

CITY OF OLATHE

# Economic Development Strategic Plan



OLATHE  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
ONE VISION. ONE VOICE.



A forward-thinking Midwestern community, Olathe offers a collaborative culture that fosters diverse businesses, attracts skilled talent, and creates a vibrant destination for all.

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# Executive Summary

Older than the state of Kansas itself, Olathe stands out as a beautiful, family-friendly community with a rich history and a commitment to business. Whether it's a corporate headquarters, a large manufacturing hub, or a small mom-and-pop shop, every business can thrive here. With close proximity to Kansas City, Olathe offers a direct line to big-city amenities while maintaining the culture and natural features of a small town, giving it a special distinction among the cities in the metropolitan area.

The economy of Olathe is robust and diverse and is driven by a wide array of industries, from advanced manufacturing to healthcare and bioscience. With access to top statewide institutions such as K-State Olathe, MidAmerica Nazarene University, and Olathe Health, businesses in the City enjoy a fertile environment for growth and innovation, a vibrant business climate, and a highly qualified and engaged workforce. With a steady pipeline of emerging technologies from the area's educational institutions, strength in STEM

occupations, and a strong focus on innovation and tech industries, the City of Olathe has the foundation necessary for long-term economic growth and success.

To support the creation of Olathe's Economic Development Strategic Plan, Resonance performed a comprehensive demographic and economic assessment. This assessment evaluated the City's performance across a variety of metrics as compared to a set of benchmark communities and evaluated Olathe's industry clusters to guide future business attraction and expansion efforts. Our team also performed a review of the real estate market in the City across all commercial property types – office, industrial, and retail – to ensure that demographic trends and projections are balanced with real estate market performance and inventory. We complemented this research with stakeholder engagement to address Olathe's assets and opportunities for the future.

## The following takeaways summarize our findings from our research and analysis:

### 1. **OLATHE IS A FAST-GROWING COMMUNITY OFFERING RESIDENTS A SAFE AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT.**

With over 150,000 residents, Olathe's population has increased by 6% in the last five years, a rate that is almost double the national average and nearly five times higher than the state average. Residents enjoy the affordability advantage of Olathe; the high quality of the schools, parks, and sports facilities; and the accessibility to amenities in the Kansas City metro area.

### 2. **HOME TO A HIGHLY SKILLED WORKFORCE IN A VARIETY OF INDUSTRIES, OLATHE HAS A HEALTHY ECONOMY.**

The workforce in Olathe is young and talented. Educational attainment in the City is 49% higher than the national average, and the median age is three years younger than the national average. As a result, Olathe has a healthy economy with an engaged and productive workforce, a low unemployment rate, and steady job growth.

### 3. **OLATHE HAS COMPETITIVE EXPORT CLUSTERS – A FOUNDATION FOR A STRONG, DIVERSE ECONOMIC BASE.**

Olathe has strong manufacturing capabilities in a variety of industries: aerospace, chemicals, metals, automotive, energy, information technology, and medical devices. Ensuring that Olathe has the specialized spaces for these industries and the utility infrastructure that satisfies their manufacturing needs will enable the City to grow and host new businesses.

### 4. **A HEALTHY TALENT PIPELINE IS KEY TO SUPPORTING OLATHE'S INDUSTRIES.**

With a low unemployment rate of 2.5%, Olathe has a labor shortage. While this is not a problem unique to Olathe, the City can leverage the presence of K-State Olathe, MNU, and JCCC to create customized education programs that are aligned with business needs, and implement graduate retention tactics that will ensure a healthy pipeline of talent.

### 5. **OLATHE HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO RETHINK OFFICE SPACE.**

There is a mismatch between the demand and supply of office space in Olathe. Workplace needs have changed in the post-COVID environment, and Olathe has the opportunity to repurpose existing space and provide companies with flexible, differentiated spaces to meet the needs of today's business functions.



**6. PLANNING FOR GROWTH IS ESSENTIAL TO PREPARE OLATHE FOR THE FUTURE.**

The new Panasonic facility will be transformative for the Olathe economy. The City needs to ensure it is intentional in its planning strategies, and it must have the right policies in place on density, land use, public life, and infrastructure layout. A flexible, comprehensive plan will allow Olathe to be responsive to future changes while ensuring that the resulting growth does not challenge the quality of life in the City.

**7. OLATHE NEEDS TO EXPAND STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT THE SMALL-BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM.**

Nearly seven in 10 Olathe businesses are small (having fewer than 10 employees). Ensuring that Olathe has a centralized hub for small-business resources, a small-business network, and specialized small-business support will encourage entrepreneurship.

**8. A WELCOMING OLATHE IS A STORY TO TELL.**

Over the last 10 years, the Hispanic population in Olathe has increased by 37%. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are on top of every site selector's list these days. Olathe needs to promote its growing diversity, and show workers from diverse backgrounds that the Midwest is a welcoming place to live. This will be a powerful tool in attracting companies and talent.

**9. PLACEMAKING WILL MAKE OLATHE MORE THAN JUST A RESIDENCE.**

While the location advantage is attractive in Olathe, that same proximity to the metro area encourages residents to go to neighboring communities for entertainment. Olathe has an opportunity to keep its resident dollars and attract visitation by making sure it complements existing assets like parks and sports facilities with expanded entertainment, restaurants, and other urban amenities.

**10. OLATHE IS OUR HOME AND WE ARE PROUD OF IT.**

Branding and cultural programming not only celebrate a community but also promote tourism. The World Cup in 2026 presents an excellent opportunity for Olathe to leverage the attention the region is getting and to highlight the City's offerings.



## These are the five goals of Olathe's Economic Development Strategic Plan:

### 1. INVESTMENT FOR OPPORTUNITY.

We will attract investment to create opportunities for Olathe businesses and residents.

### 2. PREMIER MIDWESTERN ENTREPRENEURIAL HUB.

We will build the premier entrepreneurial community in Kansas.

### 3. TALENT FOR TOMORROW.

We will invest in the diverse talent that will fuel the future of Olathe.

### 4. ENERGETIC DOWNTOWN.

We will invest in the future of a vibrant Downtown Olathe.

### 5. DESTINATION FOR ALL.

We will promote and celebrate Olathe as a destination for families, professionals, and visitors.

The following report describes Olathe's Economic Development Strategic Plan and Implementation Plan. A technical appendix containing the research that Resonance conducted to support the development of this report is available upon request and includes the

Community Competitive Assessment (Appendix A), the Target Cluster Analysis (Appendix B), the Real Estate Market Assessment (Appendix C), and the Stakeholder Engagement Summary (Appendix D).



# Discovery and Engagement

To plan for future resiliency and growth, Olathe needs access to key local economic and market data that can inform policymakers, business owners, and community members as they make decisions, develop strategies, and take action in today's complex and challenging economic landscape. Harnessing key data will equip the City to confidently create informed plans that address the true needs of the community.

As such, a strong economic development strategy is grounded in extensive research that helps leaders confirm community facts and dispel biases, identify opportunities, allocate resources, and recruit the right businesses to contribute to sustainable long-term economic growth.

The Economic Development Strategic Plan for the City of Olathe is data-driven, sector-focused, and leveraged by deep input and inclusive engagement from a diverse group of stakeholders. The sections that follow present our findings from the Demographic, Economic, and Real Estate Analysis and the Stakeholder Engagement phases.



## Demographic, Economic, and Real Estate Analysis

Olathe is an ideal location for doing business and for innovating. It has a robust and viable economy driven by diverse human capital employed in a wide array of industries, especially in professional services and STEM occupations. Olathe also has access to a range of academic institutions and workforce development partners that drives its high regional productivity and earnings. The City is committed to building a better, more equitable community; understanding community needs and having an open dialogue with all residents is at the heart of that inclusive culture.

To support the development of Olathe's Economic Development Strategic Plan, Resonance performed a comprehensive demographic, economic, and real estate assessment that consisted of three main components:

- **COMPETITIVE BENCHMARKING ASSESSMENT**
- **TARGET CLUSTER ANALYSIS**
- **REAL ESTATE MARKET ASSESSMENT**

The key conclusions of each of these evaluations are presented in the following sections.



# Competitive Benchmarking Assessment

The **Competitive Benchmarking Assessment** synthesized the demographic and economic trends that are impacting the City. The analysis compared Olathe to 14 of its peer communities across six categories: Economic Vitality, Innovation, Talent, Diversity, Equity, and Quality of Place. This part of the research included data for more than 50 metrics and grouped them into key categories that provided a holistic view of the City's comparative advantages.

The following are the findings from this assessment:

- **OLATHE IS A LARGE CITY EXPERIENCING STEADY GROWTH.**

The City of Olathe is home to over 150,000 residents. It grew by 6% over the last five years, a rate that is 63% higher than the national average and nearly five times higher than the state average.

- **OLATHE IS WELL-EDUCATED.**

Approximately half of the City's residents have a bachelor's degree or above, a share that is 49% higher than the national average. The City also benefits from an influx of educated migrants, with 44% of people moving to Olathe having a bachelor's degree or above, which is 29% and 18% higher than the state and national averages, respectively. The Olathe Public Schools also ensure that the City offers high quality education and students are regularly recognized for their achievements in academics and athletics.

- **OLATHE HAS A HEALTHY ECONOMY.**

At 75%, Olathe has the highest labor force participation rate among its peers and is above both state and national averages. The workforce here is also highly productive, with an added value of \$194 per worker, ranking second among the City's peers. Olathe also has a low unemployment rate (3%) and offers competitive earnings that have grown by 27% in the last five years. This indicates healthy growth, economic resilience, and a strong ability to attract quality talent.

- **OLATHE HAS A STRONG INNOVATION ECONOMY.**

More than 2% of Olathe's residents are employed in professional services, with a high productivity rate of \$155 comparable to the national average. The City also boasts a significant number of workers employed in STEM (5%), growing by 7% in the last five years despite negative growth trends in the larger Kansas City metropolitan area.

- **OLATHE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE EQUITY.**

At over \$100,000, Olathe has a high median household income, and it also has the lowest ranking on the Gini index of income inequality among its peers. While the City is slowly closing its gender earnings gap, there are still significant disparities between White and BIPOC residents in the areas of business and home ownership as well as in poverty levels.

- **OLATHE PROVIDES A FAVORABLE QUALITY OF LIFE.**

Olathe has a median commute time of 22 minutes, ranking second among its peers. Although the City is both walkable and bikeable, most residents choose to drive. Housing affordability is also among the City's perks, with low rents, home values, and home value to income ratio.

# Target Cluster Analysis

The **Target Cluster Analysis** acts as the primary and essential foundation for supporting all future business attraction, expansion efforts, and incentives and for helping to shape a narrative that resonates with new enterprises, site selectors, and talent. Our analysis assessed traded clusters from a comprehensive lens of competitiveness, equity, and resilience, as opposed to an evaluation that relies solely on an economic growth focus. It also focused on traded (instead of local) clusters, as traded clusters tend to have higher wages and higher levels of innovation, in addition to being more resilient and durable.

