Project Background

Development in the Planning Area over the past 20 years has been gradual. Limited preservation of rural commercial development continues along Metcalf Avenue and 199th Street, particularly to the south. The upgrade of residences has been ongoing along with recent developments in the downtown Stilwell, including the removal of older structures and the addition of new businesses and residences. The eastern and southern portions of the Planning Area still contain large tracts of agriculture and undeveloped land.

The interest in preparing a plan for this area has been long contemplated. In 2001, the Report of the Aubry Oxford Planning Committee recommended the preparation of a “Village Plan” for the vicinity of 199th Street and Metcalf Avenue. In 2004, the Johnson County Rural Comprehensive Plan update recommended a community-centered plan for the area.

In 2010, the Aubry-Oxford Consolidated Zoning Board (AOZCB) requested the County Planning Development, and Codes Department undertake such a project. With authorization from the Board of County Commissioners and the County Planning Commission, the AOZCB served as the project Steering Committee, establishing the boundaries, scope, and content for the project. The projected time horizon for the Plan was set for 2030.

Community Input

Initial public input was obtained through two series of focus group community meetings attended by over 200 residents and businesses. The first series of meetings identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and the second series focused on proposed goals and objectives. Over 160 individuals participated in the final public meeting to review the proposed goals and objectives. The meeting at Stilwell Elementary School was conducted by the AOZCB, the Township Trustee, and the Chairman of the Stilwell Community Organization.

Development Pressures

Currently, two external developments are occurring near the Planning Area that will have lasting impact on future development throughout the southeastern portion of the County.

Sanitary Sewers - Sanitary sewers are now under construction to serve an area recently annexed over Overland Park, generally located east of Mission Road and south of 179th Street. It is anticipated that higher density residential and limited commercial development will occur here. Much of the area at the intersection of 179th Street and Metcalf Avenue already has sanitary sewers. A mix of residential, commercial, and business park uses is planned for this area by Overland Park.

Roads - Two important future arterial road improvements are planned by Overland Park. Both roads are proposed to connect with the existing Missouri road system to the east. One arterial connection is the extension of 191st Street east of Mission Road. The other connection is an extension of 199th Street east of Mission Road, northeast to approximately 195th Street.
Future Development
- Support existing local businesses as well as encourage new business and new employment opportunities.
- Establish an organization of business owners in the Stilwell area to collaborate with one another as well as promote their businesses, e.g., create a Stilwell business directory.
- Establish a “Quiet Zone” along the Union Pacific tracks in residential areas.
- Support retaining Stilwell Elementary School at its current location while improving accessibility (e.g., sidewalks, bike lanes).
- Identify significant open spaces and stands of trees and encourage conservation of these areas through public-private cooperation or partnerships such as the Blue River Land Trust and the Kansas Land Trust.
- Explore opportunities to raise funds to support special community events and projects.
- Increase communication between the County and Village property and business owners through newsletters, websites, email alerts, a community billboard, and various other forms of communication.
- Increase communication between the Planning, Development & Codes website at www.jocogov.org.
- The full version of the Stilwell Community Plan is posted on the Planning, Development & Codes website at www.jocogov.org.

Brief History of Stilwell - Mount Auburn
The following is a direct excerpt from Volume II of Kansas: a cyclopedia of state history, embracing counties, institutions, industries, counties, cities, towns, prominent persons, etc., 1912.

“Stilwell, one of the new towns that have grown up in the southeastern part of Johnson County, is located on the Missouri Pacific R. R. 10 miles from Olathe, the county seat. The railroad was the making of the town, which has a good public school; several churches and general stores, a blacksmith and wagon shop, implement and hardware house, lumber yard, express and telegraph facilities, and a money order post office with one rural route. In 1910 its population was 200. Being the only large town in the southeastern part of the county it is the shipping and supply point for a rich agricultural district and does considerable business. The town was formerly known as Mount Auburn, the name having been changed by act of the legislature, approved March 2, 1899.

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— Pastor Dave Richardson

Implementation:
As noted, the preceding goals and objectives align with the goals, policies, and action steps contained in the Johnson County Rural Comprehensive Plan. Responsibility for implementation of the goals and objectives is shared by the County and the Stilwell community. At this time, however, neither prioritization nor funding for the goals and objectives has been identified.

Community History

The Stilwell train depot was located northeast of Main and Wall Streets. East of the Stilwell depot, across the tracks, was a fenced area with loading chutes used as a stockyard. The farmers would often use 190th Street, which was also known as Missouri or Ocheltree Road, as the path for driving their hogs and cattle to the stockyard. Southwest of the Stilwell depot was a hotel owned by the Adam Miller family and later managed by the Burgess family.

