

Topeka's History and City Information

Size and Location

The city of Topeka, located 60 miles west of Kansas City, Missouri, serves as both the state capital of Kansas and the county seat of Shawnee County, Kansas. With an estimated population of 122,008 for 2003, Topeka is the fourth largest city in Kansas behind Wichita, Overland Park and Kansas City. The land within the city covers about 60.46 square miles. The estimated population of Shawnee County, where Topeka is located, for 2004 is 171,716. The State Capitol complex, including the Capitol Building, the Kansas Judicial Center, and several state office buildings are located within the city. The State of Kansas is the largest employer in the Topeka Municipal Service Area (MSA) employing approximately 8,434 people.

Background History

Topeka lies on a rich sandy river bottomland where Indians lived for many years using the excellent fords on the Kansas (Kaw) River. Among the first permanent settlers in this area were three French-Canadian (Pappan) brothers. They married three Kanza (Kansas) Indian sisters and established a ferry over the river in 1842 where the Oregon Trail crossed the river. A grandson from one of the marriages was Charles Curtis, the only Vice-President of the United States to be of Indian descent. (Charles Curtis served with President Herbert C. Hoover from 1929 to 1933.)



On December 5, 1854, nine men met on the banks of the Kansas River at what is now Kansas Avenue and Crane Street. The men drew up an agreement, which later became the basis for the Topeka Association, the organization mainly responsible for the establishment and early growth of Topeka. The nine men were Cyrus K. Holliday, F.W. Giles, Daniel H. Horne, George Davis, Enoch Chase, J.B. Chase, M.C. Dickey, Charles Robinson, and L.G. Cleveland. Cyrus K. Holliday gave Topeka its name (Topeka, a presumed Dakota word having to do with the growing of potatoes) and became the City's chief promoter.

The nine had come here for many reasons: some noble, to make Kansas a free state, some personal, to start over in life, or to make money. Topeka was born.

After a decade of abolitionist and pro-slavery conflict, drought and talk of civil war the Kansas territory was admitted to the Union in 1861 as the 34th state. The great prize was the location of the state capital. The contest ultimately centered on two towns; Lawrence and Topeka. The residents of Lawrence and Topeka voted in November. Both cities solicited young men as young as 16 years old to vote. Topeka won 14,288 to Lawrence's 5,334. Topeka was finally chosen as the capital with Dr. Charles Robinson as the first Governor. Cyrus K. Holliday donated a tract of land to the state for the construction of a state capitol. The City of Topeka was incorporated February 14, 1857, with Cyrus K. Holliday as Mayor.

In 1869, the railway started moving westward from Topeka. General offices and machine shops of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad system were established in Topeka in 1878. During the first half of the century, nature presented challenges to Topeka with floods and tornados. Topekans have always stepped up and helped one another through community outreach.

During the early part of the 20th Century, the region's economic structure appeared to have settled into the typical pattern of a medium-sized Midwestern area dependent primarily on its agriculture base. Topeka lies at the point where the cattle ranches of the southwest meet the Corn Belt, between the undeveloped mineral resources of the Mississippi Valley, south of the winter snow line, and with ample supplies of water and plenty of room to develop.

With the onset of World War II, the railroad, meat packing and agricultural base shifted to manufacturing and government/military services. These new patterns were more clearly defined and solidified during the post war years. Forbes Air Force Base was established during the war, and the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company opened a plant in 1944.

Topeka's History and City Information

Again in 1951, the Kansas River overflowed, resulting in the permanent closing of the Morrell Meat Packing Plant and the elimination of over 1,000 jobs. The attraction of the Hallmark Card and Dupont plants and other manufacturing company extensions were important in keeping the economy diverse.

Form of Government

Topeka has operated under three forms of government since its founding. From 1857 until 1910, Topeka was governed by the Mayor-Council plan. The commission form of government was adopted in 1910 and remained in effect until 1985 when the Strong Mayor-City Council-Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) plan was adopted. In November 2004, the voters adopted a Council-City Manager plan. Topeka voters had previously rejected city manager plans during elections in 1929, 1952, 1962, 1964 and 1969.