The following are the key target clusters for Olathe:

- **HEALTHCARE AND BIOSCIENCE**

With almost 8,000 workers, the Healthcare and Bioscience cluster has the largest employment base in Olathe. The cluster has a large share of gender diversity, where 76% of employees are women, and a highly educated workforce, where 41% of employees have a bachelor's degree or higher. The development of nurses from the Johnson County Community College Health Education Center powers this workforce. The specialization in Bioscience is the strength of this cluster, showcased by the Kansas Bioscience Park, which has attracted funding and start-ups to the area.

- **AEROSPACE**

The Aerospace cluster has the highest competitive advantage in Olathe, with employment at more than four times the national average. The cluster benefits from competitive average earnings of \$117,000, enabling it to attract a talented (26% with a bachelor's degree or higher) and highly productive (GRP per worker of \$197,363) workforce. Olathe is home to top companies such as Honeywell and Orizon Aerostructures and is strategically located near several other aerospace manufacturing hubs.

- **ADVANCED MANUFACTURING**

Olathe is home to a diverse network of high-quality manufacturing companies, such as Gunze Plastics, ExxonMobil, ITW Pro Brands, Insulite Glass, TVH Parts, Phenix Label, MidContinental Chemical Company, and more. Providing a resilient mix of industries, the Advanced Manufacturing cluster is a significant contributor to the local economy, with a GRP of \$306 million and an 89% share of exported sales. This cluster is Olathe's most accessible for BIPOC employees, who make up 29% of the workforce.

- **FINANCE, INSURANCE, AND SERVICES**

The Finance, Insurance, and Services cluster is the largest contributor to the local economy, with a GRP of over \$1 billion. With an expected job growth of 7% in the next five years, it is likely to retain its importance. Farmers Insurance is one of the top employers in Olathe, with over 2,000 employees. Several other local establishments, such as CarMax and Cargill, further bolster regional competitiveness and cooperation.

- **ENERGY**

With a projected job growth of 9% in the next five years, Olathe's Energy cluster is primed to adapt to the changing energy landscape. Several companies in Olathe are innovating in this space. Excellerate received POWER magazine's first Distributed Energy Award for its microgrid innovation, and SPX Cooling Technologies continues to manufacture and advance its cooling systems. HiPower Systems, the Spanish and Japanese-owned power generation manufacturer, employs roughly 125 in Olathe. This cluster will soon get an additional boost with the new Panasonic facility being established nearby, which will bring electric vehicle battery production to the Kansas City metropolitan area.

# Real Estate Market Assessment

Our team performed a review of the real estate market in Olathe across all commercial property types: office, industrial, and retail. The goal of this exercise was to ensure that demographic trends and projections (i.e., demand) are balanced with real estate market performance and inventory (i.e., supply) so that the City can take the necessary regulatory and policy measures to support the growth and evolution of critical real estate in commercial nodes.

The following are the key insights from the Real Estate Market Assessment:

- **OLATHE’S OFFICE MARKET IS TACKLING GROWING VACANCIES.**

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the growth of hybrid work continue to be felt in this market. By 2028, office vacancy rates are expected to climb to 12.4% from the current rate of 10.4%.

- **OLATHE HAS LIMITED OPPORTUNITY TO SUSTAINABLY GROW ITS OFFICE SUPPLY.**

The gap between the existing supply of office space in the City and the projected unmet demand is closing. By 2028, office-occupying jobs in Olathe will generate approximately 4.28 million square feet in demand for office space, which is 114,000 square feet more than the combined 4.16 million square feet in existing and projected supply.

- **OLATHE IS COMPETING WITH OLDER RETAIL SPACES FOR CONSUMER DEMAND IN A COMPETITIVE REGIONAL RETAIL MARKET.**

Only 6% of the total retail supply in the region is located within the City of Olathe, primarily along I-35. In addition, 1 in 3 retail spaces in the City were built more than 30 years ago.

- **RETAIL SUPPLY EXCEEDS DEMAND FOR OLATHE.**

This will remain true even as the projected population and household increases take effect over the next five years. There is currently sufficient demand to support between 4.6 and 6 million square feet of retail in Olathe. This demand is projected to increase over the next five years to between 5.5 and 7.1 million square feet, which is more than 2 million square feet below existing inventory/supply.

- **MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL IS AN UNTAPPED OPPORTUNITY.**

Asking rents in this market have risen 25-48% for 1BR to 3BR units over the past decade, while vacancy rates are at their lowest in recent history. Even with 1,800 new multi-family residential units in the existing pipeline, projections point to an opportunity to grow the overall inventory in this market, particularly with larger-sized apartments (2BR to 3BR).

# Stakeholder Engagement

Our team performed targeted outreach to key stakeholders to gather input on strategic priorities, develop a broad sense of plan ownership and collaboration, and create advocates for the plan's goals. Discussions addressed an array of issues: placemaking and brand creation, growing an entrepreneurial ecosystem, promoting the City's quality of place, engaging local anchor institutions to drive development, positioning Olathe as an ideal place for young professionals, and more.

The Stakeholder Engagement complemented the research and provided thoughtful guidance for the development of the Economic Development Strategic Plan. More than 80 Olathe residents, business owners, elected officials, economic development partners, university leaders, and others participated in a series of roundtable discussions. The results of these discussions demonstrate the City's commitment to equitable community and stakeholder engagement and an inclusive, accessible process for reimagining Olathe.

From these discussions, we learned about Olathe's people and culture, family-friendly environment, location advantage, placemaking initiatives and challenges, and the community's desire for change and social equity. We also heard about workforce development and talent attraction needs, the continued promotion of equity and inclusion, and thoughts about future growth.

The following are the key conclusions from these roundtable discussions:

- **OLATHE IS A SAFE PLACE TO RAISE A FAMILY.**

Offering a comfortable family vibe, Olathe is a safe and clean community. It is accessible to other communities in the Kansas City metro area, it is relatively affordable, it offers excellent local schools, and it is bursting with parks and sports facilities.

- **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IS IMPORTANT TO THE COMMUNITY.**

Olathe has an excellent public school system. To make sure the workforce is prepared for the future, the City is developing new 21st-century programs that address industry needs and foster a stronger relationship between employers and education providers. A prime example of this is the Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS), which is an innovative high school program that immerses students in professional culture. Continuing such partnerships with the School District will be critical to equipping Olathe with the talent it needs.



- **OLATHE MUST INVEST IN RECRUITING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS.**

The City is set up for families but does not have many attractions for the younger generations. Part of attracting young professionals is a focus on developing more entertainment and dining options, but Olathe can also leverage its location advantage to draw in young new residents from neighboring cities.

- **OLATHE WELCOMES THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY.**

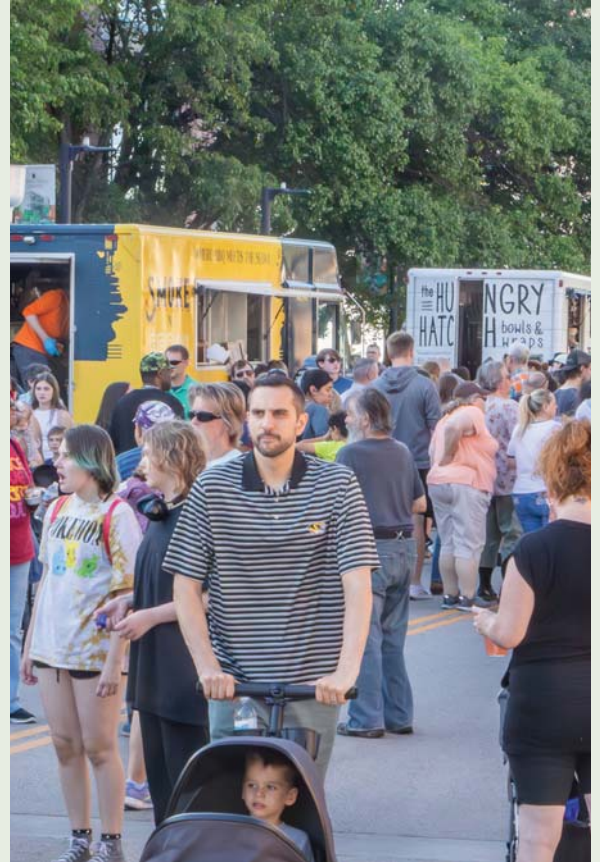
The Hispanic community has increased in size in recent years, and Olathe has opened its doors. The Olathe Culture Fest – organized by Olathe Public Schools and the Olathe Human Relations Commission – is a prime example of the initiatives the City has taken to promote and support diversity. Olathe should continue to seek out and create opportunities to further celebrate all of the different cultures within the community.

- **OLATHE CAN LEVERAGE THE DOWNTOWN AREA TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY.**

The ongoing efforts to revitalize Downtown Olathe are an opportunity to further integrate DEI into placemaking and programming. This can take the form of attracting diverse food and beverage providers, encouraging diverse entrepreneurs, and creating partnerships with local businesses.

- **INTENTIONAL PLANNING WILL HELP MANAGE GROWTH.**

Olathe is experiencing significant growth and, with the new Panasonic facility, is expected to grow even further in the next few years. The City must be intentional in its planning strategies and have the right policies in place on density, land use, public life, and layout of the infrastructure to ensure that this growth does not challenge the local quality of life.





# Economic Development Strategy

Olathe is a welcoming community in the heart of the Midwest. The City offers small-town charm while being connected to the talent, innovation, and assets of Kansas City. With plentiful parks, thriving businesses, and a strong education ecosystem, Olathe has everything it needs to become a city of the future.

Economic conditions inevitably change, and each shift will bring new challenges and opportunities that will test the resilience of Olathe’s economic development strategy. Long-term economic development efforts that are built on a foundation of the City’s core values and principles will position Olathe to be flexible in the face of these changing economic conditions, rather than simply reactive.

Olathe’s economic development strategy will help the City realize its vision and take control of its economic future. It will bring together community residents with private and public sectors and help all stakeholders direct their time and resources to drive better results. The strategy focuses

on attracting and empowering people, because the human resourcefulness that comes from the right mix of engaged people is what makes an economy work. And the strategy also focuses on placemaking – because a vibrant place attracts and retains the best and brightest people.

The defined goals, objectives, and tactics of the economic development strategy will enable stakeholders to understand their specific roles. Collectively, these individual actions will create a prosperous and equitable future for Olathe.

This five-year plan is not set in stone. Olathe’s economic development priorities will evolve as the City grows and the economy changes. Community leaders should examine the strategy at least annually to identify deficiencies and opportunities and to update the plan to address changing needs.

