



## Downtown Action Plan II 2014

Good Planning Starts Here

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## **DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN II**

Shawnee's Downtown has been a primary commercial and residential center since the 1850's. Once an outpost along the Santa Fe and California Trails, the location of Gum Springs made it an early settlement of the Shawnee Indians. Rich in history, the families associated with the development in the downtown area continue to serve the community today. Several studies and attempts to revitalize the downtown area were undertaken by the City in the 1960's and 1970's, however the initiatives were intended to be carried out by the city, and no permanent means to involve downtown property owners or business owners was created. As a result, a unified effort to encourage reinvestment in the area was never fully undertaken.

The City of Shawnee contracted with Hyett Palma, Inc. in 2002 to provide assistance in creating a long term plan for the reinvestment in the downtown area. The document created was the Shawnee Downtown Action Agenda. The document was created after an extensive process that used local input as the foundation of creation of the document. The actions presented in the agenda were based on the desires and concerns expressed by Shawnee residential and business owners as well as a realistic analysis of the market potential for the downtown area. The agenda also set the framework for creation of a private-public partnership.

For the purposes of their study, the downtown area was defined as generally 57<sup>th</sup> Street on the north, the city limits on the east, the first tier of lots along the south side of Shawnee Mission Parkway, and Flint Street on the west. Various incentive programs that have been established carry the western boundary to Quivira Road.

The Shawnee Downtown Action Plan, commonly referred to as "the Hyett Palma Study," provided actions that were undertaken to successfully provide results in the reinvestment of the downtown area. Perhaps more importantly, the actions undertaken in the last ten years have resulted in a "buy in" from property and business owners, established downtown events that have become a tradition with the community as a whole, and a more attractive downtown area. The foundation laid over the past ten years provides the impetus for future actions identified in this study.

The dollar amount of reinvestment in the downtown area has been significant. As of August 2014, there had been \$ 52,500,000 in public and private investment in the downtown area since 2003. In order to demonstrate to the business community and residents of the area that the city was going to be a significant partner in the revitalization efforts, infrastructure improvements were undertaken in the area. Street and sidewalk improvements were made along Johnson Drive from King Street to Bluejacket as well as along Nieman Road from 58<sup>th</sup> Street to 59<sup>th</sup> Street. A new swimming pool with an emphasis on children's activities was constructed at King Street and Johnson Drive. Old Shawnee Town was rebranded as Shawnee Town 1929. A farmstead and new exhibits of life in Shawnee during the 1920's and 1930's were constructed. Street overlays were made to both Johnson Drive and Nieman Road. Sister Cities Park was developed at 58<sup>th</sup> and King. Stormwater drainage improvements were made

between 57<sup>th</sup> Street and Johnson Drive just west of Flint. Pioneer Crossing Park was developed along Shawnee Mission Parkway at the eastern city limits. Street improvements to Flint Street, King Street, Barton Street, and 57<sup>th</sup> Terrace between Barton and King, and 57<sup>th</sup> Street between Nieman Road and Flint.

Enhancements to educational facilities were also undertaken. St. Joseph Parish constructed a new elementary school building, and Wonderscope, a children's museum, remained downtown and continued to make improvements to the old Flint School, and building additions were made to Hocker Grove Middle School.

An overall goal of the community was to provide a means to stabilize or enhance property values in the downtown area. Despite the recession which led to a decline in property values throughout the city and county between 2008 and 2012, the assessed value of the 940 properties included in the Shawnee Neighborhood Revitalization Act area showed an increase from \$ 28,643,706 on January 1, 2002, to \$ 31,770,581 on January 1, 2012. This represents a 10.9% increase in value, despite a general decrease in property values during the 2008-2012 recessionary period.

## **GOALS AND ACTIONS IDENTIFIED IN 2003 TO BE UNDERTAKEN**

The Hyett Palma Downtown Action Plan provided a variety of goals to be accomplished over a ten year period. In addition to the goals previously mentioned regarding the creation of the Shawnee Downtown Partnership and the creation of incentive programs the following goals were successfully completed.

### **Establishment of the Shawnee Downtown Partnership**

The Shawnee Downtown Partnership was formally created by Ordinance No. 2885 on August 19, 2005. A precursor to that group was the Downtown Action Committee established in 2002, to carry out the steps outlined in the Hyett Palma Study, as well as to review and comment on the streetscape improvements that were undertaken along Johnson Drive and Nieman Road. The Partnership is now part of the fabric of the community and has strengthened the bonds between property owners, the business community and the city. The members of the Downtown Partnership were the lead players in the development of this update, and the direction to be undertaken in the next ten year period.

### **Create Special Events for Downtown**

Collaboration between the City of Shawnee, The Shawnee Downtown Partnership and the Downtown Business Association resulted in the creation of four annual events in the downtown area. Each event has been highly successful, and have become part of the tradition of the community.

The Beauty and the Best event held in May has evolved into Celebrate the Beauty and the Best of Downtown Shawnee. Originally a clean-up event volunteers partnered with local businesses and the city to clean up trash, debris, tree limbs and assisted in painting and general upkeep. This event has changed focus into a downtown open house event, as business owners now provide better maintenance of their properties. The open house features discounts by business owners, a punch card that can be completed for an opportunity to receive gift cards to be used in downtown businesses that participate in the program, the provision of food trucks, chalk painting by artists on the sidewalk, and music provided by Probable Cause, a band made up on members of the police department.

The Car, Truck and Bike Show is held in September. This event is sponsored by the Downtown Business Association and has grown each year. Johnson Drive and Nieman Road are closed on a Sunday afternoon, and over three hundred cars, trucks and bikes compete for awards and prizes.

The Scarecrow Festival, held in October, has become one of the most popular annual city events. The festival is family oriented and provides the opportunity for children and their families to color pumpkins, and create their own scarecrow. Local high school youth organizations collect jeans and shirts for the event. Over two hundred scarecrows are created to take home, and over 500 pumpkins are decorated.

Kansas City Power and Light has partnered to be a sponsor for the event.



Christmas Around Town is held the first weekend in December. Originally designed as an event with holiday open houses by downtown businesses, closing of Johnson Drive between Shawnee Town and the eastern edge of downtown, the event has become the main event for lighting the Mayor's Christmas Tree and Christmas at Shawnee Town 1929. The Christmas tree lighting ceremony features a presentation to a local charity of funds collected from the Mayor's Christmas Tree Fund.

Although not sponsored by the City or the Downtown Partnership, Flags for Freedom is an annual display of American flags along Johnson Drive and Nieman Road in the downtown area during the week of Independence Day. This event was collaboration between the Shawnee and Merriam Business Associations. The Shawnee display is now sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars which installs, removes and maintains the flags.

In addition to these events, the City of Shawnee has maintained a Farmer's Market in the City Hall parking lot on Saturday's between May and October. One of the three concerts in the Summer Concert series at West Flanders Park, just north of the downtown area. Downtown businesses serve as the primary sponsors of this concert in the park.

### **Enhance Civic Resources**

Since 2002, numerous civic resources have been constructed in the downtown area. As a commitment from the City, the old swimming pool located in Herman Laird Park, was relocated along Johnson Drive in John Lynch Park. The Jim Allen Splash Cove pool is a family themed swimming pool with water features. Across King Street from Splash Cove, Sister Cities Park has been created. This park creates an open space in the downtown area for a variety of activities including a shelter house and rolle bolle courts. Additionally, the City enhanced the streetscape along Johnson Drive and a portion of Nieman Road with colored pavers along the sidewalk, new street lighting and landscaping. A large fountain was constructed in front of City Hall which has become a popular gathering spot in the downtown area.

The City of Shawnee also purchased property at the southwest corner of Johnson Drive and Barton Road to create additional public parking areas for downtown events and businesses.

Wonderscope is the Kansas City regions children's museum. The City partnered with Wonderscope, the located in the former Flint School to provide parking for this facility and Splash Cove.

