

## LAN Mission Statement

*The Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods (hereinafter, LAN) exists to support and enhance the viability and effectiveness of Lawrence neighborhood associations and the Urban Growth Area.*

### **Goals:**

1. To provide opportunities for networking among neighborhoods for the sharing of resources, information, and expertise;
2. To encourage and assist in the development of new neighborhood associations within the City of Lawrence boundaries and the Urban Growth Area;
3. To encourage the cooperation of neighborhoods with similar concerns in order to facilitate the achievement of their common goals;
4. To identify more efficient ways to evaluate the effects of city government policies, services, and programs on neighborhoods;
5. To encourage accurate and timely feedback to city officials on neighborhood concerns and issues regarding city policies, services, and programs.

# Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods Policy Document

## Introduction

In an effort to expand upon LAN's mission statement and to establish parameters for action by our member neighborhood associations in dealing with political issues as they arise, the following statements describe the policies as set forth by LAN in regard to changing physical, economic, and political conditions. LAN also respects individual Neighborhood Association decisions that may be contrary to the following policies.

## Communication

Preserving the quality of life in Lawrence requires actions based on a continuous flow of information among neighborhoods and with officials in the City, County, the University of Kansas, Haskell Indian Nations University, USD 497, other civic organizations and coalitions, and private developers. A strong working relationship between these entities is fundamental to maintaining mutually cooperative relationships among all parties. Maintaining these partnerships requires that all sides take an active role in sharing information and exchanging ideas in a spirit of collegiality. To this end, LAN encourages the appointment of neighborhood association members to city and county commissions and boards, as well as to university and school advisory committees.

LAN is committed to working with existing and emerging neighborhood associations to facilitate their approach to city, county, and school governing bodies and to working with such officials to help remove barriers to citizen access. To this end, LAN's Resource Manual (to be developed) assists neighborhood associations in understanding governmental procedures for civic action.

While the average homeowner defines "quality of life" in personal terms, the city ordinances that have an impact on citizens' lives are usually written in technical language. While LAN is committed to building a network among all concerned entities, respective parties must accept much of the responsibility for translating technical language for ordinary citizens. LAN will work with officials and specialists to develop and use a common language to help all concerned parties communicate. While LAN acknowledges its role in working with individual neighborhoods, elected officials and governmental staff must take the lead in insuring that the policies and processes relevant to citizens are easily accessible to citizens whose participation is part-time, voluntary, and sporadic.

LAN seeks to promote citizen participation in all areas of civic life. Further, LAN believes that a better working relationship between neighborhoods and the city can be facilitated by bringing neighborhoods into planning processes as early as possible. While plans for rezoning or other changes may develop over a long period of time on the drawing boards of planners, they usually do so out of the sight of citizens, who most often become aware of such proposals only a short time before they are officially presented to the planning and city commissions. The need of the city or private developer to go ahead with a project in a timely fashion must be balanced against the need of citizens to learn about pending decisions, their implications and alternatives. Because citizens are often forced to respond to a finished proposal as it appears before the city commission for approval, neighborhoods are often forced into a position of opposing a plan that could have been easily modified earlier in the process to accommodate the quality of life in the surrounding area. Therefore, LAN prefers to work with governmental staffs on planning projects before they become "high profile" sources of potential contention at the earliest possible stages of planning.

Finally, LAN is committed to keeping citizens informed of the activities of their local governing bodies in a timely manner (e.g., through e-mail) as situations which affect their quality of life arise. We believe that making procedural processes more visible will promote cooperation and trust between the citizens of Lawrence and their governing bodies.

## Planning Land Uses and Growth

LAN believes that all future growth in Lawrence and Douglas County should be carefully guided in conformance with comprehensive land use plans that integrate long-range planning across the city, county, universities, and school district jurisdictions for housing, commercial and industrial development, transportation, infrastructure needs, historic preservation, public schools, environmental concerns, and green space. Growth should pay for itself (e.g., through impact fees), without unfairly burdening established property owners. Appropriate infill development should be encouraged.

LAN believes that planning for and construction of infrastructure systems need to precede development. There should be a sequential capital improvement and finance plan based on the comprehensive land use plan. Infrastructure includes water lines, sewers, stormwater systems, utility lines, streets, sidewalks, as well as fire and police installations. Planning for future development should anticipate upstream watershed effects by identifying and acquiring open green spaces in advance of new development. Concerns about detrimental environmental impacts on clean air and water quality should take precedence over economic factors when considering proposals for new development.

