

## **Chapter Five: Parks, Recreation and Natural and Historical Resources**

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### **5.1      INTRODUCTION**

Park areas and recreational programs serve the citizens of Arkansas City in multiple ways. For the individual, parks, open space and recreation programs provide the opportunity to improve physical and mental health, and the opportunity for relationships with others that enhance social well-being. Parks and recreation facilities and programs should be central to a community's pride in itself, serve citizens of all ages, give choice to citizens for leisure activities, enhance the environment, and promote tourism and economic development.

The City owns a number of parks providing open space and recreational opportunities. The parks have baseball and softball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and a variety of playground equipment. Walking, running, hiking and biking takes place over the trails and in the parks. Recreational programming is also available, particularly for youth sports, which is important for team activity, skill building, and confidence.

### **5.2      VISION**

The City, working alongside the Recreation Commission, Cowley College and USD 470, will establish, preserve and manage public parks, open space and recreational facilities, and will provide a range of recreational and cultural opportunities to benefit and enrich the quality of life of current and future residents of all ages.

## **5.3 BACKGROUND**

### **A. 2003 Plan Recommendations Relating to Parks, Recreation and Natural and Historic Resources**

#### **Key Findings for Parks & Natural Resources**

- Arkansas City has approximately 320 acres of parks, or 30 acres per 1000 population. This compares favorably with national park standards. Much of the park acreage is in riverside open space areas.
- Development from a natural resources standpoint should occur in the Osage Prairies, including areas north of the City, east of the Walnut River, and south of the Arkansas River.
- Because of the difficulty of extending city services across the Arkansas River, the two most environmentally sound areas for urban expansion are the areas north and northwest of Arkansas City, and the areas between the Walnut River floodplain and C-4 school.
- Development should be avoided in the floodplains where there is insufficient levee protection. Levee system expansion beyond that now being constructed by the Corp of Engineers to enhance existing levees should be avoided for the protection of wetland and riparian areas that serve as wildlife habitats and natural flood absorbers.

#### **Recommendations**

- Develop and maintain a park and open space system to serve the needs of all the citizens of Arkansas City, in particular enhancing park and public places.
- Develop a long range plan for development of the Walnut River and Arkansas River Greenway around the City which would include development of a system of connecting hike/bike trails.
- Encourage the preservation of the Walnut River floodplain for agricultural or natural areas to enhance the character of the Highway 77 bypass.

## **5.4 SURVEY RESPONSES AND COMMENTS**

When asked for their input in 2013 in the community survey conducted for this comprehensive plan, citizens responded they are generally satisfied with the public park and recreation facilities and programs. The complete survey, and responses, are found at Appendix A.

A large majority of respondents were satisfied with the maintenance of (71%) and the number of (72%) city parks, walking and biking trails (64%), and with the

swimming pool (53%). They were somewhat less satisfied with the tennis courts, soccer fields, and softball fields, as shown below.

|  | Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Neutral | Satisfied | Very Satisfied | TOTAL RESPONSES |
|--|-------------------|--------------|---------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|
| A. Maintenance of City parks                                   | 2%                | 4%           | 23%     | 51%       | 20%            | 682             |
| B. The number of City parks                                    | 2%                | 3%           | 23%     | 51%       | 21%            | 685             |
| C. Walking and biking trails in the City                       | 2%                | 6%           | 29%     | 39%       | 25%            | 704             |
| D. City swimming pool  | 3%                | 5%           | 40%     | 38%       | 15%            | 706             |
| E. Tennis courts   | 2%                | 3%           | 47%     | 33%       | 15%            | 706             |
| F. Number of soccer fields                                     | 2%                | 4%           | 58%     | 24%       | 11%            | 657             |
| G. Number of softball fields                                   | 2%                | 1%           | 48%     | 33%       | 16%            | 697             |
| H. Youth athletic programs                                     | 3%                | 5%           | 35%     | 40%       | 17%            | 700             |
| I. Adult athletic programs                                     | 3%                | 8%           | 50%     | 31%       | 9%             | 703             |
| J. Other recreation programs, such as classes & special events | 4%                | 10%          | 40%     | 35%       | 12%            | 704             |
| K. Cultural programs   | 4%                | 11%          | 43%     | 31%       | 10%            | 646             |
| L. City community centers                                      | 3%                | 8%           | 43%     | 35%       | 11%            | 699             |
| M. Arkalalah Fall Festival                                     | 3%                | 5%           | 15%     | 41%       | 36%            | 719             |

Satisfaction with some of the recreational programs was less clear, though youth programs had a higher satisfaction rate at 57% satisfied or very satisfied, than adult at 40%, and 50% taking a neutral position. It is likely that many respondents who do not participate in or utilize those particular programs and facilities responded as "neutral".