Shawnee Town Museum was rebranded as Shawnee Town 1929 during the past ten years. This museum now contains a farmstead and a recreated main street to depict life in Shawnee during 1929. The main street features businesses that were located in the downtown area, and provides an opportunity to display artifacts from that era. The farmstead is a depiction of the farming activities, especially related to truck farming which was the livelihood of Shawnee residents in the 1920's and 1930's. Funding from the Deffenbaugh Foundation was an important source of funding for this project.

St. Joseph Parish has constructed a new elementary school on their property at Johnson Drive and King. Additionally, an adoration chapel was constructed adjacent to St. Joseph Church. The former St. Joseph School now houses the Padre Pio Academy.

The Shawnee Mission School District reinvested in the down area providing upgrades and additions to Hocker Grove Middle School which serves the northern portion of the community east of I-435, as well as students from Merriam and portions of Overland Park.

### **Create A Streetscape**

This goal was to provide an enhanced visual appearance of the downtown area that would provide streetscape enhancements that would be unique to downtown. CDBG funds were leveraged with approximately 1.8 million dollars of general obligation funds to finance streetscape enhancements. Old concrete sidewalks were replaced with paver blocks along Johnson Drive between King Street and Bluejacket Street, and along Nieman Road between 58<sup>th</sup> Street and 59<sup>th</sup> Street. Tree wells were placed in the sidewalk and trees were planted at intervals along the streets. Decorative street lighting unique to the downtown area was also installed. Entry monuments have been installed at the north, east and west ends of downtown to identify entry into the downtown district.

### **Pursue Targeted Retail Opportunities**

The purpose of this goal was to encourage the location of new businesses as well as to encourage existing businesses to remain downtown, or if additional space was required for a growing business incentives were provided, to stay in the downtown area.

Unique restaurants that have located in the downtown area include:

Fogones Mexican Delights  
Aunt Jean's  
Sushi Mido  
32 Below  
Big Bam's

Unique "one of a kind" stores include:

The Doll Cradle  
Hartman's Hardware  
Encore  
Chez La Rue  
Dodge City Beef  
Vita Craft Outlet  
Iced Art  
TREK  
She's A Pistol  
Pet Stop  
C-Jacks Quiche  
Tear Drop Video

## **Construct Additional Retail and Office Space**

A goal was to construct an additional 35,000-45,000 square feet of retail space. 33,742 square feet was constructed.

A goal was to construct an additional 30,000-40,000 square feet of office space. 35,079 square feet was constructed.

## **Encourage Construction of Buildings Containing Retail/Office and Housing**

One building, located at 11218 Johnson Drive was converted from a florist shop to a retail space with living quarters on the second floor. The Lino Building at 11212 Johnson Drive, was constructed on a vacant lot and contains an attorney's office on the lower floor and a residential unit on the second floor. The first building for the Barton Place project, located in the 5700 block of Barton was constructed with office/retail condo space on the lower floor for two businesses, and residential space on the second floor.

## **New Buildings should be Constructed Closer to the Sidewalk**

The City's zoning regulations have permitted buildings to be constructed along the front and side lot lines. While not all new construction has taken advantage of this setback allowance, newer buildings constructed since 2002 have routinely been located near the street. New building construction that has taken advantage of the zero front line setback available in the Townsquare zoning district include: the Lino Building, Barton Place and an addition to Donovan's Service.

## **Design Guidelines**

Treanor Architects was selected to create a set of Design Guidelines for use in the Pedestrian Zones indicated in the Downtown Action Plan. The guidelines adopted present a framework for new construction and renovation work undertaken on existing buildings. The pedestrian zone is roughly the area between Flint and Bluejacket and 60<sup>th</sup> Street and 57<sup>th</sup> Street. Building materials and design features identified in the design standards are those that complement the existing built environment, and encourage design that reinforces the feeling of downtown. The guidelines create features that are visually pleasing and encourage pedestrian traffic. The guidelines are not so overbearing as to completely discourage new construction and redevelopment in this portion of the downtown.

## **Incentives Created**

The Shawnee Downtown Partnership recommended, and the Governing Body created three incentive programs for use by downtown property owners in 2003. In 2010 a fourth incentive program was created directed toward at the business owner rather than the property owner.



The Downtown Incentive Program is a program to encourage exterior remodeling or new construction. Although originally for use as a façade rehabilitation program, this incentive was later expanded to include other exterior property improvements such as: parking lot resurfacing, landscaping and signage. The incentive program is a grant for reimbursable eligible expenses with a dollar value threshold. Annually, there are up to five (5) \$5,000 grants available for eligible improvements of at least \$10,000. There are an unlimited number of \$2,000 grants for reimbursable expenses of at least \$5,000. Through December, 2013, 44 Downtown Incentive Program grants have been made resulting in grants in the amount of \$ 187,000.

The Downtown Loan Incentive program is available to both commercial and residential property owners in the downtown area. Provided an applicant can meet the loan criteria of the participating lending institution, a loan may be available between \$5,000 and \$50,000. The loan program buys down the interest rate charges on the loan for a 1.5 % reduction from the quoted rate normally offered by the lending institution. The buy down covers the first five years of the term, and the term of the loan may be no longer than ten years. The buy down is paid to the bank upon approval of the loan by the lending institution. Through December, 2013, 16 Downtown Loan Incentive Grants have been made, resulting in an interest buydown of \$ 28,018.70, on a principle loan amount of \$ 466,900.

The Business Incentive Program is available to new businesses or an existing business expanding their square footage by 25%. This incentive was created in 2010 to provide financial assistance to business owners rather than property owners. The business owner has an option between a loan or a grant. The loan option terms are the same as for the Downtown Loan Incentive program; however, any loan for over \$25,000 using this incentive must be approved by the Partnership. Also, the business may not be relocating from an area outside the KNRA boundaries, unless this is a second location. The grant option may be used as a reimbursement for tenant finish improvements and equipment that will remain with the building should the business close. The grant option is not available for inventory or removable and/or non-permanent equipment. The value of the improvement must exceed \$5,000 and the grant will not exceed \$2,500. The business incentive loan program has been used by 7 businesses with a reimbursement of \$17,500.

The Governing Body, in 2003, adopted by ordinance the creation of a Neighborhood Revitalization District as allowed by the Kansas Neighborhood Redevelopment Act (KNRA). The Shawnee Neighborhood Redevelopment Act district was renewed in 2013 for an additional ten years, and was expanded to include neighborhoods to the north and west of the original district due to the success in encouraging reinvestment in the area. The program is available for use on commercial, industrial, office and residential structures.

## **Residential Construction Undertaken**

The oldest remaining structure in Shawnee is located in the 5700 block of Nieman Road, constructed in 1824. The age of the housing stock in the area is varied. Several existing homes east of Nieman Road

date from 1916-1925, and the newest home was constructed in 2013. Since 2002, seven new single family homes have been constructed. These were the single family homes constructed in over a thirty year period in this area. Predominantly single family in nature, there are a few small multi-family residential opportunities.

## **Other Activities**

### **Downtown Newsletter**

The City of Shawnee publishes a newsletter three times a year that is mailed to downtown property and business owners. Copies of the newsletter are also provided in kiosks located in City Hall and the Community Center, as well as published on the city's website. Information on the incentives available, new businesses that have located in the downtown area, and other time related items of interest are included in the newsletter.

### **Downtown Impact and Revitalization Awards**

The Shawnee Economic Development Corporation created two awards to be presented annually. These awards are in recognition of businesses located in the downtown area that have embraced the goals of the Downtown Partnership in creating a more vibrant downtown area. The Downtown Impact Award is given to a business that enhances visitor attraction, provides significant new job creation, or has provided added investment and property tax base. The Downtown Revitalization Award is given to the business which made a significant improvement to the outside appearance of a downtown commercial building during the previous twelve months. The members of the Shawnee Downtown Partnership nominate and select the recipients of the awards.

It is also noted that several of the goals were not achieved, and after a review of these goals by the partnership some were deleted, and some were determined to be carried over for efforts in the upcoming ten year period.