To ensure the overall impact and effectiveness of the plan, the following outcome metrics should be tracked during implementation:

- **POPULATION GROWTH**  
Tracking interest in the attractiveness of Olathe as a place to live.
- **SHARE OF BIPOC RESIDENTS**  
Tracking the diversity of Olathe's population.
- **NUMBER OF BUSINESSES, BY SIZE**  
Charting the health of Olathe's business ecosystem and the City's ability to retain businesses and assist entrepreneurs.
- **TOTAL EMPLOYMENT**  
Counting the new jobs created in the local economy.
- **EMPLOYMENT, BY ATTRACTION PROJECT**  
Tracking the number of jobs created through the attraction of each new company.
- **SHARE OF RESIDENTS AGED 25-34**  
Measuring the proportion of Olathe's young talent base.
- **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT LEVELS**  
Charting the educational attainment levels in Olathe and the attractiveness of the City for educated individuals.
- **MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**  
Evaluating the earning potential in Olathe.
- **NUMBER OF RESTAURANT, ENTERTAINMENT, AND SHOPPING VENUES**  
Measuring Olathe's efforts in becoming a complete destination.
- **NUMBER OF DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS**  
Assessing the attractiveness of Downtown Olathe as a place to live.
- **AVERAGE DAILY FOOT TRAFFIC**  
Measuring the downtown area's attractiveness for non-residents.
- **TOTAL NUMBER OF VISITORS**  
Sizing visitor interest in Olathe.
- **NUMBER OF FACEBOOK CHECK-INS AND INSTAGRAM HASHTAGS**  
Tracking resident and tourist engagement on social media.

The following plan includes five broad goals, with each goal supported both by guiding principles and by specific evidence of its importance and key priorities. Appendix E lays out a detailed implementation matrix that includes suggested action items, key partners, and metrics.



## GOAL 1

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We will attract investment to create opportunity for Olathe businesses and residents.

## Goal 1: We will attract investment to create opportunity for Olathe businesses and residents.

Economic development is about investing in local businesses, but it is also about attracting investment into the community. New investments are not only essential for building a more resilient economy for the future, they are also a way to help existing clusters innovate and evolve to remain competitive. Thoughtful planning and collaboration are key to the success of any economic development initiative and will ensure that resources are shared efficiently and effectively. Through considered planning and investment, Olathe will be able to fully capitalize on its innovative and technological strengths, competitive location, anchor employers, and educational partners.



# The Evidence

- Olathe's target clusters – Healthcare and Bioscience; Aerospace; Advanced Manufacturing; Finance, Insurance, and Services; and Energy – employ nearly 20,000 workers and contribute over \$2.7 billion to the local economy.
- Olathe's existing office inventory is concentrated in well-connected major nodes, with more than half of the City's office space located along key highways or downtown. While this proximity is good for cluster innovation, investment is needed as only 17% of office space is considered Class A.



## The following metrics should be tracked to assess implementation and impact:

- **BUSINESSES VISITED**  
Tracking the support given to new businesses through visits.
- **TRADE SHOWS**  
Tracking Olathe's efforts in outreach.
- **SITE SELECTORS ENGAGED**  
Tracking the number and value of site selection services for new and existing businesses.
- **CONFERENCE ATTRACTIONS**  
Counting the number of conferences hosted in Olathe related to the City's top clusters.
- **NEW BUSINESSES (TOTAL AND BY CLUSTER)**  
Tracking the number of new businesses and whether they align with top clusters.
- **EMPLOYMENT (TOTAL, BY CLUSTER, AND BY ATTRACTION PROJECT)**  
Counting total jobs generated and whether they are in the City's top clusters.

## STRATEGY

# 1.1

### Execute a measurable, cluster-focused business expansion and visitation initiative to support existing businesses.

Through the development of a systematic, tailored business expansion and visitation initiative, Olathe can better support its existing businesses. Visitation initiatives help give a better understanding of the business ecosystem and reveal both success stories and major issues while improving the relationship between the City and its businesses. By focusing on clusters, Olathe will be able to keep its finger on the pulse of its most important industries and determine which businesses are most equipped for expansion.



## Actions

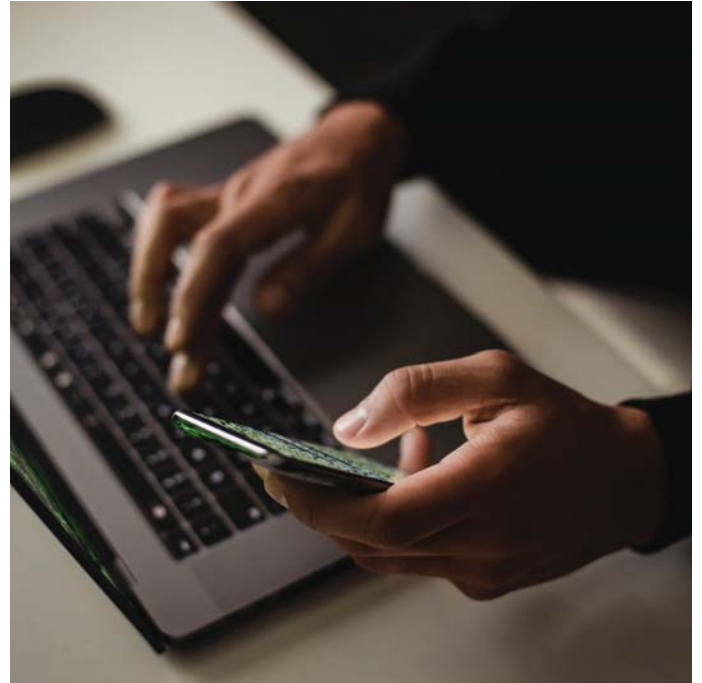
- Host cluster working groups – Healthcare and Bioscience; Aerospace; Advanced Manufacturing; Finance, Insurance, and Services; and Energy – to identify specific cluster needs and supply chain opportunities.
- Conduct a formal business visitation plan, interviewing at least 100 Olathe employers annually.
- Utilize these and other engagement tools to identify opportunities and needs and report key findings systematically.

## STRATEGY

# 1.2

## Utilize incentive programs to attract quality jobs and investment within Olathe's target sectors.

The City of Olathe has several economic incentive programs at its disposal to attract businesses and investment. Incentives such as Industrial Revenue Bonds, Tax Abatements, Tax Increment Financing, and others can be leveraged to attract jobs in Olathe's top clusters. With City support directed toward already strong clusters, companies will find Olathe an ideal place to invest in.



## Actions

- Coordinate Olathe's financial incentive programs, targeting programs for the highest and best use (i.e., quality job creation and impactful development/redevelopment). Ensure incentives have appropriate job creation and investment goals.
- Deploy statewide incentive programs to support local incentives packages.
- Consider formalizing and expanding place-based incentive policies/programs to support development in Downtown Olathe and dormant commercial corridors.
- Evaluate Olathe's incentive programs for impact and advise City Council on policy enhancements and outcomes.

## STRATEGY

# 1.3

### Maintain the Manufacturers Roundtable to continue to address the needs of Olathe's manufacturing employers.

Advanced manufacturing, with over 2,000 employees and a GRP of \$306 million, is one of Olathe's most important clusters. As such, it is equally important to make efforts to understand the successes, struggles, and needs of the companies and workers within this industry. Doing so will allow Olathe to align its efforts with industry gaps and to foster stronger connections with the workers that make Olathe a manufacturing powerhouse.



## Actions

- Hold quarterly luncheons and discussions for C-suite manufacturing leaders, offering a forum for networking and addressing pressing issues.
- Utilize these forums as an opportunity to market and feature innovative manufacturers.

## STRATEGY

# 1.4

## Collaborate with regional partners to strategically market Olathe's competitive clusters.

An economic cluster – the driving force in most regional economies – demonstrates strength in numbers. If you see a reference to computer chip production, wine production, or movie production, for example, then hubs for these industries like Silicon Valley, Napa Valley, or Hollywood will easily come to mind. By enhancing this type of brand recognition for its own top clusters, Olathe can follow this model and expand its local economy by attracting companies that support those target sectors. Working alongside partners within each cluster, the City can develop marketing messages that highlight its key clusters' strengths and advantages and call attention to investment opportunities.



## Actions

- Partner with the KCADC, Kansas Department of Commerce, and others on site-selector and RFP initiatives.
- Create cluster industry marketing and attraction materials. Profiles should be made available in print, presentation, and web/electronic format, and should include materials designed for the City and Chamber websites.
- Ensure that regional and state partners have the appropriate marketing materials to effectively represent Olathe's targeted economic development priorities.
- Attend industry trade shows for Olathe's target clusters.

## STRATEGY

# 1.5

## Enhance Olathe's broker and site-selection plan.

Creating a site-selection strategy that emphasizes local investment opportunities in Olathe is a key effort. Site selection is an important aspect of economic development and City-partner relations. Site selectors, especially those conducting searches for global headquarters and knowledge-based industries, have an enormous influence on short-listing and finalizing locations. As such, Olathe must prioritize the building of relationships with this target audience. In addition, the City should continue to engage with regional partners to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are working together to build leads and represent the community.



## Actions

- Attend commercial development trade shows to increase exposure for Olathe's business attraction efforts: CoreNet Global, NAIOP, Site Selectors Guild, ULI, ICSC, Select USA, and more.
- Refine and build a target site-selection list and conduct community outreach at least biannually.
- Host appropriate inbound Olathe city visits, tours, and trade missions with target companies, investment representatives, and site selectors.
- Coordinate broker meet-and-greets and networking opportunities (both within the Kansas City region and at external conferences).



## STRATEGY

# 1.6

## Maintain and reimagine commercial space and align planning policies to attract knowledge-focused enterprises.

Given the ongoing effects of the pandemic on commercial space vacancies, it is more important than ever for cities to have a reimagined strategy that makes the best use of the space that exists. In Olathe, businesses are largely concentrated in two main areas: by the highway and in the downtown area. The City has the opportunity to connect the spaces in these two areas to a thriving economy. By supporting the entry of knowledge-based enterprises into specific places where commercial space has been largely abandoned, the City can bring talent and retail options back to those areas. Using planning policies to attract more knowledge-based enterprises will revitalize commercial spaces while fueling innovation throughout Olathe's workforce.



## Actions

- Convene target-industry leaders, real estate professionals, and others to identify specific space needs (short-term and long-term) for each emerging tech industry cluster in Olathe.
- Conduct site assessments and feasibility studies of underutilized space (retail, commercial, and flex) in Olathe.
- Devise a series of policy recommendations and strategies to guide the City's redevelopment and commercial real estate approach (particularly in underserved commercial corridors).

## STRATEGY

# 1.7

## Partner with K-State Olathe, Olathe Health, JCCC OHEC, and other healthcare partners to lead in life sciences.

Olathe's Healthcare and Bioscience cluster has added more than 1,700 jobs over the past five years, growing by 29% and contributing \$871 million to the local economy in 2022. With the recent connection of Olathe Health to the rest of the Kansas health system, Olathe has the chance to become the center of medical innovation in Kansas. Through partnerships with Olathe Health and K-State Olathe – particularly with the latter's access to top-tier research – Olathe will have the resources it needs to invest in and grow its life sciences and healthcare industries.



