

III. VISION, GOALS, & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A. VISION 2015

In 2015, a vibrant Historic North Topeka is envisioned with a strong North Crossings mixed-use entertainment district, a successful Great Overland Station Railroad Museum, and rediscovered riverfront for the public's enjoyment. Most of the historic building fronts along N. Kansas Avenue have been restored to their original grandeur, the sidewalks are full of patrons during the evening, and former residential homes have been adaptively re-used for businesses. Nearby residential areas seem fresh with new in-fill housing and homeowners, and former residents have returned to in-town living to retire in the renovated Curtis and Grant school buildings/grounds or raise their families. School enrollment and test scores are steady after reaching their all-time peak several years ago. The I-70 interchange has put Historic North Topeka on the "map" giving its residents, businesses, and visitors direct access and identity. No longer is the area's image viewed with skepticism and doubt – nobody knocks Historic North Topeka anymore because knocking it would be a knock against yourself. Renewed pride and commitment to the area shows in every Topekan.

B. GOALS & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Historic North Topeka Stakeholders Committee identified six primary ingredients to achieving this vision: land use, circulation, Great Overland Station District, housing, community character and design, and infrastructure. These “mini-visions” have been articulated into goal statements for each topic and are supported by “guiding principles”, or instructions, on achieving the goals.

1. Land Use

Goal

To establish a predictable pattern of land use that preserves the viability of residential neighborhoods and promotes a destination-oriented mixed-use center and riverfront

Guiding Principles

- ⇒ Identify single-family residential preserves and protect them from encroachment of incompatible land uses.
- ⇒ Concentrate commercial activity within neighborhood friendly nodes and limit strip development.
- ⇒ Condense industrial districts and lessen negative impacts industrial-type uses have upon stable residential, commercial, or “image” areas.
- ⇒ Enable the cohesive re-definition of the area surrounding the Great Overland Station for high-end mixed-use development.
- ⇒ Develop a system of quality-designed open space that links a variety of uses and users and takes advantage of the riverfront.
- ⇒ Encourage mobile home development as part of planned unit developments and outside of traditional neighborhood settings.

2. North Crossings

Goal

Develop an urban entertainment, dining, retail, cultural, and living district that utilizes assets of N. Kansas Avenue business district, Great Overland Station, riverfront, and historic buildings.

Guiding Principles

- Encourage a mixed-use urban environment that promotes “in-town” living while limiting creation or expansion of industrial uses.
- Restore historic building fronts and retain integrity of block frontage on N. Kansas.
- Install public streetscape improvements to compliment area’s character and entice investment.
- Promote a “walkable” setting and pedestrain-orientned development.
- Link the Great Overland Station to N. Kansas Avenue and area north of tracks.
- Recruit destination-oriented uses and plan for expansion of district beyond N. Kansas Avenue
- Range of uses should include youth and/or young adult attractions.
- Create a management entity or structure to oversee implementation of the entertainment district’s revitalization.

3. Circulation

Goal

To provide a safer, greater, and more efficient means of access to, from, and within Historic North Topeka that will connect a diverse mix of land users.

Guiding Principles

- Eliminate heavy truck traffic from the entertainment district and establish alternate heavy truck routes without unreasonably impacting residential areas.
- Alleviate circulation/safety conflicts due to freight trains in Focus Area.
- Improve routing of non-local traffic into Historic North Topeka and its entertainment district/riverfront.
- Develop a recreational trail system that is linked to a regional trail system.

- ⇒ Enhance circulation of pedestrian traffic within Focus Area.

4. Housing

Goal

Increase density of population and quality of housing options, both market-rate and affordable, that stabilizes the housing market.

Guiding Principles

- ⇒ Establish design standards for new in-fill housing and rehabilitation that compliments the historic architectural elements of the neighborhood and maintains affordability.
- ⇒ Upgrade housing and neighborhood conditions to retain and attract more homeowners.
- ⇒ Target larger strategic blocks for in-fill housing compatible with the neighborhood and concentrate rehabilitation improvements around them.
- ⇒ Promote adaptive re-use of commercial and school buildings for loft apartments.

5. Community Character Preservation

Goal

Communicate a notable image and unique experience of place within the Focus Area by building off of its physical and cultural heritage.

Guiding Principles

- ⇒ Ensure that new development is compatible in scale, materials, and character with surrounding buildings.

- ⇨ Maintain urban form and traditional neighborhood design principles.
- ⇨ Establish gateways, edges, and streetscapes that reflect a positive first image and compliments the area’s historic character.
- ⇨ Protect and promote historically significant structures, district, views, and places.
- ⇨ Provide an appropriate setting to “tell the story” of the area’s prominence in local history.

6. Infrastructure

Goal

Upgrade and maintain public infrastructure to ensure public confidence in the future of Historic North Topeka.

Guiding Principles

- ⇨ Maintain 100-year minimum flood protection from the Kansas River and its tributaries.
- ⇨ Ensure that proper drainage systems and urban infrastructure is in place.
- ⇨ Eliminate “red water” problems from area.