

City of Topeka
Sustainability Advisory Board
2022 Report



Sustainability Advisory Board

Resident Representatives

Eliot Kemper, Co-Chair, 1st term began 2022

Michaela Saunders, Co-Chair, 3rd term

Leilani Grey, 2nd term

Kelly Magerkurth, 1st term

Mary Monzyk, 1st term began 2023

Kevin Siek, 1st term

Jay VanBlaricum, 1st term began 2023

As of March 2023, there are two vacancies.

City Staff

Sylvan Coles, Utilities,
Water Pollution Control

David Bevens, Public
Works Communications

Topeka Zoo

Dennis Dinwiddie

Special thanks

Special thanks to Mary Powell, who served four terms (12 years) on the TSAB and completed her service in February 2023. Mary remains committed to community education around the importance of native plants, trees, prairie restoration, and ecological diversity for the benefit of all of us and we are grateful for tireless service.

Special thanks to Clyde Schwanke and Casey Williams, who served the TSAB for six years, and Dr. Ben Reed who served for three years. Clyde brought expertise around alternative energy and electric vehicles. Casey and Ben are educators, in the Washburn Rural school district, and at Washburn University's Department of Biology respectively. We are grateful for their many contributions.

Special thanks to Patti Jo Ham, who retired from Public Works Administration in December. She served as secretary of this board for many years and we are grateful for her service to our community and our sustainability efforts.

Report photography contributed by TSAB member Kelly Magerkurth.



Top Priorities

The need for robust and courageous action on behalf of our planet never has been more important. While we are well aware that the City of Topeka alone will not solve the climate crisis, we believe intense focus on three goals can make a difference:

1. Prioritize sustainability by creating a staff position that is full-time and fully-funded. This position will play a key role in the city's sustainable future and remains our top priority, including advocacy related to legislation promoting a sustainable future, and other actions addressing food deserts, housing affordability, and climate justice.
2. Collaborate with city staff and council on gradual adoption of Triple Bottom Line approach to decision-making that will increase considerations of impacts to the environmental commons: land, air, water, and food access.
3. Increase promotion efforts and celebrate the important work City of Topeka departments are doing right now to support a sustainable future. Examples include storm drain painting, methane capture upgrades, the award-winning biosolids program and partnership with local farmers, and native plants in storm water control efforts.

The TSAB operates with the authority of 2.240.030 of the Topeka Municipal Code. This report fulfills obligations listed in city code.



Peer City Comparison

Peer City	Climate Mayor	Sustainability Plan	FTE Sustainability Coordinator
Boise, ID	Yes	Yes; also city-wide compost program	Yes
Des Moines, IA	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cedar Rapids, IA	No	Yes	Yes
Springfield, IL	No	Incorporated into comprehensive master plan	Not currently
Overland Park, KS	No	Energy tracking in all city facilities	Environmental Programs Coordinator
Olathe, KS	No	Listed as a council priority since at least 2010	Unclear
Lawrence, KS	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wichita, KS	No	No	Unclear
Springfield, MO	Yes	Yes	Yes
Columbia, MO	Yes	Yes	Yes. Office of Sustainability, staff of 6
Jefferson City, MO	No	Unclear	Unclear
Kansas City, KS	No	No	No
Wichita Falls, Texas	No	Unclear.	Unclear. Point position in several divisions
Rockford, IL	Yes	Yes	Unclear
Independence, MO	No	Yes - 2030, 20 year plan	Unclear. Designated “green teams” within several departments
Pueblo, CO	No	Yes	City/County partnership

Of note: 11 of 16 (68 %) peer cities have a Sustainability Plan. Six of the peer city mayors have joined Climate Mayors, a bipartisan network of U.S. mayors collaborating for meaningful change on climate change through action. Kansas Climate Mayors are in Lawrence, Prairie Village, and Pittsburg. More information can be found at climatemayors.org.

Unclear FTE represents information not clearly available. In some cases, sustainability was part of one role or several roles.