## **PRELUDE TO PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT**

As part of the on-going efforts to encourage reinvestment and redevelopment of the downtown area, the City in 2012 and 2013 participated in the Mid-America Regional Councils Creating Sustainable Places Initiative. This initiative is a region wide effort to identify best practices to create identifiable places the public wants to visit and provide infrastructure that is sustainable over time.

Funding was received with the City of Merriam to undertake a visioning process for the future of Shawnee Mission Parkway. In the City of Shawnee, a more focused discussion was held focusing on redevelopment opportunities at Shawnee Mission Parkway and Nieman Road. The City of Shawnee partnered with Design Workshop of Denver, Colorado and local firms Confluence, Shockey Consulting Services and Olsson Associates to conduct public open houses, online surveys, and presentation documents. The result of this effort was the publication of the Shawnee Mission Parkway Visioning Study, Focus Area Plans in May 2013.

As a result of participation in the Creating Sustainable Places project, the City of Shawnee received funding from the Mid-America Regional Council under their Planning Sustainable Places initiative to prepare a document that can be used to reimagine development along the Niemen Road Corridor between Shawnee Mission Parkway and 55<sup>th</sup> Street. LMN Architects from Seattle, Washington assembled a team of professionals that interacted with a local steering committee of downtown stakeholders. This effort included a walking audit, studio café, and interviews with local residents, business and property owners, and several working public meetings. The result of this effort was the publication of the Community Connections –Nieman Road document in March, 2014, identifying many of the goals included in this action plan.

## GOALS AND ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FOR THE UPCOMING DECADE

The following goals and actions to be undertaken will provide a framework for continued investment and reinvestment in the downtown area over the next decade. It is noted that several of the goals tend to overlap, but are intertwined to create a sustainable business and residential district in the historic downtown area.

Nieman Road serves as the north/south spine for new investment and reinvestment efforts over the next decade. Johnson Drive serves as the east/west spine for continued investment and reinvestment opportunities. Nieman Road bisects the entire length of the downtown area, adding to its importance. Just as was the case during the first decade of concentrated and unified reinvestment in the downtown area, the City of Shawnee will be placed in the position to take the lead to demonstrate to the public its commitment. In order to provide the opportunity to achieve the goals and undertake many of the actions presented in this report, the Governing Body, advisory boards and commissions, and staff must exhibit the leadership to carry out the plan. The leadership commitment will include providing the financial funding when necessary to undertake or support various projects. Input and actions by the public sector will follow the City's actions to improve the infrastructure in the area to make downtown a viable alternative for business development and expansion.

Actions taken during the upcoming ten year period will focus on the Nieman Road corridor, as many of the actions completed in the first ten year period focused along Johnson Drive.

**Goal: Transform Nieman Road and adjacent properties into a place that is walkable with regard to safety, convenience, comfort and access to transit, while recognizing the prevalence of automobile and truck movement.**

**Complete a Right of Way Allocation Study for Nieman Road.** Allocation of right of way along Nieman Road will determine the success of many other actions over the upcoming ten year period. An allocation study reviews the location and use of public infrastructure within the right of way for Nieman Road. Currently, the street is four lanes wide with two lanes for both north and south traffic. The street widens to five lanes at Johnson Drive where a right turn lane is provided for both north and south bound traffic.

The storm water collection system consists of curbs and gutters with collection inlets along the edge of the pavement. The gutter system is compromised by wide property access driveways in several locations between 57<sup>th</sup> Street and Shawnee Mission Parkway. The four foot wide concrete sidewalk is generally adjacent to the curb, resulting in pedestrians walking adjacent to the roadway. Landscaping is generally provided where new structures have been built since the mid-1980's. It is not uncommon to view older developed parcels with no landscaping adjacent to

the street or sidewalk. Further limiting the use of the sidewalk, overhead power lines, especially along the west side of the street have been placed in the sidewalk next to the street.

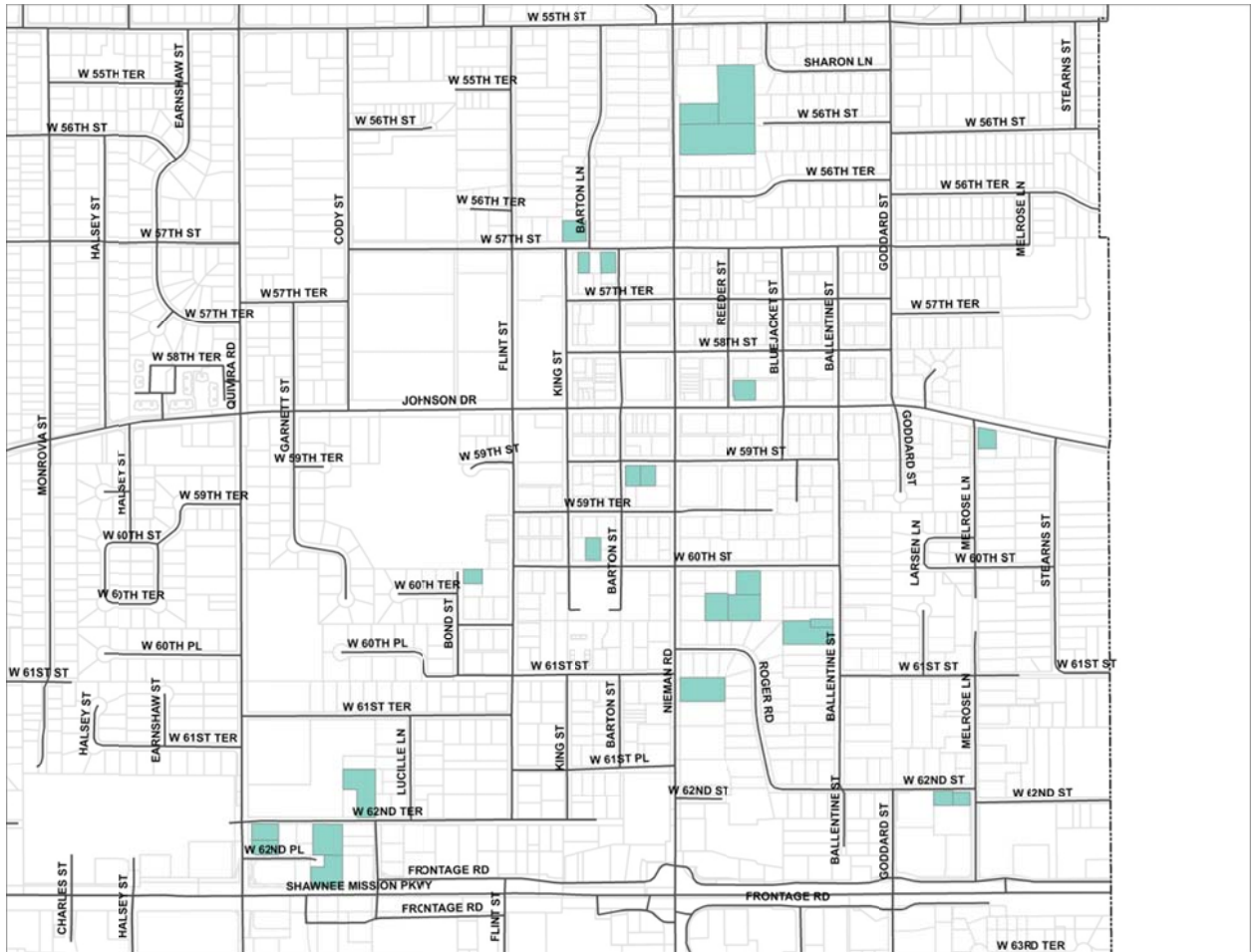
A right of way allocation study can determine if the best design to move traffic along Nieman Road remain the existing four lane configuration. The study will review other design alternatives, including the ability of a three lane street, (one lane for north bound and south bound traffic, and a center turn lane) to successfully manage the traffic flow along the corridor. Additionally, there may be opportunities to use the excess right of way to provide landscape strips, utilize the existing storm water collection system, and the provision of areas for bicycle traffic and transit stop shelters along the route.



