

**Final**

STRATEGIC ISSUES UPDATE

CITY OF KEARNEY, MISSOURI

AUGUST 14, 2012

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## Introduction

In the Spring of 2006, the key decision makers of the City met to review the important issues that were anticipated to face the City of Kearney during the next four to five years. A previous series of discussions in 2002 developed a document entitled “Overview of Strategic Issues”. The discussions in 2006 resulted in a revision of that document developed four years earlier.

In the time since that 2006 document was written and adopted as part of the Kearney Master Plan, a series of events, both anticipated and unanticipated, have influenced the development of the city. The City has determined that a sufficient period of time has passed so that it would be beneficial at this point to review the 2006 suggestions. In the Summer of 2012 Mayor Dane, the Board of Aldermen (Jeff Couchman, Dan Holt, Tim Patterson and Gerri Spencer), and key City staff (Jim Eldridge, City Administrator, Brian Hall, City Attorney and David Pavlich, Community Development Director) met with the consultant (Eric Strauss) to review the progress made on the prior document and to review important issues that will arise during the next five to six years. This document is a result of two meetings held during the period June to August 2012 to provide guidance for the City’s decision makers in meeting upcoming challenges as well as maintaining the current attractiveness of the City.

An initial question was to determine whether the prior period’s rapid growth of population and issuance of building permits would continue. The national economic situation has affected the pace of City development. During the last five years, the City issued an average of about 67 residential building permits per year. This is a drop of almost 50 percent from the period 2002 through 2005. As of July, 2012 24 building permits for single family residences have been issued by the City. This suggests that the City’s growth has slowed considerably and provides an opportunity to reflect on past successes and plan for future improvements. The City has the immediate building potential for 437 dwelling units, a six to seven year supply at current average rates. The City has been issuing free building permits for single family homes. Beginning in October, 2012, the fee will be a uniform \$1500, a potential discount of 70%.

The rate of population growth has also slowed. Between 1990 and 2000, the population grew 142% from 2260 to 5472 individuals. Between 2000 and 2010, the population grew to 8381, a growth rate of 53%. From 2010 to 2011, the U.S. Census estimated that the City grew by 1.5% to 8504. This suggests that the earlier 2006 estimate of City population of 11,000 to be reached by 2010 will not be reached in the near future.

As in both the 2002 and 2006 efforts, the goal of this strategic planning process is to continue to provide a document that citizens, City staff, and elected and appointed decision makers can use to determine the City’s priorities during the next five years. There have been many efforts to promote, enhance and maintain the current quality of life in Kearney. The current “Access Kearney” initiative portrays the City as a community that can attract residences and businesses by providing many amenities in a “small town” atmosphere. These efforts reinforce the point made in the 2006 document

that while Kearney may no longer technically be considered a “small town”, its residents wish to maintain a “small-town” atmosphere.

Current and potential residents should expect a result in which the City manages their money in a responsible manner. As before, the goal is to provide the level of services that maintains the confidence of residents that their City is providing a strong commitment to maintain the existing quality of life. The City has increased its investments in technology, allowing the City to redeploy its assets in other areas. This is particularly true in the public works and recreation services programs.

The City has a conservative approach to raising taxes and to enacting additional governmental regulations. This policy must be balanced against the need of the City to provide services to more individuals. There is little or no additional capacity to provide the level of public services necessary for a community approaching 10,000 people. This may be particularly true in the areas of public safety. This is important because for many individuals in Kearney, the first priority for the City is the safety of the community. The City should consider adding additional police personnel as its finances permit. During the next decade the City will consider increasing its administrative staff. Other issues such as enhancement of recreation facilities will require more resources to solve these problems.

One way to summarize a government’s purpose is to adopt a “Mission Statement”. Such a short paragraph should provide the citizens of a city with an indication of the philosophy of those individuals charged with the responsibility of determining future public policy.

## Mission Statement

In 2002, the overwhelming consensus of the group was that the City of Kearney should adopt a “Mission Statement” to provide a focus for the City’s strategic activities. The need for this approach has diminished somewhat in the past ten years due principally to efforts by other organizations, notably the Kearney Area Development Council, to provide such a focus. If desired by the City, the following statement is a revision of the prior discussion and could be used as the start of a guide to the overall purpose of City activity:

*Kearney should seek to continue to be known as an “open” community. The mission of the City is to create an atmosphere that provides its residents with an opportunity to achieve personal and professional goals. The City has the ability to provide a supportive environment to all individuals and businesses that want a small town location in the Kansas City area.*

In 2006, the document indicated a much shorter phrase that also sought to capture the attractiveness of Kearney. This approach provides a more concise view of how the city should approach its problems in the future.