Council / City Manager Form of Government.

On November 2, 2004, the citizens of Topeka voted 2 to 1 to change from the strong mayor/council form of government to the council/manager form. The change became effective April 2005. An appointed city manager serves an indefinite term and can be hired or fired by a majority vote of the council. The council is responsible for setting policy while the city manager runs the day-to-day operations. The manager will hire, fire and supervise all employees, administer all city administrative affairs and prepare a budget for council approval.

In March 2006, the Council named Norton N. Bonaparte, Jr. as Topeka's first permanent City Manager and Chief Executive Officer. As city manager he serves as the city's chief executive officer, responsible to the Mayor and City Council for managing the day-to-day operations of the city's 1400 employees and \$174 million budget.

The Mayor's administrative powers changed, but he is still elected to a four-year term by the city at-large. Mayoral duties include being the City's ceremonial head, presiding over council meetings, providing community leadership, promoting economic development, representing the city in intergovernmental relations, recommending council legislation and encouraging programs to develop the city.

Rules for electing council members stayed the same, with the nine members being elected in staggered terms every four years from geographic districts.



Under the leadership of Mr. Bonaparte, the organization continues to adjust and move forward under the Council/City Manager form of government. One of his first tasks as City Manager was to get acclimated to Topeka by meeting with city employees, the residents and neighborhood groups, civic organization and local businesses. Over the past seven months, he has prepared and adopted the City's 2007 budget and appointed a new police chief. As the City looks to the future, Mr. Bonaparte will be concentrating on two major initiatives: the development of a shared vision of the community and the review of the organizational structure and operations.

Educational Facilities

Unified School District Number 501 of Shawnee County primarily serves the city. With approximately 2,400 administrative and faculty employees, the District operates 21 elementary, six middle, and three high schools, as well as a modern vocational/technical school. The District serves an enrollment of approximately 13,500 students. There are eight parochial and private schools located in the city. Topeka also enjoys the presence of Washburn University, the only municipally owned university in the United States. With an enrollment of 7,350, Washburn provides broadly based liberal arts and professional education through more than 190 certificate, associate, baccalaureate, master's and juris doctor programs through the College of Arts and Sciences and the Schools of Law, Business, Nursing and Applied Studies. The U.S. News and World Report recently rated Washburn University

Topeka's History and City Information

fourth in the Midwest among public master's level universities in the 2006 America's Best Colleges rankings. This is the fifth consecutive year that Washburn has earned a top 10 rating.

Transportation Facilities

Topeka is a crossroads for major highways. As a result, trucking employs more than 5,500 Topeka workers and provides service to Topeka's agricultural, construction, and manufacturing industries. Interstate 70 and the Kansas Turnpike as well as both U.S. and state highways serve the city. The Kansas Turnpike provides ready access to the Kansas City metropolitan area to the east, and a direct four-lane connection with Wichita to the southwest. Interstate 70 provides four-lane service with all points west through central Kansas and with Denver, Colorado. Highway U.S. 75 transverses the city from north to south. Three carriers - Union Pacific, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, and St. Louis-Southwestern, provide rail service. All carriers provide a variety of specialized equipment and services. Piggyback service is available within a 60-mile radius. Topeka has two Federal Aviation Administration controlled municipal airports with a total of three fixed base operators providing a variety of aviation services.

Medical and Health Facilities

For years the city served as the home of the internationally known Menninger Foundation, a leader in mental health care and psychiatric evaluation. The Menninger Foundation made the choice to affiliate with Baylor University in Texas in 2003. Many Menninger practitioners chose to remain in the Topeka area to continue providing excellent mental health services to this area. The city's other hospitals include Stormont-Vail Regional Medical Center and St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center. The city is also home to the Colmery-O'Neil Veterans Affairs Medical Center and the Kansas Neurological Institute, a state facility.