**Pursue Reconstruction of Nieman Road.** The right of way allocation study will provide engineered plans for an alternative lane configuration along Nieman Road. Provided the study indicates a more functional and sustainable design is appropriate for the street, reconstruction should be undertaken. Several funding sources may be available to assist in the financing of this infrastructure improvement. Funds from the Community Assisted Road System (CARS) from the county, federal funding available for major arterial streets in the Kansas portion of the metro area, or some funding from the city's economic development fund may be made available for the project.

**Discuss Potential Reinvestment with Owners of Underutilized Properties.** Opportunities exist along Nieman Road for property owners to reinvest in their properties. Numerous properties are currently underutilized with small buildings, oversized parking facilities and a building configuration that is not optimal. Additionally, there are several vacant properties that can provide an impetus for redevelopment in the area. Discussion with owners can be undertaken to provide information on how their specific property has the potential for reinvestment that will be of benefit to them over the long term. New financial incentives may need to be made available for site layout and design. Additionally, the property owner may partner with the City to provide design services and estimate the financial benefit to reinvest in the property, whether it is a tear

Below is a map depicting vacant properties that have development potential.



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pleasing and encourage the public to want to walk to their destination. The introduction of story poles can create interest along the route (as well as along Johnson Drive), and break up the perceived distance between locations along the route. Depending upon the recommendations from the right of way allocation study, there may be additional opportunities to widen the width of the sidewalks or to place another feature such as a landscaped area or bike path between the sidewalk and the traffic lanes.

Enhanced street markings with brick, stone or other durable material can provide designations for crosswalks that keep the motorist alert to the potential for pedestrian traffic in the area. This also provides the pedestrian with an identifiable path to cross Nieman Road at desired locations.

**Identify Location of Potential Transit Stops.** Part of the on-going planning process to enhance the downtown area must include amenities that are convenient to bring the public downtown. One of these amenities is the provision of alternate forms of transportation. A stated goal is to provide additional housing opportunities in the downtown area. The provision of identifiable transit stops can encourage the public to live in the area, as well as to encourage current residents to remain as their housing needs may change. Transit stops should be convenient to the public to make them feel comfortable to walk to the stop. Also, the transit stop should be attractive and provide the security desired by those using bus services. A transit stop near Nieman Road and Shawnee Mission Parkway as well as a location midway between Shawnee Mission Parkway and Nieman Road can accomplish this desire. The right of way allocation study for Nieman Road can provide the identification of transit stop locations that will best fit the needs of the public.

**Discuss Potential to Relocate Utility Poles.** An aesthetic concern frequently discussed by the Downtown Partnership and business owners over the past ten years has been the location of overhead power lines immediately behind the curb along Nieman Road. Over the years it has become apparent that movement of the lines to the west is either cost prohibitive, or will result in the lines being located adjacent to or over existing buildings. In existing areas where landscaping has matured, the line of sight is concentrated at street level, rather than toward the sky. The same situation exists on the north side of Johnson Drive east of Nieman Road. However, in this area the buildings have been constructed to the property line and the line of sight is drawn to the storefront. The right of way allocation study can provide a means to more fully address this issue. Firm cost estimates can be obtained from Kansas City Power and Light to determine if movement of these lines is feasible, and alternative locations for placement of the utility poles.

**Goal: Offer more choices for living, working and purchasing goods and services.**

**Pursue development of policies that encourage Housing Diversity.** The provision of a variety of housing opportunities in the downtown area can provide not only an increased residential density, but also attract a diverse population of various ages. Currently, the housing type in the area surrounding Johnson Drive and Nieman Road is single family residential in nature. Homes date from the early 1900's to more recently built homes in the late 2000's. Many of the older homes, especially those located to the east of Nieman Road were constructed at a time when public sanitary sewer systems were not available, and necessitated larger lots to handle septic systems. There are a few apartment structures that tend to be located a block off Nieman Road or Johnson Drive. Some single family conversions have occurred in the area, mostly into duplex units. Future development along Nieman Road can provide the opportunity for mixed use buildings that contain both commercial and residential spaces. The City's Townsquare zoning district accommodates the mixed use concept, as well as encourages the placement of new structures at the front property line.

Introduction of apartment, townhome, or condominium units into the downtown area on vacant sites not adjacent to Nieman Road can provide the opportunity to construct multi-family or single family residential units at a higher density than the current land use pattern provides.

Consideration should be given to adding some of the features of the Townsquare zoning district in regard to uses and setbacks to the area designated as the Commercial Highway Overlay district. This area generally fronts Shawnee Mission Parkway between the east City Limits and Flint Street.

**Creation of a Cottage Home zoning district.** This concept can add density while adding an alternate form of single family residential development. This zoning district would provide for the construction of smaller single family residential units with share yard spaces and common architectural features. Parking requirements would be reduced, as well as lot sizes. This type of development should be located near transit stops and near amenities that lessen the need reliance on the automobile.



**Construct an additional 100 residential units.** In order to provide a population that will support additional commercial and office uses, an additional 100 residential units in the downtown area should be constructed. While an ambitious goal, given past residential construction in the area, it is imperative that additional residential units be constructed to fully implement the goals during this decade and provide a sustainable environment for continued economic growth and retention of property values.

**Encourage Retention and Expansion of Existing Businesses.** Existing businesses in the downtown area have embraced and provided support to complete the goals presented in the first Downtown Action Plan. While the pursuit of new businesses remains a goal, it should not be at their expense. Financial incentives are provided to all businesses in the downtown area, and may be utilized for the expansion of an existing business. As current incentives are reviewed the opportunity may arise to create additional incentives to use to encourage the retention of existing businesses in the downtown area. Efforts should be undertaken to actively consult with existing businesses to determine their potential for expansion as new retail and/or office space becomes available. A listing of available space can provide a resource for businesses with opportunities to relocate, if necessary, in the downtown area.

**Construct or Repurpose 70,000 square feet of Additional Retail and Office Space.** The downtown area provides several locations to construct or repurpose additional office and/or retail spaces. A more efficient use of space, while increasing the density of office and retail developments, can make the downtown area an attractive location for new business development or expansion of existing businesses. Realistic goals should be established for additional retail and office space. The ability to meet or exceed the goals provides a positive environment for investment or reinvestment efforts. Unrealistic goals are doomed to create a feeling of not being able to reach a goal or encourage unwise development in order to meet established goals. Given the locations that most likely can be used for these activities, a goal of providing an additional 70,000 square feet of space for these uses should be pursued.

**Encourage the location of additional food related businesses.** The Community Connections, Nieman Road Study, stated that the provision of additional food related business in the downtown area should be a goal. Restaurants and groceries are still brick and mortar businesses that will occupy both existing and vacant spaces. These businesses provide the social contact needed by the public, and a variety of local food options will assist in the creation of a special place downtown. Generally, these types of businesses can occupy smaller spaces than retail establishments. They can be a traffic generator for other businesses throughout the day, as well as provide an impetus for increased activity in the downtown area after 5:00 p.m. The location of these establishments can encourage the location of additional retail opportunities in the downtown area, or encourage existing businesses to expand their current hours. Current incentives can provide some financial support for these businesses to make improvements to allow wastewater connections when necessary, as well as to make purchases of permanent equipment.

