



*Sedgwick County...  
working for you*

# **Sedgwick County Strategic Plan Influencing Factors Report November 2019**

## **Introduction**

Throughout 2019, Sedgwick County's leadership team worked with the Public Policy and Management Center at Wichita State University on a new strategic plan to guide the county through the next three years. Deliberate and ongoing efforts were made to ensure the plan captures the voices of stakeholders both within the county organization and those external to the organization but impacted by its decisions.

Ongoing conversations assisted in the identification of a series of externally facing goals for General Government, Public Safety, Human Services, Public Works and Culture and Recreation. Conversation also identified internally facing goals for Human Resources, Communication, Finance and Technology.

The work of realizing these goals must take into consideration existing conditions, opportunities and challenges. To assist with these conversations, Public Policy and Management Center staff have prepared the following Influencing Factors Report with a focus on key demographics and community information, financial trends and considerations and relevant long-term issues.

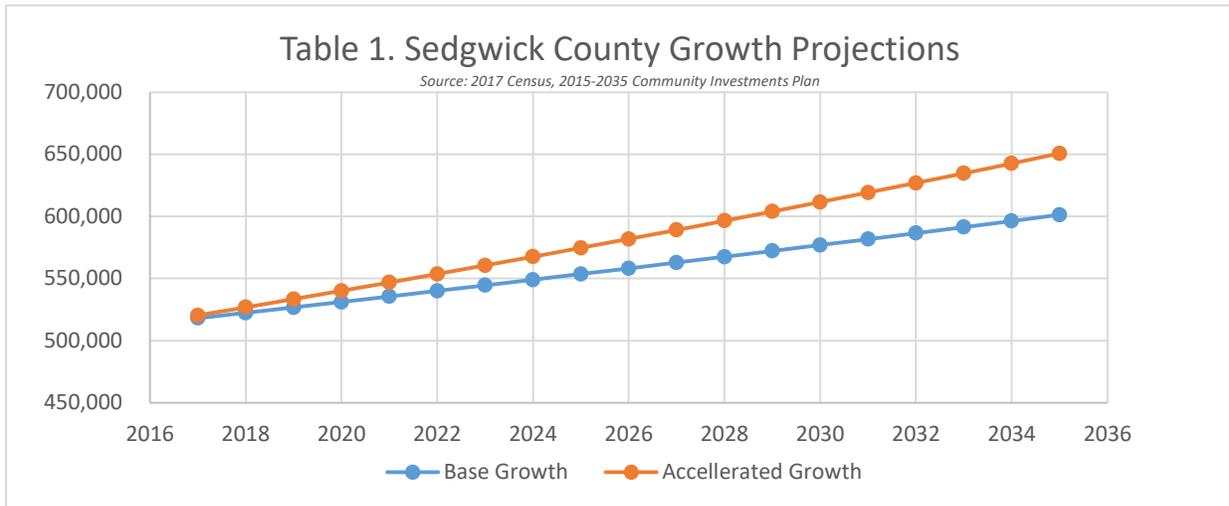
## **Purpose and background**

The data was collected and provided in this Influencing Factors report to guide the development of a strategic plan. To assist in these efforts, the Public Policy and Management Center has prepared this report to guide decision makers and advisors as the county's desired future is considered.

## **Protocol**

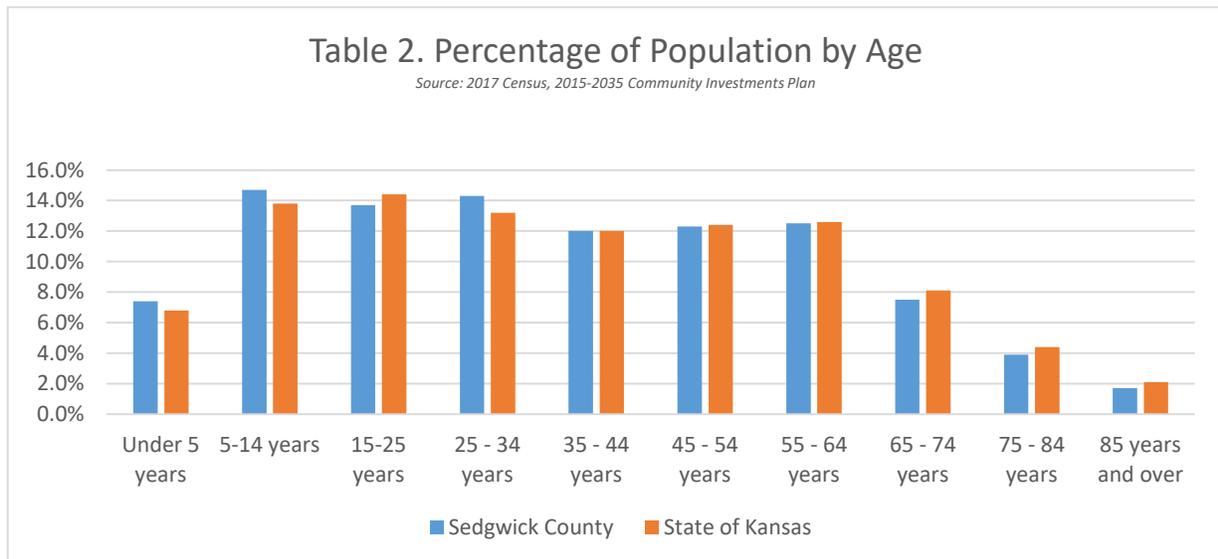
Attention was given to the impact of a number of areas, including: 1) change of demographics; 2) financial needs and trends and 3) long-term issues. To assist in defining the impact of these areas, data was collected from a wide variety of sources including: federal and state government, local governments and other research/data collection agencies.

# Demographics



## Population

Sedgwick County is an area of growth in Kansas. While this growth is not robust, Sedgwick County is one of the few counties in the state experiencing growth. The population rose 3.1% from an estimated 498,365 in 2010 to an estimated 513,687 in 2017. Table 1 shows the continued growth projected in the Community Investments Plan 2015-2035, which anticipates annual population growth at a base rate of 0.83% and an accelerated rate of 1.25%. Current trends indicate continued suburban growth, however, alternative scenarios have been proposed to constrain suburban growth and promote infill growth. Forecasts by the Urban Institute predict notable growth in Hispanic and “Other” racial sub-populations. Adults ages 20-49 and adults ages 65 and older are also projected to have higher growth rates.