When asked if they supported extension of the hike and bike trail on the west side of the City, 54% said that they do support that extension:

**Hiking and Biking Trails.** Would you support an extension of the hike and bike trail on the west side of the City, south of Chestnut, to improve safety for travel to the Cowley College Sports Complex?

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Yes             | <b>54%</b> |
| No              | 46%        |
| TOTAL RESPONSES | 658        |

As development of wetlands has been an issue of discussion in recent years, there were several questions in the 2013 survey posed about possible City action relating to wetlands. The responses to those survey questions are as follows:

**Wetlands.**

**A. If it were likely to result in savings for taxpayers, would you support the City, in partnership with others, developing a wetland area near**

**the Arkansas River to provide wildlife habitat and destination point on the hike and bike trail?**

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Yes             | <b>76%</b> |
| No              | 24%        |
| TOTAL RESPONSES | 672        |

**B. Would you support such a wetland area becoming a City park?**

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Yes             | <b>65%</b> |
| No              | 35%        |
| TOTAL RESPONSES | 654        |

**C. Would you like to see the City's historic canal carry water supplied by a wetland?**

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Yes             | <b>62%</b> |
| No              | 38%        |
| TOTAL RESPONSES | 654        |

**Survey Comments**

The 2013 community survey asked for citizen comments on the present condition of the City, and for concerns and hopes for the future. Many of those comments are set out in Appendix B. Some of the comments relating to parks and recreation are as follows:

- *We love Arkalalah, its local culture, people love it, and it brings the downtown to life. We need to work out how to bring that kind of life and energy to our city in smaller ways year round.*
- *I think that we have enough sports fields of any kind. They are an eye sore. We have more than enough trails. What a waste of money. There are miles of streets that people can walk.*
- *During these tough economic times it is important to have a very conservative approach. It is necessary to take care of city services, police, fire, water, streets, sanitation and similar necessary items. Parks, hike & bike trails, arts and other cultural expenditures should be cut back until times improve.*
- *City also needs to invest in social and human capital -- Big Brothers, Habitat, arts, historic preservation. A major recreational project, like a river walk, redevelopment of park at bridge on south end of town.*
- *The city has a huge perception problem. Ark City looks less favorable to visitors and residents alike due to the condition of some of the parks.*

*Boarded up structures, play equipment in poor repair (the park north of the river on Lincoln Ave.), parks with almost nothing there (downtown), and continually dirty restrooms (almost all of them) are a big problem.*

- *We do appreciate the walking trail. The city does a good job maintaining it and we enjoy it greatly!*
- *Enjoy walking at Veterans Lake walking path. Good asset.*
- *Suggest city have an arborist to help maintain the health and beauty of the trees in this town. Nice to have racquetball courts for adults in this community.*



## 5.5 PARKS AND OUTDOOR SPACES



Some parks serve as neighborhood areas, some are destination locations or community parks due to their amenities, and then there are regional recreation areas that serve a region and its population. Arkansas City has a wide range of neighborhood parks and community parks. In addition, other public spaces exist, for recreation or team sports, that are owned or operated

by USD 490 and Cowley College. There are also nearby reservoirs. The City's breadth of parks is highlighted here, but a complete listing of parks is found later in this chapter along with Map 5-1.

The community is fortunate to have a large number of **neighborhood parks**. They include the downtown seating area at Ben Givens City Center Park at 0.2 acres and go up in size to Mills Park at 4.7 acres, located on Highland Drive. Many of the neighborhood parks have picnic areas, benches, playgrounds, backstops, basketball courts, and some have areas for football, horseshoe or tennis. Catalpa hosts the community vegetable garden. Water features are found at both river access areas as well as several local lakes, including Veteran's Lake, which also has a trail.

**Paris Park**, Arkansas City's central park complex, is almost 9 acres with three playground areas, an aquatic center (second largest in the State of Kansas), tennis courts, a baseball backstop, football fields, shelters and



**Comment [JW1]:** Is this accurate?

an adjacent skateboard park. This park is home to an annual car show. In 2021, a Facility Evaluation Report was conducted by Lamp Rynearson which uncovered significant issues with the Paris Park Pool. The community will need to decide the past course of action to move forward on repairing the pool, replacing the pool or relocating it.

**Wilson Park** hosts many events in the community, including National Day of Prayer, Farmers Market and Art in the Park. The rotunda is an icon for Arkansas City and is over 100 years old. Two playgrounds, picnic areas, tennis courts and other facilities make Wilson an important park for the community, at about 4.7 acres. Serving as a gateway to the downtown is the locomotive that abuts Summit Street. It reflects the importance of railroads to Arkansas City's history, and also evokes memories of childhood play and adventure. The newest amenity to the park is a swing which can be utilized by those in wheelchairs.

The largest regional open space maintained by the City is the **Prairie Passage Recreation Area**, which is 165 acres. The natural trail system (not improved with rock or asphalt) is maintained by the Parks Division, and the ponds on the grounds and tree cover make it a very enjoyable way to spend an afternoon. Other regional parks include Cherokee Park and Walnut Park.

The **USD 470 Sports Complex**, approximately 33 acres in size, is adjacent to the Arkansas City High School, on North 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The complex has fields for baseball and



softball, including one that is used for college level play. Soccer is also played on the fields, both by the high school and the recreation program.

The City operates a nine-hole golf course located at 3202 N. Summit called **Spring Hill Golf Course**. The course was built in 1928 and is very challenging with a hilly terrain; one hole has a 70 foot elevation from tee to green. In addition, an eighteen-hole course is located at 8731 US Highway 166. That course is operated privately by Great Life Golf & Fitness as a private club with additional amenities including 24-hour/7 day a week fitness facilities, swimming pool and driving range.

Other community amenities include the skate park, ponds and lakes for fishing or camping, and several community building facilities. The Middle School track area is also used by the community a great deal for exercise outdoors. The Cleo Graves Hogan recreational building is located in Ranney Park and used for

parties and other gatherings. The Agri-Business building (~~pink palace~~) at Paris Park is also frequently used for community meetings and events.

### Trails, Pedestrian and Bicycle Paths

Trails provide healthy and recreational alternatives to vehicular transportation. Trails are often established in urban areas to connect major public services, parks and sporting areas, and schools. Arkansas City has developed several trails including the Poplar Walking Trail, Hike/Bike Trail and the Kneebler Pond Walking Trail. The Poplar Walking Trail, a 1½ mile-long asphalt path, ~~will have has~~ a spectacular view of the native prairie area being developed within the boundary of the trail. ~~The concept was the creation of the City's Beautification and Tree Advisory Board with installation scheduled for 2013.~~



The Hike/Bike Trail was opened in 2011 and financed with Kansas Department of Transportation enhancement funding. The 2.5 mile trail begins adjacent to Paris Park, travels west ~~in a former railroad corridor along the Mill Canal~~, then south on the levee system for the Arkansas River, which is the southwestern edge of the community, and back east ~~to U.S. Highway 77 to the Charles Dow Sports Complex~~. The total Hike/Bike Trail is anticipated to be nearly seven miles when remaining lengths are constructed. Those lengths go northeast again, often along a levee, but this time the Walnut River levee, with termination at the Poplar Walking Trail area. An additional possible pedestrian and bicycle connection would be through the middle of the community, through a combination of sidewalks, bike lanes, and/or trail from Cowley College to its new sports complex in southern Arkansas City. This was the project that 2013 survey respondents indicated support for and could be the next addition to the trail system. Lastly, for hiking and biking enthusiasts who enjoy a less improved amenity, the Prairie Passage Recreation Area is home to the Kneebler Pond Walking trail, five miles of natural surface in a wooded area with a large pond, on the eastern edge of the community.

### Future Needs

Some possible recreation improvements for the future include improvements to the tennis courts and additional soccer fields. ~~In addition, the community does not have a disc golf course, an activity especially popular among eighteen to mid-twenty year olds.~~ Another feature that could be considered is a dog park, an enclosed area for dogs and dog owners to train, exercise and socialize. Lastly, increasing playground amenities, or a dedicated area in a central park, for toddler play is desired.

**Comment [JW2]:** I think using the language from our various grant applications for trails will be better here. This information is a bit dated.