*Kearney is a place you can be proud for your family to call home forever.*

Such a policy overview provides for maximum flexibility for the City to maintain its current level of activities while responding to the presence of additional residents drawn by both current and proposed amenities. The City would like to maintain its atmosphere of providing recreation facilities and a thriving commercial center while supporting locally owned businesses and attracting new employment opportunities. There is a continuing concern about the role of downtown in Kearney. The purpose of this Mission Statement is to provide an organizing basis to adopt and enforce policies that give residents multiple opportunities to remain in the City.

The Mission Statement cannot be implemented on its own. The City has focused and prioritized its activities to provide this environment in the future. As a part of this process, this document is broken down into two parts. First, there are a set of five Priority Issues (Aquatic Center, Downtown Redevelopment, Landscape Ordinance, Parks and Recreation Facilities and Sidewalks) that the Board of Aldermen will focus their immediate attention on in the upcoming years. Second, there are a set of five broad policy areas (Physical Appearance, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Land Use and Citizen Participation) established 10 years ago and reviewed in 2006.

The categories provide citizens and decision makers with a sense of direction as well as a benchmark to measure progress. It is desirable as well as foreseeable that as new individuals undertake leadership roles, new priorities will be set. This document, after considering changes from both prior Overviews, represents a flexible guide to future decisions with the understanding that the needs and desires of Kearney residents may change these priorities.

## PRIORITY ISSUES

### Aquatic Center

The City has identified the need for an Aquatic Center. This has been the result of the work of a citizen's committee made up of both residents and non-residents of the City. The City needs to solve many issues concerning the construction and operation of this facility. This need must be evaluated in light of the fact that City residents have twice in the past rejected a tax increase to build a swimming pool. The last vote was approximately ten years ago.

The City, in conjunction with potential users, should adopt a policy to meet this need that answers the following questions, among others:

- Should a pool be built for only leisure, for only competition, or for both?
- Should the pool be located on School district property, thus making it part of an educational mission?
- Should the Aquatic Center be part of a larger Community Center with other facilities in the structure (classrooms, gyms and/or an indoor track)?
- Should the pool be an indoor pool, an outdoor pool, or both?
- Should the Aquatic Center be operated by the City, the School District or a Recreation District?
- If Tax Increment Financing Revenues (TIF) revenues are insufficient to pay for the construction of an Aquatic Center, what revenues are available to the City to build this facility? Should the City ask its residents to levy an additional tax to finance this program?
- If the City builds the Aquatic Center, should non-residents (including those who live in the School District) be charged an additional fee for using the facility?
- Should the operation of the Aquatic Center be “revenue neutral” and sustain itself financially?

## Downtown Redevelopment

The City should promote the redevelopment of its downtown area through a variety of financial and non-financial mechanisms. One method to keep the downtown vital is to provide for establishments that bring residents and visitors to the area throughout the day. The Board of Aldermen and the Planning and Zoning Commission, in conjunction with the merchants in the area, should draft, with the assistance of professionals, and formally adopt a Downtown Redevelopment Plan that addresses the following issues, in addition to others that may be relevant:

- Should the City sponsor a Merchants Association to promote downtown events, attractive signage, uniform operating hours and other functions?
- Should the City provide incentives for locally owned businesses to locate downtown?
- Should the City promote a common set of city-wide festivals to be located downtown, including July 4<sup>th</sup>, Jesse James Days, Christmas Tree Walk and perhaps one or two other events?
- Should the City actively seek to expand the downtown area by purchasing properties identified by the Plan as appropriate parcels for expansion?
- Should the City, if purchasing additional lots is not an option, use the eminent domain function to expand the downtown?
- Should the City relocate City Hall as part of downtown redevelopment?
- Should the City focus on the lots east of City Hall as a prime location for the expansion of the downtown?
- Should the City encourage the formation of an Entertainment District in downtown, focusing on restaurants, art galleries and unique region-wide retail facilities?
- Should the City invest public funds to promote an Entertainment District for activities such as sidewalks, streetlights and fields for athletic events?
- Should the City provide tax incentives such as property tax abatement to encourage certain clearly identified types of businesses to locate in the downtown area?
- Should the Plan include a Parking Study for downtown that includes both long-term and short-term parking spaces? If the Plan so indicates, should the City construct off-street parking lots in the downtown area?

