



## CHAPTER 6

# PRIORITIZATION & IMPLEMENTATION

## PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The strategies and tactics discussed in Chapter 5 are meant to be holistic and to meet Topeka's housing needs over the next 10 to 20 years. There is a need to prioritize actions in the short term and plan for future actions as conditions change.

The City of Topeka cannot implement all six strategies and 27 tactics at once, and it is not prudent to do so. A more systematic approach will lead to better long-term results.

There are clear and urgent needs in the city that can be addressed right away through strategic focus. Four priority efforts were identified through understanding Topeka's most critical housing needs, and discussions with the Steering Committee, Client Team, and Governing Body.

The four priority recommendations are:

1. Fund the Affordable Housing Trust Fund
2. Establish a strategic land bank
3. Support the development of community development corporations (CDCs)
4. Expand weatherization and home repair programs

These priorities are aimed at addressing the critical needs of providing more quality affordable housing, improving neighborhoods through housing reinvestment, and expanding the capacity of the community to address housing and related needs.



### PRIORITY STRATEGY #1: AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND (AHTF)

The City of Topeka established broad goals when it established the AHTF in July 2019, focusing on encouraging the rehabilitation and development of affordable housing, emergency shelter, and supportive services. It formed the Affordable Housing Review Committee to provide oversight, and established criteria for evaluating potential projects. It did not, however, fund the program. The following actions steps are recommended to fund and activate the AHTF:

1. Set a target fund amount.
2. Seed the fund with city dollars, such as from CDBG or the general fund.
3. Seek matching funds from local, regional, and national foundations; area employers; financial institutions, and other organizations.
4. Identify pilot projects for the first year of funding, so that it is clear what programs and developments will be supported initially. Pilot projects also help generate future support by showing the successful application of the concept.
5. Establish a clear focus of what the AHTF will do and fund:
  - a. Eligible Projects:
    - i. Renovation and/or rehabilitation projects in the Focus Areas.
    - ii. New construction projects that have additional sources, such as LIHTC, HOME, CDBG, or similar funds.
    - iii. Home repair and weatherization programs sponsored by the city.
    - iv. Predevelopment loans, with a preference for non-profit developers and CDCs.
  - b. Set targets for affordability, such as:
    - i. 50% of funds will go toward 30% AMI units
    - ii. 30% will fund 30% to 60% AMI units
    - iii. 20% will fund 50% to 80% AMI units
  - c. Set parameters for distributing the funds:
    - i. Offer a low-interest or zero-interest loan.
      - For LIHTC projects, a zero-interest loan with a balloon payment due after the 15-year compliance period is an option. This loan would roll into a second compliance period if that is exercised, and would be forgiven at the end of the second period.
      - For non-LIHTC projects, the loan could charge below-market interest and the developer/owner would have interest-only payments, with a balloon principal payment at the end of the agreed upon term. This would serve to create a revolving loan.
    - ii. Weatherization funds would primarily be grants, while home repair funds could be loans with a forgivable option.
    - iii. Predevelopment loans would serve as a bridge loan from concept to groundbreaking and would be repaid with project financing.
  - d. Finally, after the fund is seeded and successful projects are completed, it is important to secure a permanent, on-going funding source.



## An Incremental Approach

We recommend a target fund amount of \$3 million, which would support the creation of 80 to 100 units of affordable housing each year. This would effectively increase affordable housing production from the historic average of 35 units per year to the goal of 125 units per year discussed on page 52.

However, many AHTFs approach a funding goal incrementally because funding availability changes regularly and new state or federal sources could become available over time. The graphics to the right summarize the potential impacts of an incremental approach.

- It is important to start somewhere, even with a modest seed amount, to address the critical affordable housing need.
- As an example, a \$50,000 seed investment from the city could leverage \$300,000 in funding from community partners if six entities match that amount. With an initial focus on weatherization, minor renovations, and supporting small infill developments, this would preserve or add 15 to 20 affordable units.
- Over time, as additional funds are available and partners emerge, the focus of the fund should include more cost-intensive projects like rehabs and larger new construction projects. A \$1.5 million fund could affect 50 to 60 units.
- The \$3 million goal is ambitious, and not reaching that funding level should not be perceived as a failure because lesser amounts still support significant affordable housing gains.