## **Historic Preservation**

LAN supports surveys to identify significant historic resources within each of the city's neighborhoods, as well as the creation of national historic sites in Douglas County (e.g., a national monument at the Black Jack battle site and a national Civil War origins museum). Neighborhood resources include significant structures and their environs, other historic elements such as brick streets, alleys, and sidewalks, stone curbs and hitching posts, and the pattern of development as expressed in the street and sidewalk grid, lot size and shape, and building orientation. We strongly encourage individual property and district listings on national, state, and local historic registers. Further, LAN will work with city and state officials to develop incentives for preservation efforts and will provide support for property owners to take advantage of those incentives.

Neighborhood plans should incorporate proposals to protect elements of importance to neighborhood historic character and promote infill development sensitive to the historical context. Use of design guidelines and conservation district zoning overlays that preserve historic features should be encouraged in historic neighborhoods.

## **Downtown**

Downtown Lawrence is a unique and diverse neighborhood comprised of many commercial, office, governmental, institutional, and residential elements. Downtown should continue as the heart of the Lawrence community. LAN supports the designation of downtown Lawrence as a National Historic District.

One key element in the development and maintenance of a healthy downtown is a robust retail business district. Factors that contribute to the successful retail environment downtown include architecture, scale, character, history, and personality. Future developments and investments in downtown should respect each of these elements. New businesses should enhance these characteristics, not diminish them. For these reasons, LAN supports adherence to downtown design guidelines which focus on the unique character and personality of older buildings. Further, LAN believes that local, owner-operated businesses should be encouraged and recognized as the key commercial ventures which make downtown especially unique as a tourist destination.

The residential component of downtown is another key element in its success. The presence of residents 24 hours a day makes for a safer, more interesting and inviting area and makes downtown more compatible with its surrounding neighborhoods. It is in the best interests of both downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods for all of them to be healthy, viable, livable, and appealing.

There will be inevitable conflicts between commercial and residential uses, particularly on the periphery of downtown, as businesses (or others) desire to build or expand in the downtown footprint. For those who are concerned with the character, history, and personality of the area, it is important to resolve these conflicts in a way that enhances important characteristics, while allowing the new business (or user) reasonable flexibility in meeting their needs, without unduly impacting adjacent residential neighborhoods. Therefore, LAN supports the identification of boundaries between downtown and its adjacent neighborhoods and public participation in any re-definition of those boundaries.

## **Economic Development**

LAN believes that the goals of economic development should include: 1) a stable economic base (reliant neither on a single large employer or a single industry); 2) good jobs that pay living wages; 3) a tax base that increases at least as fast as the cost of public services; in order to ensure and improve 4) the quality of life. Economic development efforts should be consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and should preserve historic buildings and the natural environment. Economic development should be driven by industry growth rather than population growth. LAN would like to reverse the trend toward Lawrence becoming a sprawling, bedroom community.

To achieve these economic goals, LAN supports tactics which take into account data-based analyses of existing and future development as an integral part of long-range planning. Economic studies should include the comparative advantages of the city (i.e, University-based skills, infrastructure, and government services) in order to match development efforts with those advantages. Primary efforts should be made to grow within city boundaries by promoting infill and reuse of existing commercial and industrial properties. To keep dollars within the community, existing locally-owned businesses should be supported by providing resources and assistance to local entrepreneurs. Such resources may include public and private partnerships to support risk capital, incubators, facilities which support worker training, specialized and inexpensive "startup" zoning areas, and a city-based network of knowledgeable individuals and advocates able to mentor new businesses and link them with appropriate city resources.

LAN believes that economic development should be constrained by the establishment of an impact fee structure in which growth "pays for itself," so that new development pays the full direct and indirect costs of new infrastructure systems needed to support it, in order to ensure that the tax burden is not shifted from new businesses to existing households. When attracting new enterprises, economic assistance should be reserved for businesses that are environment-friendly

and labor-friendly. Formal contracts for major economic development assistance should include measurable performance standards, regular reviews, and clawbacks for non-performance. In particular, research-based industries related to academic research and to existing types of local industry should be targeted, as well as community enterprises which encourage historic tourism. Neighborhood-friendly development should be accomplished through early input by community members and consistently applied standards which are not compromised when seeking to expedite the development process.