## Actions

- Host quarterly working group meetings within the Healthcare and Bioscience cluster to identify cluster-oriented growth opportunities and challenges as well as supply chain development opportunities and talent needs.
- Develop a foreign direct investment (FDI) assessment to guide lead-generation activities, marketing efforts, and sales missions for life sciences attraction efforts.
- Build in – in collaboration with KCADC, K-State Olathe, Olathe Health, JCCC OHEC, and other healthcare partners – a site selection and conference strategy for targeting the life sciences sector.
- Establish relationships with venture capital organizations specializing in companies and investments in the life sciences sector.

## STRATEGY

# 1.8

### Develop an attraction strategy for conferences and meetings that aligns with target clusters.

Conferences and meetings are designed to bring people together, generating new connections and new ideas. That alone can bring benefits to the Olathe business community and workforce, but there is also more that conferences can do for the City. Bringing conferences and large meetings to Olathe will establish the City as a regional hub of innovation, foster the development of target clusters, promote tourism, and encourage corporate investment and expansion. Attracting more conferences to Olathe will also allow the City to develop a cohesive brand of innovation around its top clusters.



## Actions

- Coordinate with destination partners to identify group conference assets.
- Establish a working group to identify shared goals for Olathe's conference attraction plan.
- Coordinate with a lead generation firm, if necessary, to establish target prospects, associations, and metrics.
- Update and refresh marketing and rental information on community conference facilities.

CASE STUDY

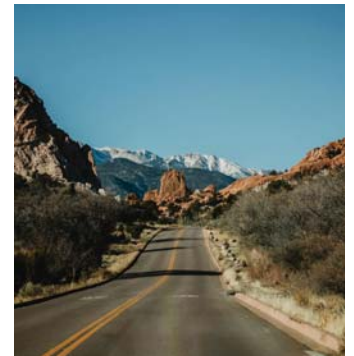
# Colorado Cleantech — Colorado

A framework for recognizing and bolstering the variety and dynamism of regional economies.

There are many well-known industrial clusters (Silicon Valley, Hollywood, etc.) but a host of lesser-known and emerging clusters are proving to be equally impactful at delivering growth and prosperity to their regions.

More than 1,500 companies are part of Colorado's burgeoning clean-energy cluster, the fastest-growing industry in the state. With groundbreaking research from institutions like the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and the Colorado Clean Energy Collaboratory (a collaboration between NREL and the region's universities), the cluster is thriving, while giants like Siemens and Vestas contribute to its manufacturing strength.

A skilled and highly specialized workforce is provided by top-tier universities like Colorado State, the University of Colorado at Boulder, and the Colorado School of Mines.



*As a result of strategic policymaking, the Colorado Cleantech cluster has established a market and found high levels of success and innovation within an environment conducive to its growth.*

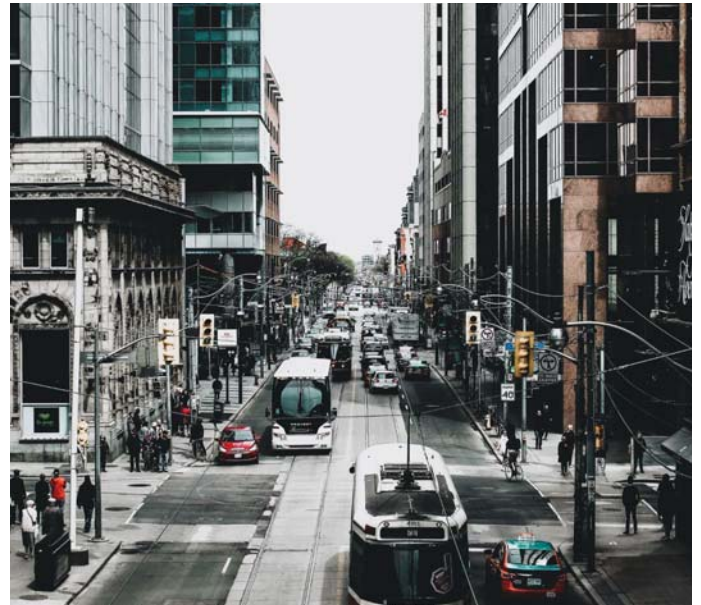
CASE STUDY

# Toronto State Street Financial Centre — Toronto, ON

Inspired by innovation, tradition, and evolution, adaptive reuse is a sustainable solution for intensification that provides creative and commercial building opportunities.

An innovative redesign of the State Street Financial Centre by BDP Quadrangle Architecture in Toronto's business district respects the complex's 1950s-era modernism while significantly expanding its gross floor area and ensuring tenant flexibility through highly adaptable floor plans, ceiling systems, and lighting. In particular, Quadrangle's design includes special consideration for the needs of new technology firms, incorporating new mechanical and electrical systems to meet high-tech requirements.

In 2001, Natural Resources Canada cited State Street Financial Centre as a model of energy efficiency within its Commercial Building Incentive Program, making it one of only a handful of buildings in Canada to be so recognized. Later that year, State Street Financial Centre was selected as Project of the Year by the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP) in recognition of excellence in innovation, creativity, and teamwork.



*A number of well-known technology businesses call State Street Financial Centre home, including Tesla.*

CASE STUDY

## CvilleBioHub — Charlottesville, VA

Focusing on developing the life sciences industry through job development, entrepreneurship, and fostering the next generation of scientific leadership.

CvilleBioHub is thriving and growing as it continues to establish itself as one of the premier Biotech clusters in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Having launched roughly five years ago, the organization aims to double the size of the industry within the region by the year 2030, and the growth seen in the Charlottesville area over the past two years has already far exceeded expectations.

Through engagement, resourcing, and educational tools, CvilleBioHub has consistently added significant value to the growing community. Currently, the group provides mentorship and guidance to more than 75 companies, and that number is expected to grow as more businesses spin out of the University of Virginia and the surrounding region.



*CvilleBioHub is fueling jobs and economic development. Charlottesville is seeing strong angel and seed support, as well as outside investment.*

## GOAL 2

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We will build the  
premier entrepreneurial  
community in Kansas.

## Goal 2: We will build the premier entrepreneurial community in Kansas.

The competitiveness and vitality of a city's economy are centered on fostering innovation and new ideas. Olathe must provide the resources that support this approach. Building new partnerships will enable the city to take on fresh, big ideas. And celebrating the successes of Olathe's doers and changemakers will reinforce the value of these efforts and inspire even more entrepreneurship.

To build a premier entrepreneurial community, Olathe must pursue strategies that intentionally support a diverse group of entrepreneurs in both local and export sectors. Through entrepreneur-focused economic development, Olathe can create a wealth of opportunities and greater shared prosperity and support the next generation of home-grown businesses.





# The Evidence

- Olathe has a burgeoning innovation economy, with an 8% growth in STEM jobs over the past five years – an impressive rate, given the 3% overall decrease throughout the Kansas City MSA. Olathe is bolstered by the nearby K-State Olathe and the 28% growth in median earnings over the past five years.
- BIPOC-owned businesses make up 9% of businesses in Olathe, 18% higher than the statewide average. Women-owned businesses make up 16% of businesses, on par with the statewide average.
- The City has a strong small-business ecosystem, with small businesses (those with fewer than 10 employees) making up 69% of total businesses in Olathe.



## The following metrics should be tracked to assess implementation and impact:

- **PARTICIPATING ENTREPRENEURS**  
Counting the number of entrepreneurs within Olathe's small-business programs and ecosystem.
- **ENTREPRENEURS PROMOTED**  
Tracking storytelling and success stories through newsletters, social media, and other publications.
- **ENTREPRENEURS RECEIVING CAPITAL DOLLARS VIA THE DIGITAL SANDBOX**  
Counting the number and value of small-business investment processes through the Digital Sandbox.
- **BUSINESS FORMATION (BY BACKGROUND)**  
Tracking the number of new businesses in Olathe by ownership (BIPOC-, LGBTQIA-, women-, and veteran-owned).

## STRATEGY

# 2.1

### Provide Olathe small businesses with the technical training, networking, and mentorship necessary to grow and scale.

Olathe's small businesses have voiced their need for support in a city full of powerhouse corporations and industries. The City has the opportunity to provide that support through technical training, networking, and mentorship programs. By assisting with growth and scale, Olathe can bolster its small-business ecosystem, helping the people that give the City its culture.



## Actions

- Convene a quarterly working group of small-business support organizations to discuss best practices, explore collaborations, and set collective support.
- Support and promote small-business resources and training offered by the Chamber and its small-business support programs.
- Establish goals and a pipeline for reaching underserved small businesses and those associated with Olathe's target sectors.
- Develop a city-wide entrepreneurship dashboard to track impact and program participation.

## STRATEGY

# 2.2

### Establish “Start-up Olathe,” a one-stop resource for small-business support services and direction on how to navigate City processes.

Olathe’s commitment to its residents is evident through the plethora of resources offered by the City. However, these programs are not always accessible, particularly for people who have never interacted with a City department before. Creating a one-stop resource hub will open up opportunities for all residents, not only improving access to services but also streamlining the process and making the City more efficient overall.



## Actions

- Inventory, in collaboration with partners, all small-business and entrepreneurship programs in Olathe and the Kansas City region.
- Build an online calendar of small-business coaching (business plans, marketing plans, and succession plans) and networking opportunities for Olathe businesses.
- Develop a “How to Open a Business in Olathe” guide, and make it available in multiple languages and formats (print/electronic).
- Collaborate to create and maintain a city-wide entrepreneurship website and app for small-business owners; cross-promote on City and Chamber websites.

## STRATEGY

# 2.3

## Grow Digital Sandbox Olathe.

Digital Sandbox KC provides critical proof-of-concept funding, mentoring, and connections to help founders build viable innovations. The program covers expenses for business needs such as market research, new equipment, and prototype testing. This support is essential for innovative projects, as many entrepreneurs have innovative ideas but lack the resources to fund and market them. Digital Sandbox Olathe has the opportunity to further invest in creating a Midwestern innovation hub by imitating the statewide organization, which has provided over \$200 million in funding.



## Actions

- Provide capital grants to early-stage companies that meet eligibility requirements.
- Market the program to eligible Olathe small businesses and host informational sessions.
- Connect participating companies with the appropriate wrap-around services (mentorship, coaching, and more) needed to succeed.
- Track and communicate the economic impact of the program.

STRATEGY

# 2.4

## Expand incubator spaces in Olathe to support the growth of tech-based enterprises.

Incubators, as the name suggests, are a great way to foster young-business growth. Incubators protect firms from competition during the time that they are vulnerable due to space constraints, and they connect emerging innovators to the resources they need.