## Landscape Ordinance

The City should promote the use of trees both on City owned right-of-ways as well as on private property. The use of plantings as landscaping and visual buffers on both private and public property makes the City a more attractive location for many activities. The City should invest its own resources to plant and maintain trees. In addition, the city should provide a combination of incentives and regulations to assure that individual property owners also start and maintain plantings. The Board of Aldermen, and the Planning and Zoning Commission, should draft a Landscape Plan and/or Landscape Ordinance that addresses the following issues:

- Should the City plant trees in the City right-of-way?
- Should the City maintain the trees planted in the City right-of-way?
- Should the City maintain trees planted on private property?
- Should the City establish and enforce a specific list of trees the City plants and/or a private individual must plant to meet the requirements of a Landscape Ordinance?
- Should the developer of a new subdivision be required to plant trees in the City right-of-way and/or on private property?
- Should the City provide incentives for non-profit groups and/or homeowners to plant trees?
- Should the City provide free trees to property owners?
- Should property owners be required to maintain trees planted by the City and/or trees required to be planted by a Landscape Ordinance?
- Should the existing Landscape Ordinance be amended to provide flexibility?

## Park and Recreation Facilities

As residents with young children move to Kearney, recreation needs become more focused. The City should commit to provide recreation opportunities both indoors and outdoors. The City needs to establish its own recreation goals and promote active participation in this activity by all segments of its population.

Such a list of goals will cover many programs; another Priority Issue discusses the Aquatic Center. This Priority Issue will propose that the City answer a number of questions concerning existing and proposed facilities. They are as follows:

- Should the Amphitheater be maintained only as an outdoor facility?
- Should the City sell naming rights to any recreational facility?
- Should additional outdoor recreational facilities be added at the site of the Amphitheater?
- Should the City survey its residents to determine the demand for recreation services and determine interest on the part of its residents to pay for such services?
- Should the City provide a linkage between two existing parks (Jesse James and Mack Porter) by building a connecting trail for the use of pedestrians and emergency vehicles?
- Should the City purchase or secure property on the southwest side of Kearney for a park of about 4 acres, similar to the existing Lions Park?
- Should the City approach Water District 3 to purchase land for additional park facilities?
- Should the City commit to the expansion of Jesse James Park by contacting landowners to see if there is current or future interest in selling their land to the City for additional park facilities?
- Should the City seek to purchase or acquire property east of downtown for use as a park?
- Should the City add more athletic fields at Mack Porter Park?
- Should the City provide a connection between parks on the west side of Interstate 35 and land to the east?
- Should a park be considered near the City lagoon on Lawrence Street?

## Sidewalks

Non-motorized traffic (pedestrians and/or bicyclists) is an important issue for the City to address. A “walkable” community is one in which people interact more frequently and create a more viable “sense of place”. Sidewalks are an essential part of the way in which individuals interact and move from place to place. They provide a way to connect commercial and non-commercial land uses and provide opportunities to link residents with various institutions, e.g. parks and schools.

The Board of Aldermen and the Planning and Zoning Commission, in conjunction with input from residents and representatives from neighborhood associations, should draft and adopt a Sidewalk Plan that prioritizes City activities and includes both the developed and undeveloped parts of the city. The following questions should be answered:

- Should all new developments contain sidewalks on one side or both sides of each street?
- Should the City build sidewalks in areas of high demand? How are these areas of high demand determined?
- Should the City pay for all of the cost of sidewalk repair or some of the cost?
- Should the City emphasize sidewalks in a certain part of the City (downtown or along Missouri Highway 92) or around certain facilities (e.g. schools and/or parks)?
- Should the City make sidewalks in commercial area a priority?
- Should the City actively assist in the formation of benefit districts for sidewalk repair?