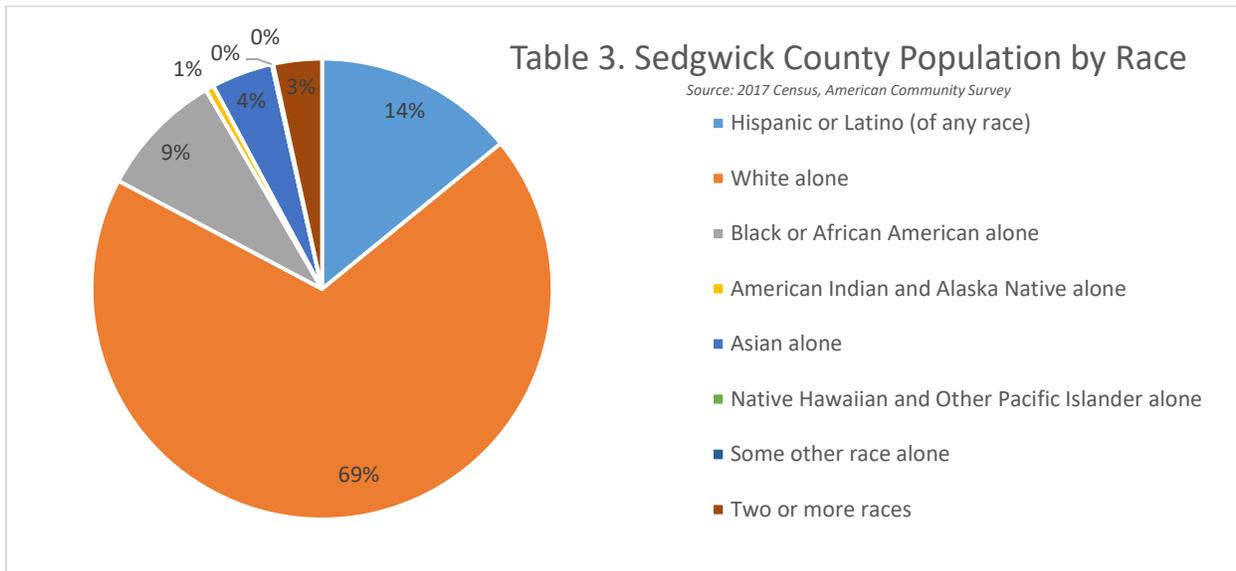


## Age and Sex

Sedgwick County's current median age is 35.5, which is down slightly from 36.7 in 2010. Table 2 provides a detailed breakout of population categories by age group for Sedgwick County compared to the State of Kansas. The largest portion of the population is working-aged adults ages 25 to 64 (51.1%). An additional 34.9% of the population is age 19 and under. A total of 14% of the population is age 65 and over. Demographically, Sedgwick County is similar to Kansas in most age brackets, varying only a few percentage points across categories.

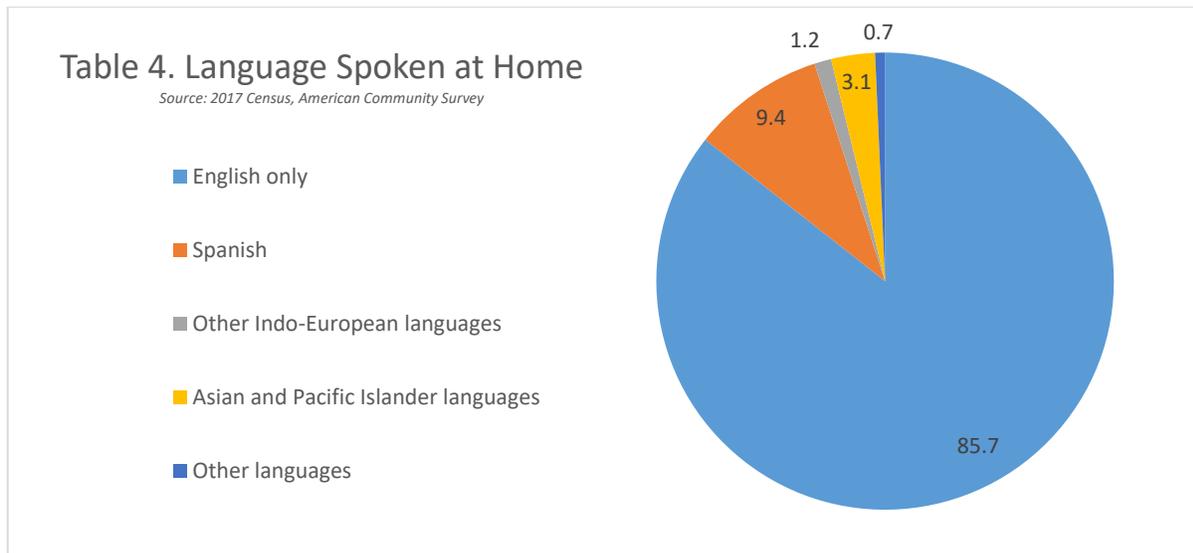
Sedgwick County's population is also slightly more female than male. In Sedgwick County there are an estimated 252,399 males and 258,085 females, for a total ratio of 97.8 males per 100 females. This ratio drops to 79.7 for seniors age 65 and older. Again, Sedgwick County mirrors the State of Kansas in male to female ratios.