Shortly after the train came to the area, telegraph service was established and located inside the train depot. Another means of communication arrived on June 22, 1888, when the US Post Office at Stilwell was established.

The first telephone office was located on Delaware Street, west of the railroad tracks. In 1907 the company was called the Mijo Telephone Company, referring of course to the areas it served, Miami and Johnson Counties. Because the Stilwell-Aubry community did not have a fire department, the telephone was used to communicate the location of the fire; four long rings announced the location and the need for volunteer firemen.”

With the arrival of the train, the town of Stilwell was established. The plat for Mt. Auburn, the original name of the town, was filed on November 20, 1886, by Michael O’Keefe, John Lar- kin, William A. Kelly and A. J. Nor- man. The town was located on the Southeast Quarter of Section 5, Township 15 South, Range 25 East, on land owned by Noah Spears. The name of the town was changed later to Stilwell in honor of Arthur E. Stil- well, a conductor for the Missouri Pacific Railroad.

Arthur E. Stilwell

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Community Characteristics

Planning Area Demographics

Population - The U.S. Census population estimate for the Planning Area in 2010 was 1,985 compared to 1,763 in 2010, for a decline of 4 percent.

Age and Gender - The graphic below shows the population breakdown for age and gender in 2010. In 2010, 10 percent of the population was within the age range of 50-54 and 27 percent was between 0-19 years of age. The split between males and females was almost even in 2010.

Race - In 2010, 92 percent of the population was Caucasian compared to 97 percent in 2000.

Income - According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the average household income was $103,069 and the median household income was $79,870.

Housing - In contrast to the population decline noted above, the estimated number of housing units increased between 2000 and 2010. In 2000, there were 640 household units compared to 698 in 2010, representing a 9 percent increase. Average household size between 2000 and 2010 increased from 2.8 persons per household in 2000 to 3.0 persons per household in 2010.

In 2000, the housing vacancy rate was estimated to be 3 percent, compared to an estimated 5 percent vacancy rate in 2010. In 2010, there were approximately 603 owner-occupied housing units, and 59 renter-occupied housing units compared to approximately 582 owner-occupied housing units, and 44 renter-occupied housing units in 2000.

Natural Environment

The Planning Area may be generally characterized as very low-density development with large areas of agriculture and open spaces.

Two watersheds encompass the Planning Area - Wolf Creek watershed on the west and Camp Branch Creek watershed on the east. A tributary of Wolf Creek is located on the north just west of the Aubry Cemetery on 191st Street. The Camp Branch Creek tributary is located generally east of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks between 191st and 207th Streets. The lands adjacent to these tributaries are designated as flood plain, where development is discouraged.

Natural resources including waterways, large stands of trees, and vegetation have an important impact on the quality of life within the Planning Area and are assets that need to be protected especially as the area develops.

Within the Planning Area there are few steep ridges or slopes. According to the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, Polo soils found in and around Aubry Township are the only soils within the County that are generally suitable for septic systems. Polo soils are typically found on land located nearby the tributaries noted above. Overall, the flood plain, topographic, and general soil conditions found within the Planning Area do not pose major obstacles to development.

Community Initiatives

The following list of Community Initiatives was developed during the preparation of the preceding Goals and Objectives. Because these initiatives are generally beyond the normal realm of government services, responsibility for implementation will be up to Stilwell’s residents, businesses, and property owners. Some of these initiatives, however, might be implemented jointly through public/private sector partnerships or support by the County and community organizations working together.

Community Heritage

- Promote Stilwell’s heritage as essential to maintaining the community’s rural small town identity as well as to its sense of pride and connection to its past.

- Survey important historic and cultural features to identify structures or locations important to the community and to preserve residences. The Johnson County Museum may provide assistance for conducting a survey.

- Increase awareness of Stilwell’s old downtown through the addition of new directional signs and markers.

- Create a Stilwell logo or “brand” that can be used throughout the area on signs, banners, newsletters, websites, etc.

Small Town Character and Identity

- Establish an ongoing farmer’s market to capitalize on locally grown produce as well as to provide a location and opportunity for residents to meet and interact.

- Encourage development of agri-businesses such as orchards, vineyards, pumpkin patches, etc., that reflect the community’s rural traditions and character and that attract visitors to the area.

Public Gathering Places - Parks, Greenways, Paths, and Recreation

- Continue collaboration between the County Park and Recreation District and the Stilwell Community Organization to develop parkland at 207th Street, east of Metcalf Avenue and create other “pocket parks” or trails in this area as well.