As the community plans for the future, attention should continue to be given to ensure good connections to parks and recreation, social and education institutions as well as shopping and major employment areas. In addition, when building roads or bridges, non-motorized needs must be considered.

|                                    | Acreage | Shelter | Restrooms | Tables & Picnic | Playground | Basketball | Baseball | Softball | Football | Tennis | Pool | Boat Ramp | Camping | Fishing |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------------|------------|------------|----------|----------|----------|--------|------|-----------|---------|---------|
| <b>Neighborhood Parks</b>          |         |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Ben Givens City Center Park        | 0.2     |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Brock Park                         | 0.8     | X       |           | X               |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Carver Park                        | 5.0     |         |           |                 |            |            | X        |          | X        |        |      |           |         |         |
| Catalpa Park                       | 0.5     |         |           | X               | X          |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Lovie Watson Park                  | 1.3     | X       |           | X               | X          | X          |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Mills Park                         | 4.7     |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Pershing Park                      | 1.7     | X       |           | X               | X          | X          | X        |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Ranney Park                        | 1.0     |         |           | X               | X          | X          | X        |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Robert Cox Memorial Park           | 1.7     |         |           | X               | X          |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Winton Park                        | 0.9     | X       |           | X               | X          | X          | X        |          |          | X      |      |           |         |         |
| <b>Community Parks</b>             |         |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Cherokee Park                      | 3.1     |         |           | X               |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Paris Park                         | 6.0     | X       |           |                 | X(3)       |            |          |          |          |        | X    |           |         |         |
| Prairie Passage Recreation Area    | 165.0   |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Walnut Park                        | 12.6    |         | X         | X               | X          |            |          |          |          |        | X    | X         | X       | X       |
| Wilson Park                        | 4.7     | X       | X         | X               | X          |            |          |          |          | X      |      |           |         |         |
| <b>Other Community Recreation</b>  |         |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Skate Park                         | 0.2     |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Paris Park Pool                    | 2.9     |         |           | X               | X          |            |          |          |          | X      |      |           |         |         |
| Veterans Memorial Lake             | 80.0    | X       |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        | X    |           |         |         |
| High School Sports Fields          | 33.0    |         |           |                 |            |            | X        | X        |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Middle School Sports Complex       | 18.0    |         |           |                 |            |            |          | X        |          | X      |      |           |         |         |
| CCCC Softball Fields               | 2.2     |         |           |                 |            |            |          | X        |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| CCCC Track/Field/City Ballpark     | 28.0    |         |           |                 |            |            | X        |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Newman Park (RV Sites)             | 5.0     | X       | X         | X               | X          |            |          |          |          |        | X    |           |         |         |
| Spring Hill Golf Course            | 10.0    |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Lincoln Street Practice Field      | 4.0     |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          | X        |        |      |           |         |         |
| Cleo Graves Hogan - Rec Bldg       |         |         | X         | X               |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| <b>Regional Parks</b>              |         |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Chaplin Nature Center              |         |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Cowley County State Lake           | 198     |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Kaw Wildlife Area                  | 4,341   |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Lions Park                         | 10.0    |         | X         | X               |            |            | X        |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Winfield Lk/Timber Creek Reservoir | 19,876  |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| <b>Walking Trails</b>              |         |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| <b>Length</b>                      |         |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Hike-Bike Trail                    | 2.5 mi. |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Kneebler Pond Trail                | 5 mi.   |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      | X         |         |         |
| Poplar Hike-Bike Trail             | 1 mi.   |         |           |                 |            |            |          |          |          |        |      |           |         |         |
| Veterans Memorial Lake Trail       | 7/8 mi. |         |           | X               |            |            |          |          |          |        |      | X         |         |         |

## 5.6 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The city's recreational program, overseen by the Arkansas City Recreation Commission Board, serves residents of all ages and provides many types of activities. The Recreation Commission is a joint city/school entity, with two members appointed by the City, two by the School Board, and one at-large. The Recreation Center is located downtown at 225 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue where it has its offices as well as a fitness center. The fitness center is a membership center and offers weight/strength building, cardiovascular equipment and sauna.

The Recreation Commission manages the Aquatic Center at the high school and the outdoor pool in Paris Park, providing lap swimming, water aerobics, recreational swimming and swim lessons.

Sports programs for local youth include baseball, softball, gymnastics, basketball, football, wrestling, soccer, tennis, swimming, volleyball, and golf. Other youth offerings include zumba, martial arts, cheerleading, fishing, dances and gaming.

Adult offerings include classes, activities and fitness. Included in these are bingo, weight loss and exercise, zumba, martial arts and horseshoes. Sports include softball, volleyball, golf and tennis.

Fitness equipment is also available at Cowley College to the public as a membership program at the Ben Cleveland Wellness Center. In addition, there are local private fitness centers, providing opportunities for aerobic and strength training. Private groups and individuals also provide dance, cheerleading, and club sports.

Water-related recreation opportunities within thirty minutes of Arkansas City include Winfield Lake, Cowley County State Lake, and Kaw Reservoir (Oklahoma). Among the activities available at these lakes and reservoirs are camping, fishing and boating.