## Race



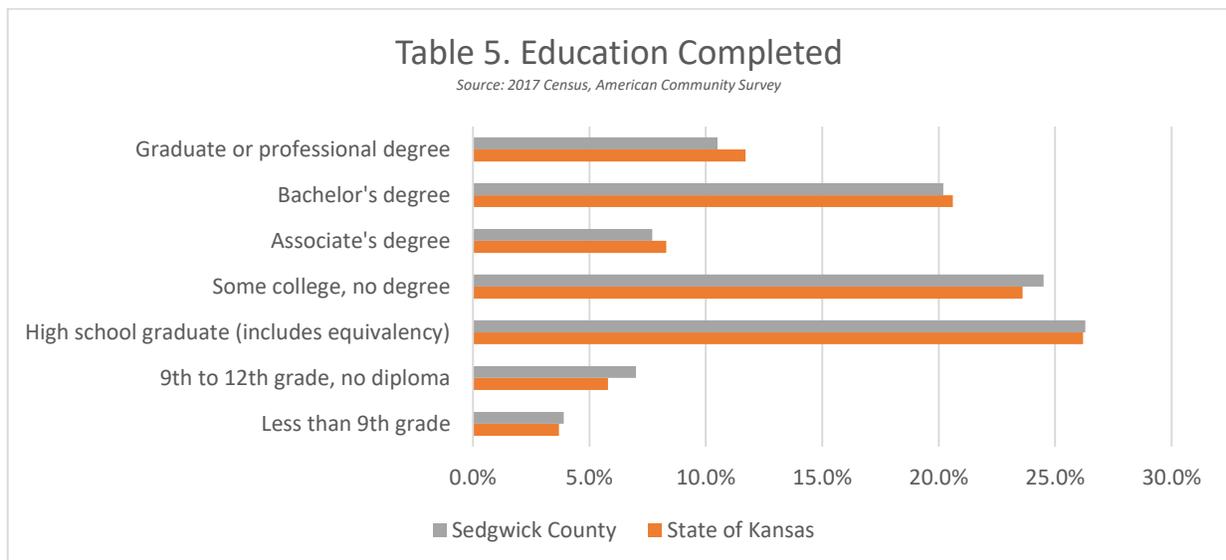
Sedgwick County's racial makeup is primarily white but is growing more diverse. Table 3 breaks down the racial makeup of the Sedgwick County population in 2017. In 2000, approximately 8% of the population was Hispanic or Latino. Over the past 17 years this has increased to 14.1% of the 2017 population. In 2000, the Black or African American population totaled 9.1% of the overall population. This grew slightly, to 9.3% in 2010 and then dipped to 8.8% in 2017.

## Language Spoken at Home



Along with the increasing racial diversity, languages spoken at home have changed in the years since the last Census. Table 4 identifies the languages spoken at home for Sedgwick County residents in the latest Census update. English only remains the overwhelming language choice, but Spanish continues to increase, coinciding with the growth in the Hispanic or Latino population. In 2010, an estimated 87.2% spoke only English at home, which dropped to 85.7% in 2017 estimates. At-home speakers of Spanish have increased, from 8.1% in 2010 to 9.4% in 2017.

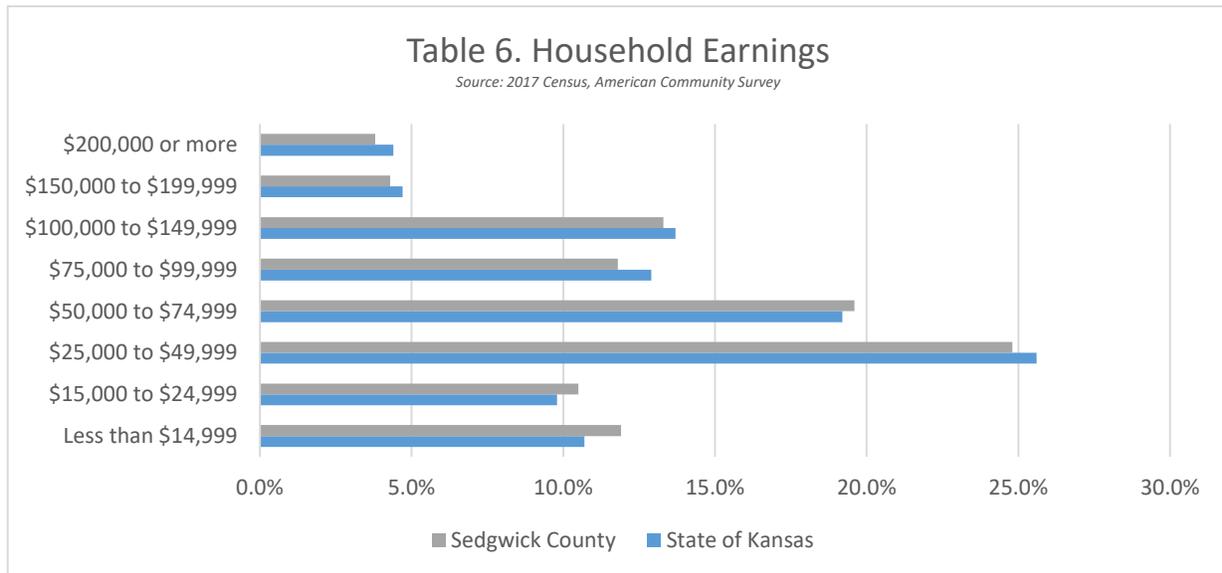
## Educational Attainment



Educational attainment has a strong correlation to household income potential. Achieving higher levels of educational attainment tend to lead to higher income levels. Table 5 compares educational attainment of Sedgwick County residents to the State of

Kansas. The vast majority of Sedgwick County’s 334,211 residents ages 25 and over have some type of higher education. More than one-third do not have educational levels beyond high school. A high school degree or equivalency is the highest level of education for 26.5% of Sedgwick County residents. Approximately one in 10 (10.1%) have less than a high school education, slightly lower than the State of Kansas rate.