## FUNDING SOURCES AND PROJECT PRIORITIES



## INCREMENTAL ANNUAL UNIT PRODUCTION IMPACT







### PRIORITY STRATEGY #2: LAND BANK

The City of Topeka researched land banks in the past and the Department of Neighborhood Relations prepared a draft ordinance, though it was never formalized. It is recommended that steps be taken in the next two years to create a land bank, including:

1. Establish the core functions of the land bank.
2. Revise the prior draft land bank ordinance to ensure current applicability.
3. Use GIS to map:
  - a. Existing publicly-owned residential properties
  - b. Property conditions
  - c. Properties that would serve goals of neighborhood plans if redeveloped
  - d. Properties suitable for development
  - e. Properties suitable for redevelopment ("Rehab-ready" properties)
  - f. Properties ideal for land bank acquisition
4. Partner with the Greater Topeka Chamber to facilitate conversations with Shawnee County officials to draft a Memorandum of Understanding or similar agreement to give the land bank first right of refusal of properties that are eligible for tax sale and meet strategic objectives.
5. Identify qualified developers to partner with to rehab and sell properties.
6. Establish a goal of not holding properties for more than three to five years.



### PRIORITY STRATEGY #3: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS (CDCs)

The city would have a smaller role in establishing CDCs because they are typically non-profit entities that operate outside of city government. Cities primarily support CDCs by funding capacity building, and partner with CDCs to streamline the development process and enhance city services.

The primary actions that the city would take to implement this strategy are:

1. Identify individuals and groups in the community with the skill set to lead an organization, including business experience, exposure to the development process, and a passion for serving the community.
2. Coordinate with a national organization, such as LISC or NeighborWorks, to conduct training for the individuals and groups to develop knowledge, skills, and relationships necessary to form a CDC, select board members, identify the area they will serve, create a business/organization plan, and devise a funding strategy.
3. Identify partner organizations or community anchors, such as Stormont-Vale and Washburn University, that would support a CDC or similar efforts in the Central Topeka focus area.



### PRIORITY STRATEGY #4: EXPAND WEATHERIZATION & REPAIR PROGRAMS

There is considerable data from weatherization programs that shows their positive impacts to the health and wellbeing of citizens, and their positive economic impact to households and cities. Renovation and rehabilitation programs can also have significant impact by helping keep households in safe, habitable homes, preventing vacancies by fixing homes before they become uninhabitable, and returning vacant properties to productive use.

The city of Topeka is already taking actions to utilize CDBG funds to fund weatherization efforts that would greatly expand what some community partners are able to do today.

The AHTF will be a powerful tool to raise additional funds to support weatherization and expand repair programs.

## ADDITIONAL PRIORITIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS

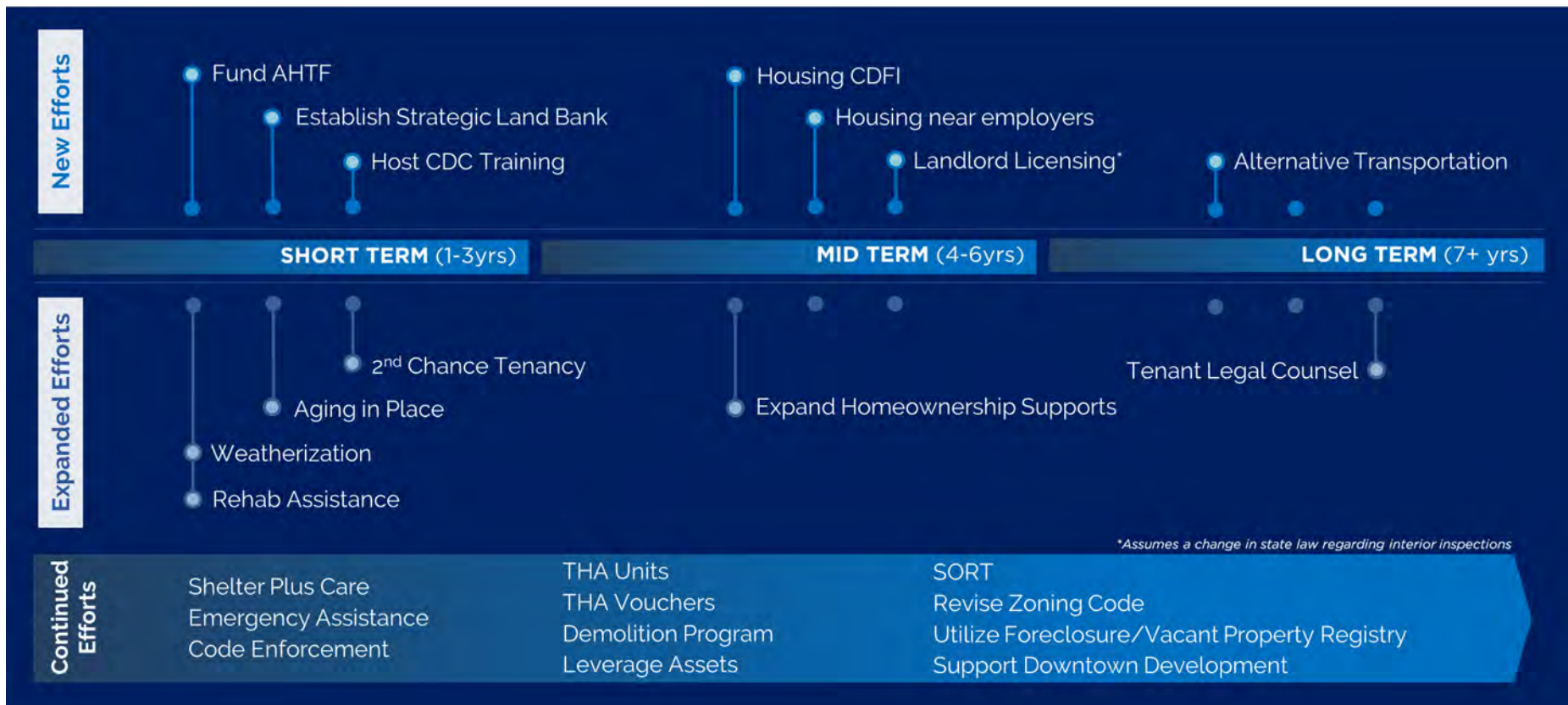
Not everything can be accomplished at once, so it is important to set expectations for the timing of all recommended housing initiatives. Positive change will require incremental and sustained interventions over the long term.