Located east of Arkansas City is Camp Horizon, which is open to the public for camping, outdoor challenge course and mountain bike trails. Another favorite for leisure time is hunting which is also available in the area.

## **5.7 NATURAL RESOURCES**

Kaw Wildlife Area is one of two areas near Arkansas City preserving wildlife habitats. It is owned by the U.S. Corp of Engineers and managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The area is 4,341 acres of land and river, with about one quarter of it cultivated, and the balance in grasslands and riparian timber. A portion of the cultivated area is left standing for wildlife food and cover. Some hunting is allowed.

The Chaplin Nature Center is the second wildlife area located several miles west of the City. It is owned by the Wichita Audubon Society. There are a number of hiking trails, stretching over five miles and providing multiple opportunities for exploration. There is a visitor center, with programs including a naturalist. This is a valuable means for exploring the bottomland timber and prairies, upland prairies, and the Arkansas River, allowing view of the many species of birds as well as the wide range of trees. The Center is an amenity to the local area as well as a tourist attraction for south central Kansas and north central Oklahoma.

Features that have long defined the community are the Arkansas and Walnut Rivers. They make possible activities that people enjoy, such as fishing, kayaking, boating, floating and hiking. However, they are also critical habitat for animal and plant life and essential to natural cleaning of stormwater and the air. Two wildlife habitat terms of note are wetlands and riparian areas, both found abundantly in the Arkansas City area. Riparian areas comprise the areas along the river banks and streams that feed them. Wetlands include marshes, ponds or other particularly moist areas that also are filled with animal and plant life.

The City's 2003 Comprehensive Plan covers in great detail natural habitats that should be protected. Those include the Arkansas River Corridor (essentially the floodplains associated with the river), the Walnut River Corridor (also floodplain), the Bolton Uplands (south of the confluence of the rivers), the Creswell Uplands (near C-4 school and land near Walnut River), and the Osage Prairies. The Prairie has the greatest potential for development that would have the least impact to the environment. A map showing these areas is included in this chapter as Map 1.

According to the 2004 USGS Lower Ark Model Report #5204, one key natural feature that serves Arkansas City is the Arkansas River Alluvial Aquifer, enabling a ready source of water resources, even in drought conditions. According to this report,

“Hydraulic properties of an aquifer provide important information in the evaluation of ground-water problems by giving an indication of well yield in a particular aquifer and by providing the necessary data for ground-water modeling. Hydraulic properties include estimates of hydraulic conductivity, transmissivity, storage coefficient, and specific yield. Under unconfined conditions, as is the case in the alluvial aquifer in the modeled area, the storage coefficient and the specific yield are virtually equal.”

In simple terms, the large alluvial aquifer provides a steady baseflow of water to the stream. While this provides security to the community for its future water needs, it also means the community must do what it can to ensure no harm occurs to the aquifer, a large area reaching north to Wichita, so water demands do not put too much strain on the aquifer. As the Wichita area has seen strong

growth over the years, with greater demand on water resources, this will be an area of concern, particularly in low precipitation years.

Floodplains have been regulated by the City since the early 1980s, with the most recent version adopted in August 2010. Flood areas are important to maintain, not only for protection of life and property, but also for animal habitat. There will be more discussion on the floodplains in Chapter Six.

## **5.8 HISTORICAL RESOURCES**

The following is an excerpt from a 1983 National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, describing the downtown area of Arkansas City:

The architectural expression of the buildings in the commercial area reflects the mood of the community at the time they were built. Three of the most prominent buildings in the district, the Gladstone Hotel (individually nominated to the National Register of Historic Places), the Syndicate Block and the First National Bank (now the Union State Bank) were designed along with some other buildings in the town by W.A. Ritchie and Co., a prominent architectural firm in southern Kansas. Brothers W.A. and W.J. Ritchie were the principals of this firm which for a time was headquartered in Winfield, Arkansas City and Wichita. The Ritchie buildings stand out as not only stylish but the most flamboyant in Arkansas City. The Gladstone had galleries of delicate cast iron work at each of its four stories; the First National Bank building has an unusual round corner tower with a bell shaped roof; the Syndicate Block has creative repeated arches of round, elliptical and horseshoe forms in walls embellished with corbels and red and black bricks.