## POLICY OBJECTIVES

### Objective 1: Maintain the Physical Appearance of Kearney

In order to continue to have a “sense of place” that evokes a small town atmosphere in a large metropolitan area, the community should provide a mechanism for promoting the current residential nature of Kearney while providing for appropriate commercial areas. This objective can be reached through the process of the City adopting a series of shorter goals (e.g. strategies) and defined activities (e.g. policies). Subsequent decision makers should be free to revise this list as objectives are achieved and/or the needs of the residents of Kearney change.

#### Strategies to Achieve Objective 1

*Strategy 1.1: The City should adopt a “branding” strategy to promote physical appearance*

The City should continue to promote the city in a recognizable way for current and future citizens and businesses. The best way to make a distinctive statement about the beneficial aspects of living and working in Kearney is to provide a general theme or slogan around which the City could organize activities, including promotional events. The current strategy surrounding the term “Access Kearney” fulfills this goal.

*Strategy 1.2: The City should clearly define commercial areas*

Kearney has already developed retail commercial areas in its downtown and along major state highways. Full development of these areas, as opposed to allowing unlimited non-residential development anywhere, will maintain the current physical appearance of the City. The City should be very cautious in permitting the development of new commercial areas other than at major intersections. There should be a special emphasis in promoting traffic flow by individuals from the Interstate 35 along Missouri Highway 92 into the downtown area.

*Strategy 1.3: The City should maintain its easy accessibility to Kansas City*

Kearney’s location in proximity to Kansas City has been the major reason for recent growth. New interchanges with the limited access freeway should be located to provide the greatest amount of accessibility to current residents of the City. The City should actively work with the federal and state governments to ask for an additional interchange with Interstate Highway 35 at 19<sup>th</sup> street, one mile south of the current interchange. This development would promote additional economic development in terms of commercial land use and provide good access between east and west parts of the community

The City anticipates that a slight majority of its residential growth will occur west of Interstate 35. The City has invested in sewer facilities along 19<sup>th</sup> Street in anticipation of development in this direction.

#### Policies to Achieve Objective 1

##### **Policy 1.1: Kearney is “Open”**

The City should promote a strategy to communicate the fact that Kearney is “open” to all existing and potential residents and businesses. Such a message should be contained on all City documents and be mentioned in all significant City decisions. This message should be coordinated with the efforts of other groups seeking to enhance the image of the City.

##### **Policy 1.2: The Master Plan Should Show the Location of a Proposed Interchange with Interstate 35 at 19<sup>th</sup> Street**

The Master Plan should be amended to show the location of a new interchange with Interstate 35 to be at 19<sup>th</sup> Street. This makes sense economically, in terms of cost, and of the interchange and future land use. Locating the new interchange closer to the existing developed city will provide an impetus for more compact growth, in terms of both residential and commercial land use. This location will also promote the construction of a frontage road to help manage traffic from commercial growth existing and planned at the current interchange. Locating the interchange at 19<sup>th</sup> Street will make it easier for residents currently living west of Interstate 35 to get access to the freeway. This location also coordinates with an existing sewer line, thus promoting development.

## Objective 2: Promote Economic Development for Kearney Residents

Another attribute of a small town “sense of place” is a location that has employment and retail opportunities for residents, both to own and to patronize local businesses. The City should maintain and develop its reputation as a “host” community, particularly in regards to amateur athletic events. This activity could be done in conjunction with creation of a downtown that has an entertainment focus that could attract residents and visitors to the area. Existing industrial plants should be encouraged to expand in the community.

### Strategies to Achieve Objective 2

*Strategy 2.1: The City should focus its retention efforts on existing small businesses*

The City has worked hard to attract new businesses to Kearney. City staff should make a concerted effort to contact local businesses to determine their needs so that any potential expansion of that company would occur in the City.

*Strategy 2.2: The City should very carefully consider allowing large national retail chains to build large buildings in Kearney by restricting the size of structures in certain areas to conform to the existing building pattern.*

Locally owned and operated businesses give the City a unique atmosphere that should be preserved. When national retail organizations seek to locate in Kearney, the City should carefully consider their impact on existing merchants before allowing such development to occur. Such development would normally be appropriate in the near proximity to Interstate 35. Larger buildings would be located in this area and not in other commercial zones, such as downtown.

*Strategy 2.3: The City should promote the idea of tourism*

Kearney has current and potential tourist sites that could use more publicity to attract visitors. The City should begin a campaign to promote tourism that enhances the “small-town” image of Kearney as a city with friendly residents. This approach should be coordinated with the efforts of other area cities and appropriate state and regional organizations.