Recreational and Cultural Facilities

Local theatrical production facilities include the Topeka Performing Arts Center, the Topeka Civic Theater, and Washburn University's White Concert Hall, all of which attract local, national, and international talent of recognized prominence. The 210,000 square foot "Expo Centre" convention center, completed in 1987, also hosts entertainment events on a regular basis. Heartland Park Topeka is a combination stock car racing, drag racing, and sports car road racing facility. It is recognized nationally by racing governing bodies and hosts' major competitions and events.

Within 65 miles of Topeka there are seven major lakes and reservoirs that provide all forms of water recreation. The city operates six community centers, which offer participation in competitive sports and opportunities for involvement in hundreds of classes in arts and crafts. The city has six public swimming pools, three public golf courses, numerous public tennis courts, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, a lighted bicycle motocross, a skateboard park, a 7-mile pedestrian/bicycle trail, playground areas, and six natural areas. Opened in the Fall of 2003, the USD 501 Hummer Sports Park provides a top-flight athletic facility for the school district and city. The city has approximately 200 religious facilities for all faiths and denominations.



Financial and Banking Institutions

There are several commercial banks in the city, including at least one national bank. There are two savings and loan associations in Topeka. Capitol Federal Savings and Loan Association has its headquarters in the city and branches throughout the state. It is the largest savings and loan in Kansas with total assets over \$8.5 billion and total deposits over \$4.2 billion. The Tenth District of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, serving Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska and Oklahoma, is headquartered in Topeka as well.

Bragging Rights

The City of Topeka was named a **FOUR STAR community** in the 6th Annual Quality of Life Quotient survey by *Expansion Management* magazine. A FOUR STAR rating puts Topeka in the top 40% of communities. The rating considers peace of mind; affordable decent housing; standard of living; traffic congestion and safety; air accessibility; adult education levels; adult employability; and continuing education as factors. The editors of this

Topeka's History and City Information

magazine define “quality of life” as the ability to afford the “American Dream,” –the ability to afford an average-priced home or rent a decent-sized apartment, to feel safe and relatively free from crime, to be able to send your children to good schools, to be able to spend your income as you see fit, and not be stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic. (*Expansion Management*, May 2005)

Employment

The major employers within Shawnee County are government, manufacturing, public utilities, trade (wholesale and retail), health care, and service-related industries. The distribution of employment for all the major industries is as follows:

Sector	2003	2004	2005	Change 2005
Construction	4,773	4,644	5,729	1,085
Manufacturing	6,660	7,378	8,468	1,090
Trade	14,503	14,078	15,119	1,041
Transportation	2,338	2,700	2,769	69
Information	3,827	2,682	2,798	116
Finance/Insurance /Real Estate	6,531	6,516	6,020	(496)
Services	18,992	15,237	17,551	2,314
Health Care	14,683	14,867	15,967	1,100
Government	22,397	22,309	26,270	3,961
All other	1,715	3,573	4,671	1,098
Totals	96,419	93,984	105,362	11,378

Source: Kansas Department of Human Resources.

Unemployment Rates

Comparative unemployment rates are provided in the following table:

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Topeka MSA	4.3%	4.8%	5.5%	6.1%	5.6%
Kansas	4.3%	5.7%	5.6%	5.5%	5.1%
United States	4.7%	5.8%	6.0%	5.5%	5.1%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Major Employers

The table below presents the largest employers with operations headquartered in the city:

Employer	Estimated Employees
State of Kansas	8,434
Stormont-Vail Regional Medical Center	3,100
Unified School District 501	2,270
Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Kansas	1,817
St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center	1,800
Payless Shoe Source	1,800
Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company	1,679
Washburn University	1,670
Topeka City Government	1,400
United States Government	1,231
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway	1,100
Josten's Printing and Publishing	1,040
Shawnee County Government	1,014
Colmery-O'Neil VA Hospital	935
WalMart Superstores	882
Hill's Pet Nutrition	832
Frito-Lay, Inc.	803
Dillon's Food	761
Westar Energy	748
Hallmark Cards	695

Source: Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce