

# Topeka's History and City Information

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## 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 58.5 square miles. The estimated population of Shawnee County, where Topeka is located, for 2003 is 170,902. 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 MSA employing approximately 8,612 people.

## Background History

In 1840 two French-Canadian brothers, Louis and Joseph Papan, decided to settle on the north bank of the Kansas River. In two years they had established a profitable trading center and a ferryboat service across the shallow waters of the Kansas River. This site was destined to become Topeka, Kansas. The settlement had grown considerably by 1854 when a group of nine men decided to mark off an area to represent city boundaries. One of those men was Cyrus K. Holliday. Holliday was two years out of college when he and his new bride left their home in Pennsylvania in search of adventure. He is credited with founding the City of Topeka, as well as the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company. 1854 is recognized as the birth date of Topeka, but the city was not officially incorporated by the territorial legislature until 1857. The Wyandotte Constitution was adopted and Kansas entered the Union in January 1861. A short time later, an election was held under the provisions of the new constitution and Topeka was chosen as the capital of Kansas.

## Form of Government

Topeka has operated under three forms of government since it's founding, and will try a fourth beginning in April, 2005 (see box on the next page). 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.

Under this form of government, the City Council:

- 1) Provides for the performance of all duties imposed on the city.
- 2) Adopts codes, rules, and regulations to establish proper legislative authority, but shall not be charged with administrative functions.
- 3) Assists the Mayor in the hiring of the CAO.
- 4) Sets priorities for budget preparation and adopts the annual budget.
- 5) Overrides the Mayor's veto with a 2/3 vote of Council (6 votes).
- 6) Investigates affairs and conduct of city offices. May use subpoena powers.
- 7) Develops, with the Mayor's leadership, plans for economic growth, quality of life, and city stability.

Under the Topeka Mayor Council plan, the Mayor is elected at large and is the titular head of the city. Specific responsibilities assigned to the Mayor by Charter Ordinance include:

- 1) Presiding officer of the Council and governing officer of the city under military law.
- 2) Represents the city in official functions.
- 3) Recommends actions to the Council. The Mayor does not vote but has general veto power.
- 4) Provides leadership to the Council in matters of long range planning.
- 5) May call special meetings of the Council as required.
- 6) Employs the Chief Administrative Officer with the consent of the council. Supervises and evaluates performance of CAO.
- 7) Prepares and submits Annual Operating and Capital Budgets to Council.
- 8) Appoints members to non-statutory boards, committees or authorities.
- 9) Signs all contracts authorized by the Council.
- 10) Employs and terminates all officers and employees of the city.

The Chief Administrative Officer functions under the direction of the Mayor with those responsibilities the Mayor deems appropriate. At this time, the Mayor has delegated full administrative responsibility to the CAO. The Administration has been organized as outlined in the Organizational Chart included in this document. Financial operations are the responsibility of the Director of Financial Services, supported by the City Controller and the City Treasurer. The Controller organizes and supervises the accounting department, while the Treasurer handles cash deposits and investments. The internal controls are designed to maintain segregation between the activities of authorization, record keeping, and custody of funds.

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## City Manager Form of Government Comes to Topeka

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 will become effective after City elections in April, 2005. Topeka voters rejected city manager plans during elections in 1929, 1952, 1962, 1964 and 1969.

An appointed city manager will serve an indefinite term and be hired or fired by a majority vote of the council. The council will set policy while the city manager will run 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.

The Mayor will lose all administrative powers but still be elected to a four-year term by the city at-large. Mayoral duties will 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 will stay the same, with the nine members being elected in staggered terms every four years from geographic districts. The City Council will appoint an acting City Manager on April 12, 2005.

## 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, seven middle, and four high schools, as well as a modern vocational/technical school. The District serves an enrollment of approximately 13,655 students. There are nine 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 7,334, 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.

## 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. Rail service is provided by three carriers - Union Pacific, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, and St. Louis-Southwestern. A variety of specialized equipment and services is provided by all carriers. 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.

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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.

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## 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	2001	2002	2003	Change 2003
Construction	4,850	4,941	4,773	(168)
Manufacturing	7,571	6,940	6,660	(280)
Trade	15,642	15,781	14,503	(1,278)
Transportation	1,391	1,454	2,338	884
Information	4,335	3,984	3,827	(157)
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	7,112	6,767	6,531	(236)
Services	20,377	19,602	18,992	(610)
Health Care	15,015	14,685	14,683	(2)
Government	22,108	22,537	22,397	(140)
All other	2,187	1,739	1,715	(24)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100,588</b>	<b>98,430</b>	<b>96,419</b>	<b>(2,011)</b>

Source: Kansas Department of Human Resources.

## Unemployment Rates

Comparative unemployment rates are provided in the following table:

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Topeka MSA	3.1%	3.8%	4.0%	4.4%	4.9%
Kansas	3.0%	3.7%	4.3%	5.1%	5.4%
United States	4.2%	4.0%	4.7%	5.8%	6.0%

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	8,612
Stormont-Vail Regional Medical Center	3,100
Unified School District 501	2,441
Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Kansas	1,855
St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center	1,837
Payless Shoe Source	1,735
Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company	1,700
Washburn University	1,455
Topeka City Government	1,400
United States Government	1,246
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway	1,100
Josten's Printing and Publishing	1,060
Shawnee County Government	1,014
Colmery-O'Neil VA Hospital	885
WalMart Superstores	882
Frito-Lay, Inc.	849
Hill's Pet Nutrition	801
Dillon's Food	761
Hallmark Cards	754
Westar Energy	729

Source: Topeka Chamber of Commerce