



GOAL 02

Reduce overall household expenses so housing is more affordable

The strict cost of a mortgage, rent, property taxes, and insurance are not the only costs a household bears. Transportation, childcare, and property maintenance are other major expenses for Johnson County residents. Addressing household expenses that impact the overall cost of living is a way to make housing in Johnson County more attainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW:

★ 2.A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce overall household expenses by locating housing near employment centers with transportation options by providing incentives to developers in these locations. Work with Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) to include projects for the Transportation Improvement Plan that improve access to housing and jobs.
2.B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand utility assistance program resources and reach.
2.C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide additional housing choice vouchers, allow for voucher portability between jurisdictions, and increase landlord education and awareness to promote voucher acceptance.
2.D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with housing authorities to consider incentives for locating affordable housing developments, and of Replacement Housing Factor (RHF) Fund units near transit.
2.E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage employers to offer a program to provide additional housing services and resources and reduced rent on market rate rental housing.
2.F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support incentives and partnerships to address quality of life issues, including wrap-around services that create or provide access to health and wellness spaces and activities.

★ Top recommendation as recommended by Housing Task Force

■ Community for All Ages, see page 23



RECOMMENDATION 2.A

■ Reduce overall household expenses by locating housing near employment centers with transportation options by providing incentives to developers in these locations. Work with Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) to include projects for the Transportation Improvement Plan that improve access to housing and jobs.



CONTEXT:

Increasing access to transportation options other than single passenger cars gives opportunities for households to spend less on mobility. For some households, these options are a necessity. There is a large amount of land in Johnson County that is undeveloped along major transportation routes. These are opportunities to increase density and bring public transportation to more areas.

The federal government standard defining affordable transportation costs is less than 15% of annual income. An individual's transportation costs can vary greatly across the country depending on density, location of jobs and affordable housing, and mass transportation options. Transportation costs more than 15% can greatly impact the ability to afford housing in communities. Cities can prioritize and incentivize developers to provide attainable housing units near jobs and transportation to help lessen the transportation barriers faced by lower-income households and to make living in Johnson County more feasible for households with one or no personal vehicles. Johnson County Transit is reviewing current transportation options in order to reprioritize resources to support more transit options in Johnson County with a focus on transit that supports workforce housing and improving transit access along employment corridors (Housing Study page 53, Place of Work map).



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Cost of housing, lack of diverse housing types, limited supply of first-time home buyer options, overall cost of living



COMMUNITY TYPE:

All



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

County, municipalities, KCATA



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

3 - 5 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Total number of attainable housing units within a 15-minute walk to an employment center or a less than 10-minute walk to a transportation solution
- Total transportation dollars leveraged from Federal funding sources to support affordable housing Countywide



CASE STUDIES:

Developments near transit stops can help reduce overall costs for individuals by reducing/eliminating the cost of single driver transportation options. The Housing Study identifies strategies for affordable transit orientated developments.

Affordable housing is highly desired around transit and lower-income populations, employers of lower-income populations, and patrons of those businesses benefit the most from transit access.

[Learn more about incentivizing housing around transit locations here.](#)

MARC conducts an environmental justice analysis when they update the Transportation Improvement Plan. [You can find the 2018-2022 TIP here.](#)

RECOMMENDATION 2.B

■ Expand utility assistance program resources and reach.



CONTEXT:

The Housing for All Task Force identified the overall cost of living as a barrier to affordable housing. By assisting low-income individuals and families with utility bill payments, people can prioritize spending on rent, mortgage, or other household costs. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) assists eligible low-income households with their heating and cooling energy costs, bill payment assistance, energy crisis assistance, weatherization, and energy-related home repairs. Local utilities and non-profit organizations may provide additional assistance.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Overall cost of living



COMMUNITY TYPE:

All



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

County, municipalities, non-profit, local utility companies



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

3 - 5 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

■ Total dollars of assistance provided



CASE STUDIES:

Multiple programs can help reduce energy costs for individuals and families providing overall cost savings to help make housing affordable. [Learn about the different programs that are available in Kansas here.](#)

Some Johnson County Municipalities have existing programs:

- Merriam - Franchise Fee Rebate
- Mission – Community Rebate Program (Franchise Fee/ Property Tax/Solid Waste Utility Rebates)
- Roeland Park – Property Tax Rebate Program
- Johnson County – Senior Rebate Program

RECOMMENDATION 2.C

Provide additional housing choice vouchers, allow for voucher portability between jurisdictions, and increase landlord education and awareness to promote voucher acceptance.



