

## Chapter Seven: Community Health

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### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Comprehensive planning originated in this country primarily out of a need to protect the health of citizens from such threats as urban congestion, unsafe housing and inadequate sanitation. Eliminating disease, overcrowding and incompatible uses were goals worthy of addressing through planning efforts. As time passed, and comprehensive planning evolved, infrastructure and other issues became its focus and health issues were relegated to public health officials. In recent years, subjects that affect the health of citizens have come full circle with the realization the built environment is critical to good health, as are public policies regarding land use and development. While congestion may not be an issue in Arkansas City, access to health providers, access to parks and open space, transportation, access to groceries, and an opportunity for exercise, are all parts of comprehensive planning that can improve health factors for citizens of Arkansas City.

Health starts where we live, work, learn and play. Our surroundings have a profound impact on our overall health, from exposure to toxins to the ability to safely walk or ride a bicycle. The built environment of our communities and neighborhoods plays an important role in providing opportunities for residents to live long, healthy lives. For example, people who live in walkable neighborhoods tend to get more physical activity, and those who live near supermarkets are more likely to eat healthy foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

### **7.2 VISION**

The City will act by influencing the built environment and setting policy regarding City programs and services to enhance the lives and health of Arkansas City residents. Reducing obesity levels, increasing participation in wellness activities, increasing public education of healthy lifestyle choices, reducing dependence on emergency room care as primary care, and creating good transportation links for walking and biking are recognized means of achieving this vision.

### **7.3 BACKGROUND**

#### ***Health Care Services***

Arkansas City is home to South Central Kansas Medical Center, which is located at 6401 Patterson Parkway. This new facility was opened in 2011, but the history of the institution dates back to 1905 when it was begun as Mercy Hospital. The facility sits on a large acreage, creating opportunity for expansion and development of a medical campus over time.

The new facility is a single-story building, with over 60,000 square foot of space to meet patient needs for emergency care, with 17 private patient rooms, 5 semi-private rooms, a negative pressure isolation room, and 4 intensive care beds. In addition, there is an obstetrics wing with family birthing suites, with a total of six beds available. There are two operating rooms, two treatment suites for outpatient/inpatient

surgery, as well as radiology and laboratory areas. The Center provides a number of vital services for the community from diabetes support and education, physical therapy, to respiratory therapy and more.

The land and buildings of the Medical Center are owned by the Public Building Commission created by the City. Financing for such came via a 10-year 1/2¢ citywide sales tax which commenced in 2009. The land and buildings are leased to the South Central Kansas Health Foundation. The city manager and a city commissioner are ex officio members of the Foundation's board of directors.

A new facility that helps to bring health care to low income residents was established in 2015. The Community Health Center in Cowley County (CHCCC), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is the only designated Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Cowley County. It received its FQHC designation in 2015 as the culmination of over six years of grassroots efforts to bring a community health center to Cowley County. The next nearest health center is over 30 miles away, with a drive time of nearly one hour.

Westside Clinic, 221 W. 8th Avenue, Winfield, currently houses services and programs. This 5,000 sq. ft. facility houses nine exam rooms, a minor surgery room, a diagnostic laboratory, an X-ray suite, and a behavioral health counseling space. To further improve health care access, CHCCC seeks to establish a second FQHC clinic in Arkansas City.

The service area for CHCCC is Cowley County, Kansas. The target population is county residents with a household income less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. According to the US Census Bureau, the current population of Cowley County is 34,908, of whom 37.4% (Source: [kansashealthmatters.org](http://kansashealthmatters.org). Retrieved on September 15, 2021) have a household income of less than 200% FPL.

Access to health care and health care utilization is influenced by several factors, including but not limited to: health insurance coverage, availability of health care professionals, cost, geography, and cultural and linguistic accessibility.

CHCCC provides comprehensive, prevention-focused, and integrated primary health care to its target population. Services include but are not limited to well child-care, chronic disease screening, diagnosis and treatment, gynecological care, prenatal and postnatal care, oral health services, pharmacy, behavioral health, laboratory and radiology, health education, and eligibility assistance.