Celebrating Success by the Numbers:

The Sustainability Advisory Board would like to thank the following departments for providing us with information about their sustainability efforts: Public Works, Forestry, Utilities Water Pollution Control Division, and Shawnee County Waste Management. As Topekans, we can all be proud of the following:

- 1 electric charging station is included in the Public Works capital improvement plan.
- 1 tree planted by the Forestry Department, during an Arbor Day commemoration on the Capitol grounds.
- 1 information booth hosted by TSAB regarding recycling compliance and composting at home.
- 3 hybrid patrol cars purchased
- 152 acres of farmland in the Topeka area received fertilizer from the biosolids program. The program is on pace to serve 500 acres in 2023.
- 1,121 trees trimmed by the Forestry Department
- 7,389 tons of recycling processed January to October 2022
- 8,386 customers served by the Shawnee County Hazardous Waste Facility during the fiscal year ending July 2022. Included in disposal was 121,738 lbs of Latex paint. Of that, 60.6 percent (or 6,500 gallons) was recycled for reuse.
- 73,425 tons of yard waste was kept out of the landfill through the Garick partnership.
- Street crews use recycled asphalt millings for alleyways.
- Road brick on new mill and overlay projects were saved and re-purposed on brick street repair efforts.
- Red and Green traffic lights throughout the city are transitioning to LED. This project will be completed in 2023.
- The City of Topeka and Topeka Zoo collaboration to paint storm drain covers reached 100 installed in February 2023. TSAB members have been among the volunteer painters.

JOIN US

All are welcome to join the Sustainability Advisory Board meetings, which alternate between presentations and business meetings. The TSAB meets the First Friday of each month at 4 p.m. in the Holliday Building main floor conference room. Please email SustainTopeka@gmail.com for the agenda and other information.



City Department Successes

Topeka Utilities - Water Pollution Control Division: *WPCD - North Topeka Wastewater Treatment Plant Nutrient Upgrade:*

In compliance with the State of Kansas Department of Health & Environment (KDHE) & EPA guidelines, the City will be upgrading the North Topeka Wastewater Treatment Plant to achieve an average total discharge of 10 mg/l and 1.0 mg/l respectively for Total Nitrogen and Total Phosphorus to the Kansas River. The upgrade to the North Topeka Wastewater Treatment Plant will cost ~ \$17.2 million and is to be com-

pleted by December 31, 2023.

Within one year of the completion of construction (December 31, 2024) the guideline is scheduled to be met. Once met, the North Topeka Wastewater Treatment Plant will be a “State of the Art Wastewater Treatment Plant” and will reduce the amount of phosphorus discharged to the Kansas River by 78%, and will reduce the amount of Total Nitrogen discharged to the Kansas River by 37%.

Nitrogen and Phosphorous are the primary nutrients that contribute to the growth of plants and algae. This is helpful to people when in a crop’s soil, but it overpowers the natural ability of nature to oxygenate the gulf waters where the Kansas River eventually discharges, contributing to the creation of large dead zones which can suffocate aquatic life, in a process called Eutrophication. This project is 60% through the Design Phase.

WPCD - Sanitary Sewer Odor Control Project: Project Number 291068.01

Sanitation sewers are often associated with unpleasant odors and Topeka’s Sanitary Sewer System which consists of approximately 800 miles of Sanitary Sewer is no exception. Over the years the City has received several odor complaints and has noted a degradation of its sewer system, caused largely by the generation of Hydrogen Sulfide (H₂S) gas, which accumulates when the wastewater becomes septic during the journey to a wastewater treatment plant.

The City of Topeka hired Bartlett & West in late 2020, to study seventeen Pump Stations and complaint locations that had been associated with the public’s odor complaints. The study’s goal was to develop an odor control plan to mitigate, and if possible eliminate, the odor problems throughout the

City.

This study and its recommendations culminated in an Odor Control Technical Memorandum completed on October 6, 2021, which evaluated the best-fit odor control solutions for each of the studied locations. The recommended systems have been reviewed and included both liquid phase & vapor phase treatments. Vapor phase technologies considered included carbon absorption, bio-trickling filters, in-ground bio-filters, chemical scrubbers, and ozonation. Liquid phase technologies included oxygen injection, calcium nitrate addition (Bioxide), aeration, pH adjustment (Alkagen), and super-oxygenation. The estimated system-wide cost is approximately \$5.7 million to construct the necessary treatment systems, with an annual operating cost of approximately

\$560,000 per year.