**Goal: Create a better network of pedestrian connectivity to and between nearby neighborhoods as well as within the district itself.**

**Review Alternative Residential Street Design to Provide Safe Sidewalks.** The City's current street design standards can work well in new developments, but can be challenging in portions of the community developed prior to the 1950's. Several neighborhoods surrounding downtown were developed prior to 1950, and at that time storm water collection systems were constructed as ditches next to the street pavement. Although effective at the time, over the years these systems can become ineffective and contribute to the need to revitalize the neighborhood, as new residents expect a modern street design. Frequent driveway culverts needed to move storm water through the ditch sections can create additional flooding problems, if the pipes and culverts are not cleaned and maintained by the property owners. As a consequence, street improvements frequently are an overlay on the existing asphalt, with no opportunity to hold the edges of the street in place. In many cases the width of the street is limited due to the location of the ditch sections. It may not be economically feasible to utilize the same street standards in these areas as in newer parts of the community. Street standards should be reviewed to determine if narrower streets could be constructed as ditch section roads are converted into curbed streets, and if sidewalks can be provided in new easements obtained from property owners if sufficient right of way is not currently available. One opportunity may be the placement of a sidewalk nearer to the new curb as ditch sections are filled to provide enclosed storm water collection systems. This would also allow homes constructed closer to the street in the past to maintain an adequate front yard area, as well as retaining existing trees that form a canopy over the street.

In order to encourage residents in the downtown area to walk to local businesses or services in the downtown area, sidewalks or other walkways need to connect to Nieman Road and Johnson Drive, as well as throughout the neighborhood. Improved streets will also encourage bike traffic to occur, and provide a healthier neighborhood with the same level of transportation options found in newer neighborhoods. A vibrant neighborhood will also lead to reinvestment potential and make the area more enticing than already exists.

Funding may be available through the Creating Sustainable Places initiative to study how connections can be made to Nieman Road from the neighborhoods to the east and west in an economical and safe manner.

**Construct a Trail System to Connect with Turkey Creek Trail in Merriam.** The City of Merriam has constructed a significant trail system along Turkey Creek in their community. The creek itself is located approximately three-quarters of a mile east of Nieman Road. A significant tributary of the creek lies just north of Shawnee Mission Parkway and branches off to the northwest just before Nieman Road. An amenity for the residents of the downtown Shawnee would be a trail that connects the downtown area to the greater trail system along Turkey Creek. The system would also provide opportunities for the general public to utilize the trail and provide a means to

attract a larger population onto the area. The trail system would provide an opportunity for pedestrian and bicycle traffic parallel to Shawnee Mission Parkway potentially moving this traffic off the street, and provide a connection to other forms of transportation such as bus routes along Nieman Road and Shawnee Mission Parkway.

As storm water improvement studies are undertaken to determine the ability to enhance the storm water capacity through the area, attention should be given to use land above an enclosed stormwater collection system, or regraded areas adjacent to an open channel as a pathway to achieve this goal.

**Goal: Enhance the overall economic value of businesses and properties within the Downtown area.**

**Adopt Design Standards for Properties South of 60<sup>th</sup> Street.** Design standards have been adopted for the pedestrian zone areas identified in the original Downtown Action Plan. These standards covered the area along Johnson Drive and along Nieman Road from 58<sup>th</sup> Street to 60<sup>th</sup> Street. The guidelines have been successful in encouraging façade renovation work, as well as new construction to blend in well with the older structures in the area. The properties south of Johnson Drive were generally developed at a later date, and reflect the effect increased automobile traffic has had on development patterns. In most cases, large fields of parking are located in front of the building, and the entrances to the buildings are removed from the street. Design standards can be developed to provide a current or future landowner guidelines to develop their site in an alternative method that can increase visibility of the retail, office, service or residential uses being developed. Such guidelines should not be so overly demanding as to discourage reinvestment to occur, but should outline the vision for ultimate build out of the corridor. While form based zoning codes have been a popular means to affect the design of buildings in a specific area, they have also been so rigid as to discourage new development or rehabilitation of existing structures to occur. A set of guidelines that is easily amended as changes in market conditions occur, will allow the community to react quickly, and at the same time discourage the type of development that may be detrimental to the corridor.

**Discuss creation of a Business Improvement District with property owners.** Kansas State Statutes permit a city to create a Business Improvement District. The creation of a business improvement district would allow property owners and business owners to assess a fee on themselves to provide enhanced services or amenities than those provided by the city. Examples of items that could be funded include banners, advertising, enhanced snow removal, flower baskets and their upkeep, increased security, art work, and other such items. The City is responsible to set the boundaries of the district and determine the method to collect the fees. Initially the Mayor appoints a committee to study and develop plans for the establishment and operation of the district. After a Business Improvement District is created by ordinance, an advisory committee recommends the program of services to be provided annually, and identifies the funding source. City staff and business owners shall discuss and gauge the interest in creating a Business Improvement District, and realistically discuss the service fees needed to be annually collected to undertake the identified activities. As an alternative to the creation of a Business Improvement District, a non-profit business association that collects membership fees could be created to undertake additional improvements in the downtown area.

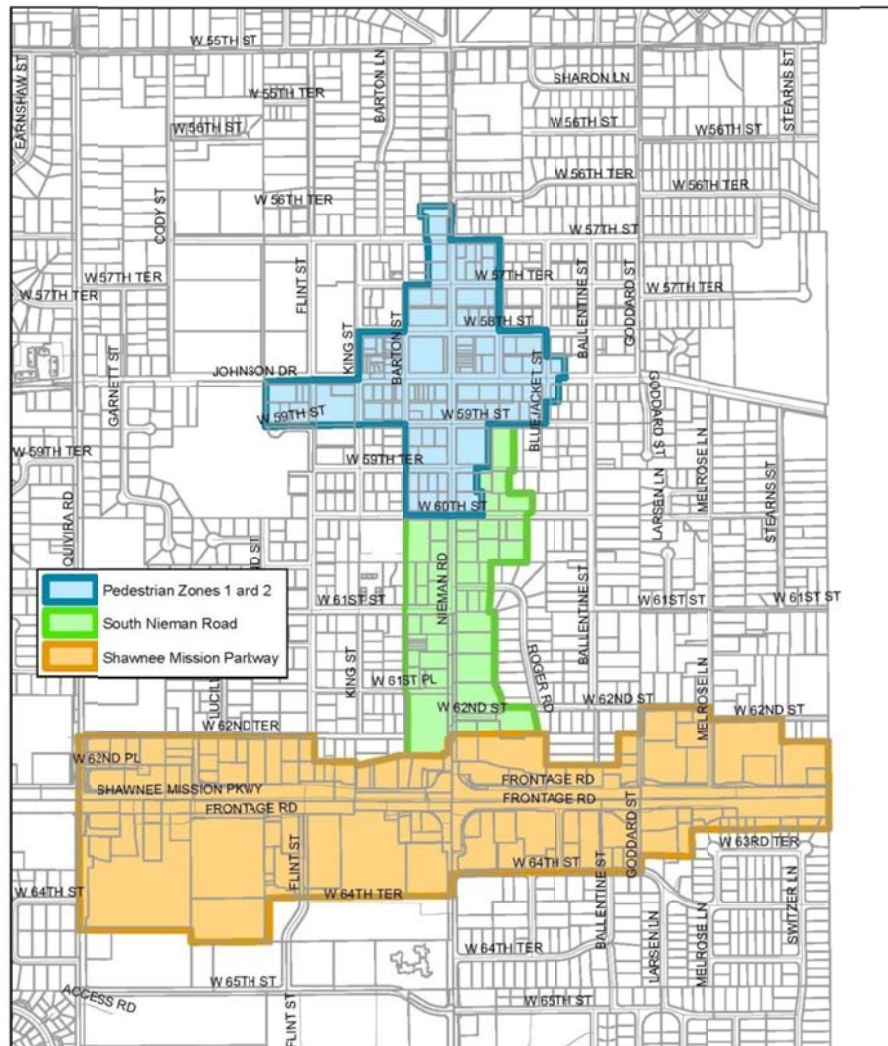
**Implementation of an Asset Maintenance and Replacement Schedule.** Infrastructure improvements do not come without a price for their on-going repair and maintenance. An asset management schedule provides guidance when funding should be made available to maintain the improvements that have been made. This includes sidewalk replacement, tree well maintenance, metal work and light pole repair and maintenance, street tree pruning and care,