### ***Mental Health***

Mental health services are provided by the Four County Mental Health & Counseling Center, located at Strother Field, 22214 D Street, Winfield. The organization is quasi-governmental, as it is run by a local board of directors but funded with governmental funds as well as private donations and grants. The Center is licensed and has been providing psychiatric and substance abuse services for nearly forty-five years to Arkansas City residents and the region. Their staff has grown over the years, but now exceeds 90 persons, including licensed clinicians. The location in Strother Field, a mid-point, between Winfield and Arkansas City was selected to efficiently serve the regions clients with a new building that was constructed in 2007, with additional leased space nearby.

Services provided to the children, adults, couples and families include medication services, alcohol and substance abuse evaluation and treatment, emergency and crisis resources and intervention, and a large variety of support services through Children/Adult Community Based Services programs. CCMHCC also offers a day-school, cooperating with six regional school districts for this intensive day-treatment service. The area is also fortunate that the organization is home to the Transitions Foster Home Program, the only remaining foster care program sponsored by a community mental health center in Kansas. The Center also partners with Sumner County for the Children Crisis House in Winfield.

## City-Cowley County Health Department

Public health practice can be characterized as a multi-disciplinary approach that includes physicians, nurses, epidemiologists, dietitians, health educators and other professionals who assess common health measures to improve community health and the quality of life by providing interventions and promotion of healthy behaviors.

Local health departments provide a broad range of services including disease surveillance and investigation, immunizations, emergency preparedness, maternal and infant health programs, health promotion and prevention programs, and environmental health services including school and childcare facility inspections.

In 1946 the Cowley County Board of County Commissioners and the Governing Bodies of the cities of Arkansas City and Winfield created the joint City-Cowley County Health Department governed by a local Board of Health.

The Department **vision** is for Cowley County residents to enjoy healthy lives and exercise personal responsibility for their health and the health of their families.

The **mission** of the Department is to promote excellent health, prevent disease, and to protect the environment to benefit all our citizens.

The provision of public health service is focused on population based, community driven interventions. The local health agency provides some individual services as a safety net for those who would not otherwise receive care. The services rendered by the Department are preventative interventions that have been proven to have a direct impact on decreasing the medical costs associated with acute and chronic diseases. This is accomplished by being a well-financed modern public health organization capable of implementing its mission on behalf of the communities it serves.

The ten (10) essential services of public health are: (1) monitor the health of the community; (2) diagnose and investigate disease; (3) inform, educate and empower people; (4) mobilize community partnerships; (5) develop policies; (6) enforce laws and regulations; (7) link to and provide health services; (8) assure a competent workforce; (9) evaluate quality; and (10) research for new insights.

The City-Cowley County Health Department is recognized as a valued partner in public health policy development.

### 7.4 COMMUNITY HEALTH AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

**Introduction.** The built environment -- where we live, work, learn, and play -- impacts our health. The following paragraphs summarize the interplay between the subjects of this Plan and community health.

**Healthy Food.** Eating healthy foods lowers the risk of becoming overweight or obese, key risk factors for chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Peoples' eating choices are strongly influenced by the food options available to them. For example, living near stores that sell healthy foods influences health. The closer one lives to a grocery store, the easier it is to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables. Proximity to healthy food is associated with greater consumption of healthy



food, and with decreased rates of obesity. Living near sources of unhealthy food can lead to an increased risk for obesity and chronic diseases. When fast food restaurants and convenience stores are more abundant, closer, and cheaper than grocery stores and produce stands, people are less likely and less able to maintain a healthful diet.

Local food production and direct sales increase options for accessing healthy food. Creating new opportunities for farmers markets and produce stands are ways to expand access to healthy food.

**Housing.** There are three housing-related factors that relate directly to community health. These are housing that is unaffordable, unhealthy, or inadequate.