In early 2022, the City began the initial phase of improvements with the design of the recommended odor control facilities at the Central Park Pump Station (which is a major pump station) and the Rockfire North Pump Station (which is a smaller pump station located in SW Topeka). The design is 90% complete and these units should be fully operational by the end of 2023. The recommended improvements to the Wanamaker, Ash Street, Shunga, Clarion Lake, Tick, & South Kansas Pumping Stations are to follow.



WPCD - Biosolids Program – Beneficial Reuse

Biosolids Recycling for Beneficial Reuse by the farming community is now continuing for its 41st year at the Oakland Wastewater Treatment Plant. Biosolids are the solid organic material removed in the wastewater treatment process – poop, to be exact. The wastewater treatment process, through scientifically proven methods, turns this organic material into a safe, natural, and endlessly-renewable resource loaded with nutrients that are better for the environment than chemical fertilizers.

If there is any doubt, one needs just to ask any of the hundred-plus farmers the City has worked with over the course of the last forty years. Besides saving money on fertilizers, farm-

ers benefit from the addition of humus and micronutrients in Biosolids that are not found in commercial fertilizers. Humus (Organic Matter) significantly contributes to the bulk density of soil and its retention of moisture & nutrients which is necessary for good crop production. Farm fields that have lost topsoil due to erosion and runoff or are sandy and lacking in organic matter can find no better source for stability and nutrients than Biosolids.

In Topeka, not only does the farming community benefit from the reuse of Biosolids but so does our community. Reuse of Biosolids:

- Reduces energy-intensive fertilizer production and their release into our environment.

- Keeps Biosolids out of landfills where they would displace valuable landfill space, which is giving our landfills a longer life span.
- Reduces greenhouse emissions from landfills that would have received these Biosolids for disposal.
- Reduces the cost of sewage disposal while simultaneously benefitting the environment.

In 2021 the City of Topeka applied Biosolids to twelve farms, totaling 396 acres in the Topeka vicinity. The estimated value of the fertilizer received from the applied Biosolids was approximately \$250 per acre. The City is on pace to apply biosolids to 500 acres in 2022 with the Fall application season currently underway.

WPCD - Oakland Wastewater Treatment Plant Biogas to Pipeline Project

Since 1950, the City of Topeka's Oakland Wastewater Treatment Plant has experimented with uses for the "Biogas" that is generated at its plant. Biogas is methane (CH₄) from our sewage, which is inevitably generated during the anaerobic biodegradation phase of treating wastewater.

Past uses for this gas have included: heating digesters, generating electricity (Co-generation) for use at the plant, and fueling natural gas engines which power the blowers that provide air to the biological treatment process. When the

useful life of the Co-Generation project passed, the City began evaluation of alternatives for the uses of Biogas.

After several years of discussion, in 2017, the City began to analyze which technology would be the most economical, efficient, flexible, and best use of the biogas. This evaluation resulted in Topeka's Renewable Natural Gas Facility. The Biogas is treated to become Pipeline Quality Natural Gas and is injected into the Southern Star Central Pipeline. This gas is then sold to large natural gas users and producers and

qualifies as a renewable source of energy to meet their Renewable Portfolio Standards. From inception to completion the Renewable Natural Gas Facility has been a long and difficult process, but as of July of 2022, it has been operational; producing and selling renewable energy.

This is considered Renewable Energy because it is not unlocked from locked-away underground deposits. For more information about how natural gas meets renewable energy standards when generated from wastewater, see this resource: Biomass explained Landfill gas and biogas; at

<https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/biomass/landfill-gas-and-biogas.php>



WPCD – Laboratory

The WPCD Laboratory is in its second year of working with Biobot Analytics of Boston Massachusetts to monitor Covid in the wastewater of both of the City of Topeka’s Wastewater Treatment Plants. Both plants are monitored Monday and Wednesday of each week for the SARS-CoV-2 virus in wastewater. The results are normalized to the fecal strength indicator

in the wastewater sample. This differs from the CDC method, but provides a similar predictive indicator of the rise or fall of Covid cases in the City. There is a two day turnaround for results and the results are shared with the Shawnee County Health Department. This is related to sustainability, as infected wastewater gets treated and recycled back into

the water that we use every day, and that cities further along our watershed use, and sustainable use of water sources is important during this year of national drought. For more information, see: Rethinking wastewater risks and monitoring in light of the COVID-19 pandemic | Nature Sustainability located at <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-020-00605-2>.