- Establish a venue or location (e.g., future village green) to commemorate the community’s history, e.g., historical markers, public displays, etc.

- Develop a sample historic-themed village architectural style pamphlet for property owners to consider when remodeling or building new structures.

- Support redevelopment of the original Stilwell School into a community center or public gathering space.

Sense of Community

- Encourage local civic organizations to bring neighbors together through community social, cultural, and historic events (e.g., Stilwell Parade).

- Support redevelopment of the original Stilwell School into a community center or public gathering space.

- Increase awareness of Stilwell’s old downtown through the addition of new directional signs and markers.

- Encourage local civic organizations to bring neighbors together through community social, cultural, and historic events (e.g., Stilwell Parade).
Community Goals and Objectives (continued)

Encourage the inclusion of conservation or open space areas as part of new development, particularly, non-residential development.

Minimize stormwater runoff by utilizing natural drainage systems and continue to restrict development in flood prone areas.

Develop "general" voluntary design guidelines, including lighting and landscaping, for non-residential development to establish a common frame of reference for future and current development.

Restrict parking for future non-residential development to the rear or sides of the new building as well as provide sufficient screening from adjacent residential uses. Consider lowering parking requirements; particularly in the downtown area.

Explore opportunities for public transportation (e.g., Johnson County Transit Local Link or Commuter Express) to serve Stilwell as well as promote the use of the 151st Street and Antioch Road Park and Ride facility. Also, explore the potential for a future Park and Ride facility in Stilwell for carpooling and possibly for a future Stilwell JO route, if feasible.

Address traffic safety (e.g., pedestrian, bicycle, railroad crossing) on 199th Street, while minimizing adverse impacts on surrounding existing development including Stilwell Elementary School.

Centralize locate future community facilities to create a "civic center" or area that would include other community facilities such as a post office, after-school facilities, a library, or a community center.

Plan and design the future installation of public utilities, including sanitary sewers, to limit adverse impacts on existing development.

Identify locations with utility services deficiencies (e.g., water pressure, power, etc.) and work with the utility providers to upgrade these services.

Increase communication and coordination with surrounding jurisdictions to ensure development is coordinated, orderly, efficient, and compatible.

Support a diversity of housing types with a wide range of prices.

Review applicable zoning and building codes to identify possible regulation changes that might facilitate new restaurants with local flavor along with expanded grocery and neighborhood convenience-type stores.

Explore establishing new zoning regulations that will allow for mixed-use development in the unincorporated area.

If sanitary sewers become available, assure that any new medium density development is appropriately located and compatible with adjacent existing development.

Encourage infill development of vacant and underutilized lots; particularly in old downtown Stilwell.

Government Jurisdictions

The entire Planning Area is within the unincorporated area of Johnson County. The only shared municipal border of the Stilwell Planning Area is with the City of Overland Park on the west side of U.S. Highway 69. The Blue Valley School District serves most of Aubry Township, including Stilwell.

Community Uses and Services

Land Use

The predominant land uses within the Planning Area are agricultural, large and small lot residential uses, and some limited non-residential development. Numerous older and established community facilities also exist within the area.

The Union Pacific Railroad runs approximately 30 trains daily along the east side of old downtown Stilwell. The Existing Land Use Map below shows locations of the various land uses within the Planning Area.

Nonresidential Land Uses

There are numerous businesses in the Planning Area, most of which are located along Metcalf Avenue between 191st Street and 207th Street. In addition, there are several businesses on 199th Street between Metcalf Avenue and U.S. Highway 69. Three industrial parks are located in the Planning Area, one small and older industrial area just north of 207th Street and Metcalf Avenue (Griffin Industrial Park) and two larger and newer industrial areas southwest of 207th Street and Metcalf Avenue.

Community Facilities and Service

Three churches are located within the Planning Area as well as a U.S. Post Office, Stilwell Elementary School, and a fire station. The future Stilwell Community Park, on the north side of 207th Street just east of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, is still in the design and funding phase.

Cultural

While many community-recognized historical and cultural features may be found throughout the Planning Area, the only State designated historical feature is the "Frontier Military Historic Byway" that generally follows U.S. Highway 69 from Leavenworth through Ft. Scott, Kansas to the Oklahoma border.

Cultural facilities such as a post office, after-school facilities, a library, or a community center.

Support a diversity of housing types with a wide range of prices.

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Explore opportunities for public transportation (e.g., Johnson County Transit Local Link or Commuter Express) to serve Stilwell as well as promote the use of the 151st Street and Antioch Road Park and Ride facility. Also, explore the potential for a future Park and Ride facility in Stilwell for carpooling and possibly for a future Stilwell JO route, if feasible.