The graphic below summarizes the recommended timing of initiating the recommended strategies and tactics.

Certain tasks are spread out over time to allow for the identification, acquisition, and allocation of resources to set the tactics up for long-term success.

Many recommended strategies currently underway in some form are noted under “Continued Efforts”. It is critical that these efforts continued and expanded if possible—their continued implementation is part of the holistic approach needed to meet Topeka’s housing needs for many years into the future.

PRIORITIZATION AND TIMING DIAGRAM



## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

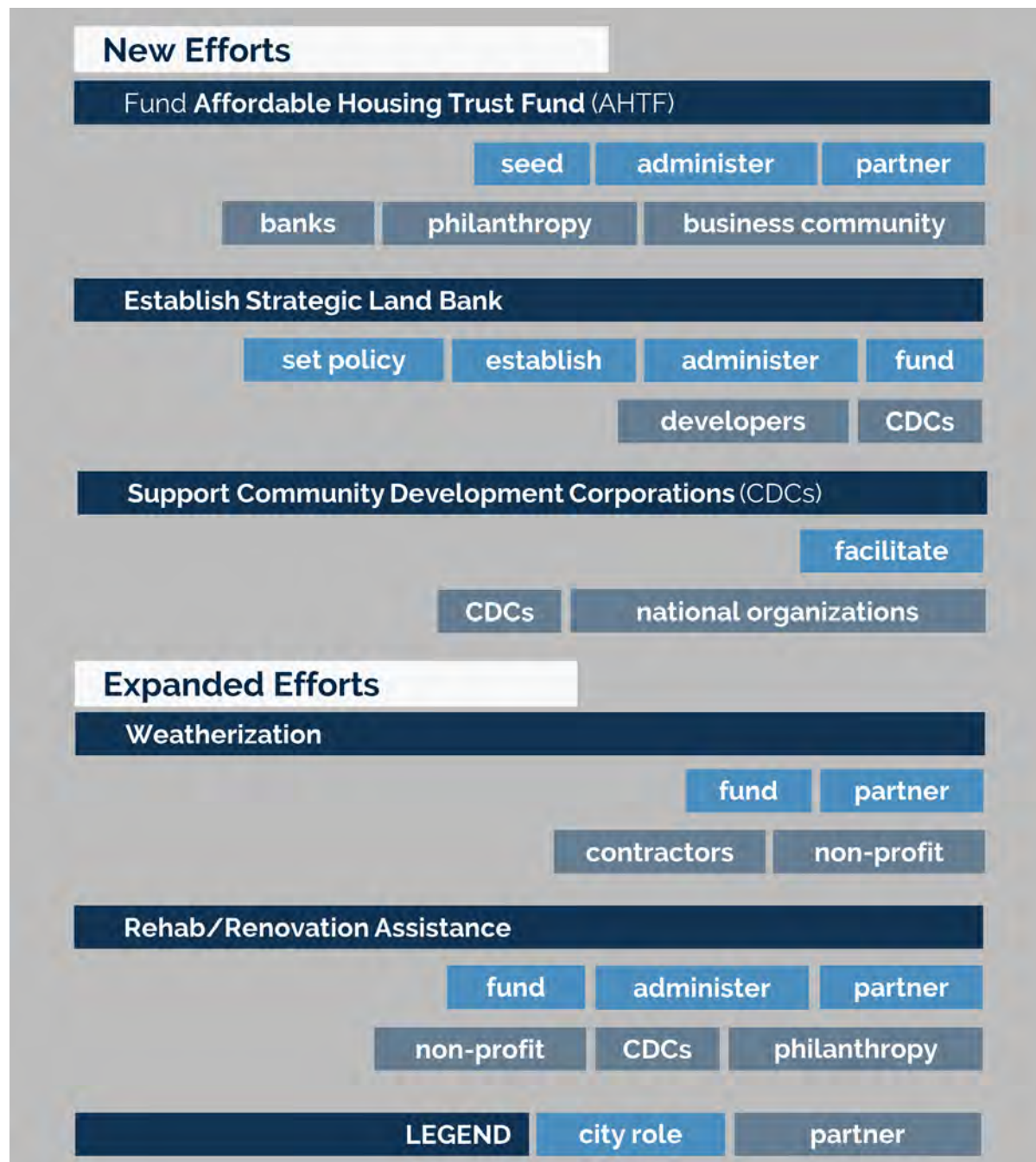
A consistent theme of this study is that the City cannot do everything needed to have a successful housing strategy. Clearly defining the role of the city and its many partners is necessary to align resources for collective impact and set the strategy on a path for long-term success.