## Income

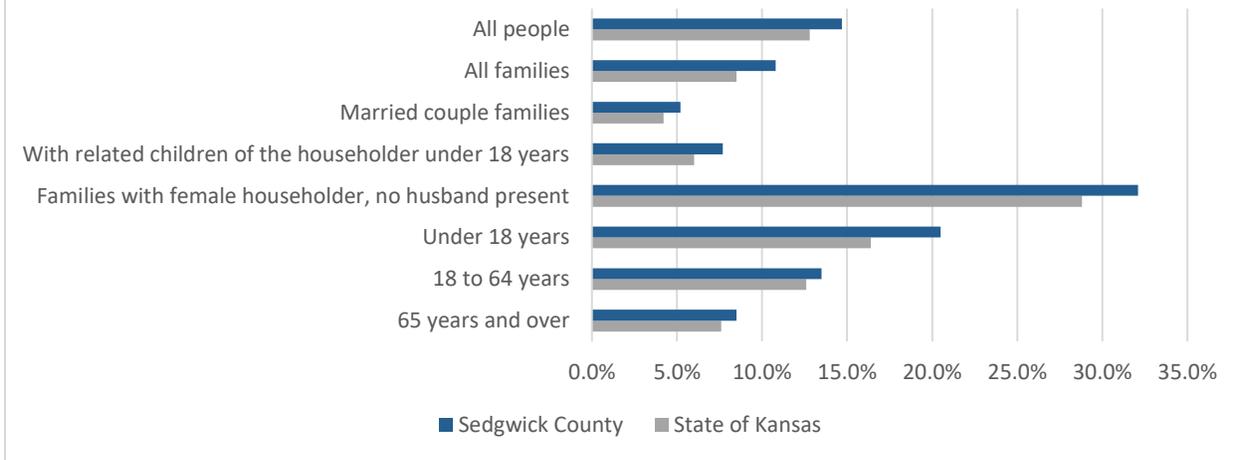


Much like the educational attainment, Sedgwick County closely mirrors the State of Kansas in median household income. Table 6 compares the percentage of households at certain income levels for Sedgwick County and the State of Kansas. Sedgwick County had generally lower household incomes compared to Kansas with a higher concentration in the less than \$14,999 category.

Higher concentrations of low-income households in Sedgwick County, as compared to the State of Kansas, can be seen in multiple measures. In 2017, the median household income in Sedgwick County was \$52,841, with an estimated per capita income of \$27,583. For the State of Kansas, the median household income in 2017 was \$55,477, with an estimated per capita income of \$29,600.

**Table 7. People in Poverty by Selected Characteristics**

*Source: 2017 Census, American Community Survey*



Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2017 established \$12,060 as the poverty guideline for a household of one, and \$24,600 as the poverty guideline for a household of four. Table 7 shows the percentage of people in poverty by household characteristics in both Sedgwick County and the State of Kansas. In Sedgwick County 14.7% of all people and 10.8% of all families had incomes below the poverty level in the past 12 months. Comparatively, the State of Kansas had a poverty level of 12.8% of all people and 8.5% of all families were below the Federal guidelines. In Sedgwick County, 32.1% of families with female householders fell within poverty guidelines, as did 20.5% of children under the age of 18, and 13.5% of working-aged individuals between the ages of 18 to 64. All categories of households in poverty were greater in Sedgwick County compared to the State of Kansas.

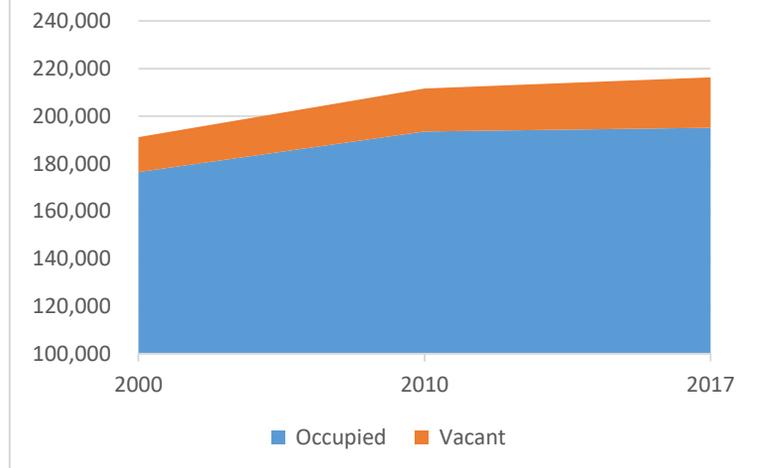
## Other Community Information

### Housing Trends

Sedgwick County’s housing stock has grown from decade to decade. Table 8 shows the total number of housing units in Sedgwick County and those that were occupied versus vacant. Table 9 provides insight into the percentages of owner occupied compared to renter occupied units. In 2000, 191,133 housing units were in existence, with 176,444 (92.3%) occupied. Of these, approximately 66.2%

**Table 8. Housing Growth & Occupancy**

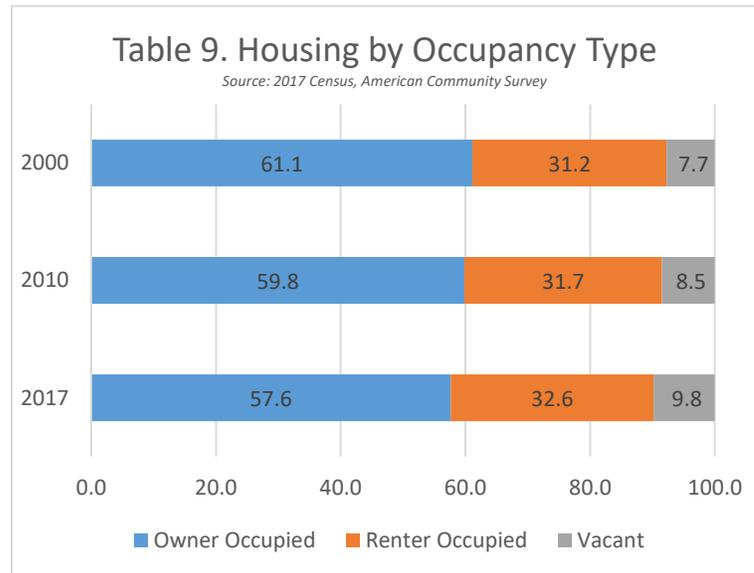
*Source: 2017 Census, American Community Survey*