The district consists of five main commercial blocks along Summit Street and two and a half blocks of Fifth Avenue in the vicinity of Summit Street. The boundaries were chosen to include the main commercial core of Arkansas City with their limits defined by the location of key or particularly significant buildings. Generally, the boundaries follow the property lines of the buildings facing onto Summit Street and Fifth Avenue with the exception of the west side of the 100 block of North Summit which has been eliminated from the district since most of the structures there do not contribute to the district. At the south end of the district, the west side of the 400 block of South Summit, except for the Syndicate Block, a key building, has been eliminated from the district.

There are many historic buildings and areas in Arkansas City. The most well-known are the following:

**Burford Theatre & Commercial Building**, 116110-118 S. Summit, was built in 1923 and was one of the homes of Mr. Newman before he built a store in 1917. In 1923, the building underwent major renovations to house a theatre that would occupy most of the block. The Burford company decided to "build the largest theater of any city of this size in the south west, only two downtown theaters in Kansas City and one in Wichita being larger". The theater proper was built on the alley running north and south, back of Highland Hall and the buildings then on the two lots south of Highland Hall. The lobby and shops had a fifty foot frontage on Summit Street, with an auditorium measuring 62x125 feet. The stage was built at thirty feet to the curtain and fifty feet high. The seating capacity was 1200, with 800 on the first level and 400 in the balcony. The front of the theater was constructed in tapestry brick trimmed in terra cotta. The Burford Theatre started off as a vaudeville theater. It boasted that Ginger Rogers appeared there prior to becoming a movie actor. Not too long after the theater opened, the "talkies" arrived and the theater was altered to house movies as opposed to plays. In November 1919, J.B. Burford and his associates purchased Highland Hall, the town's first opera house that was built in 1883, as an initial step toward their plan to build a moving picture palace. They also purchased the Isabella Block building next door, to the south of Highland Hall. The Saddle Rock Café had operated in the Isabella Block at 118 S. Summit St. since at least the early 1900s. The buildings were razed in 1924 for construction of the new Burford Theatre. It opened in September of that year and the opening represented an investment of \$300,000. The two-story Burford Theatre, connected to the adjacent Burford Commercial Building, has a total frontage of 125 feet. The theater was built as a venue for vaudeville shows, local artistic productions and movie events. Ginger Rogers performed on the Burford stage as part of a vaudeville act in the mid- to late 1930s. The Arkalalah coronation was held at the theater in the 1930s, the early years of the town's annual fall festival. Actress Janis Carter, who starred in the movie "Santa Fe," visited the theater in 1951 for the staging of the movie's premiere. The theater underwent several changes to its interior through the years. It closed in 2004, and then-owner B&B Theatres donated the building to the Arkansas City Area Arts Council. The council led a 12-year, \$7.5 million effort to restore the theater to its original 1920s look. Community volunteers, professional construction workers and a New York-based restoration firm worked long hours to restore the theater, which reopened in 2016. The prairie-style structure with Neoclassical decorative elements is a three-bay buff building with wreath and garland.



**Ireland Hall/Old Arkansas City High School** is located at 300 W. Central and was constructed in 1890. It is three stories, a rectangular Richardsonian Romanesque structure with basement. It was constructed of white Silverdale limestone set in red mortar. Because the mortar was not waterproofed pink streaks appeared due to

moisture and the stone absorbed the color, resulting over time in a pink color. Artistic features of lions' heads and dragons carved in stone, along with two massive chimneys and a clock tower, contribute to the spectacular appearance of this distinctive building. Ironically, clocks were never installed in the tower. It was constructed at a cost of \$38,000 and designed for 450 students. Used as a school until 1922, it was purchased and renamed by Cowley College in 1968. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. The first high school class, with 194 students, started on September 7, 1892, although the building was not completely finished until 1893. It remained in use as the high school until 1922, when a new high school was opened. Arkansas City's sixth-graders used the school until 1941.

After the last students left, the old high school was used by the USO during World War II, as a teen town, and also by the Red Cross.

By 1949, time had taken its toll and the school board was considering selling the old school. But interested persons suggested the building should be made available for the local junior college. A new chapter in the life of this old building began when Cowley County Community College acquired it in 1971. In 1974, the building was added to the National Register of Historic Places and declared a state landmark.

After the college secured funding for a renovation of the lower portion of the building, which was completed by the summer of 1982, "The Red School House" returned to its original mission of education. The building was officially dedicated on December 12, 1982, and named after W.H. "Pat" Ireland, a strong community supporter who served on the college's Board of Trustees for nearly 10 years. Today, Ireland Hall is home to Cowley College's Criminal Justice, Cosmetology and Institute of Lifetime Learning programs.