## Policies to Achieve Objective 2

### **Policy 2.1: Coordinated Commercial Zoning**

The City's existing commercial land use along Missouri Highway 33, Missouri Highway 92 and downtown should be preserved. Additional development should be concentrated in compact form as nodes that support existing commercial areas. The city should promote land uses that provide for commercial uses between the Interstate 35 interchange along Missouri Highway 92 into the downtown area.

### **Policy 2.2: Tax Incentives for Industry**

The City should expand its tax incentive program to promote the retention of existing businesses as well as to attract new employers. In the short-term (within the next ten years), the city should aggressively seek to attract regional offices to locate in Kearney, particularly in the existing areas planned for employment growth. For the longer term (beyond the next ten years) new areas reserved for manufacturing should be carefully considered in the southern and eastern part of the community. The city should work with the Kearney Area Development Council to bring light manufacturing businesses to the City.

### **Policy 2.3: Tax Incentives for Retail Facilities**

The City should provide an incentive for new locally owned businesses to open in Kearney, particularly in the downtown area. Such incentives could consist of such items as Tax Increment Financing, business retention and expansion services, sales tax and/or property tax abatements for a limited period of time as well as low cost loans from the City. The City could consider other incentives as appropriate.

### **Policy 2.4: Utilize Existing Structures for Multiple Programming**

The City has already renovated the old police station to become the Kearney Enrichment Center. The City has leased part of that space for use by the Chamber of Commerce. As programs for Kearney residents develop at the Center, the City should hire a staff member based in the Parks Department to help coordinate programming.

### **Policy 3.4: Additional Fees for Non-residents to Use City Facilities**

The City should analyze the feasibility of imposing an additional fee on non-residents to use City recreational facilities for organized activities. Kearney residents already support public facilities located in the City through their taxes. An additional fee would reimburse the City for the added expense of administering programs that also benefit non-residents.

**Policy 2.5: Expansion of the City Museum**

The City should plan to increase the size of the City Museum into the space recently vacated by the Chamber of Commerce. There are many exhibits that are not on display due to space limitations. The City should consider providing support to the Historical Society to provide staff to operate the facility.

### Objective 3: Provide Additional Infrastructure to Meet the Needs Generated by the City's Expanding Population

An increase in the City's population continues to place burdens on the City's infrastructure. As land develops west of Interstate 35 into commercial space and residential areas south and west of the present developed City, decision makers must integrate these new areas into the existing community. Governmental facilities must keep pace with the needs of new residents. This may entail extra investment in community facilities while maintaining a level of services that City residents have come to expect from their government.

#### Strategies to Achieve Objective 3

*Strategy 3.1: The City should seek to provide ways to lessen traffic congestion*

Traffic will continue to increase along arterial streets during the next five years. The City should continue to plan for alternative traffic routes directing through traffic away from residential neighborhoods and seeking to increase the capacity of arterial streets where commercial facilities are located.

*Strategy 3.2: The City should continue to require storm drainage control for new development*

The City has adopted policies that require the detention and/or retention of storm water drainage in newly developed areas of the City. This policy should continue with provisions to increase the amount of water held back on a temporary basis in newly developed subdivisions to ease the pressure on older areas of the City where no storm drainage facilities exist. The City should consider acquiring appropriate parcels for use as water retention facilities.

*Strategy 3.3: The City should plan for the linkage of the eastern and western parts of Kearney*

Interstate 35 represents a potential barrier between the undeveloped western part of the city and the developing eastern part of Kearney. The City should plan for bridges and/or underpasses over and under Interstate 35 to link both areas of the community to improve access to local facilities and businesses. This should also include sidewalks to provide for the ability of pedestrians to have access to all parts of the city.

*Strategy 3.4: The City should plan for the expansion of water and sewage facilities to provide infrastructure for development when the demand for urban growth resumes.*

The City should continue its effort to plan for the future expansion of its sewer capacities by expanding its facilities. After clarifiers at the wastewater plant are

built, the City should begin to expand its sewer facilities according to an approved facilities master plan. The City should continue to invest in its sewer plant. The City should invest in all possible technological improvements to assure the long term efficiency of its sewer plant.