### Actions

- Convene an advisory committee (university officials, real estate developers, entrepreneurs, and capital providers) to guide Olathe’s incubator expansion plan.
- Inventory current incubator spaces in Olathe and survey entrepreneurs about missing resources.
- Catalogue incubator best practices for communities similar to Olathe.
- Work with the advisory committee to develop an action plan and next steps.

## STRATEGY

# 2.5

## Evaluate the opportunity of an innovation district adjacent to the K-State Olathe campus.

An innovation district is an urban model that focuses on the critical role that new business plays in sustainable economic development. Innovation districts are, as the City of Glasgow has called them, “the ultimate mash-up of entrepreneurs and educational institutes.” The talent and innovation from the university in an innovation district fuels progress and expansion in the business sector, which in turn fuels talent attraction to the university. With the potential of an innovation district next to K-State Olathe, the City has the opportunity to provide a strong foundation for the creation and expansion of businesses across the target sectors by connecting start-ups and entrepreneurs with the businesses, universities, and investors that only Olathe can offer.



## Actions

- Assemble an advisory committee, including regional partners, entrepreneurs, and K-State officials, to guide an innovation district economic development plan.
- Catalogue innovation district best practices across North America (especially for smaller communities), focusing on programming and placemaking efforts.
- Develop a district plan, ensuring alignment with Olathe’s economic development strategy, K-State research, and various regional/community start-up programs.

## STRATEGY

# 2.6

## Celebrate the diversity of Olathe's entrepreneurial community.

Thriving communities celebrate their businesses – and Olathe has much to celebrate. The City boasts great diversity among the entrepreneurs and innovative start-ups that make their home here, including a growing Hispanic and Latino community. Olathe and its economic development partners should shout this success and diversity from the rooftops. By showcasing businesses of all sectors, types, and sizes, the City will entice a new array of enterprises and entrepreneurs. This approach motivates people to contribute to local economic development and changes their understanding of what is possible.



## Actions

- Develop a systematic approach to identifying diverse small businesses and start-ups in Olathe to profile.
- Promote Olathe's successes across multiple communication platforms: Chamber and City websites, blogs, social media, billboards, paid advertising, and direct emails.

CASE STUDY

# Arizona Business One Stop — Arizona

**Making the creation and operation of businesses more efficient – and more digital.**

Arizona Business One Stop is a digital portal that provides a single online location where business owners and entrepreneurs can find personalized tools to plan, start, grow, move, and exit businesses in Arizona. It is a secure digital experience that does not require in-person interaction.

This portal reflects the broader move among governments to combine many operations underneath the same digital roof. The idea is to bring disparate business functions – for instance, trademarks and tax IDs, among many others – to a single, centralized location, eliminating the often frustrating practice of sending users to other sites via pages filled with links.



*Arizona has created an end-to-end digital experience for businesses.*



CASE STUDY

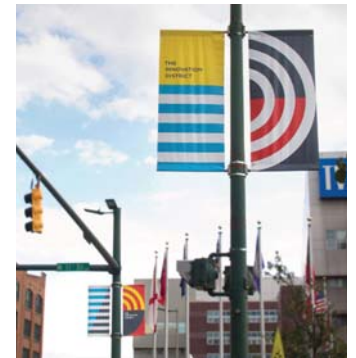
# Chattanooga Innovation District — Chattanooga, TN

Thinkers, starters, and doers – a bold place full of people working together to discover the next big thing.

Chattanooga has built its Innovation District strategically on three critical assets: quality placemaking, anchor institutions, and a highly collaborative innovation ecosystem.

Located in the heart of downtown, Chattanooga’s Innovation District is approximately a quarter-mile walking radius. Chattanooga is the first mid-sized city in the U.S. with an established Innovation District.

In addition to designing spaces specifically for workers and companies in the new knowledge economy, Chattanooga’s Innovation District provides easy access to other assets enjoyed by those working in the area, including coffee shops, pubs, restaurants, and multimodal transportation.



*The result of Chattanooga’s Innovation District: genuine, enthusiastic collaboration between public, private, and civic institutions and leaders.*

CASE STUDY

## Futurpreneur — Canada

Fueling the entrepreneurial passions of Canada’s young enterprises for over two decades.

Futurpreneur is a national non-profit organization that provides financing, mentoring, and support tools to aspiring business owners aged 18 to 39. Its internationally recognized mentoring program hand-matches young entrepreneurs with a business expert from a network of more than 2,600 volunteer mentors.

The pre-launch coaching offered by the program helps young entrepreneurs turn their ideas into businesses. The Business Resource Centre provides tools, articles, and an interactive Business Plan Writer to help entrepreneurs create a viable business plan. Entrepreneurs can receive up to \$60,000 from Futurpreneur Canada and the Business Development Bank of Canada. Following that, entrepreneurs are entered into a two-year business mentoring program and receive ongoing peer support through the Entrepeer Program.



*Since 1996, Futurpreneur has supported almost 18,000 diverse young entrepreneurs and has helped launch almost 14,000 businesses. Four in 10 are women-led and one in five is BIPOC-owned.*

## GOAL 3

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We will invest in the diverse talent that will fuel the future of Olathe.

## Goal 3: We will invest in the diverse talent that will fuel the future of Olathe.

In today's economy, talent development is economic development. The U.S. is enduring its most constrained labor market since the 1960s. Across industries – from registered nurses and software developers to retail salespeople and truck drivers – jobs are going unfilled. Moreover, declining fertility rates mean that this talent shortage isn't going away anytime soon.

Olathe's future success and competitiveness in this climate hinge on its ability to attract, retain, and develop skilled and diverse talent. To that end, the City must focus on growing its own talent pool to meet the demand of its growth clusters. Necessary efforts include aligning education programs and training in Olathe with local and regional workforce partners to adequately skill the workforce, developing robust workforce pipelines, creating a welcoming and engaged environment, and connecting under-resourced populations to high-performing sectors.



# The Evidence

- K-State Olathe, with its strong emphasis on meaningful work experience, is connected to the Kansas State University network, which is frequently ranked as one of the top universities in Kansas and one of the best universities for alumni connections and internships. Combined with MidAmerica Nazarene University, which offers over 60 programs and a top-ranked nursing degree, residents have access to relevant skill-building opportunities right in their backyard.
- Olathe is rife with talent. Half of all residents here have a bachelor's degree or higher – a share that is 49% above the national average and 46% above the state average. This share has grown by 8% over the past five years.
- Olathe has the opportunity to create a more inclusive talent pipeline. There is a racial gap in educational attainment, with 55% of White residents having a BA or higher compared to 33% of Black residents and 18% of Hispanic or Latino residents. Similar disparities can be seen in Olathe's income distribution, with a \$30,000 gap between White and BIPOC populations.



## The following metrics should be tracked to assess implementation and impact:

- **NEW EARN-AND-LEARN PROGRAMS CREATED**  
Counting the number of apprenticeship and earn-and-learn programs created, and the number of participants involved.
- **MEDIAN INDIVIDUAL EARNINGS**  
Tracking earnings to understand the effectiveness of talent-building efforts.
- **SHARE OF RESIDENTS AGED 25 TO 44**  
Tracking the share of residents in their prime working and talent age.
- **SHARE OF BIPOC RESIDENTS**  
Tracking the share of BIPOC residents to ensure equitable participation in talent-building efforts.
- **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT LEVELS**  
Counting the number of residents with attainment in each category of post-secondary and advanced degree.

## STRATEGY

# 3.1

### Collaborate with K-State Olathe, MidAmerica Nazarene University, JCCC OHEC, and anchor employers to grow “earn-and-learn” opportunities for Olathe’s tech sectors.

One of the best ways to build talent is through “earn-and-learn” opportunities, where workers are gaining skills through job experiences. While these apprenticeship programs have existed for decades, Olathe can reinvigorate this option by investing in STEM sectors, a field that has seen wide success in the new era of these programs. Given the emphasis on work experience found in Olathe’s educational institutions, fostering connections between those institutions and top employers in the area will create a talent pipeline that benefits all parties.



## Actions

- Engage Olathe’s higher education partners and trad-ed-sector employers quarterly to discuss needed training programs.
- Create and field a survey to identify training gaps for entry-level and middle-skill opportunities in Olathe’s growing tech sectors.
- Use survey findings to support the creation of a pilot to establish “earn-and-learn” programs, including the recruitment of participating companies.
- Measure the impact of the pilot program and initiative, and make appropriate adjustments to help it scale.

## STRATEGY

# 3.2

### Partner with Olathe Public Schools to evaluate K-12 industry-focused programming and ensure alignment with the city's growth sectors.

As industries search for more pathways to training workers, schooling will increasingly bear the burden of preparing students for ever-shifting workforce needs. The City can provide resources and evaluations to help schools focus on the skills that are needed for Olathe's most innovative clusters. Targeting intervention at this level will also be effective at reducing education gaps by race. These gaps are much lower at the high school level, with 96% of White residents, 92% of Black residents, and 81% of Hispanic residents having completed high school.



## Actions

- Host a workshop for Olathe Public School administrators and teachers to highlight the drivers of Olathe's economy and spotlight future employment opportunities for students.
- Partner with K-12 administrators to catalogue programming and initiatives to better understand the offerings and gaps within the target industries.
- Evaluate the need for new programming or improved/increased promotion (to students, parents, and employers) for current initiatives already underway.
- Celebrate the success of students participating in current programming.

## STRATEGY

# 3.3

### Advance, in collaboration with private sector employers, a resource hub for improving employee and resident well-being.

Following the pandemic – and the trends that rose in its wake, including remote work, “quiet quitting,” and the “great resignation” – it is more important than ever for companies to focus on the well-being of their employees along with their output. Olathe can lead the charge by creating a resource hub with tools that support all levels of health, including physical, career, financial, social, community, and emotional, along with purpose-driven well-being. By programming events, providing education on best practices, and distributing information, the City can help maintain a happy, healthy, and productive workforce.



## Actions

- Assemble an advisory committee that includes employers, residents, and health and community advocates to guide and plan efforts around improving community well-being.
- Explore best practices for other community well-being initiatives across the U.S.
- Host Chamber seminars and provide resources to support community well-being, promoting these resources in a central hub on the Chamber and City websites.



## STRATEGY

# 3.4

## Expand the program offerings for YOPro (Young Olathe Professionals).

Young professionals are drawn to Olathe. The City's median age is 36, two and a half years younger than the national average. The prime talent pool – residents aged 25 to 44 – is 14% larger than the state average and 8% larger than the national average. With the rise of remote work in a post-pandemic world, young professionals are moving away from the hustle and bustle of the big city in favor of smaller towns that promise affordable homes, more space, and access to nature. With its YOPro program, Olathe can showcase its commitment to networking, community service, and professional development for its young professionals.



## Actions

- Continue to grow the YOPro offerings, including networking functions, award recognition, volunteer opportunities, and more.
- Actively promote the successes of young professionals in Olathe.