**Pilgrim Congregational Church** is located at 101 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. As described in the nomination form:

Constructed from 1891 to 1893, the Pilgrim Congregational Church is a Richardsonian Romanesque style, sandstone and limestone church located on the northwest corner of 3rd Street and Central Avenue in Arkansas City. The church is built upon an above grade, rock faced limestone foundation laid in regular courses. The rock faced sandstone walls are also laid in regular courses with contrasting limestone utilized for the door and window arches, sills, belt course, and sculpted stone. The multiple gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The five gable ends have parapets with metal caps and limestone cornices and scrolled returns. At the southeast corner of the church, a prominent bell tower extends seventy eight feet in height. There are two limestone chimneys. The Pilgrim Congregational Church is being nominated to the National Register for its architectural significance as a Richardsonian Romanesque style church.

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~~The structure was completed in 1893 at a cost of \$15,000.00. In 2001, the Church of the Nazarene, which had occupied the building since 1949, relocated to a new building and sold the structure to the City. The City undertook some cleaning and other repairs including the exterior sandstone and limestone walls, a new asphalt-shingled roof, metal parapet caps, and painted the interior. The building was added in 2005 to the National Register.~~

Construction of one of Arkansas City's most impressive historic buildings, the Pilgrim Congregational Church, began in 1891 and finished in 1893. It was completed just a few years after the old high school (now Ireland Hall), built in 1890. Both buildings are wonderful examples of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture, and both are built of cut Silverdale stone blocks with the Roman arches and towers typically found in this style.

The Congregational Church was one of Ark City's oldest churches. Several of Ark City's founding fathers, who originally came here from Emporia, were Congregationalists. Among them were A.A. Newman, Lyman Beecher Kellogg and Henry Brace Norton. (The latter two men were instrumental in securing and staffing the Kansas State Normal School in Emporia, now known as Emporia State University.)

The Congregational Church in Ark City had grown to 154 members by 1892. During the 1870s, its early members joined members of other denominations and met in several different locations in town. In 1887, the Reverend D.D. DeLong, a popular minister, was secured to unite the people and the church was incorporated. A building committee was formed in 1889.

Built of sandstone with limestone trim, the church features a bell tower 78 feet high. In 1949, it became home to the Nazarene Church and, in 2002, the Vinelife Family Church. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2005.

#### HISTORIC STRUCTURES IN ARKANSAS CITY

**Comment [JW3]:** Need to ask the board how to better display this information.

|                         |                     |              |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Security National Bank  | 227 S. Summit       | 1889         |
| Cornish Studio          | 125 W. 5th Ave.     | 1924         |
| City Building           | 118 W. Central      | 1888/1918-20 |
| Eagle Block             | 312-14 S. Summit    | 1886         |
| Isabella Building       | 116-18 S. Summit    | 1894         |
| Newman's Dry Good Store | 400 S. Summit       | 1917         |
| Matlack Building        | 201 S. Summit       | 1880 & 1887  |
| Summit Block            | 300 Block S. Summit | 1886         |
| Union State Bank        | 127 S. Summit       | 1883         |
| Home National Bank      | 126 S. Summit       | 1917         |
| AC Office Building      | 116-18 W. 5th Ave.  | 1886         |
| Bittle Building         | 101 S. Summit       | 1885         |
| Beard Building          | 303 S. Summit       | 1905         |

|  |                               |         |
|--|-------------------------------|---------|
| Bishop Block                             | 103-5 N. Summit               | 1885    |
| Commercial Block                         | 212-214-216 S. Summit         | 1884    |
| Conrad Block                             | 125 S. Summit                 | 1894    |
| Colorado Building(Holmes)                | 200 S. Summit                 | 1905    |
| Carder Lock Building                     | N. Side 100 Block W. 5th Ave. | 1887    |
| Central Block                            | 103-5 S. Summit               | 1885    |
| Crescent Building                        | 301 S. Summit                 | 1905    |
| Commercial House                         | 112 E. Central                | 1926    |
| Chicago Store                            | 105 N. Summit                 | 1890    |
| Fifth Avenue Block                       | 117-19 E. 5th Ave.            | 1889    |
| Hasie Block                              | 218-20 S. Summit              | 1884    |
| Herman Godehards Block                   | 200 Block S. Summit           | 1885    |
| Highland Hall                            | 110-112-114 S. Summit         | 1883    |
| Howard Building                          | 117--119-121 W. 5th Ave.      | 1912    |
| Illinois Building                        | 123 S. Summit                 | 1905    |
| K.P. Block                               | 226 S. Summit                 | 1902    |
| Louisiana Building                       | 125 N. Summit                 | 1906    |
| Miller Hardware Building                 | 119 S. Summit                 | 1885    |
| McCowan Block                            | 225 S. Summit                 | 1905    |
| Parker Block                             | 219-221 S. Summit             | 1893    |
| Pearson Block                            | 212 S. Summit                 | 1893    |
| Puritan Billiard Parlor Building         | 121 S. Summit                 | 1911    |
| Ranney-Alton Mercantile Wholesale Grocer | 208 W. 5th Ave.               | 1889-90 |
| Sheridan Block                           | 308-310 S. Summit             | 1888    |
| Sipes Hardware                           | 102 S. Summit                 | 1870    |
| Syndicate Buildings 2nd Location         | 122 N. Summit                 | 1886    |
| Union Block                              | 107-109 S. Summit             | 1885    |
| Walpex building (Woolworth)              | 215 S. Summit                 | 1921    |

