

# STRATEGIC PLAN

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## **PUBLIC POLICY & MANAGEMENT CENTER**

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# BACKGROUND

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The following report captures feedback from interviews, focus groups, and a survey conducted between April and July 2024 to inform the City of Sedgwick's strategic planning process. Four focus groups were held, and participants included local business owners, board members from various local organizations, USD 439 students, and community leaders. Further input was collected through a brief survey available at City hall, June's Moonlight market, the City's annual 4th of July celebration, and Back To School night. Internal interviews consisted of City of Sedgwick employees and City council members.

# MISSION & VISION

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The PPMC helped craft a new vision statement that better reflected the organization. This statement was influenced by the stakeholder engagement process and created with the steering committee.

## **Mission:**

To foster a vibrant and welcoming community through responsible stewardship of resources.

## **Vision:**

To innovate and ensure a prosperous future while honoring our rich heritage.



# STRATEGIC PLAN



GOAL 1

Increase collaboration for the best use of resources.

STRATEGIES	CHAMPION (Lead is listed first)	TIMELINE
Establish a system of communication and collaboration between the City, USD 439, and the Recreation Commission	City Administrator, 439 Superintendent and Recreation Commission Board	2025-2026
Determine common goals between the City, USD 439, and the Recreation Commission	City Administrator, 439 Superintendent and Recreation Commission Board	2025-2026
Increase awareness of the City of Sedgwick's 501(c)3 named Sedgwick Community Development Corporation	City Administrator	2025-2026
Increase cross training and educational opportunities for City staff	City Clerk, City Superintendent	2026
Create a central information hub that can be accessed by residents to amplify events (community calendar)	City Administrator, USD 439 Technology Director	2025



## GOAL 2

Meet the housing needs of current and future residents to maintain vitality and manageable growth.

STRATEGIES	CHAMPION (Lead is listed first)	TIMELINE
Develop and promote incentives for first-time home buyers, homebuilders, and prospective developers	City Administrator	2025
Explore current zoning maps and regulations to identify areas for potential infill or redevelopment	Planning and Zoning Commission, City Administrator	2025
Encourage construction of diversified housing options for all demographics including young families and seniors	Zoning Administrator	Ongoing
Encourage real estate development to meet community needs while being conscious of expanded infrastructure and ongoing maintenance costs	City Administrator	Ongoing





### GOAL 3

Provide quality parks and public spaces for youth recreation and community activities.

STRATEGIES	CHAMPION (Lead is listed first)	TIMELINE
<p>Develop a Parks Master Plan (including but not limited to the following)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate current parks and public spaces</li><li>• Seek community input on future recreation development</li><li>• Consider disc golf, dog park, and other special use public spaces</li><li>• Activate Hike and Bike Plan</li><li>• Improve activation of pocket park and downtown corridor</li><li>• Explore development efforts and collaboration opportunities on the east water tower land with Recreation commission</li><li>• Expand development efforts for DeHaven Memorial Park and Highlands Pond</li></ul>	City Administrator, Recreation Commission Board	2025
Identify programming opportunities in the community between the Recreation Commission, USD 439 and City	City Administrator, USD 439 Superintendent, Rec Commission Chair	2025

