



Chapter Two

Community Vision and Values

Introduction

The qualities, values, and community characteristics desired for Newton by the year 2030 are expressed in the following Vision Statement and Values. Achieving the vision cannot be the sole responsibility of city government; the entire community must take ownership. By supporting the vision, Newton's citizens will take pride in their community and will commit to taking the necessary steps to achieve it.

The Vision Statement is presented in bullet points to concisely summarize the desired course, actions, and image of the Newton community in 2030. The Values summations seek to clarify and elaborate upon the guiding principles identified in the Vision Statement. Each of these statements and values work together to create, maintain, and enhance the community. These statements describe what the Newton community aspires to become in the future.

Vision Statement

Between 2010 and 2030, Newton will expand its tax base and enhance community amenities, while preserving its richness of character, heritage, and way of life.

To make this vision a reality, we will:

- Revitalize the Newton Main Street Historic District, developing it into a pedestrian-friendly cultural center that is home to entertainment, shopping, dining, and residential living.
- Cultivate a spirit of entrepreneurship and actively nurture and support homegrown businesses to create new jobs and increase tax revenues, while also encouraging the Midwest values of self-reliance, self-determination, and willingness to support our neighbors.
- Recruit larger employers from the outside that have values in sync with this community's vision, and who bring with them well-paying jobs and new residents.
- Actively market the community to retirees, middle- and high-income families, and young professionals as a great place to live.
- Embed a philosophy throughout the county that shopping and conducting business locally helps the community maintain and improve its overall quality of life.
- Strengthen the economic, social, and cultural connections with the surrounding communities in south-central Kansas.

- Expand and enhance quality-of-life amenities (library, recreation, parks, trails), prioritizing initiatives that promote education and health/wellness.
- Strengthen the city's relationship with Bethel College, its students, alumni, and faculty to fully assimilate the college and its cultural assets into the community.
- Foster new housing options for people at all economic levels, and focus on renovating the existing housing stock and preserving older neighborhoods.
- Seek energy efficiencies, water conservation, recycling, green architecture, and environmentally friendly transportation methods whenever feasible.
- Explore methods to increase community pride and create within residents a better understanding of the significance of Newton's history, ethnicity, and heritage within the region, state, and nation.
- Recruit, elect, and hire leaders who will respond to changing conditions in a way that furthers this vision.

Values



Vibrant Economy

We are committed to creating and maintaining a diverse economy with a growing tax base. We desire a broad mix of small businesses as well as homegrown industry and manufacturers. We also support the recruitment of large, national companies that desire our central location that is served by convenient rail and highway access. We strive to attract manufacturers devoted to the wind energy industry or other green industries. Our intent is to grow our local economy, but in doing so, we strive to bring industries and businesses that are compatible with our community vision, values, and long-term goals. We accept that, as our town grows in population, we will become more attractive to national retail and service businesses. At the same time, we intend to foster and encourage local retail, service, and dining entrepreneurs who will offer a complement of unique, niche businesses catering to the individuality of the Newton community.

We acknowledge that our opportunities for continued growth and community change are linked to metropolitan Wichita, and to our ability to take advantage of the proximity to urban employment, services, and amenities. We hope that people and businesses that want to be close to a metropolitan city will choose to make our community their home.



Revitalized Downtown and Newton Main Street Historic District

We want to create an award-winning, revitalized downtown district. Our vision includes attracting retail, restaurants, and cultural facilities. We envision readapting our historic buildings to support start-up companies or act as business incubators. We want to offer a variety of housing options on our second floors, as well as new residential structures designed to complement the area. We want to recreate civic spaces to be pedestrian-friendly, inviting, and busy with life and commerce. The historic architecture and visual character of the Newton Main Street Historic District will be preserved. We acknowledge that our downtown buildings outside the designated historic districts may be adapted, or in some cases removed, to meet changing marketplace demands. Storefronts will be restored within the overall context of the 2009 Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District to create a true mixed-use setting with retail, office, housing, and open spaces, all functioning together as the center of cultural activities and community life.

Creating a free Internet wireless zone within the downtown district is integral to the vision of viable “third spaces” for people to gather. New construction and adaptive reuse of existing buildings within the downtown district will be respectful and compatible with the historic character and pedestrian orientation.



Livability

Over the next 20 years, our community will continue to be a great place to live, retire, raise a family — a place for everyone to call home. Our vision for the future relies on improving and expanding our quality-of-life amenities in an effort to become attractive to college students, young professionals, young families, and higher-income households, as well as empty-nesters and retirees who are seeking hometown living next door to a metropolitan city. We know this requires creating public and private partnerships to finance new (or expand existing) recreation and cultural amenities. This also means being realistic about the impact of these plans on taxpayers. We must ensure that our community remains affordable for businesses and homeowners. We want our community leaders to be visionary and make investments in recreational and cultural amenities that contribute to the marketability and livability of our community.