## STRATEGY

# 3.5

## Continue to offer Leadership Olathe, setting goals for diverse participants.

BIPOC leadership at all levels is essential to ensure that diverse needs are understood and addressed. Olathe can continue to advocate for this leadership by providing opportunities for all its residents to access the networking, training, and support that will both encourage and enable more people to attain leadership positions. These opportunities would be designed not to promote conformity but instead to empower BIPOC leaders to express and act on their ideas. One such pathway for promoting BIPOC leadership is through the intentional expansion of Leadership Olathe to reach diverse participants. The program has been connecting residents to community leadership roles for over 30 years, and setting diversity goals will create a network that fosters inclusive prosperity.



## Actions

- Continue to offer Leadership Olathe while growing its impact.
- Encourage diverse residents and Chamber members to apply for Leadership Olathe.
- Grow a scholarship fund to support program participation.
- Create promotional materials that show diversity in the Leadership Olathe program to raise the public profile of participants and to welcome a wider range of applicants.

## STRATEGY

# 3.6

Grow, in collaboration with community-based organizations (Olathe Latino Coalition, Urban League, and others), diversity programming and events.

The Urban League and the Latino Coalition are examples of the strong network of BIPOC residents in Olathe and the links in that network to nationwide organizations. Olathe can embrace this diversity by assisting community-based organizations with diversity programming and events. This will help foster inclusivity in the City while showing that Olathe is willing to understand and meet the needs of all of its residents.



## Actions

- Use Chamber and City marketing and communication platforms to promote various city-wide cultural programs and initiatives, featuring participating Olathe companies, businesses, and community leaders.
- Assemble a diverse advisory committee, including City officials, residents, cultural and philanthropic representatives, and business and community leaders to help guide Olathe's diversity initiatives.
- Evaluate best practices from other Midwest communities (e.g., Northwest Arkansas and Tulsa).
- Continue to host educational DEI and diversity seminars for corporate representatives in Olathe.

CASE STUDY

# CareerWise Colorado — Colorado

A revolutionary adaptation of the traditional model of apprenticeship.

CareerWise Colorado creates opportunities for students and employers through modern youth apprenticeships. The program integrates work-based learning experiences into K-12 and higher-education systems to help fuel the local economy with practical skills and to provide all students with a path to prosperity.

Youth apprentices split their time between their traditional high school classroom and the workplace. They earn a wage while receiving hands-on work experience in which they can apply their classroom learning. By the conclusion of the program, students will have meaningful work experience, nationally recognized industry certification, a professional network, and the opportunity to earn debt-free college credit.

The CareerWise model is mutually beneficial for the apprentices and the employers. When a business hires an apprentice, it is gaining more than a productive employee – it is also making a dynamic investment in its ability to innovate; in its future pipeline of skilled, diverse workers; and in its connection to its community. At the same time, it is providing more leadership and growth opportunities for existing staff and for the larger workforce in the community.



*CareerWise Colorado has connected 1,400 apprentices to 120 companies since its launch in 2017.*

CASE STUDY

# Pima Community College x City of Tucson Initiatives — Tucson, AZ

Preparing students to lead and thrive in the workplace of the future.

Each year, an IT scholarship program provides more than 100 Tucson students with funding to help them advance their technical skills. The AZ Pioneer Pitch Competition, a joint effort between the City of Tucson Office of Economic Initiatives, Pima Community College, and several industry partners, offers skills training to local entrepreneurs, then provides them with the opportunity to present a 5-minute pitch on their “moonshot ideas” for a chance to win scholarships and gain connection to local industry leaders.

Meanwhile, the Center of Excellence in Applied Technology at Pima Community College offers a maker space, an advanced manufacturing incubator, and a Flexible Industry Training (FIT) Lab. These initiatives help nurture entrepreneurs while providing workers with the required skills to support the local battery manufacturing industry. The program is supplying a pipeline of talent to growing local businesses like Sion Power.



*Pima Community College provides students with opportunities for professional development and provides the community with a cutting-edge workforce.*

CASE STUDY

# Partnership for Inclusive Innovation's Smart Community Corps — Georgia

Innovating new solutions for a fairer world.

The Smart Community Corps internship is a joint collaboration with the Georgia Tech Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain (SLS), the Georgia Tech Career Center, and the Student Government Association (SGA).

It is the first statewide effort of its kind for civic-minded students to gain valuable hands-on experience working on real-life problems in a community environment.

Smart Community Corps uses the “pair model,” placing interns in pairs to work together on projects. The aim is to bring students with complementary skill sets, experiences, and expertise together so they can leverage their joint work on the project for cross-learning and co-creation.

SCC works with higher education institutions in Georgia such as Valdosta State University and AUC Data Science Initiative to open the internship opportunity to students.



*In the five-year duration of Smart Community Corps, over 100 students have worked on solving community issues to improve the lives of Georgia residents.*

CASE STUDY

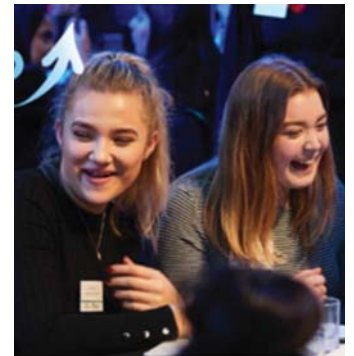
# A Better City for All Initiative — London, UK

Creating a city that is inclusive, healthy, skilled, and fair.

A Better City for All is designed to create a place where everyone feels they belong. The program is fostering a healthier and more inclusive workplace by reducing stigma, dispelling myths, improving employee well-being, empowering women, and providing equal access to opportunities.

The initiative raises awareness through information sessions, events, and an online hub for storytelling and sharing experiences, and delivers programs for change across four strategic priorities: inclusion, mental health, skills, and philanthropy. It also hosts a workshop series and industry-leading forums.

The initiative is led by the Lord Mayor's Appeal and takes place in collaboration with several other charities and with financial support from corporate partners.



*Through collaboration between charities and corporate partners, 400 people attended A Better City for All inclusion seminars, 392 organizations encouraged employees to speak about mental health, and over \$500,000 was raised in 2023.*

CASE STUDY

# EngageNWA — Northwest Arkansas

A diverse and inclusive region is the key to the future.

EngageNWA serves as a connector for leaders in business, government, and the community on matters that help create a more inclusive Northwest Arkansas region.

Launched in 2013 as a joint venture between the Jones Trust and the Northwest Arkansas Council, EngageNWA was founded on the principle that diverse communities perform better economically and, in our increasingly global economy, the regions that embrace these values will thrive. Engaging this diversity – across all levels, sectors, and communities – is how the region will secure its place as one of the nation’s best places to live and work.

In 2017, a regional strategic planning process for diversity and inclusion created an actionable roadmap for partners across multiple sectors to work toward the common goal of maximizing the inclusion of everyone in Northwest Arkansas. EngageNWA, operating within the Northwest Arkansas Council, was tasked with facilitating the priorities and initiatives of that plan.



*EngageNWA provides a platform to demonstrate shared values, practical strategies for engagement, and positive results around efforts to build an inclusive region.*



## GOAL 4

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We will invest in the  
future of a vibrant  
Downtown Olathe.

## Goal 4: We will invest in the future of a vibrant Downtown Olathe.

The social isolation that resulted from the pandemic and the accompanying rise in remote work has made it more important than ever for Olathe to take active steps to create communal spaces where residents, businesses, and visitors can return to interacting and engaging with one another in person. Placemaking – the process of designing a robust network of public spaces that facilitate a variety of social activities and creative art interventions – draws people into a community and helps build the density and variety of people and activities that can support vibrant retail and entertainment uses, economic opportunities, and essential services necessary to a high quality of life. For that reason, Downtown Olathe is a strategic location for placemaking initiatives given its cluster of civic uses, businesses, and growing base of year-round residents.

In today's competitive market, talented workers are seeking not only cities to work in that have great amenities but also places that champion diversity and allow new ideas to flow. Intentional, open-spirited placemaking can increase well-being and connectedness and ensure that all members of a community are welcome to share ideas, innovate, and collaborate. Placemaking will create the opportunity to reimagine Downtown Olathe as a community hub where residents and workers alike can easily access critical resources and business support needed to drive economic growth and equity. Given Goal 4's alignment with the principles previously outlined in the Envision Olathe Downtown Plan, the following strategies are intended to reinforce a subset of recommendations from the plan that will directly impact economic activity in the City. For more information on the 2018 Envision Olathe Downtown, refer to the plan.



# The Evidence

- Olathe’s recent investments and adoption of the Envision Downtown Plan and many of its recommendations show its commitment to its downtown core. Downtown Olathe is undergoing several redevelopment projects, including the completion of its first multifamily residential development in more than 30 years. As a growing neighborhood, Downtown Olathe offers the perfect scene for placemaking initiatives.
- Home to major sports complexes, one of the country’s most famous sandwiches, and over 40 parks – containing lakes, golf courses, and nature reserves – Olathe is a hidden gem in the Kansas City metro area. A revitalized downtown area with direct access to outdoor recreation can pull all of these amenities together to create a regional destination.
- A vibrant downtown benefits the whole community. Downtowns are the main economic drivers of communities, and by increasing the business and recreational options in its downtown area, Olathe will expand its economic, cultural, and tourism influence.



## The following metrics should be tracked to assess implementation and impact:

- **TOTAL ANNUAL DOWNTOWN BUDGET**  
Tracking the amount of money dedicated to placemaking and events in the downtown area.
- **AVERAGE DAILY FOOT TRAFFIC**  
Counting the number of interactions that occur in Downtown Olathe.
- **TOTAL EVENT ATTENDANCE**  
Measuring the number and success of events in Olathe.
- **TOTAL DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS**  
Tracking the demand for and population of housing in the downtown area.
- **TOTAL NUMBER OF RETAIL STORES AND EATING/DRINKING PLACES**  
Understanding the mix of stores that attract visitors and create a vibrant nightlife.
- **SHARE OF SMALL BUSINESSES**  
Tracking small businesses (those with fewer than 10 employees) in Downtown Olathe to understand the area’s potential for entrepreneurship and innovation.

## STRATEGY

# 4.1

## Establish a long-term management plan (entity, governance, and funding) for Downtown Olathe.

An intentional long-term management plan will prepare Olathe to reinvigorate the downtown area while staying up to date with changing market trends and resident desires. With ideas in mind, organizations to support them, dedicated staffing/teams, and a budget set aside to make them happen, the City can ensure that its plans for Downtown Olathe become a reality.



## Actions

- Explore the process of implementing a downtown management entity.
- Form an oversight board that can also serve to grow/advocate for more private investment in Downtown Olathe.
- Encourage the direct involvement of local business owners and residents in Downtown Olathe.
- Bolster grant funding for Downtown Olathe.
- Coordinate efforts among local, state, and regional economic development organizations that work with small businesses and downtowns (such as Kansas Main Street Inc., Network Kansas, and LISC) to promote business development in Downtown Olathe.