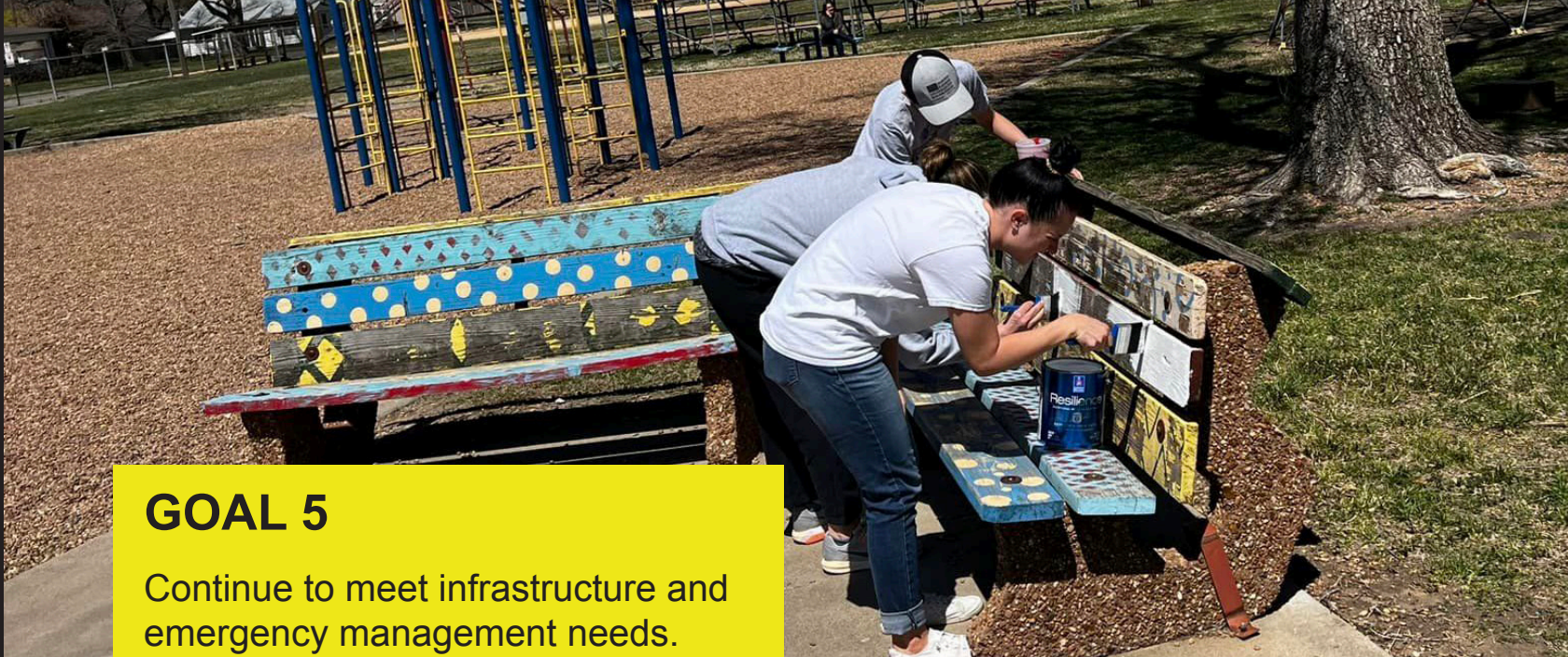


## GOAL 4

Promote business retention and development.

STRATEGIES	CHAMPION (Lead is listed first)	TIMELINE
Create and maintain a list of local businesses	Utility Clerk	2026
Create a marketing campaign to promote shopping local and highlight local business	USD 439 Business Class, City Administrator, (Cardinal Collective, Sedgwick Connect and other groups)	2026
Identify areas of infill and mixed-use properties for future development	Planning and Zoning Commission, Zoning Administrator	2027
Increase efforts for beautification and walkability along downtown corridor	City Superintendent, Community Volunteers	2025
Explore efforts to support local businesses and market Sedgwick to future businesses	City Administrator, Harvey County Economic Development, Area Businesses	2026
Actively promote the facade improvement grant program	City Administrator	Ongoing





## GOAL 5

Continue to meet infrastructure and emergency management needs.

STRATEGIES	CHAMPION (Lead is listed first)	TIMELINE
Annually fund infrastructure and emergency management needs	City Council, City Administrator	Ongoing
Continue beautification efforts at entry points to town to encourage a positive first impression	City Superintendent, City Administrator	Ongoing
Evaluate and update the Emergency Management Plan	EMS Director, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Harvey and Sedgwick County Emergency Management	2026
Continue implementing a comprehensive street maintenance program that including gravel roads	City Superintendent, City Administrator	Ongoing



# APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDER THEMES

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## Strengths

### *City Services and Engagement*

Trust is growing between the City of Sedgwick and its residents. Both external and internal stakeholders note that new leadership in key positions is increasing collaboration and communication across City departments and with the school. The City has faced significant financial hurdles and high staff turnover in recent years. The leadership and dedication of the current mayor, staff, and council members led to current financial stability and improved staffing. There is a tone of hope, collaboration, and long-term vision when talking with key community leadership and internal stakeholders.