Old two inch water mains should be replaced. The City should maintain its water plant but should not, at the present time, undertake a major capital investment to upgrade its facilities. When that decision becomes necessary, the City should consider purchasing water from other producers. The City water plant should not be used beyond its economic life.

### Policies to Achieve Objective 3

#### **Policy 3.1: Seek Additional Federal Funds**

The City should investigate the possibility of seeking additional federal funds for special infrastructure improvements. The City should contact elected federal officials and federal government agencies to determine its eligibility for special projects. The City should determine if it has special needs for roads, sewer, water or drainage improvements that can be partially met by outside funding sources.

#### **Policy 3.2: New Municipal Facilities**

The City is rapidly outgrowing its current offices. The City has opened a new police station on the west side of town. The City should also plan for a new municipal office and municipal court building to accommodate the additional staff required by population growth. This will become a necessity if the existing municipal building is redeveloped into new commercial space.

#### Objective 4: Continue to Plan for Balanced Growth and Development Particularly in Residential Land Uses

The City will need to plan for additional housing units during the next decade. The City has successfully managed a process through which an adequate supply of land has been provided in the past. This guidance must continue if the City is to accommodate additional growth in the future. The City should maintain its “small-town” atmosphere by ensuring that no one type of housing or of land use is over represented in a balanced mix of development. In order to assure the continued growth of Kearney, the City should work with adjacent landowners to determine their willingness to voluntarily annex into the City as a condition for receiving City services to their property.

#### Strategies to Accomplish Objective 4

##### *Strategy 4.1: The City should promote voluntary annexation*

The City should attempt to initially bring unincorporated land into the municipal boundaries with the consent of the landowner, assuming the proposed land use is consistent with the Master Plan. The City will accept voluntary annexations into the City by adjacent landowners, subject to the discretion of the Board of Aldermen in regards to the total circumstances surrounding the request. The City will annex unincorporated land without the agreement of landowners only when there is a good reason for the City to expand its boundaries.

##### *Strategy 4.2: The City should maintain its current land use image*

The City should maintain its current “small-town” image of smaller detached lots located in subdivisions. The City should not annex any existing three to five acre parcels into Kearney unless it is necessary to provide public services for undeveloped or redeveloped parcels of property.

#### Policies to Achieve Objective 4

##### **Policy 4.1: Enact a Property Maintenance Code**

The City has worked to revise its nuisance control system. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all housing units, particularly those that are owner-occupied, will remain in good repair. Special attention has been paid to exterior appearance of structures so as to not cause negative impact on neighboring properties. This system did not prove to be as effective as desired, especially in terms of commercial facilities. The City should enact a property maintenance code similar to ones currently in effect in nearby cities. Such a code would be a deterrent to property owners who consistently refuse to maintain their properties.

**Policy 4.2: Single Family Developments should be encouraged both East and West of Interstate 35**

The City should promote balanced growth in residential development on both sides of Interstate 35. Single-family homes are encouraged by the use of free or discounted building permits. Once the housing market recovers from its slowdown, such incentives could be targeted to occur only in those areas of the community where the City believes growth is important to provide a consistent level of urban land use.

**Policy 4.3: Add to Existing Subdivision Amenities**

As part of creating the “small-town” atmosphere in the newer subdivisions in the community, the City has increased the amount of improvements and amenities available to residents. This has occurred as a part of the subdivision plat approval process. Homeowner associations were formed with the encouragement of the City to provide for the maintenance of these new facilities. This trend should continue. Kearney’s newer areas could include additional tree planting, extra public landscaping, continuous sidewalks and decorative lighting. This would add another incentive for homeowners to move to Kearney as well as providing a benefit to improve the physical appearance of the City.

**Policy 4.4: Schools Should Always Be Built Within the City Limits**

The City and the Kearney School district should coordinate the placement of public facilities in order to make the most efficient use of resources. By placing all schools within the city limits, traffic, sewer, and water costs are minimized. Land uses that are compatible with schools are also encouraged by their location in the city’s boundaries. In this way, growth can occur adjacent to existing developments, thus preserving open space for all the residents of Kearney.