## **Zoning and Subdivision Issues**

LAN supports zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations that promote the development, maintenance, and revitalization of neighborhoods.

## **Existing Neighborhoods**

LAN encourages existing neighborhoods to create neighborhood plans. The city bears the responsibility for funding the creation of such plans. An ideal plan includes a long-term vision, short-term goals, and integration with adjacent neighborhood plans and with the comprehensive plan. LAN encourages new infill development that is consistent with the neighborhood plan and with the character of the neighborhood. LAN believes that relevant small area plans should usually be developed prior to infill development.

Because homeownership is an essential factor which stabilizes neighborhood quality, residential zoning should preserve and encourage homeownership. LAN supports regulations of residential zoning districts, consistent with the patterns of use that prevailed when each particular neighborhood developed, especially when those are identified in neighborhood plans. Zoning should provide requirements for lot areas, widths, depths, and setbacks appropriate to existing neighborhood patterns. Standards that apply to new development (e.g., that single-family houses should not face collector or arterial streets) are often inappropriate when considering existing neighborhoods, and the use of such standards to justify "up-zoning" should be challenged.

LAN believes the City should require that its appropriate zoning ordinances and neighborhood and other adopted land use plans be enforced over land owned by the University of Kansas, Haskell Indian Nations University, and USD 497. Zoning and planning standards should ensure adequate buffers and compatible transitions between residential neighborhoods, school campuses, and commercial areas. Transportation corridors and greenspace corridors should be planned to create and respect neighborhood boundaries and to limit school and commercial traffic through residential neighborhoods.

## **New Neighborhoods**

LAN supports the creation of new, identifiable, residential neighborhoods which consider housing, offices, commercial businesses, and other land uses with the goal of building a neighborhood. Rather than simply subdividing parcels of land, zoning regulations and locations for streets, sidewalks, setbacks, landscaping, parking, schools, parks, neighborhood commercial, and other public services and amenities should be planned in advance of new neighborhoods and adjacent development. Area planning of housing subdivisions should require the support of public transit and encourage identifiable, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly neighborhood units. Neighborhoods should have well-defined boundaries.

LAN supports a development guidance system utilized to: 1) encourage a compatible mix of housing types including high and low density single-family housing; 2) create "village green" type park spaces and other neighborhood focal points; 3) identify in advance potential public transportation stops and hubs; 4) better integrate different land uses; and, 5) ensure appropriate and efficient infrastructure development.

The principles known as "new urbanism," which urge development that closely resembles the forms of our vital and popular older neighborhoods, should be encouraged by changes in our zoning regulations. These principles include smaller lot sizes for single-family housing, alley entrances for garages, streets oriented more toward pedestrian use and less toward serving automobiles, coherent development patterns that create clear neighborhood focal points, and other elements that simultaneously promote neighborly interaction and increase the efficiency of infrastructure services.

## **Appeals, Variances, and Waivers**

Variances to the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations should not be granted when they subvert sound zoning and development policies, but should be granted to permit exceptions that meet established criteria. Zoning ordinances are unable to anticipate all possible situations, but the intent of regulations should guide the appeal process. Changes to ordinances are outside the scope of the zoning appeals and variance processes.

## **Infrastructure and Utilities**

The large and ongoing capital expenses of our infrastructure systems require careful long-term planning and budgeting before new development begins. Maintaining systems already in place should be prioritized over allocating funds for

designing and building new systems to handle future changes.

LAN urges that extension of infrastructure into new areas must always be considered in light of renewal of existing systems, since new development increases the burden on existing infrastructure. Streets require more frequent repair due to increased traffic, while sewer mains, water treatment facilities, and stormwater systems require additional capacities. Neighborhoods should be consulted during the initial planning stages of cell phone towers and power lines, or any changes to infrastructure.

The costs of developing and maintaining infrastructure and basic services required by all Lawrence residents must be shared fairly in proportion to the cost benefits gained by new development. LAN supports impact fees as a reasonable mechanism to direct growth and to defray the additional burden that new, rather than infill, housing development places on the city's systems. LAN believes that impact fees can be targeted or fine-tuned to encourage development that utilizes infrastructure wisely and to discourage the reverse.