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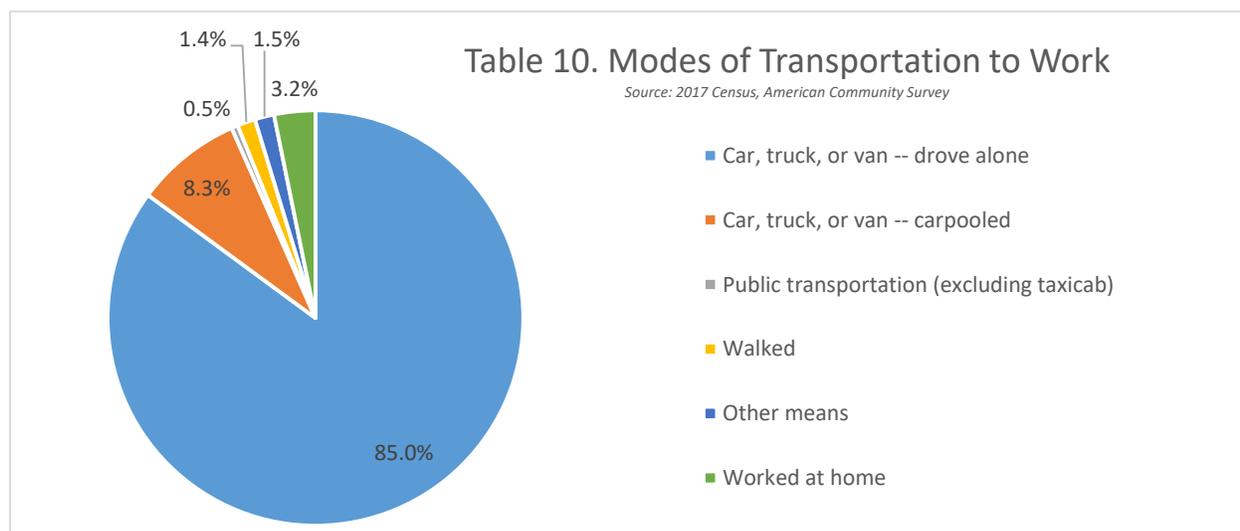
were owner occupied and 33.8% were rentals. By 2010, total number of housing units had grown to 211,593, and even post-recession 193,502 (91.5%) were occupied. A slightly lower percentage were owner occupied (65.4%), versus renter occupied (34.6%) and vacant housing units increased to 8.5% of total housing stock. Growth in the housing market has continued in the current decade, with a current estimate of 216,296 housing units in 2017, of which 90.2% are occupied.

The 2017 American Community Survey estimates indicate Sedgwick County's housing stock remains largely 1-unit, detached (154,759) with 19.3% of stock built between 1950-1959. Approximately 12% to 14% of stock were built per decade in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. This stock currently features a median of 5.8 rooms, with 36.6% of units featuring three bedrooms, and a median household value of \$130,900.



A trend toward growth in renter occupied housing shows through more clearly in 2017, with owner occupied units falling below two-thirds of total occupied units and renter occupied units up to nearly one-third of all units. National trends and indicators point toward this increasing in the years to come.

## Transportation



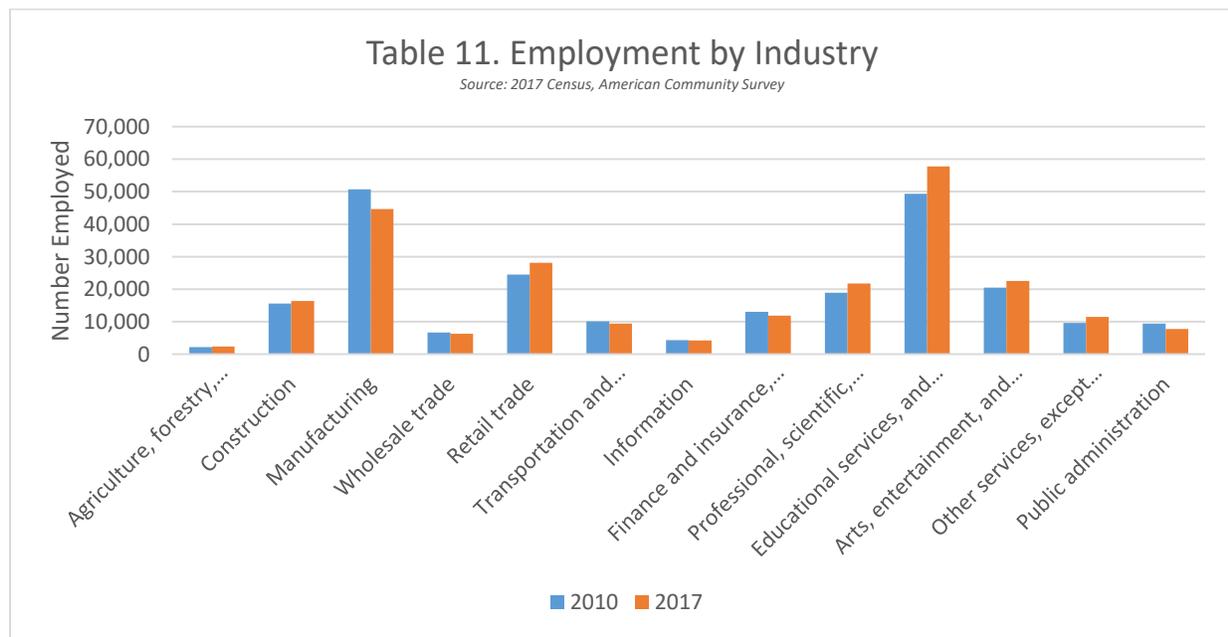
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Sedgwick County transportation remains focused on automobiles. Table 10 provides the percentages of workers using different modes of transportation to work. Increasing numbers of workers are driving alone to their places of employment. In 2010, 84.5% of workers reported driving alone, and in 2017 that number had risen to 85%. Meanwhile, fewer are carpooling, down from 9.4% to 8.3%. Use of public transit also has fallen, from 0.7% to 0.5%. Walkers and those who work from home have remained steady.

The personal automobile remains the preferred mode of transportation between home and work in Sedgwick County, with 97.9% of workers 16 years and older reporting their household has at least one vehicle, a number that has held steady since 2010. The percentage of workers whose households have access to three or more vehicles has increased slightly, from 34.2% in 2010 to 35.3% in 2017, and households with access to one vehicle (19.3%) or two vehicles (43.2%) have decreased very slightly.