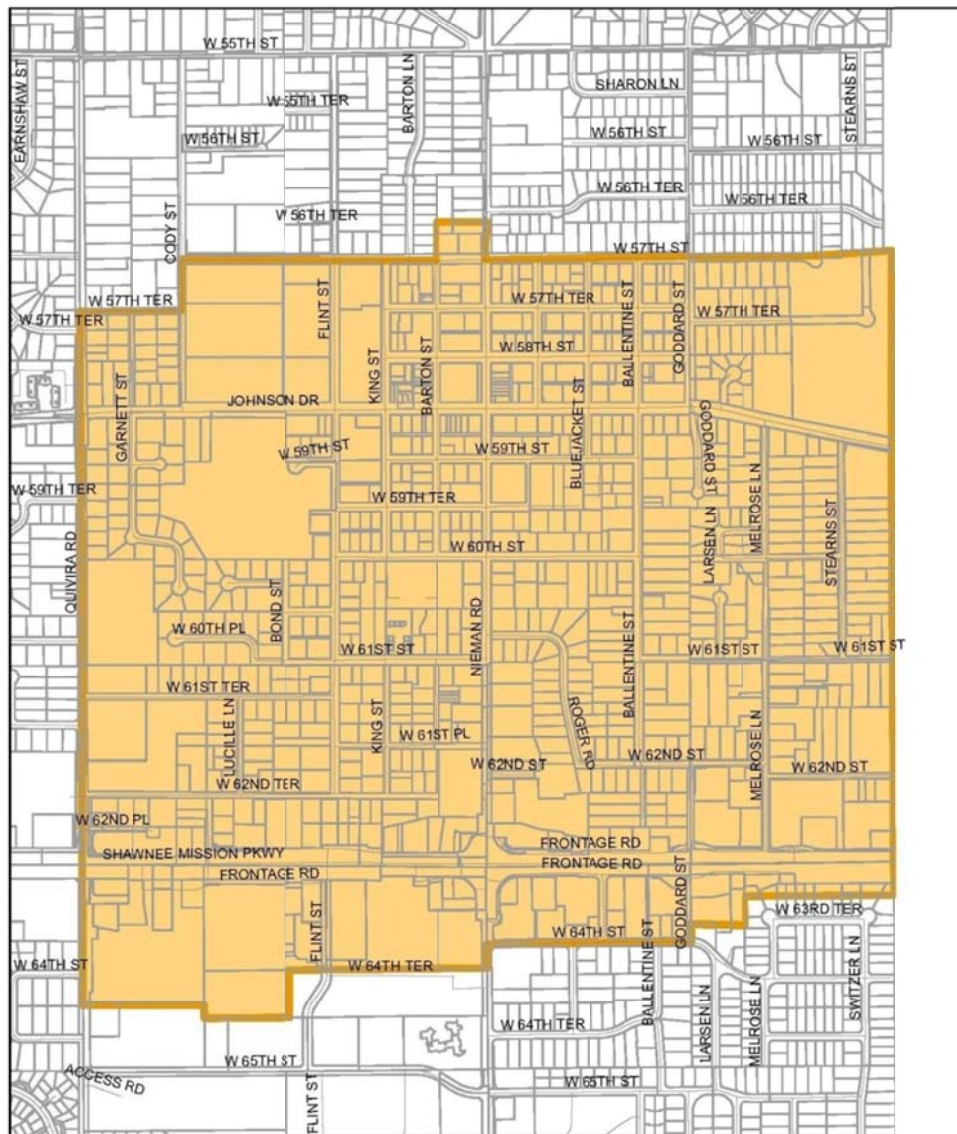
monument sign care and other features that may be installed in the future such as story poles or flower baskets, as well as signage such as banners. The schedule will provide an inventory of the infrastructure improvements, a timeline for inspection of the specific asses, and an estimate of maintenance, repair or replacement cost. Financial obligations can then be committed form a variety of sources to maintain the integrity of the improvements that are undertaken.

**Continue to Publicize Current Financial Incentives.** The façade renovation, loan buy-down, and businesses expansion incentives have been successful in encouraging reinvestment on the downtown area. Continued use of these programs is vital to provide an impetus for future improvements to existing structures, or to encourage existing businesses to expand their square footage or enhance their product or service. The map on the below outlines the pedestrian zone and South Nieman Road Zone where there incentives are applicable.

### Downtown Improvement Incentives



## Downtown KNRA Area A



**Develop Targeted Incentives.** The creation of targeted incentives to assist reinvestment in the downtown area will be an action taken over the planning period. New methods to assist in financing new development or redevelopment of existing sites should be expected to occur over time. Specific incentives could be targeted to provide the following:

- landscape costs for existing multi-family developments,
- façade improvements to existing multi-family developments,
- assistance in providing street trees on existing developed sites,
- provision of transit stops at specific locations,
- grants to provide architectural services and site layout for sites to be redeveloped,
- wastewater connection fees for food service businesses,
- STAR bonds for destination related uses, and
- Tax Increment Financing districts or other forms of incentives authorized by state statute

These types of targeted incentives may be used in conjunction with existing incentive packages. Specific incentives may be provided during certain periods of time to encourage their use when other public infrastructure improvements occur.

The creation of a Transportation Improvement District either along Nieman Road and/or Shawnee Mission Parkway could provide financial assistance to fund specific transportation features along both routes.

## **Goal: Develop Alternative Means of Community Outreach.**

**Develop Downtown Social Media Opportunities.** It is imperative that the provision of continual and updated information regarding activities and business opportunities be undertaken. Current forms of information distribution include the use of webpage postings, Facebook, Twitter, and other means of electronic communication. As new technologies develop, opportunities to link to those sources of outreach should be readily secured.

**Create and maintain a directory of vacant spaces.** Creation of a vacant space directory can provide a means to proactively promote the opportunity to locate a business in the downtown area. It also can provide a resource for a real estate brokers to target their efforts to market the downtown area. This inventory will also provide a quick source of information for the public and city staff with information regarding contact names and phone numbers, as well as the size of the vacancy and any special features a vacant space may offer.

**Encourage a Small Business that Relates to Our Sister Cities Theme.** The City of Shawnee has strong relationships with our three sister cities. A business that features products or highlights the culture of our sister cities not only provides a year round opportunity to promote our relationship but also enhances our relationship with these communities. This business could also be food related and further meet other goals identified in this Plan.

**Enhance Partnership with Existing Cultural Institutions.** Numerous cultural institutions exist in the Downtown area. Four churches; Shawnee United Methodist, Primitive Baptist, First Baptist Church of Shawnee and St. Joseph Catholic have a long history of service and involvement in the community. Their commitment to the downtown community has been shown in their expansions as well as maintenance of their presence in the community. St. Joseph Parish has continued to invest in their property through the construction of a new elementary school building. The City of Shawnee has enhanced the awareness of our sister city program by constructing a park at 58<sup>th</sup> Street and King.

Wonderscope, a children's museum, is located in the old Flint Elementary School at the corner of 57<sup>th</sup> Street and Flint. The museum regularly hosts events that draw visitors from throughout the region. The museum provides another recreational opportunity in the downtown area. The museum is determining the future focus and location of their facility. Efforts shall be undertaken to stress to their Board of Directors the importance the museum has not only to downtown, but to Shawnee as a whole. Cooperative programming with the City, Downtown Partnership and the Downtown Business Association can enhance the ties with the downtown community.

Immediately adjacent to the downtown area is Shawnee Town 1929. This living museum is one of the most visited historic attractions in the metropolitan area. The stories being told at the museum and the history of the downtown area are entwined. Several of the new exhibits created

at the museum are replicas of the buildings and businesses along Johnson Drive in the 1920's. Specific media tools can be used to indicate this interrelationship between the two areas, these may include information on story poles along Johnson Drive and Nieman Road, as well as walking tours, and other brochures created to tell the story of early Shawnee.