WPCD – Environmental Field Services Environmental Project Summary

Project	Location	Summary
Monarch Milkweed Planting	Auburndale Basin	EFS Section applied for and received a grant of 480 milkweed plants to help build habitat and food sources for Monarch Butterflies. The plants were worked into a stand of native grasses and watered throughout summer and early fall to help with establishment.
Chesterfield South Field	Oakland WWTP	WPC staff and Topeka Fire Department conducted a prescribed burn to reduce vegetation build-up. Johnson Grass was strayed to help eradicate the noxious weed. The area will be reviewed for Johnson Grass in Spring 2023, before drilling native grasses and wildflowers.
Chesterfield North Field	Oakland WWTP	WPC staff mow the 8 acre field to keep weeds and weed seeds from developing. The area was drilled with native grasses and wildflowers in Spring 2021.
EFS Post-Construction BMPs	Multiple	City-owned stormwater control measures were maintained throughout 2022. The areas incorporate native grasses and wildflower as part of the function and design. Native plants are used for their many benefits, from stormwater pollution removal and water filtration to being part of the pollinators’ life cycle.
Planting Switchgrass	Jackson Street Bioretention Cells	Switchgrass plugs were planted in 3-4 bioretention cells. As they establish, their roots will help filter stormwater runoff and provide an aesthetically pleasing site.

Note: The goal of each of these projects is to provide an aesthetically pleasing area that functions as a habitat for wildlife or pollinators while encouraging infiltration of storm water.

Public Works Department

Fleet Services:

Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) devices were installed in most city-owned vehicles to reduce idling, shorten response times, and more efficiently allocate city resources. Tracked data are:

- Idling (# of events, duration of events, and average duration, by department)
- Speeding (# of events by department)
- Acceleration (# of events, combined G Force and average G Force, by department)
- Braking (# of events, combined G Force and average G Force, by department)
- Cornering (# of events, combined G Force and average G Force, by department)
- Total Drive Time (Total Time

of driving all vehicles within a department)

The fleet replacement fund exists in order to systematically replace aging and inefficient city-owned vehicles. Purchases and considerations with a focus on sustainable goals include: Three Hybrid Patrol Cars were purchased by Police Department.

Other departments are considering Electrics and Hybrids for vehicle replacements.

An Electric Charging Station included in a Capital Improvement Plan, subject to approval of approximately \$130,000 in funding over two years.

For more information on the City's CIP, see this page: Capital Improvement Projects | Fi-

nance, located at <https://www.topeka.org/finance/capital-improvement-projects/#gsc.tab=0>

Transportation Infrastructure: Improvements in winter operations are considered a major sustainability win. The Winter Operations have transitioned from a salting and plowing primary operational strategy to a pre-treatment, anti-icing, plowing, and salting program, reducing the amount of salt (NaCl) that runs off into the Kansas River. For information about why this is important, see this resource: Winter is Coming! And with it, tons of salt on our roads | US EPA at <https://www.epa.gov/snep/winter-coming-and-it-tons-salt-our-roads>



Shawnee County Solid Waste Management Program:

On February 8, 2021 the Shawnee County Solid Waste Management Plan was formally adopted. The 5 year plan for Shawnee County included the five incorporated cities – Auburn, Rossville, Silver Lake, Topeka, & Willard – within the County’s borders one census designated place, Wakarusa.

The document represents the County’s updated five-year solid waste management plan and comprises six chapters. You can find it at Shawnee County 2020 Solid Waste Management Plan, located at https://www.snco.us/hd/Document/2020_Solid_Waste_Management_Plan.pdf

Shawnee County Recycling Facility:

Tonnage recycled:

- 2019 - 8966 tons
- 2020 – 10,061 tons
- 2021 – 9304 tons
- 2022 – 7389 tons through October 2022

Shawnee County Household Hazardous Waste Facility:

The number of customers who used the facility in 2020 was 8,343 with 172.2 tons of hazardous waste being processed. That number jumped to 9,010 customers ending fiscal year July, 2021 with 185.6 tons being processed.

Ending fiscal year July, 2022, 8,386 customers brought 294.8 tons of Household Hazardous Waste to the facility.