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Community Future Uses and Services

Blue Valley Plan Future Land Use Map - No Changes

For the purpose of this planning project, no changes were made to the goals, objectives, or to the land uses recommended in the Blue Valley Plan "Future Land Use Map." The Blue Valley Plan was originally made an amendment to the County’s Comprehensive Plan in 1996 and as shown below, encompasses the Planning Area.

The recommendation for no change is based upon an evaluation of the information collected for this Plan; particularly an assessment of the unlikely potential that sanitary sewers will reach the Planning Area within the 20-year project time horizon. Also, although substantial, the impact of continuing development pressures from the north, east, or west are not anticipated to significantly alter the existing on-going fragmented, low-density, and low-intensity development pattern that has occurred within the Planning Area over the past two decades. For these reasons, the Blue Valley Plan goals, objectives, and the future land use recommendations for the Stilwell Community Plan remain appropriate for the Planning Area and have not been modified.

Blue Valley Plan Future Land Use Map

Community Goals and Objectives

The following list of Goals and Objectives align with the Goals, Policies, and Action Steps contained in the County’s Comprehensive Plan. Responsibility for implementation of these Goals and Objectives is shared by the County and the Stilwell Community.

Goal: Historic Small Town Character and Sense of Community

Stilwell residents are proud of their community and share a strong sense of commitment to enhancing as well as preserving its rural traditions and small town character.

Objectives:

◆ Encourage new development, particularly nonresidential structures and uses, to be appropriately scaled and designed to be compatible with and embrace the community’s character.

◆ Establish guidelines to restrict excessive lighting, particularly on new residential development. Undertake voluntary efforts to encourage businesses and residents to limit their outdoor lighting to be sufficient for safety and promote the use of new lighting technologies to reduce glare, e.g., LED when and if this lighting option becomes available.

◆ Encourage redevelopment and adaptive reuse of older structures by reusing applicable zoning and building codes to identify possible regulation changes that might facilitate redevelopment, particularly within old downtown Stilwell.

◆ Encourage multigenerational development that supports residents in all stages of their lives and particularly support efforts to enable the elderly to “age in place” with access to essential services (e.g., groceries, medical, and health services).

◆ Support the establishment of a new centrally located and easily accessible public gathering place like a village green to provide a common space, e.g., outdoor stage, picnic shelters, etc., for community events and enjoyment as well as a place of civic pride.

◆ Develop a Camp Branch Creek bicycle and pedestrian greenway and possibly horse trail to connect with the recently acquired parkland at 17th Street and Mission Road as recommended in the Johnson County Rural Comprehensive Plan. Access to these improvements should be safe and convenient and could be developed through public/private partnerships.

◆ Identify utility corridors and unused land near stream corridors suitable for future trails.

◆ Develop a future bicycle and pedestrian trail connection to the Overland Park Arboretum.

Goal: Environmental Quality Protection of the natural environment is essential to maintaining a balance between the natural and built environments, as well as, maintaining Stilwell’s rural small town character.

Objectives:

◆ Integrate new development with the natural environment, minimizing adverse impacts while conserving open spaces.

Future Streamway Park and Greenway Linkages

Streamway park development, also referred to as greenway linkages, are open spaces set aside for public use. Greenway linkages are generally wide enough to accommodate pedestrian, bike, and sometimes even equestrian trials. Typically, greenway linkages are located along or within existing floodplain areas or existing public right-of-way.

As noted in the preceding Natural Environment section, the Planning Area has two major drainage ways: Camp Branch and Wolf Creek. Camp Branch extends between the future Stilwell Community Park on the north side 207th Street east of Metcalf Avenue and property donated for a future park on the north at 163rd Street and Mission Road. A greenway linkage along the floodplain would connect the two future parks through the Planning Area. Potential future greenway linkages are shown along the two areas where Wolf Creek enters the Planning Area. These linkages, along with linkages along U.S. Highway 69, would tie the Planning Area with the Overland Park Arboretum, Heritage Park, the County’s Streamway Park System, the greenway system in Leawood, and the Blue River Parkway.

Greenway Linkages Map

Future Transportation

The County will continue to utilize the Comprehensive Arterial Road Network Plan (CARNP) adopted in 1999 as its guide for future road improvements within the Planning Area. CARNP designates 199th Street as a Type III (4-lane), Metcalf Avenue as a Type II (2-lane), and Nall Avenue as a Type I (2-lane). All of the other arterial or section line roads within the Planning Area are designated as Type I (2-lane) routes.

CARNP Conceptual Road Design

Stilwell Community Plan