- Unaffordable Housing: When unaffordable housing is the only choice available, people are forced to make trade-offs that are associated with poor health, obesity and other chronic diseases. When too large a percentage of income goes to cover rent or mortgages, residents may be unable to afford medical care for themselves or their families. Similarly, they may have to rely on inexpensive foods that contribute to obesity, live in over-crowded conditions that may spread infectious diseases, or suffer from poor mental health. Traditionally, housing is considered affordable if the cost of rent and utilities does not exceed 30% of gross household income.
- Inadequate Housing: *Inadequate housing* is housing that is structurally deficient, or having problems such as frayed wiring, lack of plumbing, or narrow stairs without a protective banister.
- Unhealthy Housing: *Unhealthy housing* is housing of an age or condition that results in problems such as pest-infested carpeting, indoor mold, or flaking lead paint.

Residents need access to affordable housing that offers the benefits of stability and reduced stress, which translate into reduced risk for chronic disease. Housing should not place an undue financial burden on residents that limits or eliminates resources devoted to self-care and the care of their families. Health is promoted when housing is located near parks, healthy foods, and walkable destinations.

**Transportation and Land Use.** Creating new opportunities to be active as part of daily life can help in reducing obesity, and "active transportation" such as walking, and cycling offers opportunities for exercise. Like all forms of transportation, the ability to benefit from active transportation is intimately tied to the arrangement of land uses in the community and the transportation infrastructure.

Built environments that provide opportunities for physical activity lower the risk of obesity. Neighborhoods with walkable destinations allow residents to get physical activity as part of their everyday routine. Density and a mix of land uses promote active transportation by bringing destinations closer together. For example, a mix of land uses can result in destinations such as restaurants and retail shops to be within walking distance of residents. Buildings that come right up to the sidewalk with ground-level windows and entrances encourage walking, as do amenities such as street trees, benches, and lighting. Streets are more comfortable for pedestrians when blocks, buildings, or vegetation provide a sense of enclosure. A well-connected street network makes bicycling and walking easier and safer. Auto-dependent development reinforces sedentary lifestyles, and spending time driving is associated with a higher likelihood of obesity.

The availability of primary care has a role in preserving good health and preventing illnesses and hospitalizations. Health care facility locations that allow people to use active transportation have the added health benefit of promoting physical activity.

**Economic Development.** Higher incomes are associated with better health. Income is a proven predictor of overall health, and each step up the economic ladder equates to better health. This is indicative not only of better access to health care, but also a greater capacity to engage in healthy behaviors. Employment influences chronic stress and income. Frequent or long-term stress takes a toll on health, and employment is a major influence on stress.

Compact, walkable development that creates vibrant neighborhoods can attract companies and skilled workers than can increase economic opportunity.

Citizens benefit from access to high quality, primary, secondary and higher education and stable employment opportunities that offer living wages. Providing these opportunities requires the community to attract highly skilled workers and create vibrant, attractive places to live, work, and play. A strong local economy helps create opportunities for education and employment.

**Parks and Recreation.** Being physically active reduces the risk of many diseases and improves wellbeing. Access to parks increases the likelihood of physical activity. The number of parks nearby, their size, and their features or amenities can all influence the amount of physical activity people achieve. People who live close to parks are more likely to use them and be physically active. Multi-use trails help people meet physical activity needs for both recreation and transportation purposes. Physical activity in parks is affected by park safety and maintenance. Investments in parks are maximized when people feel safe and comfortable using them for exercise.



Contact with nature can also reduce stress and have positive impacts on mental health. Contact with nature can decrease symptoms of attention deficit disorder. Parks and open space are a way for residents to make contact with nature, and also offer a public gathering space to interact with neighbors and others in the community.

**Safety and Social Connections.** Neighborhoods can undermine a sense of safety if they have characteristics such as narrow sidewalks, dead-end streets and alleys, high speed limits, or the absence of crosswalks. People who perceive their neighborhood as unsafe are less likely to go for

walks or use public parks. Adverse health outcomes associated with lack of safety include obesity, chronic stress, heart disease, and poor mental health.

A high degree of social cohesion is a strong predictor of lower rates of violence. Among middle school youth, positive connections to school and social groups is associated with better mental health, less risk of smoking, less risk of marijuana use, and higher graduation rates. In adults, strong social connections can help reduce stress, assist in coping, improve access to material support such as transportation or information, and improve mental health. Social connections are influenced by features of the built environment that provide opportunities for interaction, such as parks, shops, or front porches. The lack of a social network is associated with higher rates of morbidity and mortality, depression, and cognitive decline. Community centers, parks, libraries and other meeting places provide a social space separate from home and work and play an important role in enhancing social connectedness and a sense of community.