Waste Types Accepted at the Shawnee Co. Household Hazardous Waste Facility:

Automotive & Garage

Oil & Fuel Additives (can be recycled)
Grease & Rust Solvents
Carburetor & Fuel Injection Cleaners
Starter Fluids, Power Steering, Brake Fluid, Transmission Fluid
Antifreeze, Oil Filters
Old Gasoline/Diesel Fuel
Kerosene
Waxes, Polishes & Cleaners
Automotive Batteries (can be recycled)
From the Workshop
Paints
Stains
Varnishes
Sealants
Paint Thinners
Fluorescent Tubes
Paint Strippers & Removers

From the House:

Aerosol Cans
Batteries (rechargeable & Alkaline)
Compressed Fluorescent Lights
Drain Cleaners
Cooking Oil
Oven Cleaners
Medication (Liquid & Pill form)
Wood & Metal Cleaners
Toilet Bowl Cleaners
Disinfectants
Used Needles (Sharps)
Finger Nail Polish Removers
General Purpose Cleaners
Hypodermic Needles

Farm & Garden

Herbicides
Pesticides
Rat Poisons

The Shawnee County Household Hazardous Waste Facility (HHWF), is located in North Topeka, at 131 NE 46th Street.

The facility is open Monday through Friday, 7 A.M. to 3 P.M., and on the first Saturday of every month from 9 A.M. to noon.

For more information see their website: Household Hazardous Waste · Solid Waste (Shawnee County, Kansas), at <https://www.snco.us/sw/hhwaste.asp>

Miscellaneous

Pool Chemicals
Photo Processing Chemicals
Empty Camping and Barbeque Propane Tanks

Press Releases with clear connections to sustainability:

• 1/14/2002

Topeka Homeless Count To Begin

• 1/24/2022

Kansas River Weir Project in Final Phase

• 3/14/2022

Release of 2022 “point in Time Homeless Count”. ~ 365 folks are counted.

• 3/21/2022

Capital Improvement Plan Review.

• 4/16/2022

ECycle Event at Stormont Vail Events Center.

• 4/16/2022

Free Yard Waste Disposal at Garick.

• 6/18/2022

Waste Management Free Landfill Disposal

• 7/6/2022

Public Works Department Receives 5th Accreditation.

• 8/10/2022

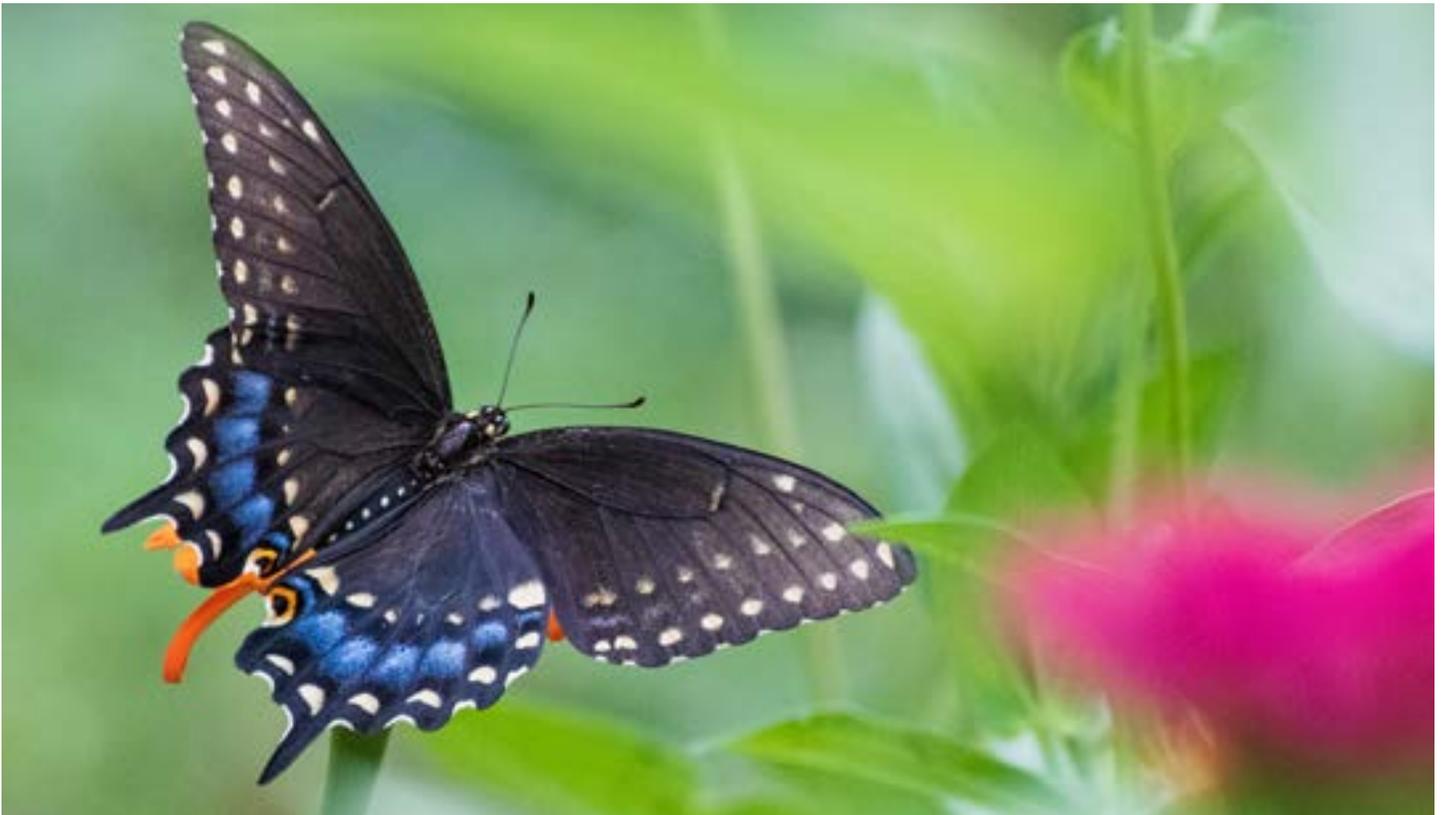
Roadway Assist Services Hired to Inventory Topeka Roads / Condition.