In recent years, there has been a focus on developing multimodal transportation options and increased bike lanes, particularly within Wichita and the downtown core. The impact of these investments remains to be seen, and these trends should be watched closely for potential impact.

## Workforce and Employment



Sedgwick County's labor force has grown slightly, from 257,063 in 2010 to 259,419 in 2017. Unemployment has fallen in the years since the Great Recession, which resulted in a 7.7% unemployment rate with 19,528 unemployed individuals in 2010. Table 11 compares the employment categories for Sedgwick County in 2010 and in 2017.

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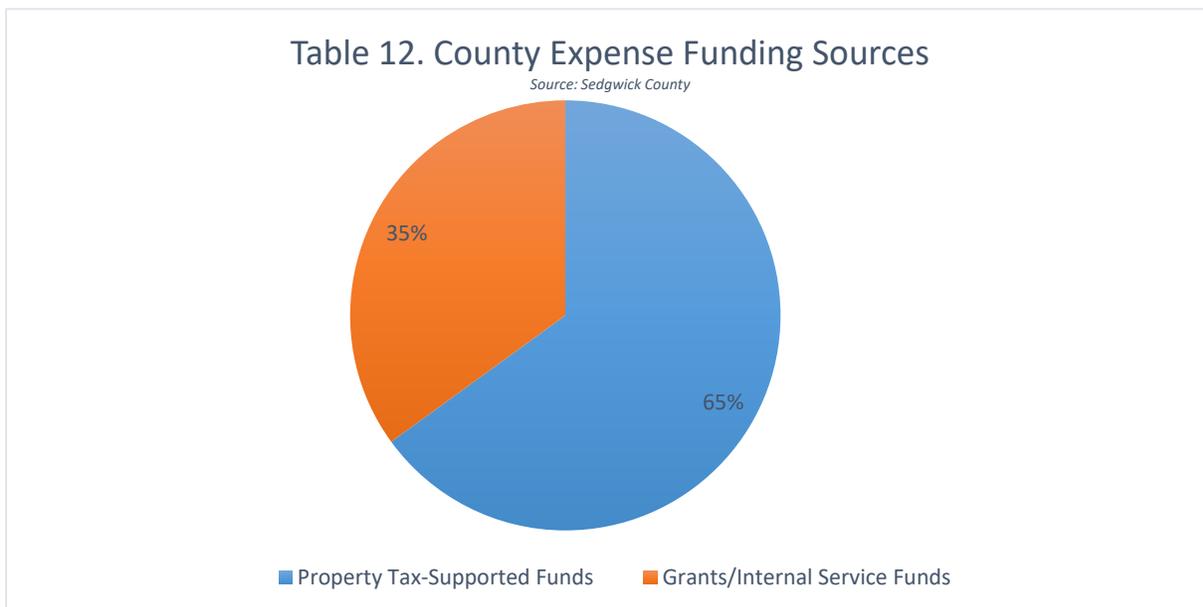
In recent years, the unemployment rate has fallen closer to 3%, leading to a focus on strategies for attracting and retaining particular skillsets. Internally, Sedgwick County has struggled with workforce shortages in the public safety, social work and mental health fields, and externally there is regional conversation on how to attract, retain and develop the needed workforce to support and sustain key industries.

Locally, the workforce is seeing growth in management, business, science and arts occupations as well as service occupations. The highest level of growth was in the educational services, health and social assistance employment category. Slight declines have occurred in sales and office occupations; natural resources, construction and maintenance occupations and production, transportation and material moving occupations. The largest reduction was in the manufacturing sector which shed approximately 5,000 employees between 2010 and 2017.

## Financial Trends

Sedgwick County annually prepares a long-term financial forecast as a fundamental element of its budget process. The forecast evaluates current and future fiscal conditions and helps to guide the county's decision-making process. The forecast is developed through both quantitative trend analysis and a consideration of percentage growth patterns of historical revenues and expenditures. The qualitative experience and knowledge of finance staff and department managers also help shape projections.

### Local Property Tax



Local property tax is a primary revenue source for many of Sedgwick County's operations. Table 12 highlights the percentage of funds supported by property tax compared to other revenue streams. In 2018, property tax-supported funds, overseen

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by Sedgwick County Commissioners, covered nearly 65% of county expenses. Other revenue streams include grants and internal service funds and are often subject to additional restrictions.

In Sedgwick County, property tax revenues are primarily used to fund county-wide services through the general fund and for the retirement of long-term debt on capital projects. Modest growth in property tax revenues is one significant challenge faced by the Sedgwick County government. Assessed valuations grew between 3.7% and 7.9%, with an average growth rate of 5.6% in the early 2000s. However, growth stalled out with the Great Recession, even going backwards in 2013. In the years since, valuations have grown at a much slower rate, averaging 1.7% annually. Increases in 2019 valuations of 3.9% represent the largest increase this decade.

### **Local Retail Sales Tax**

Sedgwick County implemented a 1% tax on retail sales in July 1985 and distributes these revenues to the county and its cities based on individual population levels and property tax levies. Sedgwick County receives 28.5% of the revenue from the county-wide sales tax, with the balance distributed to the 20 cities located within the county. In 2008, sales tax revenues were \$26.8 million, and slid to \$24.3 million in 2010. However, they have rebounded with the economy and total revenues of \$29.5 million were collected in 2018.

### **Other Revenue Sources**

- **Motor Vehicle Taxes:** Changing economic conditions and the impact of tax reductions have made motor vehicle taxes a less consistent and reliable revenue source. However, this source did reach a historical high of \$19 million in 2018.
- **Mortgage Registration Fees:** Legislative action in 2014 began to phase out a previous fee rate of \$0.26 per \$100 of mortgage principal registered, with complete elimination by 2019.
- **Medical Charges for Service:** Medical charges for service include Medicaid, Medicare, insurance and patient fees for medical services. Medical services are delivered through EMS, the Health Division and the Sedgwick County Offender Assessment Program. EMS was responsible for 92.4% of 2018 collections. A change in billing processes prompted decreased 2018 revenues, with collections expected to spike in 2019 with the collection of delayed 2018 billings.
- **Special City/County Highway:** Used for the distribution of State motor-fuel taxes among local jurisdictions.
- **Investment Income:** Revenues generated from the investment of idle county funds. Sedgwick County's investment portfolio ranges from \$225 million to \$500 million depending on the time of year. By law, investments are restricted to short maturities having little to no risk. Low interest rates since the Great Recession have translated to several years of low returns.