Control of stormwater runoff is an ongoing concern. LAN supports improvements to the city's stormwater drainage system, including establishment of safely designed, open drainage channels and retention ponds, as well as improvements to the city's existing stormwater infrastructure. We support city-owned green space along waterways as a low-cost solution to flooding, and a measure that will also improve water quality and encourage recreational pedestrian uses. All properties need to share fairly in the costs of stormwater management. Costs assessed to properties should accurately reflect the impact that those properties have on changing stormwater runoff patterns. Assessments based on the amount of built and paved surface should be the first basis for determining relative impacts. Features such as detention ponds, permeable pavements and soils, and on-site use of stormwater for irrigation and other purposes should be encouraged, and such efforts rewarded with lower stormwater fee assessments.

## **Transportation and Traffic**

LAN supports multimodal transportation planning, as proposed in Transportation 2025, augmenting the use of automobiles and promoting public transportation, bicycling, and pedestrian sidewalk traffic are in the long-term interests of the city of Lawrence and its neighborhoods. The city's fixed-route public transportation system should be jointly developed and operated with KU on Wheels and USD 497 in order to maximize both service and efficiency.

Current street design standards and layouts, which best accommodate automobiles, should be revised to address the safety and convenience of pedestrians and bicycles. LAN supports the planning and development of bike lanes and sidewalks. We support the implementation of traffic calming measures within existing neighborhoods, when those measures have been developed by city staff in cooperation with residents. Existing streets should be maintained along with expansion of new street systems.

Transportation should be designed to enhance and serve the quality of neighborhood life by providing traffic flow around residential areas. On our collector and arterial streets, LAN insists that engineering standards must be balanced with less quantifiable issues of environmental quality, protection of the character and economic value of residential property, and preservation of the historical townscape. Traffic issues are not engineering questions alone; they contribute significantly to our quality of life.

## **Education**

Neighborhood schools are a focal point for community identity. At both the primary and secondary school levels, social and economic diversity and educational equity among the various schools must be promoted so that students benefit from the diversity of the Lawrence community. LAN supports the preservation of elementary schools in established neighborhoods. We support the construction of schools in the newly developing areas of Lawrence, except when that construction comes at the expense of existing schools. The impact of school closings on the neighborhoods which they serve must be taken into consideration along with issues of efficiency, economy, and educational quality. All possible avenues should be investigated to retain existing schools, including the development of adaptive uses by the community in order to maintain the vitality of smaller schools.

Because school construction, locations of new facilities, school closings, boundary changes, and other school board decisions affect the growth and health of the city, LAN urges closer cooperation among school district, city, and county decision-makers. The Board of Education's decisions, while made with fiscal responsibility, must be part of a broader planning process for the community.

Haskell Indian Nations University and the University of Kansas are vital assets to Lawrence. LAN encourages the development of stronger ties between the universities and the larger Lawrence community and supports the efforts of the KU Neighbors Coalition. As with the public schools, the universities should work more closely with the city and county governing bodies for the benefit of the entire community.

## **Environmental and Green Space Issues**

LAN supports the protection and maintenance of environmentally sensitive, natural communities for open space, agriculture, and low-impact recreational uses. Intrusive and intensive development of such areas should be prohibited. Development proposals should respond to landforms and natural features by following natural topographic contours, maintaining existing drainage patterns and channels, preserving significant existing vegetation, and building at densities appropriate to the natural conditions. No new infrastructure systems should be built in these areas where other alternatives exist.

Residential, commercial, and industrial development should be discouraged in flood-prone areas. LAN believes that, as a rule, alteration of flood plain boundaries through channelization, earth fills, and similiar engineering strategies are not sound flood control techniques. New development should not create flooding problems for existing uses, including agricultural land.

Protection of our existing parks is a concern. The zoning ordinance should contain a category dedicated to park use. New development should provide green space for parks conducive to establishing neighborhood identity. LAN also supports conversions of existing railroad right-of-ways to hiking and biking trails for recreational uses. LAN encourages the use of native plants in landscaping new developments and parks.

## **Civil Liberties**

LAN believes that the individual liberties afforded by the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Kansas, the Kansas Anti-Discrimination Acts (K.S.A. 44-1001 et seq), and the City of Lawrence Statement of Non-Discrimination are the building blocks of our neighborhood communities, fostering mutual respect, trust, and cooperation among neighbors, regardless of race, sex, religion, color, national origin, age, ancestry, sexual orientation or disability. This will be a guiding principle in all LAN decisions. (adopted 8-20-2003)

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