## **7.5 COWLEY COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The Federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act requires tax-exempt hospitals to complete a Community Health Needs Assessment every three years. The law requires the Assessment include input from persons having public health knowledge or expertise along with persons representing the broad interest of the community. The Assessment is to identify community needs and adopt a strategy to address those needs.

Creating healthy communities requires a high level of mutual understanding and collaboration among community leaders.

Area stakeholders held a community conversation to review, discuss and prioritize health delivery. Top priorities identified include Behavioral/Mental Health, Poverty, Drug/Substance Abuse and Suicide. Strengths included Partnerships/Coalitions, Clinical Providers, Specialty Services and Access to Exercise and Fitness. According to the 2021 Robert Wood's Cowley County Health Rankings, Cowley County was ranked 94<sup>th</sup> in Health Outcomes, 84<sup>th</sup> in Health Factors, and 63<sup>rd</sup> in Physical Environmental Quality out of the 105 Kansas Counties. A full copy of the Health Needs Assessment is available on the Health Department's website. Each subsequent plan will also be added as they are completed.

## **7.6 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR TO THE ECONOMY OF COWLEY COUNTY**

In December 2010 Kansas Rural Health Works published its report on the "Kansas Rural Health Options Project." Following are excerpts from the introduction and summary of that report:

### **The Economics of Rural Health Care**

The organization and delivery of health care services have undergone rapid evolution in recent years. For many Americans, the cost of services and access to care are important issues. This certainly is true in many rural areas where communities have struggled to maintain affordable, quality health care systems. As economic forces and technical advances continue to change health care, it is more important than ever for rural community leaders and health care providers to work together to ensure affordable, sustainable health care systems.

### **The Economic Contribution of the Health Care Sector in Cowley County, Kansas**

The rapidly changing delivery of health services in rural counties has the potential to greatly impact the availability of health care services in the future. These changes include:

- Insufficient Medicare and Medicaid payments to hospitals and providers may force a reduction in the provision of health care services.
- Although Kansas rural health networks are already fairly strong, creation of provider networks may substantially change the delivery of, and access to, local health care services.
- Use of telemedicine could increase access to primary, consultative and specialty health care services at the county level.
- Development of critical access hospitals could help health care services remain in rural counties. Kansas currently has over 80 critical access hospitals.



As a result, the health care sector can have a large impact on the local economy. All of these changes make it imperative that decision makers in Cowley County become proactive in maintaining high quality local health care services.

Health care facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes provide jobs and income to people in the community. As these employees spend their income in the community, a ripple spreads throughout the economy, creating additional jobs and income in other economic sectors.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The Health Services sector of Cowley County, Kansas, plays a large role in the area's economy. Health Services represents one of the largest employers in the area and also serves as one of the largest contributors to income. Additionally, the health sector has indirect impacts on the local economy, creating additional jobs and income in other sectors. The health sector also contributes substantially to retail sales in the region.

While the estimates of economic impact are themselves substantial, they are only a partial accounting of the benefits to the county. Health care industries in rural counties help to preserve the population base, invigorating the communities and school systems. Similarly, many hospitals and nursing care facilities have active community outreach programs that enhance community services and the quality of life for community residents.

A vigorous and sustainable health care system is essential not only for the health and welfare of community residents, but to enhance economic opportunity as well. Health-related sectors are among the fastest growing in economy. Given demographic trends, this growth is likely to continue. The attraction and retention of new business and retirees also depends on access to adequate health care services.

The strategic health planning process helps local communities identify their health care needs; examine the social, economic, and political realities affecting the local delivery of health care; determine what is wanted and what realistically can be achieved to meet their identified health care needs; and develop and mobilize an action plan based on their analysis and planning.

For the strategic health planning process to be most effective, it must be based in the community and driven by the community. This process is about local people solving local problems. The local hospital and health care providers should have input into the decision-making and should support and trust the outcomes, but the community must provide the energy and commitment.

