines exist on the city's website and are technically still in effect, many residents interviewed didn't know they exist. Given all of the recent developments downtown and the new designation as a Kansas Main Street Community, now is the time to update, strengthen and reimagine these guidelines.

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Through this project the Atchison Downtown/Riverfront Design Guidelines were updated and strengthened in 2022 with public input and support from local business and city leadership (See appendix).

**This update to the Downtown/Riverfront Design Guidelines can capitalize on current momentum, help create strategies for visual consistency, and create positive change and prosperity for the entire community.**

The next steps will be for the City of Atchison to make final decisions on a few key components including the following before formally adopting and codifying the updated guidelines.

### Facade Materials

When thinking about future development and renovations in the district it will be important for the city to decide what is absolutely not allowed in terms of facade materials, and what might be considered taking into account the proposed design and development opportunity.

- Further, will these requirements be applied only to the core of the district which is B3 zoning only or the entire downtown/riverfront district which includes B3/B4 zoning.



## **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**

### **Paint colors**

Professionally designed paint palettes can go a long way in creating a visual consistency and an attractive cohesive feel to downtown districts.

In lieu of a palette custom designed for Atchison, an economic alternative is to utilize the [Sherwin Williams - Historic Paint Color Collection](#) (which can also be matched by any local paint retailer).

- The full Historic Paint Collection can be used for a wide variety of options, or alternatively the scope can be narrowed to the [Victorian Era](#) colors given the majority of buildings are from this time period.
- The City will need to decide if the use of pre-approved paint palettes will be recommended or required in the final guidelines.
  - If required, will the colors be for the entire district including B3/B4 zoning or specific to the core (B3 zoning only).

### **Process**

When adding in additional requirements related to design the City will need to assess if the existing permit process works or if there is an alternate process that would need to be implemented.

### **Who serves as the Design Review Committee**

A Design Review Committee (DRC) is a requirement of the Main Street program but there are no exact rules on who should serve or how this committee functions. The City will need to decide on the best way to implement this team without overly complicating its existing process which could stall development.

Options include utilizing an existing entity such as the planning commission, Main Street board, Economic Development Advisory Group, Chamber or some combination of these. It could also be an on-call advising team to the city regarding downtown design.



## BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES

*There are a number of great examples to highlight for the proposed strategies. The following are provided as a starting point for reference.*

### **RENTAL REGISTRY PROGRAM |**

KANSAS CITY, KS & LAWRENCE, KS

### **MAIN STREET AMERICA - THE MAIN STREET APPROACH DESIGN HANDBOOK**

is intended to help Main Street directors and community leaders implement a people-centered design process. It explores the range of issues that impact the physical characteristics of a downtown and provides you with a roadmap for navigating the set of choices involved in implementing holistic design principles to ensure they complement the overall strategy for your downtown.

**KANSAS MAIN STREET DESIGN MANUAL (2004)** - From 1985 to 2012, more than \$600 million in redevelopment took place in participating Kansas communities. This included the opening or expansion of 3,800 small businesses, creating more than 8,600 new jobs. With the return of the state program in 2020, one of their current goals is to update the state's Main Street Design manual. While the 2004 version is outdated, the core of the manual is still relevant and useful.



## PARTNERSHIPS

To achieve this vision of a vibrant, active and thriving downtown district, continued investment of time, talent and financial resources will need to be consistent through building a culture of community pride and revitalization.

While these guidelines will need to be finalized and codified by the City of Atchison, partnerships with local leaders will be critical in the rollout to ensure broad public awareness and support.

This change cannot happen overnight or by one entity alone. It requires public and private buy-in and a collaborative approach. **The good news is that Atchison has recently seen significant development and the ripple effect of positive change can impact the entire district if amplified across all levels.**

[City of Atchison](#)

[Economic Development Advisory Group \(EDAG\)](#)

[Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce](#)

**Locally Atchison Main Street Board.**

**Downtown/Riverfront district building and business owners**

# **FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

Access to funding is often regarded as one of the greatest barriers to economic and community development efforts. The following is a list of agencies/ organizations and funding programs the City of Atchison is eligible for and should consider pursuing at some point in the future. It is important to review the program guidelines in detail to ensure it is appropriate for the project/ initiative before applying.

## **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION RESOURCE ROADMAP**

### **STATE & FEDERAL RESOURCES**

There are many state and federal resources available for a wide variety for business and building owners. A few notable programs are listed below:

#### **HISTORIC TAX CREDITS**

Historic Tax Credit programs encourage investments in the rehabilitation and re-use of historic buildings. As a city full of historic properties, Atchison provides many opportunities for individuals to take advantage of these state and federal programs.

#### **FEDERAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDITS: 20%**

A 20% Federal Tax Credit is available for approved and certified restoration projects on historic structures. Prior approval is required. Historic renovation projects must be comprehensive, and must also meet several thresholds of completeness. Credits are not issued for partial restorations, or for routine maintenance.

- [Federal Tax Incentives for Preserving Historic Properties](#)

#### **STATE HISTORIC TAX CREDITS: 25%**

The Kansas historic program provides a tax credit equal to 25% of qualified expenditures on income-producing or non income-producing properties. The total amount of the expenditures must equal \$5,000 or more. Projects must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

- [State Tax Credit Basics](#)
- [State Tax Credit Requirements](#)

## **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**

### **USDA Energy Efficiency Grants and Loan Guarantees**

[Rural Energy for America Program Renewable Energy Systems & Energy Efficiency Improvement Guaranteed Loans & Grants in Kansas](#)

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

Dedicated to developing strong communities across Kansas  
Strong communities are the lifeblood of Kansas. We offer a range of programs and services to help communities improve infrastructure, meet community needs, revitalize downtown corridors, preserve their history and develop commercial and tourism destinations that enhance the vibrancy of our communities and the quality of life across Kansas.

- Community Development Block Grants
- Kansas Downtown Redevelopment Tax Rebate
- Rural Housing Incentive District - ([Including downtown second story housing](#))

### **KANSAS CREATIVE ARTS INDUSTRIES COMMISSION**

Mural and Public Art Grant

[Mural Making Guide for Kansas Communities](#)

[Reimagined Spaces](#)

### **GRANT OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY:**

- [Heritage Trust Fund \(HTF\)](#)  
Competitive grant program for projects on national and state register-listed properties.
- [Historic Preservation Fund \(HPF\)](#)  
Grants that assist communities in planning for the preservation of their historic resources.
- [Kansas Rural Preservation \(KRP\)](#)  
Grants to assist historic properties in rural locations with populations less than 30,000.
- [Other Funding Sources](#)  
Funding for historic preservation comes from a variety of sources. The following link provides information focusing on the rehabilitation of historic properties. Please note that many of these programs are competitive and require matching funds. Contact information and websites are subject to change.



# APPENDICES



# APPENDICES

[Community Snapshot Report](#)

[Public Visioning Results](#)

[Atchison Steering Committee Visioning Results](#)

[Atchison Public Survey Results Report](#)

[Atchison Community Assessment](#)

[Updated Downtown Design Guidelines](#)

[Atchison Resource Roadmap](#)