• 10/3/2022

HUD-ARP to provide \$1,754,962 for to go to new shelters & affordable housing to reduce homelessness & increase housing stability in Topeka.

• 11/01/2022

Equity Access Shelter – Provides single point of access for the homeless.



Report & Recommendations

Water

Topekans enjoy drinking water that meets state and federal regulations. Topekans also benefit from fully compliant and effective wastewater treatment and management.

What the average Topekan doesn't realize is how innovative the approaches to ensuring that are. We applaud the City's investment in the development of methane capture technology, which will create both a revenue stream and a significant environmental improvement. Further, this board applauds the City's biosolids management program. We encourage the City to continue to support

these and other innovative solutions to unavoidable environmental concerns.

This board continues to recommend adoption of technology that can address growing health threats from substances like plastic micro-beads, pharmaceutical compounds and chemicals used in farming operations.

Again this year, we would like to make the community aware of The City of Topeka Utilities Department's current effort to install an Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) system. This system provides the Utilities Department with the ability to read all 57,000 water meters in Topeka by radio, using 31 radio receiving locations. The AMI system will also provide the

Utilities Department with more frequent and reliable information to better serve utility customers.

The AMI initiative involves the installation of nearly 40,000 smart meters and 20 associated collectors to establish advanced metering infrastructure in Topeka through 2024. The new meter technology will enhance the City's data analytics allowing for accelerated detection of water leaks; customers experience the economic benefit from early leak detection as well as the environmental benefit of water conservation. AMI will eventually allow customers to see their water consumption data in real-time and personally identify leaks.



Greenspace

Topeka has numerous nature trails, bike trails, sports fields and parks. And we're encouraged that the Forestry Department plans to plant replacement trees in 2021. Continued work on reforestation will benefit quality of greenspaces, as well as support traffic speed control. Woods and natural meadows, wetlands, streams, and ponds are fundamental components of any urban ecosystem.

Green areas encourage relaxation, social interaction, and physical activity, particularly important as we continue to experience necessary physical distancing. Quality outdoor spaces also provide refuge from noise. It is no surprise to you that trees produce oxygen and filter air and water pollution. They also assist natural water sources in combating the "heat island effect" common in urban communities. As the Utilities Department's storm water management practices demonstrate, beautiful spaces with native plants can be effective tools in managing storm water, improving air quality, and reducing social vulnerability.

