The City of Topeka Planning & Development Department issues and tracks building permit information to measure development trends and policies in the City.

Using 2020 permit data, total building permits are projected by the end of the year to experience an increase of 10.1% from 2019 (472 vs 520). Residential permits are projected to increase 41.3% (253 vs 358) as compared to a decrease of 26% (219 vs 162) in the total number of commercial permits.

In addition, both building square footage and building value can be evaluated to better understand the scale of investment in the City of Topeka.

By the end of 2020, building square footage is on pace to decrease 6.6% from 2019 (4,065,616 sq. ft. vs. 3,797,658 sq. ft.). The value of building permits is on pace to increase 2.4% ($215,196,502 vs. $220,257,910). However, these trends both reflect the massive Walmart Distribution Facility ($94M, 1.8M sq. ft.) as a major outlier.

* The Top 10 Permits table includes permits with the highest project completion cost issued to date, both commercial and residential.
Residential Growth

The total number of residential building permits issued in the City of Topeka are an indicator of housing growth. The number of new residential building permits (by units) through October of 2019 and 2020, increased 134% from 102 to 239. Over that same period of time, additions and alterations increased by 30.8% (156 vs 204).

Tracking total new housing unit types can be an indicator of more quality housing choices and affordability in keeping with the priorities of the City’s Housing Market Study and Land Use and Growth Management Plan 2040 (LUGMP).

For the decade of 2000 to 2009, single family and non-single family housing units developed at a relatively even share. From 2010 to 2019, the share of new non-single family units surprisingly did not grow, accounting for only 39% of new units. While the sample size is much smaller, 2020 is on pace to show an important reversal of this trend with 65% non-single family share.

In order to evaluate 2015 policy changes made in the LUGMP, tracking the location of new residential dwelling units created within Topeka (City), Urban Growth Area (UGA), Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (3-mile ETJ), and Shawnee County is vital. The City’s share of new dwelling units compared to all of Shawnee County was 70.3% through October 2020 (239 out of 340 units) compared to 53.5% in 2019 indicating better alignment with LUGMP priorities.

Buildable prime vacant lots (BPVL) are those lots/units within the city that were platted since 1970 and currently have street access or approved benefit districts. Topeka has a sufficient supply of BPVL’s through the end of the second quarter of 2020 to accommodate 7.75 years of housing growth for new single-two family dwellings.
3-Mile ETJ, UGA, and City Boundary
New Housing Units — Year to Date