Commitment to Education

Our community remains committed to supporting education as a core community value. We know how important a high-quality education is to families and to high school graduates seeking vocational skills. We must meet the needs of a changing workforce in a global marketplace. We want our community to be recognized statewide for the high-quality education we provide across the spectrum of students and lifetime learners.

Building a strong community partnership with Bethel College is vital in order to bolster our connections to the arts, music, culture, and various learning opportunities. Young college students bring vitality and diversity to our community, so we want to engage — and retain — these young people. Creating a synergy between Bethel College and our community offers promise to people of all ages. The same level of partnership must exist with Hutchinson Community College in order to provide vocational education and training for a viable workforce.



Innovations in Transportation

We recognize that the ways in which people and goods move or are transported within our community influence our lives, economic stability, and sustainability. Our vision for future mobility and an urban transportation system relies on embracing innovations in transportation. This vision includes greater reliance on bicycles, electric cars, walking, and public transit. We know cars and trucks will remain a fundamental and essential element in our transport systems, yet we need to build roadways and a citywide trail system integrated with bicycle pathways and pedestrian walkways to allow for low-cost transportation and a healthy community. We also envision greater reliance on our railways, from promoting economic development opportunities to offering a commuter train to Wichita and cities beyond.

The Kansas Logistics Park, along with the large amount of undeveloped land near the Newton City-County Airport, will offer significant economic development opportunities, supported by intermodal and multi-modal transportation systems. The strategic location of the City of Newton on the “SuperCorridor,” which stretches from Canada through the United States to the seaports of Mexico, offers the possibility of an inland Foreign Trade Zone. The central location of Newton is a selling point, allowing businesses and manufacturers to efficiently transport their products to the marketplace.



Healthy Living

Rediscovering how city design contributes to healthy lifestyles and community well-being is important as we build new neighborhoods. Our vision incorporates integrating mixed land uses — retail, office, residential, parks, schools — to allow people to walk or bike for basic needs rather than driving for every trip. We also envision employees being able to bike to our industrial parks or other places of employment. Designing “complete streets” and extending our linear trails to industrial areas is vital to our vision. (See Transportation Chapter for further information on complete streets) In our established neighborhoods, we want people to be able to walk or bike safely and to have connectivity to downtown, parks, schools, shopping, and work. We want to create well-planned parks, linear trails, and recreational facilities to enable bicycling, walking, and physical activity.



Preserving Our Town Character

Promoting the orderly growth and development of our community must be accomplished in harmony with our historical identity and character, without losing sight of the vision, values, and goals we aspire to in our ReNewton Plan. We do not want to lose our core values of family, faith, self-reliance, friendliness, cooperativeness, security, and strong sense of community in the pursuit of economic development. Our town has an authentic character, which is found in our people, neighborhoods, churches, schools, Newton Main Street Historic District, and business community. This is our strength, our identity, and our heritage.



Housing for All

Our vision for the future ensures a broad choice of housing options for all income levels and individuals at different stages of their life cycles. We want to foster the rehabilitation of our older housing stock. We value our older neighborhoods and want them to be safe, attractive, and affordable places for people to live. Ensuring that our older citizens have the capability of aging in place is important, and we also want to foster intergenerational neighborhoods. Preserving the physical character, housing capacity, public and civic spaces, and social fabric of our older neighborhoods is vital to maintain our community identity. We also encourage our neighborhoods to adapt to new opportunities for mixed land uses, housing, and multi-modal transportation systems. All existing and new neighborhoods shall be linked together through our network of wellness trails, allowing all residents to enjoy the unique characteristics of different neighborhoods.



Visionary Leadership

This vision for the future rests, in large part, with the civic, business, and political leadership in guiding the growth and redevelopment of our community. Our shared vision requires a consistent and long-term commitment from local leaders and members of the community, as well as the ability to respond to and adapt to changing conditions.



Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion

Our city is composed of various races, ethnic groups, religious faiths, social classes, and physical and mental abilities. We strive to be a community that respects cultural diversity and values social cohesion.



Sustainability

We know we have a responsibility to future generations to provide them with a community of clean air and water, and to promote wise use of energy and our natural resources. We want to

build new areas of town, or rebuild existing areas, to integrate energy efficiency, water conservation, recycling, and green architecture. Our vision for sustainability emphasizes walkable neighborhoods, a variety of transportation and housing choices, compact town growth, and the promotion of environmentally friendly materials and technologies.



Community Marketing

Our vision is that community marketing will be an organized, strategic, and tightly coordinated effort undertaken jointly by the city, the county, Chamber of Commerce, and private business. Marketing will be an important part of the community's efforts over the next two decades to strategically expand its tax base through recruitment of new industries and residents. Additional efforts to encourage local spending will further increase sales tax revenues. As the tax base grows, so will the city's ability to enhance and maintain amenities, which will make the community an even more attractive and enjoyable place to live. Marketing initiatives will also target current residents to increase community pride and to elevate the understanding of Newton's history and heritage.