## STRATEGY

# 4.2

### Activate a placemaking strategy to transform Downtown Olathe into a central entertainment district.

By capitalizing on Olathe’s history, culture, and proximity to Kansas City, the City can create a placemaking strategy that attracts a diverse range of target audiences to the area, turning it into an entertainment district. This work will require identifying strategic placemaking activation locations, designing pillars that tie the various experiences together under a downtown brand, and planning for a variety of events and activities to execute. By offering fresh, affordable, and unique experiences – ranging from new dining options that capture the heart of Olathe to nightly shows and events – the City can enhance the well-being of its residents while fostering the connections that bolster a strong economy.



## Actions

- Develop and manage a placemaking strategy and year-round calendar of events.
- Focus on creating and celebrating the places that make Olathe unique (local businesses, retail, entertainment, etc.).
- Create an After Hours Downtown event.
- Relocate the farmers market back to Downtown Olathe.
- Create an arts village attraction in Downtown Olathe.

## STRATEGY

# 4.3

## Grow a year-round downtown residential community.

Creating a walkable community in the heart of the downtown area, complete with year-round residents, will allow Olathe to make the most of its vibrant downtown vision. A residential community is essential to creating foot traffic for nearby restaurants and businesses and to spurring the local economy. More foot traffic activity increases the attractiveness and perception of safety and vibrancy of Downtown Olathe, increasing the demand to live, work, and play in the area.



## Actions

- Continue to build diversified residential development and encourage executive-level housing development.
- Provide rental incentives to residents relocating to Downtown Olathe.
- Build on neighborhood amenities such as convenience stores, childcare/daycare services, gym/wellness studios, and personal care services.

## STRATEGY

# 4.4

## Incentivize the entry and expansion of small and creative businesses in Downtown Olathe.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of Olathe, making up 69% of all businesses. These entities are important because of their interconnectedness, both financially and relationally, and because of their contribution to the local economy through employment and sales. Incentivizing their creation in or relocation to the downtown area will benefit Olathe's economy. With a concerted effort on placemaking in the downtown area, businesses there will benefit from increased foot traffic and visitation.



## Actions

- Permit small-batch manufacturing uses in Downtown Olathe, including food/beverage manufacturing, brewery/brewpubs, and the manufacturing of jewelry/silverware, textiles, clothing, and leather goods.
- Offer business relocation packages.
- Expand storefront improvement programming to include interior upgrades.
- Hold and publicize an annual Downtown Olathe contest and arts festival to attract independent, unique retailers and restaurants and other experiential concepts.

## STRATEGY

# 4.5

## Explore the creation of a subsidized shared commercial space in Downtown Olathe.

Shared commercial spaces help businesses by allowing for flexibility, particularly for start-ups that need to resize. They also support collaboration between workers and companies and provide lower-cost amenities. By subsidizing such spaces, Olathe can help attract businesses to the downtown area by reducing the upfront costs associated with buying or renting new property. The City can also be flexible with what kind of businesses are occupying the space, whether it is a trendy new bakery or a tech start-up that aligns with one of Olathe's target sectors.



## Actions

- Work closely with commercial property owners to identify suitable ground-floor spaces, and negotiate near-term master lease agreements.
- Partner with a local/regional artisan market operator to design and manage a “pop-up” subsidized shared commercial space.



## STRATEGY

# 4.6

### Develop a retail strategy to diversify the ground-floor commercial tenant mix.

The commercial heart of a community is found in its downtown and business districts. These areas create jobs for local residents and generate sales that boost the economy of the wider community. Equally important, these hubs establish an improved quality of life, serving the needs of a city's residents, workers, and visitors. Downtown Olathe currently has a limited mix of retail and dining, and the City will need to strategize with property owners to better understand opportunities to diversify the tenant mix and merchandise offerings and leverage the recent growth in population and tourism.



## Actions

- Develop a merchandising strategy with downtown property owners and brokers, with a focus on tenants that activate Downtown Olathe after 5 p.m.
- Create community benefits agreements with downtown developers to provide health and wellness/community services.

## STRATEGY

# 4.7

## Re-imagine strategic downtown sites.

Keeping Downtown Olathe among the City's most cherished places, now and in the future, is Olathe's vision for tomorrow. Downtown Olathe's new vision will create new business opportunities, unite the district with its surrounding neighborhoods, improve infrastructure, and create a unique shopping and business environment while maintaining its historical charm. Re-imagining critical sites that are highly visible from key thoroughfares such as Santa Fe Street and Kansas Avenue, including the Post Office site and the Chestnut Street Lot, are exciting redevelopment opportunities to optimally use the space.



## Actions

- Acquire Post Office site for redevelopment.
- Create a request for development proposals to select site developer(s) for Post Office site and Chestnut Lot.
- Engage a master planner to create a concept and architectural plans.

CASE STUDY

# Downtown Topeka Inc. — Topeka, KS

A place-based management entity focused on downtown as the center of the regional economy.

Formed to lead the revitalization of the city’s downtown as the “entertainment center of the community,” Downtown Topeka, Inc. (DTI) is a city-designated Business Improvement District that carries out a variety of functions, from public realm management to business grant administration and placemaking (including managing several annual free-to-public events, along with activations and downtown business marketing). Programs are funded by service fees from businesses located within the district, and from additional sponsorship funding provided by major businesses located downtown. The organization has three full-time staff and is governed by a board of directors and supported by subcommittees composed of various downtown stakeholders.

In 2018, Downtown Topeka Inc. joined forces with adjacent entities including the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce, GO Topeka, and Visit Topeka Inc. to create the Greater Topeka Partnership – a regional alliance that advances economic development for Topeka and Shawnee County. The shared resources provided by this alliance are powering the coalition to meet the 14 objectives and 54 initiatives in its “Road to 2027” strategic plan.



*Downtown Topeka is home to over 2,000 residents and 23,000 jobs, and attracts 200,000 special event attendees annually. Wages here are 18% higher than in the greater surrounding region.*

## CASE STUDY

# Downtown OKC — Oklahoma City, OK

A downtown entity leveraging community-driven public art and placemaking to inspire conversation and wonder in the city center.

Downtown Oklahoma City (Downtown OKC) understands the power that placemaking has in creating and maintaining authentic experiences for residents and visitors. Over recent years, the organization has grown its initiatives to create and fund various new and unique placemaking and public art projects annually. With the support of full-time district managers on staff, as well as a director of place management, Downtown OKC is able to produce more than 20 events annually, ranging from educational workshops to community bike-to-work events and large festivals and maker markets. The variety of events in Downtown OKC invites a diverse set of audiences to explore downtown and meaningfully engage with the brand identities of the six sub-districts located in the area.

In addition to event and activation productions, Downtown OKC engages local artists and creatives to develop both permanent and temporary public art – including lighting installations, street furniture, and murals – through a series of micro and matching grants.



*From 2010 to 2016, growth in Downtown OKC outpaced the rest of the region, the number of workers increased 13%, and the Business Improvement District increased its value by 90%, up to \$157 million.*

## CASE STUDY

# Downtown Norfolk Retail Strategy – Norfolk, VA

A retail strategy that outlines an ideal retail mix and size for the downtown area, backed by market-driven research and stakeholder input.

Similar to major urban markets in the Mid-Atlantic that saw an exponential growth in retail development through the 1990s and early 2000s, Downtown Norfolk today is competing against a high degree of recently emergent regional competition, particularly against single-owner environments that have significantly upgraded assets and tenant/brand mixes.

To better understand the area's competitive retail strengths and weaknesses, the Downtown Norfolk Council enlisted the support of retail strategists to outline a landlord-endorsed, market-relevant merchandising plan that empowers landlords to make decisions that are best for their properties long-term and for the value of the greater downtown area. The resulting Downtown Norfolk Retail Strategy includes proposed districts by tenant type and a set of illustrative tenants based on regional market research, as well as a tenancing approach that will guide decision-making (including tenant qualities and design considerations). The plan has helped facilitate a common vision and stakeholder alignment that is often absent from multi-landlord downtown environments.



*The Downtown Norfolk Retail Strategy includes five key initiatives, from improved banners and signage to better zoning and parking solutions to the activation of family-friendly events and spaces.*

## GOAL 5

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We will promote and celebrate Olathe as a destination for families, professionals, and visitors.

## Goal 5: We will promote and celebrate Olathe as a destination for families, professionals, and visitors.

Community branding and promotion will enable the City to establish its value proposition – in other words: What makes Olathe worth moving to or investing in? Storytelling is one of the most effective ways to activate and engage people’s emotions and imaginations. In the same way, forming a narrative is equally effective at attracting people and investments to the region.

When a region offers a strong brand, people become aware of and are drawn to the things that make that region unique. This in turn has the double effect of increasing talent in the area and providing a strong sense of place, resulting in local attachment and retention. Additionally, a strong brand identity can articulate a region’s unique strategic positioning, establishing a competitive advantage over other places and destinations. In addition to branding, marketing and promotion is critical to building awareness of the City and its offerings, and driving visitation to community assets and attractions. With a strategy for economic development marketing and promotion that articulates a strong brand identity, Olathe can improve its investment value proposition and drive sales and traffic to key businesses and attractions.



# The Evidence

- Branding helps communities, cities, and destinations distill and articulate their unique strategic positioning and differentiating characteristics. A strong brand will help Olathe compete in the global marketplace. Promoting the City’s unique characteristics is essential to attracting investment, people, and capital to Olathe.
- Place marketing enables cities to reach targeted audiences strategically across multiple touchpoints in order to drive greater awareness of a place. A well-articulated place-marketing strategy translates the essence of a place into the right messages across the right media channels to reach businesses, communities, and visitors.



## The following metrics should be tracked to assess implementation and impact:

- **UNIQUE WEBSITE VISITORS**  
Measuring interest in the Olathe website.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT**  
Tracking interest in Olathe as a destination to live, work, and visit.
- **NUMBER OF SPORTS TOURNAMENTS**  
Measuring interest in Olathe’s recreational activities.
- **MARATHON PARTICIPANTS**  
Tracking participation in a major tourist-attracting City event.
- **HOTEL OCCUPANCY**  
Counting the number of visitors to the City.
- **NEW ENTERTAINMENT AND HOSPITALITY INVESTMENTS**  
Tracking the funding and number of efforts focused on branding a welcoming and entertaining community.



## STRATEGY

# 5.1

## Develop a destination brand identity that attracts investment, talent, and visitors.

The difference is in the details. Olathe needs to fully define its value proposition for investment, talent attraction, and resident engagement as it relates to economic development. Olathe has the talent and the assets to be a regional leader. Creating a centralized message and brand identity will position the City to play up its unique strengths and differentiate itself from its peers across the Kansas City metro area. Once created, this brand should be deployed across all platforms with targeted messaging that helps each audience make the easy decision to invest in Olathe.