## 5.9 GOALS AND ACTIONS

Goals represent overall vision and desired outcomes. They describe the kind of community Arkansas City leaders hope to offer to citizens to meet their expectations and needs for active living. The following goals provide the outline of recreational amenities, programs and the preservation of natural and historical resources.

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>Goal</b> | <b>Evaluate Whether the Community Would Benefit from Closure and Disposition of Certain Parks and Other City-Owned Properties, with Resulting Savings Made Available for Other Park Improvements.</b> |
|-------------|---|

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>Goal</b> | <b>Make Improvements to Parks and Playgrounds to Meet the Needs of Persons of All Ages.</b>   |
| <b>Goal</b> | <b>Protect and Preserve the Natural Resources, Particularly Along the Rivers, Both for Natural Features and Flood Protection.</b>   |
| <b>Goal</b> | <b>Promote the Maintenance and Preservation of Historical Resources Such as Burford Theater, the Downtown District, Ireland Hall, Pilgrim Congregational Church, and Historic Structures.</b> |

**GOAL**

~~EVALUATE WHETHER THE COMMUNITY WOULD BENEFIT FROM CLOSURE AND DISPOSITION OF CERTAIN PARKS AND OTHER CITY-OWNED PROPERTIES, WITH RESULTING SAVINGS MADE AVAILABLE FOR OTHER PARK IMPROVEMENTS~~

**Action:**

1. ~~Analyze the benefits of each park, looking at factors such as size, location, existing facilities and improvements, and public use to identify any parks which are underutilized to the point that public costs outweigh public benefits.~~  
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2. ~~If there are cost savings attributable to the closure of underutilized parks, increased funding for maintenance and improvement of remaining parks should be given priority for such cost savings.~~  
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3. ~~Perform a similar study of all vacant and/or unused City owned property to identify surplus property to be returned to the tax rolls.~~  
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**GOAL**

**MAKE IMPROVEMENTS TO PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF PERSONS OF ALL AGES AND INCOME GROUPS.**

**Action:**

1. ~~Update playground equipment, particularly additions to equipment for young children, seeking grant or charitable funds to augment city funds. Continue development of the Wilson Park Master Plan~~
2. ~~Consider new features such as disc golf, dog parks, and nature exploration kiosks. Develop a Master Plan for Paris Park~~
3. ~~Add fitness stations to areas along trails. Develop a set of goals for each of the smaller neighborhood parks. Designate the Beautification and Tree Advisory Board to develop these plans and make a recommendation to the Planning Commission.~~
4. ~~Consider converting certain of the City's smaller parks to "specialized" uses, such as community gardens and pet exercise areas. Develop a dedicated funding stream for park maintenance and redevelopment.~~

**GOAL**

**PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE NATURAL RESOURCES, PARTICULARLY ALONG THE RIVERS, BOTH FOR NATURAL FEATURES AND FLOOD PROTECTION**

| Action: Develop McFarland Pond (North Pond) and access for public use.

**Comment [JW4]:** This can be a part of the neighborhood parks study that the BAB does.

**GOAL**      **PROMOTE THE MAINTENANCE AND PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES SUCH AS BURFORD THEATER, THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT, IRELAND HALL, PILGRIM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, AND OTHER HISTORIC STRUCTURES**

**Action:**

1. Assist the owners of historic properties in identifying and accessing public and private resources for historic preservation.
2. Encourage the owners of historic properties to maintain their properties and preserve their place in the community.
3. Give careful consideration to the possible impacts of development nearby historic and cultural properties when taking action on zoning applications, demolition permits and other necessary City approvals.