**Goal: Re-introduce natural features consistent with the historic pattern of meandering watercourses, trees and other vegetation and to enhance the habitat.**

**Increase Stormwater Capacity under Nieman Road.** With little ability to increase the volume sent through the paved portion of the storm water collection system, alternative means to move storm water through the area must be reviewed. Not only has the system met its carrying capacity in its current design, but the size and configuration of storm water pipes under Nieman Road at both 61<sup>st</sup> Street and 62<sup>nd</sup> street need to be evaluated. A stormwater collection system analysis can provide various options that may be available to realign or construct additional pipe capacity under Nieman Road, and the system as a whole.



**Review Potential to Return Turkey Creek Tributary to a Natural Watercourse.** Turkey Creek lies approximately three quarters of a mile east of the Shawnee City limits paralleling I-35 in Merriam. One of the tributaries of Turkey Creek runs along the south side of Shawnee Mission Parkway between I-35 and Goddard. Just west of Goddard the creek passes under Shawnee Mission Parkway and runs parallel to Shawnee Mission Parkway on the north side of the commercial developments along the Parkway. At 62<sup>nd</sup> Street the tributary splits with a portion heading north and northwest, while the other branch continues to run to the west, once again crossing under Shawnee Mission Parkway near Flint. There is a large elevation change along the creek between Goddard and Nieman Road. This change in elevation has caused severe erosion along its length, has exposed utilities and has caused flooding problems where the west branch crosses beneath Nieman Road at 62<sup>nd</sup> Street. The northern branch is located within a FEMA designated floodway. In the 1970's and 1980's a predominant method to alleviate flooding was to concrete line stream channels resulting in streamways that tended to convey moving stormwater through the basin as quickly as possible. Thus, the northern tributary of Turkey Creek was lined with concrete between 62<sup>nd</sup> Street and Johnson Drive. This shortened flood



durations but did little to eliminate flooding. As development continued to occur in both Shawnee and Merriam, more structures became susceptible to flooding. As the stormwater paths became lined or piped, flow peaks and stream velocities increased, causing flooding and more severe erosion along the unimproved stream banks. Current best practices for stormwater collection systems analyzes methods to balance moving stormwater efficiently, and managing peak flows. Water quality practices provide methods to cleanse the stormwater before it enters the stream. The best practices include removal of concrete lined systems and returning the stream bed to a more natural watercourse, using plantings to both slow down water flow, provide for the opportunity for stormwater to be absorbed, as well as provide a filtering system for silt and organic compounds moving through the drainage system. A study should be undertaken to review the design and associated costs to remove the concrete liner and restore the stream channel to a natural state. Additionally, this provides the opportunity to provide additional green spaces in the downtown area and may provide opportunities for other amenities in the area. Funding for engineering studies and a portion of the development of the new storm water collection system may be available from SMAC funding from the county, as well as Parks and Pipes funds, or the City of Shawnee Stormwater Utility Fund.



**Construct a Trail System to Connect with Turkey Creek Trail in Merriam.** During the review of enhanced stormwater capacity improvements to the Turkey Creek tributaries, an opportunity may arise to provide a trail connection between the downtown area and the Turkey Creek trail in Merriam. Stormwater mitigation methods undertaken to return the stream channel to a natural state, as well as re-grade the creek parallel to Shawnee Mission Parkway, can provide an opportunity to include a graded surface to install a walking and bike trail. This is an amenity that does not conflict with storm water overflow from the creek during flooding. The provision of this trail system not only provides another amenity to the residents of the area, but also enhances the off-street trail system developed throughout the city.

**Goal: Enhance the identity of the corridor as both a gateway to downtown and extension of downtown commercial activities.**

**Create a Theme through Landscaping, Light Poles and Signage.** A common theme of landscaping, lighting and signage will further identify the Nieman Road corridor north of Shawnee Mission Parkway as a part of the downtown area. Unique light poles have been installed along Johnson Drive and a portion of Nieman Road. These light poles can be extended further to the south to create a uniform appearance. Tree wells have been provided along the same route as the light poles. The provision of a wider sidewalk during a potential reconstruction of Nieman Road will provide an opportunity to carry this landscaping concept further to the north and south. In some instances, especially north of 60<sup>th</sup> Street, property owners may be consulted to discuss the potential to place the tree wells on their property rather than cut into the sidewalk. Regardless of the future configuration of Nieman Road, trees can be planted in the existing landscape strip south of 60<sup>th</sup> Street. The movement in location of the trees in this area occurs at the point the age and architecture of the retail and office spaces change to a more modern style. If improvements are made to Nieman Road, the cross section design of the street can provide a more uniform approach to the location of landscaping. Theme signage such as banners and the placards for story poles should relay the same message of the sense of place, and incorporated common graphic elements.

**Create a Memorable Marketing or Branding Message.** Unique places often brand themselves with a memorable message. This message is carried through into marketing efforts for the district. The goal of a branding and/or marketing campaign is to create a message that the public will with the district. This may be in the form of a district logo, district name, or a catchy tagline. An opportunity may exist to use the “Good Starts Here” brand and provide a tag line to identify the downtown area. A unique logo could be created that uses the “Shawnee Tree” brand in part of the logo, along with buildings or other downtown features. A successful brand is one that the consumer remembers when a decision is made where to shop or obtain other services. The use of a different locator other than “Downtown Shawnee” also needs to be discussed with business and property owners in the downtown area.

**Create a community space in 6200 block of Nieman-** Public open spaces add vibrancy to a neighborhood and provide a gathering space for the public. Currently downtown festivals and events are held at City Hall or at the corner of Johnson Drive and Nieman Road. Provision of a second public space will provide the ability to enhance these events, or create a new venue for a different type of recreation. A vacant parcel of land containing just under an acre is located on the east side of Nieman Road, just south of the Turkey Creek Tributary. The same property owner owns an additional acre to the south which is currently developed with an old stone house. Further south is a 1.8 acre tract that is developed with a commercial building on the south, and large parking area on the north. The potential exists to either develop a portion of the northern properties with both commercial uses and open space, or to combine all three properties which would contain 3.07 acres and redevelop the site to accommodate both uses.

The provision of open space could lead to a variety of uses such as a gazebo or pavilion, a city sponsored marketplace, a bicycle/pedestrian trail head, a transit stop, as well as other uses.

## **Goal: Celebrate the historical and cultural significance of the area.**

**Installation of Story Poles.** Downtown Shawnee has been an important economic center since Native Americans established a settlement at Gum Springs. The City was the county seat as well as the scene of civil war confrontations. As the city matured, and through the 1950's, downtown remained the commercial and cultural hub of the City. The use of light and utility poles to relay the history of the area can be achieved by creating story poles. A placard placed on selected poles at regular intervals can encourage residents and visitors to learn more about their community. The information on the placards could relay information on the names associated with the streets in the area, history of existing buildings, location of former buildings, history of existing buildings, and stories about the commercial cultural development in the area such as truck farming and the city square. A link to Shawnee Town 1929 and the downtown can be undertaken with the stories told along Johnson Drive. An interest survey can be undertaken to assist in determining the type of questions residents would want answered on the story poles. Accurate historic interpretations can be prepared by Shawnee Town 1929 staff. A potential funding source could be an offering to allow residents to purchase placards. Placards can be installed as new lighting fixtures are installed, or on utility poles that will remain if Niemen Road improvements are undertaken.