Community stakeholders express satisfaction and optimism with most City services, especially with increased code enforcement and recently enhanced beautification efforts, particularly downtown.



The City's Facebook page is improving communication with residents. With the recent hiring of a new Police Chief and Director of EMS, there is a hopeful tone of new leadership and safety. In the Sedgwick Community Survey, participants rated "general administration (communication, permits, beautification)" as the least in need of improvement, while also describing Sedgwick as "friendly," "connected," and "family." This suggests community satisfaction with the City's focus on outreach and providing services to residents.

City staff and council members are connected to the meaning of their work and are proud to give back to the community through public service. Many employees are living and working in their hometown. One staff member noted it was “time to come home,” when coming to work for the City of Sedgwick. Most of the staff live in the City, and many of the staff and council were raised in Sedgwick. Points of pride for staff include: “good learning opportunity” as well as “pride in doing work not everyone is willing to do,” “offering good customer service,” and “building relationships with residents.” Council members note a call to give back and affect change in their community.

### *Small Town Feeling*

City staff and residents also note the traditional “small-town lifestyle” found in Sedgwick.

“Everyone knows everyone” and “Children are safe to ride their bikes on the streets” were often repeated phrases from participants.

Residents are proud of their community and believe it to be safe and quiet. The most common descriptor of Sedgwick by survey respondents was some variation of “small town” and “home.” Over 85 percent of survey respondents indicated a residential or family connection to Sedgwick, indicating a deep, long-standing relationship with the community.

Residents especially enjoy community-centered programming such as the Moonlight Market and Fall Festival. Many indicated an appreciation for the beautification efforts on Commercial Street and the honoring of the Hometown Hero banners.





## *Student Focus*

Stakeholders express dedicated support and trust for USD 439, Sedgwick Public Schools, believing it to be the community's biggest asset. Students believe they receive a quality education and are prepared for higher education or the workforce. Students report feeling very supported by the community. Council and City staff are committed to partnerships with USD 439 and are also proud of the quality of education provided. School representatives note an improved trust and communication between the City and the school with opportunities for further collaboration. Thirty percent of survey respondents indicated USD 439 as their connection to the community.

## *Council Priorities*

City council members' top priority areas are generally aligned. They include housing, safety, and economic development. Infrastructure priorities were a close 4th in prioritization, while beautification efforts rounded out the list. Some council members would like to see a Chamber of Commerce created or small-business incubator programs. Others believe improved parks or walking paths are a good use of resources. Many of the top priority areas have current projects under consideration or development.

## *Words to Describe Sedgwick*

For those who choose to live in Sedgwick, words like "family," "friendly," "hospitable," "supportive," "safe," "community," "quiet," and "happy small town" were used.

Focus group participants describe the Sedgwick they hope to see in the future as "thriving," "growing," "healthy," "trusted," "unified," "premier community," "tranquil," "friendly," "welcoming," "inviting," "collaborative," and "progressive."





## **Opportunities**

### ***Economic Development***

When asked to describe Sedgwick in ten years, survey respondents consistently used terms such as “growing” and references to “more business” in the City. Community stakeholders in focus groups also listed “economic development” as one of the most important opportunities for the City. Attitudes towards economic development were slightly divergent in focus group feedback and community survey results. While stakeholder groups described economic development as one of the most important opportunities, survey sentiment was more nuanced where respondents consistently ranked community priorities as services, infrastructure, and public safety.

Business leaders and residents note a desire for business recruitment in the downtown corridor and industrial park. The 9% sales tax makes “doing business hard” in Sedgwick, according to business leaders. Stakeholders want more opportunities for residents to live and work in Sedgwick. Attracting small businesses and industry are priorities. Promoting the downtown corridor for new business is of particular importance for many residents.

Business leaders and other residents want to see more promotions and information related to existing businesses. One suggestion involved providing residents and new homeowners with information packets highlighting the businesses in the City and encouraging residents to buy locally. Focus group participants suggest the City drop the special assessment taxes on industrial park lots to incentivize more tenants to the industrial park.

Stakeholders encourage the City to think beyond just manufacturing or industry when attracting tenants. Suggestions include event venues or other small shops.