The graphic on the next page summarizes the city's primary roles for the priority recommendations, as well as partners that will be needed to successfully implement the individual programs. In some cases, such as establishing (and operating) the strategic land bank, the city will have primary responsibility in setting it up and administering the program.

In other cases, like supporting CDCs, the city should take on the role of facilitator by utilizing funds and networks to build community capacity, then work with organizations to accomplish shared goals over time.

Some efforts, like funding the AHTF, will take joint leadership from the city and its partners. The city has established the structure and, with this study, the understanding of the need and recommended focus of the AHTF. It should also find ways to seed the fund so that community partners see the city's commitment and have something to react to and support. However, to make the AHTF a long-term success, community partners such as philanthropy, the business community, and financial institutions, must support and champion the effort. This includes recognizing that housing is a critical component of Topeka's long-term success.

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES





## IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX OF STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Each strategy has a different focus, a different timeframe for implementation, and different partners involved. An implementation matrix serves as a resource for aligning resources and efforts, and is a reference tool for all partners.

The matrix on the following pages is a tool that the City and its partners can use to understand how various strategies fit together, which types of housing need they address, the City departments and public agencies involved, and where the strategies can be focused.

While all strategies are focused on housing, some are targeted to for-sale and owner-occupied housing, and others to rental.

Different strategies are also designed to affect housing at different demand levels, with some designed to address the need for affordable and workforce housing and others focused on housing at moderate, upscale, or luxury price points.

The **target housing demand type** highlights the relevant details related to tenure and price point. Other strategies marked with a “-” do not have a target demand type, but are needed to address systemic barriers to quality housing production.

The City has many departments and public agency partners that touch on some facet of housing. Just as the City works to collaborate with outside partners, it also must coordinate internally across its many departments. The **City Resources and Partners** column lists the departments and agencies that would assist with implementation of a given strategy. The partner listed in **bold** indicates a likely lead implementer and facilitator for the coordinated effort.

As this chapter has detailed, no community can implement all strategies at once. The **Implementation Timeframe** column indicates roughly when efforts may begin. Some strategies are already in progress, some will be initiated in the near future, and others are medium-term priorities.

Stakeholder conversation and the analysis highlighted many ways in which neighborhood conditions and needs are different. The strategic framework was designed with this in mind, and it identifies tools targeted to different issues and different market contexts. The **Neighborhood Cycle Applicability** column indicates where strategies are relevant, and highlights where different efforts should be focused. This allows for tactics to be strategically applied throughout the city.

## IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Strategic Recommendations	Target Housing Demand Type			Resources and Partners	Implementation Timeframe			Neighborhood Cycle Applicability			
	Owner	Renter	Price Point (Affordable, Workforce, Moderate, Upscale)		Short-Term 1-3 years	Mid-Term 4-6 years	Long-Term 7+ years	Opportunity	Transitioning	Stable	Growing
Strategy 1: Improve the quality of the existing housing stock to provide non-subsidized affordable housing and stabilize neighborhoods											
Expand weatherization programs to help lower utility costs for low-income homeowners.	x	-	Affordable; Workforce	Housing Division, Utilities, Utility Companies, Community Partners	○	○	○				
Expand financial and technical assistance for home repair.	x	x	Affordable; Workforce	Community Housing Partners, Housing Division, Financial Institutions	○						
Consider a landlord licensing program to address landlords with persistent code violations and excessive evictions.	-	x	Affordable; Workforce; Moderate	Housing Division, Property Maintenance Development Services, Municipal Court, City Council		○					
Leverage historic districts and community anchors to identify targeted investment areas.	-		n/a	Planning, Kansas Historical Society, Developers, Other Community Partners		○					
Fund adequate staff to support consistent code enforcement.	-		n/a	City Council		○					
Strategy 2: Address abandoned and vacant properties											
Create a land bank to return vacant properties to productive use.	-		n/a	City Council, Legal Department, Planning, County, Non-Profit Partners	○						
Continue consistent code enforcement efforts.	-		n/a	Property Maintenance, Municipal Court, Landlords & Property Owners	○						
Expand the foreclosure and vacant property registry to support other initiatives.	-		n/a	City	○						
Adopt a “demolition as a last resort” policy to promote renovation and preservation.	-		n/a	Housing Division, Planning	○						



Strategic Recommendations	Target Housing Demand Type			Resources and Partners	Implementation Timeframe			Neighborhood Cycle Applicability				
	Owner	Renter	Price Point (Affordable, Workforce, Moderate, Upscale)		Short-Term 1-3 years	Mid-Term 4-6 years	Long-Term 7+ years	Opportunity	Transitioning	Stable	Growing	
Strategy 3: Expand resource to encourage housing stability and support homeownership												
Expand financial assistance for low- and moderate-income homebuyers and homeowners.	x	-	Affordable; Workforce	Community Partners		O						
Support residents working toward homeownership with affordable rental opportunities.	-	x	Affordable; Workforce	Housing Division, Community Partners, THA, Developers		O						
Expand financial and technical assistance for rehabilitation.	x	-	Affordable; Workforce	Planning, Housing Division, City Council, THA, Community Partners	O							
Provide housing options that support aging in place.	x	x	All	Planning, Developers	O							
Expand supports to prevent and address eviction and homelessness.	x	x	Affordable; Workforce	Housing Division, Community Partners,		O						
Support a 2nd chance tenancy program	-		Affordable; Workforce	Community Partners, Municipal Court	O							
Strategy 4: Support development of a diverse mix of housing types												
Market housing needs and development opportunities to new developers.	-		n/a	Topeka Builder’s Association, Planning, Greater Topeka Partnership, Community Partners	O	O						
Support a diverse range of infill housing typologies and price points.	x	x	all	Planning, Development Services, Developers	O	O	O					
Support market-rate housing Downtown to bolster economic development.	x	x	Workforce, Moderate, Upscale	Downtown Topeka, Inc., Planning, Greater Topeka Partnership, Developers	O	O	O					
Leverage ongoing or planned public investments.	x	x	all	Planning, Development Services, Public Works	O	O	O					

## IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX (CONTINUED)

Strategic Recommendations	Target Housing Demand Type			Resources and Partners	Implementation Timeframe			Neighborhood Cycle Applicability				
	Owner	Renter	Price Point (Affordable, Workforce, Moderate, Upscale)		Short-Term 1-3 years	Mid-Term 4-6 years	Long-Term 7+ years	Opportunity	Transitioning	Stable	Growing	
Strategy 5: Expand production of affordable housing to enhance economic mobility												
Identify locations for affordable housing with convenient access to employers and amenities.	x	x	Affordable; Workforce	Community Partners, Neighborhood Services, Planning, Developers		O						
Coordinate with employers to provide alternative transportation options.	-		all	Planning, TMTA, Greater Topeka Partnership, Employers			O					
Coordinate with employers, institutions, and social service agencies to provide support services.	-		Affordable; Workforce	Community Partners, Housing Division, Employers	O	O	O					
Leverage existing programs, such as the 4% LIHTCs, to produce more affordable housing.	x	x	Affordable; Workforce	Developers, Financial Institutions, Investors	O	O						
Strategy 6: Expand financial and organizational capacity												
Market Topeka, its housing options, and development opportunities.	-		n/a	Greater Topeka Partnership & GoTopeka, Topeka Builder's Association, Planning, Communications, Sunflower Association of Realtors	O	O						
Enhance the city's ability for strategic land control (not eminent domain).	-	x	all	Planning, City Council, Legal Department	O							
Target incentives to support quality housing development.	-		all	Planning, City Council, Community Partners, Developers	O	O	O					
Leverage city resources to create a more robust community development ecosystem.	-		n/a	Community Partners, Housing Division, Greater Topeka Partnership	O	O						