## **7.7 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Since the 2013 Plan, a community health center for low income was successfully established in the County. A Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) was established in Winfield. The Community Health Center in Cowley County has plans to now also establish an additional health center in Arkansas City.

RISE Cowley was established which helps to promote healthy eating, active living and tobacco and vaping cessation throughout the county. The City also received a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas Pathways to a Healthy Kansas program. The grant is being used to conduct a transportation plan that will in part help to develop more active living through trails, and better pedestrian connectivity throughout the City to help with active living.

## **7.8 GOALS AND ACTIONS**

In light of the recent Coronavirus pandemic, community health has come to the forefront. The pandemic has changed the healthcare picture forever. It brought to the forefront issues on how public health is delivered to the community. Now, more than ever, the City must work to promote public health by promoting our local health institutions and to ensure that public health is looked at in all planning decisions.

Goals or actions are organized around priorities. Generally, where specific actions build on a goal, they will be listed immediately following the goal. Some goals may not have specific actions. Short term priority means it should be achieved within the next 5 years. Medium term priority means it should be achieved within 5-10 years. A long-term priority means it should be achieved in 10 or more years.



GOAL/ACTION	PRIORITY		
	Short	Medium	Long
<b>Support Efforts to Improve Access to Health Services.</b>			
Improve the public's awareness of available health services.	X		
Encourage higher rates of utilization of basic preventative care.	X		
Encourage providers to offer services at times, and days that allow people to utilize health care services.	X		
Encourage and support Cowley First in its efforts, alongside the South Central Kansas Medical Center and William Newton Memorial Hospital, to study ways to achieve the most cost-effective provision of comprehensive health services to residents of Cowley County.	X		
Assist the Community Health Center in Cowley County (CHCCC) in establishing a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Arkansas City for low income residents.	X		
Work with providers to enhance the availability of childcare and work with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to streamline childcare licensing regulations and policies.	X		
Look at public health in all planning decisions	X		
<b>Encourage a positive view of mental and behavioral health that will encourage citizens to respond to their mental health needs</b>	<b>Short</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Long</b>
Improve the public's awareness of the availability of mental health services.	X		
Encourage mental health providers and primary care providers to implement programs to reduce the stigma of mental illness.	X		
Avoid the inappropriate incarceration of persons with mental health issues and encourage Cowley County to do the same.	X		
Partner with existing organizations to help prevent suicide and other harmful behaviors.	X		
<b>Increase the opportunities for physical activities for citizens of all ages and abilities</b>	<b>Short</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Long</b>
Maintain and enhance parks and recreation facilities and services consistent with the goals and actions in Chapter 5.		X	
Increase access to parks, recreation and open space.		X	
Provide recreation opportunities for residents of all ages, abilities and economic and cultural backgrounds.	X		
Provide recreation facilities and services needed by various population groups, such as specific age groups or people with special physical requirements.	X		
Whenever possible, consider the impact of public infrastructure decisions, and private development requiring City approval, upon the ability of citizens to walk or bike to their destinations, including parks.	X		
Encourage public and private schools, and childcare providers, to provide ample opportunities for physical activity.	X		
Establish areas for physical activity at City offices and encourage similar actions by other employers.	X		

<b>Encourage easy access to healthy foods</b>	<b>Short</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Long</b>
Encourage the location of food retailers throughout the community	X		
Support and promote farmers markets, produce stands and community gardens.	X		
Consider creating a land use category for urban agriculture, distinguishing it from rural agriculture.	X		
Encourage healthy foods in city-owned facilities and at City-sponsored events.	X		
<b>Promote Healthy Transportation</b>	<b>Short</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Long</b>
Increase the City's walking and bikeway network.	X		
Increase sidewalk connectivity and safe crossings.	X		
Implement traffic calming on neighborhood streets where appropriate.	X		
<b>Continue working with the city's partners to create a stronger local economy</b>	<b>Short</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Long</b>
Mitigate the health impacts of poverty by encouraging employment opportunities for those in poverty.	X		
When recruiting businesses, place significance on businesses that provide living wage jobs.	X		
Help educational institutions provide students with the support needed for educational success.	X		
Work with educational institutions and businesses to connect educational achievement with employment opportunities in the community	X		