## *Housing*

Sedgwick is not immune to the national trends in housing shortages. Housing inventory and availability are consistently rated within all stakeholder engagement as an important opportunity for the City. Concerns related to housing are diverse. Business leaders want more permanent customers. Younger residents need affordable housing options to remain in Sedgwick. Some homeowners note that their property taxes have increased significantly in the last few years.



Participants further describe a desire to see more affordable housing options as current rental properties are out of financial reach for many who would like to live in Sedgwick. Respondents note the need to attract and incentivize builders to Sedgwick to establish more housing developments. Thirty-three percent of USD 439 enrollment is outside the district. If housing challenges can improve, these families could be given options within the Sedgwick City limits.

## *Infrastructure*

The City council is working toward paving downtown streets. Residents note the financial burden road paving efforts place on homeowners. Opportunity for improved communication with the community on all the improvements that this project involves may promote more buy-in from residents.

Many focus groups and internal stakeholders agree that improved infrastructure should remain a priority for the City, though economic development and housing were rated by participants as the most important priorities in these groups. Feedback suggests more parking downtown and continued sidewalk and road improvements are valuable to stakeholders.

## *Beautification of the City*

Stakeholders suggest enhancing the City's parks as well as an increase in biking and hiking trails for general recreation purposes. Internal stakeholders note Sedgwick has good zoning laws and code enforcement that need to continue to be utilized to make downtown and other main roads more visually appealing, noting visitors to Sedgwick, "eat with their eyes."

Others note that the City needs to give people a reason to visit and stay in Sedgwick. Many point to the empty storefront on Commercial Street as a problem of aesthetics.

## Quality of Life

Most stakeholders are happy with their quality of life in Sedgwick, but several areas for improvement were identified.

Residents suggest introducing more neighborhood programming such as the Moonlight Market. There is an undercurrent of division noted in some of the feedback, particularly from those who are newer residents to town, feeling unwelcome. Continued community events can help to make newcomers feel a sense of belonging.



Sedgwick youth note a lack of a “third place.” A third place is traditionally a youth-frequented business or setting when they are not at home or school. Youth suggest engagement programs, parks, fast food restaurants, bowling alleys, and events at the recreation center. Business leaders also note a need for youth engagement to boost economic and population growth. Exploring applied learning opportunities between the school district and the City is an area for future exploration and youth engagement. There is a history of work-study opportunities between school students and the City. School leadership would like to see this explored as a workforce opportunity.

Residents express concern about public safety in general. Though many people note that Sedgwick is currently a safe place to live, some express fear of it becoming less so with growth. City staff corroborated a need for more public safety funding to hire more officers, expand to a 24-hour department, implement EMS services, and continue to support the fire department readiness plan. Improvements to public safety were, by far, ranked as the most important improvement needed by survey respondents.



## *Adaptability*

As the world continues to modernize and resident needs evolve, both external and internal stakeholders noted a need for the City to be adaptable. Residents want City leaders who are open to change, and City staff want to feel like they have the support they need to make innovative decisions within their job responsibilities.

## *City Staffing*

Sedgwick has faced staffing issues with a high rate of turnover in the past. Currently, the City is more adequately staffed, having implemented pay increases to help foster retention. Internal stakeholders would like to see more frequent communication from the City leadership, with an increased focus on collaboration among City staff, along with increased pay, when possible. Internal stakeholders cited these changes as potential tools for improved employee retention.

## *Communication*

While pleased with increased communication from the City on Facebook, external stakeholders desire a more comprehensive communication strategy that communicates all City services and events. This input suggests developing a communication strategy as part of the strategic plan. Respondents note that other social media channels are competing for followers and carrying the unofficial message of Sedgwick. Attention should be paid to who is telling the story of the City.





# CONCLUSION

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Sedgwick residents, business leaders, City council, and staff believe in their City and love their community. Focus group and survey participants were optimistic about the future of Sedgwick and pointed to numerous opportunities for innovation and growth in the City.

Based on feedback from community stakeholders and surveys, special focus should be given to economic development and housing that has the potential to attract new residents, increase Sedgwick's tax base and economic activity, and allow for further quality of life improvements. Staffing and funding for public safety departments and related projects are of particular concern to community stakeholders. Lastly, infrastructure and street maintenance are additional quality-of-life enhancements that appeal to a broad audience of stakeholders.