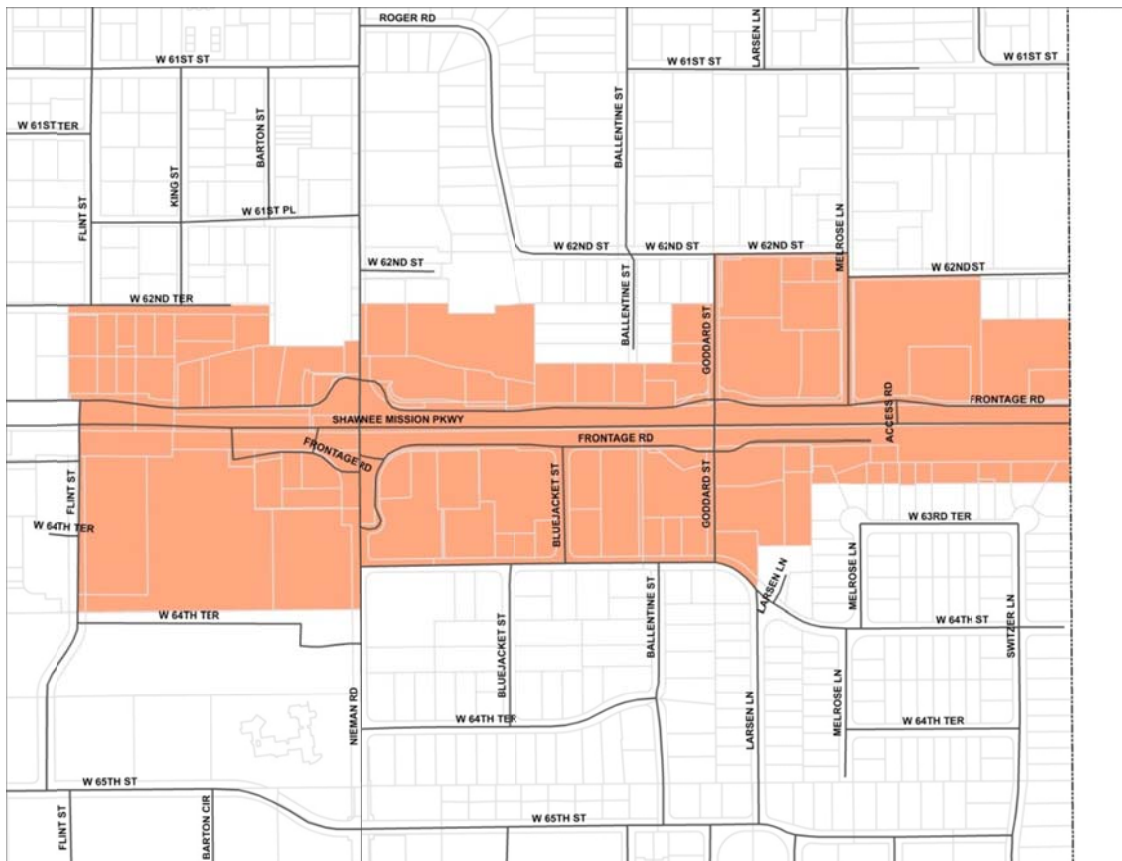
**Develop Downtown Walking Trail Brochure.** Publication of an updated Downtown Walking Trail brochure can complement the installation of story poles in the downtown area. The brochure can be used as a "take away" as well as a means to provide additional information about the City's efforts to create a special place. The brochure can be distributed at various city events and can serve as a source for articles in the City Line mailing.

**Enhance the Visibility and Value of Wonderscope to the Downtown Area.** As the region's children's museum, Wonderscope provides an opportunity to further the image of Shawnee as a premier family oriented entertainment venue. Located in the former Flint School building, Wonderscope is adjacent to the Jim Allen Aquatics Center, a block from Shawnee Town 1929, and is a block north of Johnson Drive anchoring the western end of the downtown area. Opportunities exist to further integrate Wonderscope into the downtown area by linking programming with downtown events, shared advertising opportunities and assistance in seeking financial support for the museum. Not only are enhancements to the building necessary to keep the museum in downtown Shawnee, but also a means to finance permanent and travelling exhibits. Depending on the opportunities available and vision of the museum's Board of Directors, financing using programs such as the State of Kansas STAR bond financing could be pursued.

**Goal: Continue to upgrade the development potential along Shawnee Mission Parkway.**

**Consider Zoning Regulation Amendment to Reduce front Yard Setback in CH (Overlay) Zoning District.**

The Commercial Highway Overlay District runs along both sides of Shawnee Mission Parkway between the east city limits and Flint Street. The purpose of the overlay district is to limit uses normally found in the Commercial Highway zoning district to portray a positive image at the gateway to the community. Continued expansion of Shawnee Mission Parkway, as well as construction of an access road system along the Parkway has reduced the setback of buildings along Shawnee Mission Parkway. This is especially the case on the north side of the street from Goddard west. The current 30 foot setback requirement would most likely render some properties useless, and also results in reducing the opportunity for buildings in new developments to be located closer to the street, creating a more urban feel. In the Townsquare zoning district the required front yard setback is zero. However, it would be expected that new construction will provide a sidewalk adjacent to the street as part of a site plan reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission. An amendment to the zoning regulations could reduce the building setback to zero with approval by the planning commission, and provide developers the opportunity to create a more urban environment and increase the commercial density along this portion of Shawnee Mission Parkway further identifying this area as part of downtown. The following map highlights the area included in the Commercial Highway Overlay Zoning District.



**Identify Potential Transit Stop Locations.** The City of Shawnee and Johnson County Transit Authority have partnered in preparation of the Community Connections Study and the Shawnee Mission Parkway Visioning Study. The location of transit stops need to be convenient to the public , providing access by walking, or access to a parking lot large enough to provide parking for an extended period of time. Not only do the stops need to be convenient but constructed or signed in a consistent manner to provide easy identification of the stop.

The location of transit stops along Shawnee Mission Parkway pose the unique situation of providing a bus turn out lane on the already developed parkway, or to provide transit stops along the frontage road. Use of the frontage road would move the busses off the parkway for a few blocks, but then would require re-entrance onto the parkway. Potential locations for transit stops are at Shawnee Mission Parkway and Quivira, Shawnee Mission Parkway and Nieman and Shawnee Mission Parkway and Goddard. The stop at Goddard would provide good pedestrian access to a transit stop from the residential neighborhoods to the north and south of the Parkway.

Opportunities present themselves to provide cross transit connections along Shawnee Mission Parkway and Nieman. Currently, there is a bus route along Nieman Road between 75<sup>th</sup> Street and Johnson Drive. Transfers between the routes could be made at a Shawnee Mission Parkway and Nieman Road transit stop. Potential transit stops along Nieman Road have been identified at 62<sup>nd</sup> Street, 60<sup>th</sup> Street (midway along the corridor) and at Johnson Drive and Nieman Road. Another potential location for a stop would be at Goddard and Johnson Drive.

Construction of transit stops can be integrated in to the redevelopment of properties, or integrated into existing parking lots. The locations need to provide riders with the feeling that they are safe an can get to the stop in a convenient manner.

**Discuss Potential Reinvestment with Owners of Underutilized Properties.** As is the case with properties along Nieman Road, there are properties along Shawnee Mission Parkway that are underutilized and in need of reinvestment. The City should undertake a discussion with these property owners to encourage either reinvestment or in some cases redevelopment of the properties. A more dense development pattern will result in a more urban feel, and complement the provision of an enhanced transportation corridor and streetscape improvements. Opportunities may exist for several property owners to work together to create a new pattern of development that is cost effective and sustainable. The discussion will include financial incentives such as the KNRA, tax abatements for specific uses that may be available, or any potential design assistance that may be provided for a specific site.

**Create a Master Landscape and Walkway Plan.** Shawnee Mission Parkway presents a unique opportunity to provide landscaping to soften the six lane road and frontage road transportation system. An opportunity presents itself to introduce plantings into the median, as well as along the street with new development or reinvestment in existing properties. A master landscape plan can address the location of landscape improvements, type of vegetation that can be



expected to survive, and direction to provide these types of landscaping features in a coordinated manner. The landscape plan can offer walkway/bikeway options along the frontage roads, but it also could identify multi-modal trails for the public behind the first tier of buildings along Shawnee Mission Parkway. This would encourage the separation of pedestrian from a major arterial street with a heavy volume of traffic. Walkway corridors could be provided at intersections or using sidewalks through parking lots to bring the public to the commercial businesses along the Parkway. The landscape and walkway plan should also indicate how a transition from the theme created along Shawnee Mission Parkway and Nieman Road improvements where the street widens.