CONTEXT:

Housing vouchers can allow people who may otherwise not be able to live in a community the ability to do so. Vouchers help to address those that are cost burdened paying more than 30% of their income on housing, which allows them to live more comfortably and be able to better afford other expenses such as childcare, utilities, or transportation. Housing vouchers can lead to red flagging renters and misconceptions or stereotypes of those using vouchers and not all landlords may accept vouchers.

In Johnson County, there are available vouchers but a lack of housing units that will accept vouchers. Allowing for voucher portability between jurisdictions and increased landlord education to promote voucher acceptance will help address this issue. As voucher use increases, it is important to ensure the community meets increased demand for vouchers. This can be accomplished by approaching and working with the Congressional Delegation to expand resources, working with the Kansas Legislation to implement programs, and supplementing voucher programs with local resources.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Cost of housing, knowledge of programs and resources, NIMBY-ism, overall cost of living



COMMUNITY TYPE:

All



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

County, non-profit



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

3 - 5 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Total dollars in housing vouchers used
- Total units accepting vouchers

The Johnson County Housing Authority has a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program.

[Learn more here.](#)



CASE STUDIES:

Housing Choice Vouchers can help families move to higher quality neighborhoods, improve neighborhood socio-economic diversity, and reduce homelessness, family separations, and exposure to crime. [Learn more about the effectiveness of Housing Choice Voucher programs here.](#)

[Learn about the Housing Choice Vouchers Program here.](#)

RECOMMENDATION 2.D

Work with housing authorities to consider incentives for locating affordable housing developments, and of Replacement Housing Factor (RHF) Fund units near transit.



CONTEXT:

Replacement Housing Factor Fund Grants are awarded to public housing agencies that have removed housing units from inventory for the sole purpose of developing new public housing units. All replacement units must be undertaken in accordance with public housing development regulations, meaning there is an opportunity to incentivize, encourage, or require the development of affordable housing units near transit. Additionally, there are a significant number of HUD-assisted properties that are near transit. The preservation of these and other federally subsidized housing units within walking distance of transit stations are an important element of a mixed-income, transit-oriented housing strategy.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Cost of housing, lack of diverse housing types, overall cost of living



COMMUNITY TYPE:

Large and mid-sized municipalities



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

County



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

1 - 3 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

■ Total units developed along major corridors served by transit stops



CASE STUDIES:

[Learn about Replacement Housing Factor Funding here.](#)

RECOMMENDATION 2.E

Encourage employers to offer a program to provide additional housing services and resources, such as childcare, and reduced rent on market rate rental housing.



CONTEXT:

Major employers in Johnson County are experiencing workforce recruitment challenges due to housing affordability issues. High housing costs can prevent workers from living near their jobs and can put a strain on the local economy by slowing employment growth. To get ahead of this issue, employers should advocate for and invest in affordable housing as a way to support their workforce and local economy.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Cost of housing, lack of diverse housing types, limited supply of first-time homebuyer options, overall cost of living



COMMUNITY TYPE:

All



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

Chamber organizations, economic development groups, non-profits



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

1 - 3 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

■ Total employer funding leveraged for attainable housing



CASE STUDIES:

In recent years, there has been a trend in large employers making large investments into affordable housing in their communities. For example, Microsoft invested \$750 million into affordable and Missing Middle Housing types in Seattle, not only for employees, but for other middle- and low-income residents. [Learn more about Microsoft's commitment here.](#)

RECOMMENDATION 2.F

- Support incentives and partnerships to address quality of life issues, including wrap-around services that create or provide access to health and wellness spaces and activities.



CONTEXT:

Wrap-around services bring together families, community-based services, and existing support services to create an individualized plan to help meet needs. The plans are created with a team approach and monitored to ensure the desired outcomes are produced and adjusted as needed and can help stabilize families and improve their current socio-economic status. Wrap-around services can help reduce bureaucratic barriers and identify solutions for highest-need families.

In addition to wrap-around services, the built environment impacts health and quality of life issues. A person's zip code can be a determination in their health. Access to fresh food options, walkable neighborhoods, nearby parks, and safety additions like lighting can improve a person's overall quality of life and healthcare costs incurred by individuals.



BARRIERS ADDRESSED:

Ability to age in place, cost of housing, knowledge of programs and resources, overall cost of living



COMMUNITY TYPE:

Countywide



IMPLEMENTATION LEAD:

Non-profit, municipalities, developers



IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME:

3 - 5 years



PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Grant dollars leveraged
- Number of locations where wrap-around services are part of development



CASE STUDIES:

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded five grants to test the effectiveness of supportive housing for vulnerable families. [More information about the experiences of the five communities can be found here.](#)