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## **Expenditures**

Sedgwick County has seven primary spending categories into which expenditures are divided: personnel, contractuals, debt service, commodities, capital improvements, equipment and interfund transfers. In 2018, total expenditures in county property tax-supported funds were \$254,317,416. Of these, 53% were for personnel costs and 26% were for contractual services.

### **Personnel Costs**

Personnel expenditures represent the largest cost in delivering services. Future projections represent Sedgwick County's attempt to address identified market pay deficiencies and other adjustments, as well as health benefit plan changes and premium increases and increases in retirement rates through KPERS and KPFRS, as set by the state.

### **Contractual Expenditures**

Contractual expenditures represent the county's second-largest expenditure category and include services by external entities and internal divisional charges to other funds. Contractual expenditures are somewhat cyclic in nature, based on elections and other changes, and in 2018 they saw a large increase because of costs incurred in the merging of city and county code functions and a \$7 million economic development incentive. They are expected to be lower in 2019 and average out in coming years.

### **Other Expenditure Categories**

- **Commodities:** Includes expenditures for common tangible items with acquisition costs of less than \$10,000 per unit.
- **Equipment (Capital Outlay):** Expenditures of more than \$10,000 for equipment. The county anticipates increases in 2020 with radio replacements across the organization and again in 2021 for anticipated replacement of monitors and defibrillators for EMS.
- **Debt Service:** Debt service payments on current debt obligations. The county continues to hold highest bond ratings from three widely used rating agencies, with a notation that Sedgwick County's financial management policies and practices are "strong, well embedded and likely sustainable." An anticipated 2019 repayment of a 2009 issue is anticipated to save more than \$700,000 in interest costs through 2029.
- **Transfers:** Traditionally, transfers are relatively consistent from one year to the next, with the exception of transfers for capital improvement projects and those for one-time equipment and software purchases.

## Long-term Issues

### Public Safety

Public safety remains a core function for Sedgwick County. Ongoing work with violent crimes, jail population and juvenile justice reform continue to be important work in public safety. Strategic issues that impact arrests and incarceration include mental health and substance abuse. Recent studies highlight links between inmate populations and issues such as substance use, drug addiction and/or mental health needs. The Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office has noted that 73% of inmates in the Sedgwick County Jail struggle with drug addiction and many are likely in need of drug treatment or mental health services. Additionally, about 11% of all charged felony cases the district attorney's office handles have at least one count of meth possession.

This aligns with statistics documented in June 2019 by the National Institute on Drug Abuse: "The substantial prison population in the United States is strongly connected to drug-related offenses. While the exact rates of inmates with substance use disorders (SUDs) is difficult to measure, some research shows that an estimated 65 percent of the United States prison population has an active SUD. Another 20 percent did not meet the official criteria for an SUD, but were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of their crime."

A separate, but similarly concerning issue is the jailing of people with mental illness. In 2015, National Alliance on Mental Illness on NAMI.org published information stating that in a mental health crisis, people are more likely to encounter police than get medical help. As a result, nearly 15% of men and 30% of women booked into jails have a serious mental health condition. The organization notes the vast majority of the individuals are not violent criminals.

### Infrastructure

A comprehensive assessment of all Wichita and Sedgwick County infrastructure and facilities in 2011-12 revealed that 38% of Wichita's infrastructure is in a 'deficient/fair' condition (about 11% of the County's infrastructure is in a 'deficient/fair' condition).

The Community Investments Plan projects diminishing state and federal funding for local infrastructure, as well as slowing locally generated revenues for both Wichita and Sedgwick County. There is concern about the overall cost of bringing local infrastructure fully up to standard, as well as costs to maintain existing infrastructure and facilities.

Despite efforts to develop and promote alternative types of transportation, the number of people in Sedgwick County who drive to work is increasing and fewer individuals report participating in carpools or using public transit. These trends will impact the County's transportation and highway needs and distributions.

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## **Mental Health**

Nationally, one in five people (20%) have been diagnosed with a mental illness, and approximately 46.6 million adults in the United States face the reality of managing a mental illness every day. Mental illness, particularly if untreated, can be debilitating. Depression has been named as the leading cause of disability worldwide.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-24. Locally, there is an average of one death by suicide every four days in Sedgwick County, which saw more than 100 deaths by suicide in 2018. These rates are the highest on record since the county began tracking suicide rates in 2001 and are trending higher than state and national averages. Males are impacted at more than twice the rate of females, and 59% of those who died had a known history of mental illness such as depression or anxiety.

## **Employees**

County-wide cuts made in the wake of the Great Recession, which caused budget shortfalls and decreased activity, are still in place. However, the past decade has brought economic rebounds and associated workloads, many of which have been absorbed by existing staff members. Continued upticks in work volume are straining current staff capacity.

Outside factors also have increased the workload, particularly in the public safety field where increases in law enforcement personnel and the addition of body cameras by both Sedgwick County and Wichita law enforcement agencies have increased prosecutions and caseloads at the District Attorney's office. However, ebbs and flows resulting from state budget decisions have a significant trickle-down effect on departments such as COMCARE and corrections, with fluctuations at the state level directly impacting their ability to hire and/or retain.

Compensation and benefits have been discussed by all groups throughout the strategic planning process. Employees expressed concern that wages are significantly lower than local and peer city comparisons. There is an internal awareness of this, and future expenditure projections include efforts to begin to bridge this gap.

## **Fiscal/economic shifts**

The Great Recession had a significant impact on the local economy. The County experienced the impact of slow revenue growth in many categories that provide insight into the local economy's fiscal health, including the value of the property tax base, sales tax collected, fees paid on home and commercial mortgage filings, taxes from auto sales and investment income. The impact can be seen in various statistics including unemployment rates, home sales and new construction permits. Despite the downturn in the economy, the County has preserved its very high credit ratings with all three major credit rating agencies.