## Actions

- Evaluate Olathe's brand and positioning for economic development, talent attraction, and investment.
- Hire a place-branding firm to support Olathe's brand development.
- Refresh the City and Chamber identities and marketing materials (websites, social media, and more) to reflect new positioning.

## STRATEGY

# 5.2

## Showcase Olathe during the 2026 World Cup.

With Arrowhead Stadium set to host matches during the 2026 World Cup, Olathe will be a short drive away from the biggest sporting event in the world. Olathe can activate its community to generate excitement around this event. With the eyes of a worldwide audience turning toward the region, Olathe can leverage branding to put itself on the map like never before.



## Actions

- Develop, in partnership with KCADC, Visit KC, KC Sports Commission, and Travel KS, a strategy for raising community and regional awareness.
- Host a series of World Cup-adjacent placemaking events in Olathe.
- Create a social media engagement strategy to support efforts.

## STRATEGY

# 5.3

## Continue to develop mixed-use neighborhood destinations.

Mixed-use development unites residential buildings with professional service offices, retail, and restaurants, keeping all within a single, walkable, and vibrant micro-neighborhood. This type of community can promote the health and well-being of residents, reduce environmental harm, and boost the local economy. Done properly, mixed-use zoning can encourage equitable neighborhood development. By leveraging areas best suited for mixed-use zoning and pursuing land use updates and urban design excellence, Olathe can continue to develop its culture as a suburban city of the future.



## Actions

- Create and enforce mixed-use neighborhood design guidelines for target focus areas identified in corridor studies.
- Market and promote available development incentives (including Neighborhood Revitalization rebates) to owners of properties located in target focus areas.
- Form a steering committee for target focus areas that includes property owners and tenants to align with and update on redevelopment plans and opportunities.

## STRATEGY

# 5.4

## Grow retail and entertainment anchor attractions in strategic locations.

“Anchor” attractions bring people of all generations together and are an effective way to draw people to an area. Retail anchors, such as large, well-known retailers within a mall or entertainment tenants (e.g. performing arts venues/theaters, cinemas, arcades/gaming venues, and recreation facilities), can boost the credibility and popularity of an area. As people travel to a neighborhood or retail district specifically for unique experiences – more so than for retail transactions – they are more likely to continue on to secondary locations, increasing economic activity in the area. Entertainment anchor attractions, such as Olathe’s Black Bob Bay, can be equally effective and are more appealing to families. By focusing on this strategy in specific target areas, Olathe can encourage economic growth.



## Actions

- Conduct market research on existing regional anchor entertainment tenants and growing retail concepts.
- Create a targeted tenant/brand outreach list.
- Develop a retail and entertainment pitch strategy for industry events and trade shows.

## STRATEGY

# 5.5

### Activate an outdoor and sports tourism strategy that includes youth sports, recreation, and the Garmin Olathe Marathon.

Sports and outdoor activities are the heartbeat of Olathe. With a thriving youth sports scene, a soccer complex with nine world-class fields, and an annual marathon run by over 2,000 people, the City can share this passion with all of its visitors. Whether attendees are spectating or participating, they can count on Olathe to provide an engaging experience. In return, the entire Olathe community can enjoy the social, emotional, and economic benefits that come with a thriving sports tourism industry.



## Actions

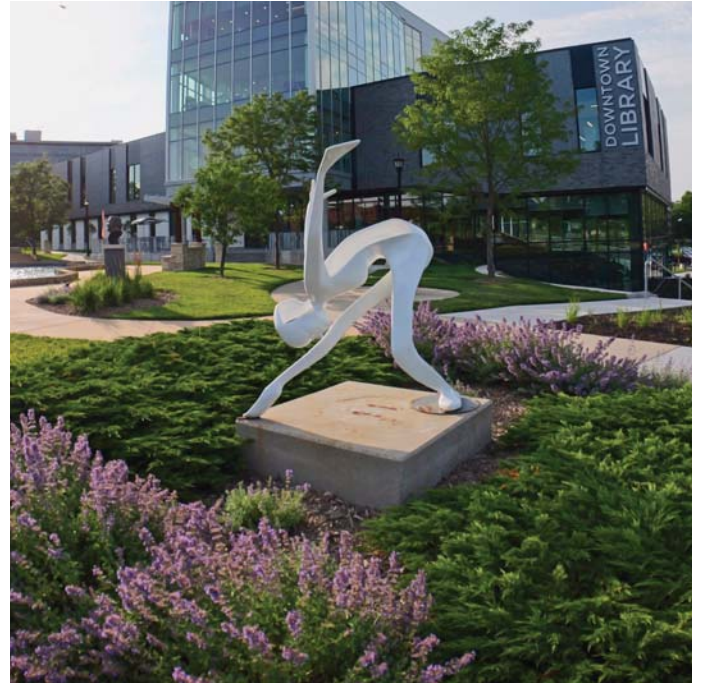
- Coordinate with destination partners to identify sports and recreation assets, and conduct a gap assessment of sports venues/facilities.
- Partner with destination organizations to build an action plan for attracting new sporting events to Olathe.
- Coordinate with a lead generation firm, if necessary, to establish target prospects and prospective sports organizations/associations and to establish metrics.
- Support investment in Olathe's parks, recreational facilities, and gathering spaces.
- Continue to host and grow the Garmin Olathe Marathon.

## STRATEGY

# 5.6

## Inventory and showcase Olathe's cultural and heritage destination assets.

What does it mean to be part of Olathe? The City's name is derived from a Shawnee word meaning "beautiful," and, with its natural beauty and rich history, it lives up to that original dedication. Olathe is home to art sculptures scattered throughout its neighborhoods and to an impressive collection of historical homes and buildings, and residents and City planners have held a long-time commitment to parks and recreation. With a history tied to Native American populations and with the current growth in the Hispanic and Latino populations, Olathe has a diverse set of cultures and stories to share. By listing and celebrating these assets and stories, the City can cultivate itself as a unique bastion of history and culture.



## Actions

- Develop an inventory of Olathe's cultural and heritage assets.
- Promote these assets as part of the City's curated destination experiences.
- Ensure that City destination marketing materials reflect these assets.

## STRATEGY

# 5.7

## Curate and promote destination experiences.

Residents know that Olathe has a lot to offer. When asked for their top reasons for living in Olathe, our survey respondents pointed to the parks and outdoor activities, the quality of the natural environment, and a sense of community. By cultivating these strengths into experiences and promoting them through City programming, Olathe can attract more people and give existing residents a greater appreciation for their home.



## Actions

- Expand/update the inventory of Olathe's destination assets: cultural and recreational amenities, music, art, food, entertainment, and more.
- Develop curated destination experiences for Olathe residents and target visitors and test ideas on social media.

## STRATEGY

# 5.8

## Diversify and grow Olathe's hotel offerings.

With an intentional branding message comes a greater need for hotels to drive overnight stays, particularly during large events/conventions. Hotels, essential for housing visitors, hosting social events, and providing entry-level jobs, are a vital part of any city's economy. With 17 hotels currently on offer in and around Olathe, the City should assess the feasibility of increasing its hotel room supply while diversifying the visitor experience at each hotel. This will not only attract tourists, it will also show those tourists what makes Olathe unique.



## Actions

- Attend national trade shows targeting hospitality and hotel brands.
- Annually update Olathe's investment portfolio/pitch for hospitality enterprises and brands.
- Continue to develop relationships with site selectors who represent hospitality enterprises and brands.
- Provide site visits as requested.



## CASE STUDY

# LYH Loves You — Lynchburg, VA

Developing a new brand identity that communicates the inclusivity and warmth of the community in Lynchburg.

Following the creation of a five-year economic development strategic plan, the City of Lynchburg identified a core strategy to attract talent, businesses, and visitors through effective communication of its authentic stories to the world. The City engaged a destination branding consultant to develop a new campaign that tells a bold message of inclusivity while also leveraging the state’s iconic “Virginia Is for Lovers” messaging.

Since the release of the new brand positioning and campaign, the City of Lynchburg has applied it widely across B2B and B2C platforms, from print to social and organic marketing platforms, and it continues today to serve as the city’s central rallying message. LYH Loves You clearly communicates the city’s desire to welcome talent, companies, and visitors and give them the information, training, and space needed to thrive in Lynchburg.



*In March 2022, Southern Living Magazine named Lynchburg one of the South’s Best Cities on the Rise, and profiled the city for its incredible natural beauty, historic districts, and lively arts scene.*

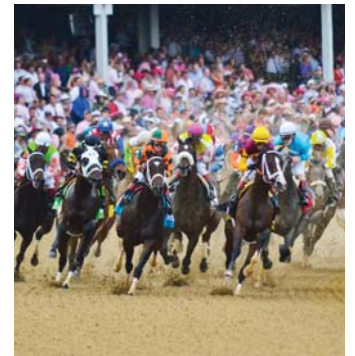
## CASE STUDY

# Go to Louisville KY — Louisville, KY

A curated mix of “can’t miss” experiences for travelers, ranging from bourbon to iconic attractions and African-American heritage.

Louisville Tourism, the city’s Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), has organized and marketed the 120-plus key attractions and visitor experiences the city has to offer under nine core themes: including Bourbon (a core and unique brand pillar for the destination), Arts & Entertainment, History & Culture, Family-Friendly Fun, Shopping, Outdoors, LGBTQ Louisville, Black Heritage, and Spa & Wellness. These experience packages are widely featured across all of the city’s marketing platforms and are made easy to navigate on the DMO website, with integrations that bring visitors directly to booking platforms and ticket websites.

With the stated goal of enhancing Louisville’s economy through tourism, the organization has been largely successful: tourism was the third-largest industry in the city before the pandemic, supporting over 70,000 local jobs.



*The Go to Louisville initiative has increased awareness of the city as an affordable and diverse leadership destination. Louisville was named one of the 52 places to go in 2023 by the New York Times.*

## CASE STUDY

# Gilbert Heritage District — Gilbert, AZ

**History, culture, art, and innovation collide in an accessible downtown core.**

Downtown Gilbert is known by locals as the Heritage District. It is a fun and vibrant space, including chic, one-of-a-kind boutiques and specialty purveyors that sell furniture, locally crafted art, antiques, seasonal gifts, and unique merchandise.

Mural-clad brick walls, glowing benches, a seven-foot gopher, waterways art, and a color-changing water tower are a few creations found in the district, in addition to a gallery, an established theater, and a historical museum. Public parking in the area is easily accessible and free.

The Heritage District is also home to two universities (Park University and the University of Arizona) operating out of one state-of-the-art facility. Students are offered a high-quality education with an easygoing vibe that feels both downtown and authentic to Gilbert.

In 2018, Gilbert Town Council adopted a new Redevelopment Plan for the Heritage District. It fosters coordinated efforts between the public and private sectors to develop wayfinding, place marketing, renovations, parking, and infrastructure improvements.



*Gilbert's downtown area supports over 1,000 residents, 30 restaurants, and shopping and art experiences in one do-it-all neighborhood.*