Access to green spaces can improve well-being and reduce health inequalities. Some analysis suggests that physical activity in a natural environment can help remedy mild depression and reduce physiological stress indicators.

This board recommends the continued use of native plants and the use of only non-neonicotinoid pesticide treated plants to create greenspaces with



high biodiversity - in its soil, its native plants and organisms including pollinators — which maximizes environmental resources.

Every organism plays a role as predator, prey, or soil improver in a natural habitat. If we didn't have native plants, we wouldn't have insects and butterflies. No insects, no baby birds. What do those bird parents feed their hatchlings? Soft bodied insects such as caterpillars, ants and winged insects.

Further, the board recommends the funding of the tree inventory, which had been planned for 2019, but found its funding diverted. This knowledge and intentional creation and maintenance of greenspace is crucial because it goes hand and hand with transportation and water issues especially.

Planning for future transportation networks should include greenspace for cyclists and walkers. Future water management practices should include bioswales. In the face of all these needs, a holistic approach to the urban landscape is important to realize all potential benefits.

Lastly, we encourage the work underway with property code enforcement that recognizes the power of yards as greenspaces that serve as important habitats. Local gardeners who are introducing native plants into their property should be recognized as contributors to, not detractors from, the health and sustainability of their neighborhoods and our community. We encourage collaboration and respect in this work.

Food

Topeka continues to experience the consequences of large

food deserts. This is a too-common problem in urban areas and negatively impacts the health and well-being of citizens at lower economic levels who don't have access to safe, healthful, and affordable food.

Shawnee County Extension food distribution map:



We recommend, as we did last year, that the City Council explore incentives to encourage grocery stores to locate in food deserts and to support community gardens through access to vacant lots and city-owned property, as well as grant funding and collaborations such as tool lending.

Shelter: Energy Code

Kansas is one of eight states that does not have a state-wide energy code adoption. Instead, Kansas is a “home-rule” state, which allows local municipalities to select, edit, & adopt an energy code.

Currently, the City has adopted very limited portions of the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) for new residential construction only. The City also approved

adoption of the 2015 IECC code focused on the building envelope only, and therefore have recommended the removal of the mechanical and electrical efficiency portions.

While the TSAB would like for the IECC to be adopted in its entirety, we understand and agree with the approach to bring forward an edited version to gain traction in the area. We are encouraged by this action.

As we did last year, we applauded the work of Topeka JUMP, USBank and the City in the establishment of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. We recommend that these designated properties return to the City's past practice of Energy Star and better building efficiency.

Eyeonhousing.org and other groups point out young professionals are seeking homes, and communities, that prioritize sustainability.



Energy

While we are disappointed that 2010-2020 energy tracking was not fulfilled, it remains imperative that a City of Topeka Director of Sustainability be hired and bring focus to City energy consumption and beyond. This board understands what gets measured gets attention, and we as a community deserve a comprehensive energy use

plan, updated 10 year goals, and the associated tracking.

This board recommends that the Council take courageous action toward a no/low-emission sustainable vehicle fleet. We further recommend increasing alternative energy use by adding grid-tied solar panels to city facilities as roof replacements or other upgrades are planned.

Waste Management

We applaud the City's contract with Garick at the Topeka Biomass and Yard Waste Materials Recycling Facility, which is increasing the anticipated use-span of the local landfill by removing yard waste materials.

The city collected 73,425 tons of yard waste in 2020. Of that, 54,279 tons has been recycled back into the community. The

remainder is in process of becoming mulch, top soil or other products or burning fuel for local business. Again in 2020, yard waste stayed out of the landfill.

This board continues to recommend much more public education related to effective single stream recycling practice, particularly given the recent

change in pickup opt-out, and glass recycling requirements. While we know recycling won't save the planet, teaching our young people environmentally conscious habits does make a difference.

Further, we endorse public education on the benefits of going without single-use plastics.

We encourage the council to consider and adopt a single-use plastic ban on shopping bags, utensils and drinking straws.

Did you know:

The State of Kansas has about 52,000 square miles of watershed area. This means that *any* trash that

is swept away ends up in Kansas lakes or the Kansas River.

Any debris that ends up in the Kansas River will find its way to the ocean.