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At the same time the County was coping with the impact of the Great Recession, it experienced additional revenue challenges due to a number of State actions:

- In 2002, the Legislature ended the Local Ad Valorem Tax Reduction (LAVTR) demand transfer payment, which had provided a portion of the State sales and use tax to cities and counties. This resulted in annual reduced revenue of about \$4.3 million.
- In 2002, the Legislature also ended the City/County Revenue Sharing demand transfer payment, which had provided a portion of the State's sales and use tax in exchange for the local share of cigarette and liquor enforcement taxes. This resulted in annual reduced revenue of about \$2.7 million.
- In 2006, the Legislature passed a personal property tax exemption for new commercial machinery and equipment. In 2006, the assessed value of personal property was \$419.6 million in Sedgwick County. As of November 2019, that value is down to \$230.1 million. Based on a mill levy rate of 29.359 mills, the 'lost' revenue is about \$5.6 million for the 2019 budget.
- In 2012 and 2013, the Legislature enacted income tax reductions proposed by then-Governor Brownback. Following the tax cuts, a number of State agencies reduced funding to County divisions. In 2009, State aid and Medicare payments to the County's Aging, CDDO, Health, COMCARE and Corrections departments were at \$47.7 million. In 2014, the number was reduced to \$41.3 million. In 2018, State contributions and Medicaid payments in the same programs were at \$42.2 million. As a result of the funding cuts, positions and services were reduced, resulting in service delays for clients.
- In 2014, the Legislature phased out the mortgage registration fee, which was a fee based on the dollar value of mortgages and other documents filed with County Registers of Deeds. The fee was phased out over five years, while per-page filing fees were increased. Combined, the fees totaled about \$8.5 million in 2012. For 2019, the first year of the full phase-out, total fee revenues are expected at \$5.4 million, which will be a loss of \$3.1 million annually.
- In 2016, the Legislature amended its property tax restrictions for cities and counties by adoption of a "property tax lid," which places restrictions on a municipal government's ability to increase taxes over the prior year level without a public vote. The lid was first applicable to development of the 2018 budget. The lid allows an increase in the tax levy for some exceptions and exemptions, as well as growth in assessed taxable value based on a five-year average of inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index. For the 2018 budget, the allowed five-year average of inflation was 1.4%; actual assessed value growth was 3.2%. For the 2019 budget, the five-year average was 1.4%; actual assessed value growth was 3.9%. For the 2020 budget, the five-year average was 1.5%; estimated assessed value growth as of July 2019 is 4.6%.

In addition to the State's action, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) took two related actions in 2016 to limit County spending. First, the BOCC amended its debt

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policy to reduce the amount of debt the County could take on by reducing the ratio of annual debt service payments relative to the County's annual General Fund and Debt Service Fund budgets. That ratio had been at 20% but was reduced to 8%.

Second, the BOCC adopted a resolution that set the "target" mill levy rate (property tax rate) at 29.359 mills, which was the rate that was imposed in the 2011 adopted budget. The resolution also directed a decrease in the target mill levy rate to 28.758 mills in 2023, when some significant debt issuances were expected to be paid off. In 2017, the BOCC took action to amend the debt policy and increased the ratio of debt service payments relative to the budgets for the General Fund plus the Debt Service Fund from 8% to 10%; however, the BOCC voted against a change to the target mill levy rate resolution. This could create a potential challenge for the County's budget as the County continues to issue debt, but simultaneously has a restriction on the funding source to repay the debt.

Within the last two years, the economy has improved enough that those same key revenues have increased at rates that are closer to pre-Great Recession levels, with the exception of the phased-out mortgage registration fee. While local indicators are improving, the finance department remains cautiously optimistic about accelerating growth in the next few years. National indicators point toward a potential recession amidst concerns about actions at the Federal level to impose tariffs that impact international trade, actions to drop interest rates, the impact of natural disasters and the 2020 Presidential election which could influence the markets. However, should a recession occur, the County is poised to make thoughtful, deliberate, and strategic budget decisions due to strong financial management by the BOCC.

## **Tech & Equipment**

Costs associated with technology continue to rise. Software and technology help streamline departments and offer cost-savings via reduced staff time and office supply use. However, many Sedgwick County departments rely on specialized software systems which include both purchasing costs and ongoing fees for maintenance, updates and servicing.

Additionally, there is a strong sentiment that the county needs to assess its technology to ensure systems are up-to-date and effective for both county employees and others who utilize them.

Similarly, technological equipment requires ongoing maintenance and upgrades as useful lifespans are reached. Examples requested in the past year include Emergency Management siren system maintenance and battery replacement, EMS on-board mobile gateways and other medical equipment.

## **Regional Conversations**

Sedgwick County recognizes collaboration and partnerships are critical to its success. The strategic plan shows great synergies with five focus areas identified in the 2018

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Project Wichita community engagement process. Project Wichita engaged nearly 14,000 residents in outlining a community vision for Wichita and the surrounding region in the next 10 years.

# PROJECT WICHITA

Two-thirds of respondents (67.1%) expressed optimism about the future of the Wichita region, which includes Sedgwick County and surrounding counties and communities. However, an even higher number (86.1%) agreed the Wichita region has to be willing to change to keep and attract the next generation.

A number of focus areas identified in the Project Wichita conversation overlap with external issues identified by Sedgwick County's work teams and leadership. Many items are jointly identifiable as long-term issues. Other issues are more specific to Sedgwick County's inner workings but are no less important.

Project Wichita's five key focus areas include:

- Talent
- Lifelong Learning
- Strong Communities and Neighborhoods
- Economic Prosperity
- Quality of Place

## **Conclusion**

An influencing factor report provides a snapshot in time of external influences on an organization. The report is a high-level perspective of important trends and topics that will have impact on the organization during the time of the plan. While there are certainly numerous additional issues that should be and were considered in the planning document, demographics, financial and key trends should be considered for strategic initiatives in the future.

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