**Policy 4.5: High Quality Apartments and Senior Living Centers Should Be Encouraged**

As the average population age of City residents reflects national trends and grows older, the City should anticipate the housing needs of smaller families. The City should consider amending its current Zoning Ordinance to add a district or districts to promote apartments, senior citizens housing or smaller single family detached dwelling units. Developers would be encouraged to rezone property into zoning district or districts to provide this housing opportunity for current and future Kearney residents.

## Objective 5: Promote Citizen Involvement in City Activities

Active participation by Kearney residents in local government should extend beyond participation in elections. Furthermore, citizens should be encouraged to take an interest in municipal affairs other than when their own personal economic interests are involved. The City should distribute more information to its citizens on a regular basis. The City should organize forums for interaction among its residents on a targeted basis.

### Strategy to Achieve Objective 5

#### *Strategy 5.1: The City should encourage citizen participation*

The City should schedule citizen meetings around times that a large number of citizens would be interested in coming to City Hall. This might include adoption of a budget, community festivals or a sale event in downtown. A particular theme might be chosen and a local sponsor secured to increase public interest in the event.

### Policies to Achieve Objective 5

#### **Policy 5.1: Annual Report to the City**

Each year the City Administrator should issue a newsletter on annual accomplishments of the City government. The Mayor already has a newspaper column to provide timely information and announcements. This should continue. As a part of that document, Kearney's property tax rate should be compared to other nearby communities giving proper credit to the School district. Such a newsletter would list those policies contained in this document that the City was going to implement in the upcoming year.

#### **Policy 5.2: Annual Report of the City's Department Heads**

Each year the City Administrator and the Heads of City Departments should present a report to the Board of Aldermen that shows how each Department will prioritize its missions for the upcoming year. As a part of this process, each Department should do a needs assessment in terms of future facilities and personnel to inform the Board and citizens of Kearney of new issues and/or programs that may arise in the coming year.

#### **Policy 5.3: Involve Residents and Existing Neighborhood Associations in Yearly Meetings**

Each 3 months of every year (i.e. quarter) citizens and members of neighborhood associations in a different quadrant of the City should be invited to attend a meeting at City Hall to discuss neighborhood concerns. All members of that subdivision should be contacted with advance notice of the meeting. A particular

issue should be highlighted by emphasizing those concerns specifically affecting that area. A summary of the meeting would be provided to residents of that area. This would be a working session with representatives of the Board of Aldermen, the Planning and Zoning commission and City staff. As a part of this process, neighborhood associations should be encouraged to produce a guide to city functions and services.

**Policy 5.4: Assist in the Formation of Benefit Districts**

If a homeowner's association is not able to maintain the amenities currently available in a subdivision or cannot repair existing facilities, the City should assist in the formation of benefit districts. These mechanisms provide all affected property owners with a chance to take responsibility for the public improvements that they value. The City will assist in the formation and administration of these organizations to provide a secure source of funding to keep up the attractiveness of existing subdivision. The City would be able to provide for the continued maintenance of subdivision common areas through a stable funding source.

**Policy 5.5: Review of the City's Legal Structure**

The City is growing at a healthy rate and seeks to accomplish goals that are consistent with its population base. As it expands its services and functions, the City should review the possibilities for its organization that are available under the Missouri Statutes. If possible, the City might consider changing its classification or adopting a City Charter to give it more flexibility in meeting the needs of its residents.

## Conclusions

This document represents an agenda of strategic issues developed by the participants listed in the Introduction. These are the issues and concerns of the current moment. This is an Overview that can be changed as new issues arise. It is a guide in a general sense and can be flexible. It is the consensus of the group that all these issues should be examined at some level during the next five to six years. No specific priority was assigned to the implementation of specific policies.

More importantly, it was the consensus of all the individuals involved that this Strategic Issues Update be officially adopted by the Board of Aldermen. In this way it could become official City policy as well as an indication to the citizens of Kearney that their leaders had clearly thought about the future direction of the City. In addition, this document should also be considered and adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission. It should become part of the Master Plan and used as a part of the City's decision making process.

Each year the Mayor, the Board of Aldermen and the City staff should review this document and decide which, if any, issues need immediate attention, further consideration or significant change. This document will continue to be important as a guide to future policy decisions only for so long as the decision makers believe it is current.

If this process has been successful, a future group of leaders can meet and examine the progress of the solutions to City problems contained in this Update. At that time, those individuals can formulate a new list and undertake the same examination of strategic issues for that time period.