The Kansas River

flows to the **Missouri River**, which feeds the **Mississippi River**, with flows into the **Gulf of Mexico**.

As much as 90% of the floating debris in the world's oceans is plastics.

Transportation

This board continues to recommend examining the purpose and total life cost of vehicle replacements of city-owned vehicles. Municipal fleets like New York City have found electric car maintenance costs are only 15% of the cost for their gas-powered cars. We encourage the City to utilize the existing fleet replacement fund to move in this direction and grow the fund as quickly as possible.

We applaud the City's zeal for street maintenance and repair because we know that effective streets mean cars that run closer to their designed efficiency and make alternative transportation modes, such as cycling, safer. We encourage Topekans to utilize the SeeClickFix app

to report concerns along their routes.

Further, this board continues to recommend the City Council support efforts to expand and improve non-car transportation, including implementation of the Complete Streets and Bikeways master plans, and support of Topeka Metro.

This board is pleased that the Topeka Metro recently received

a federal low/no-emissions bus grant, but is concerned that lack of levy increase could lead to more cuts in service or an increase in fares. Such changes place an undo burden on Topekans who rely on public transportation. Service cuts harm both the environment and Topekans who rely on public transportation or choose it for sustainable-lifestyle reasons.



Quality of Life: Public Education

A key to creating a more sustainable environment within the City of Topeka is public education and awareness.

Local efforts include the Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE), which conducts a number of workshops throughout the year, including one held in Topeka focusing on environmental education in schools. KACEE also hosts Kids Conservation Roundup each year for 4th grade students to learn about water conservation. The Topeka Zoo conservation and education department also offers several workshops and citizen science conservation programs.

One major local set back recently was the removal of funds

to Keep America Beautiful- Topeka/Shawnee County, which provides education on littering, beautification, and recycling.

Due to company regulations, Rolling Meadows landfill does not conduct any community education or awareness.

As mentioned earlier, this board believes that continued collaboration with Shawnee County and Rolling Meadows to educate the community on recycling and waste management is an essential part of getting the most out of the single stream recycling program offered.

This board recommends the City continue to include sustainability education and awareness content on the City's website and social media pages, and we welcome the opportunity to

collaborate in this regard.

Celebrating ongoing advancement within City departments and information on topics such as safe disposal of unused medication, e-waste recycling options, how to effectively recycle household waste, the benefits of native plants and trees, water and energy use reduction, vehicle efficiency, and the like are just a few of the topics that would help Topekans understand why and how to help the City develop a sustainable future. Such communication channels also can be utilized to proactively educate the community about "the why" behind decisions. Our efforts to collaborate in this were hampered this year by staffing changes, but we are eager to make the appropriate connections in 2022.



Quality of Life: Public Health

Prioritizing health, wellness, and improving the quality of life for our community is essential to making a city resilient and sustainable. The American Public Health Association, The American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Lung Association agree climate

change is a public health emergency and urge leaders to take actions to address these issues. Utilizing the Topeka Neighborhood Health study, conducted by the City in 2017, neighborhoods of focus have been identified. Continuing to focus on improving the overall health of

these neighborhoods and their residents will improve quality of life and enhance community connections. The CDC's Healthy Communities Programs has evidence that suggests creating healthy places for people to live, learn, work, and play reduces the burden of chronic diseases.



Presentations & outreach

- Courtney Masterson, biologist, & Lesley Hayward, master gardener, native plants and property code enforcement. (February 2022)
- City Grants Administrator Kaela Pauole regarding potential project grants
- Marc Galbraith, Central Topeka Grocery Oasis
- Kevin Siek, Shawnee County Master Gardener Program
- Metropolitan Energy Center (MEC)'s, Brandt Hertenstein Program Coordinator & Kansas City Regional Clean Cities Coordinator
- Party for the Planet composting and recycling demonstrations
- Stormwater drain painting by TSAB members
- Increased coordination regarding website and social media

Feedback?

We welcome feedback on this report and are interested in environmental efforts at all levels of the community. Please share what you know with us at SustainTopeka@gmail.com and on [Facebook](#).

Remaining 2023 Meetings

May 5

June 2

July 7

August 4

September 1

October 6

November 3

December 1

4 p.m.

**Holliday Building
Conference Room**