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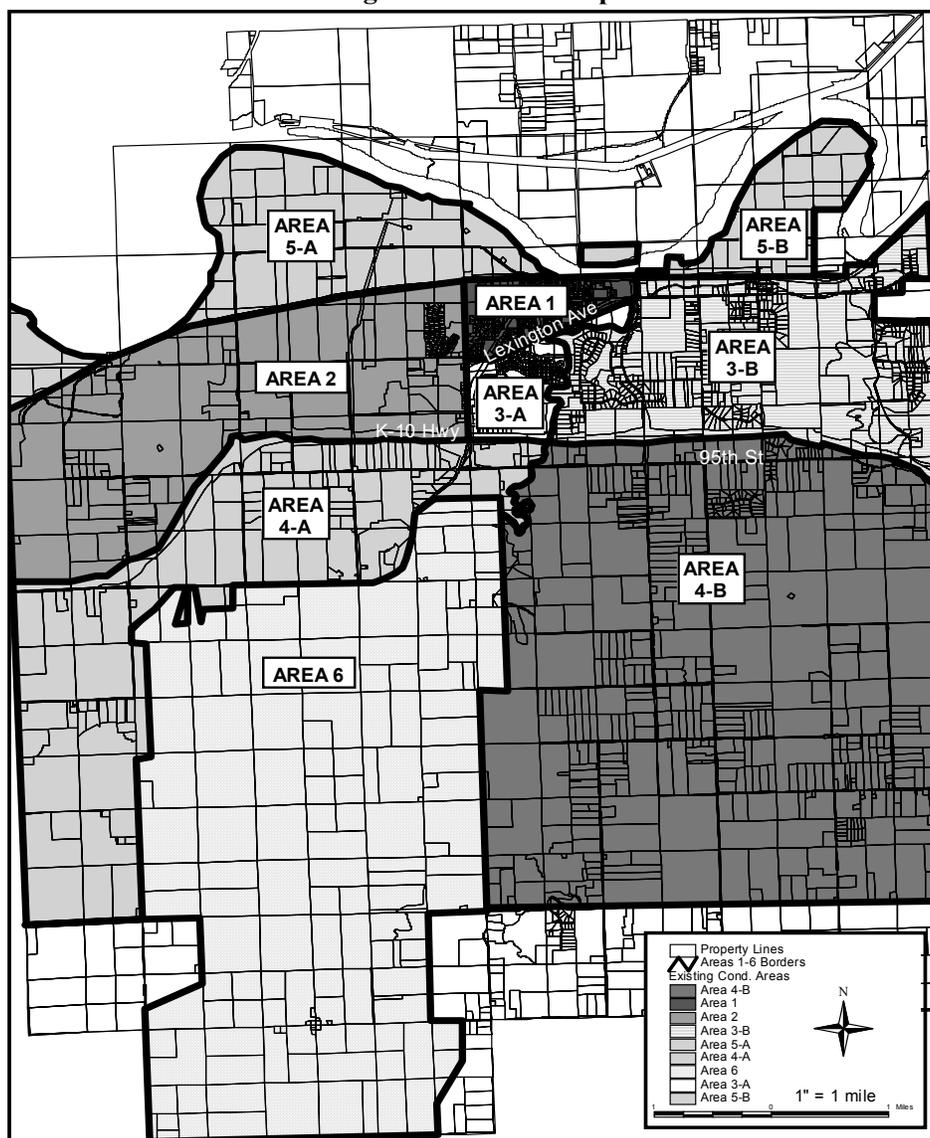


CHAPTER 4 – EXISTING CONDITIONS

EXISTING LAND USE

An inventory and analysis of existing land use is vital in the planning process. Establishing the type and geographical patterns of development is important for establishing a basis for planning decisions. **Map 1** shows the City's existing land uses as of summer 2003. In order to study the growth of De Soto, the area has been divided into nine sub-areas defined by physical boundaries, similarity in development patterns, development limitations, jurisdiction and prior definition of sub-areas by the 1996 Comprehensive Plan. Although sub-areas have been defined, their boundaries are not strictly defined geographic areas. Rather, they are identified for the purpose of land use analysis.

Figure 4.1: Area Map



Source: City of De Soto, 2003



Sub-Areas

Following are general descriptions of each of the nine sub-areas shown in **Figure 4.1**.

Area 1: Original Development – The Historic “Old Town” District

De Soto’s original development occurred primarily in this limited area south of the Kansas River and north of Lexington Avenue. This area includes Downtown De Soto the historic center and commercial core of the community. Adjacent to the commercial district were the City’s original public facilities and residential developments, including isolated housing subdivisions and the original De Soto High School.

Although commercial uses still exist, Downtown lost much of its commercial vitality with changes in transportation patterns and shifts in residential development away from the core of the community. One of the most significant impacts to this area was the relocation of K-10 Highway in 1985. This relocation encouraged development to approximately a mile to the south toward the new highway location for better, more direct access and visibility.

Although the function of Downtown has changed, much of the community still has a sentimental connection to Downtown and the unique architecture and development represented in the core of the community. The City has actively reinvested public dollars in Downtown. In the last decade, the City has renovated the former De Soto High School as a new City Hall and community center. The former City Hall now provides additional facilities for the Fire Station and houses the City’s Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Directors offices. Other investments in Downtown include major improvements to 83rd Street.

This area contains much of the City’s oldest housing and infrastructure which poses both opportunities and challenges for the area’s future. Over time much of the older housing has deteriorated or maintenance has been deferred. Similarly, investments in updating aged infrastructure have been limited. In addition, an increased pattern of renter occupancy and incompatible infill development, including mobile home parks, have impacted the stability of some of the area neighborhoods. Although these challenges are significant, the City has identified Area 1 as a target for reinvestment and revitalization in the community.

Area 2: Western De Soto Development

Area 2 is defined as that area west of Lexington Avenue and the “Old Town” District, south of the floodplain along Kansas River and north of K-10 Highway. With the exception of existing research uses, this area has historically been projected for residential uses. Through the late 1990s only limited development had taken place in this area. Since that time, residential, public, commercial and industrial development has taken place within the City east of Sunflower Road.

Three medium density residential developments have been constructed with another two being planned in the area. The De Soto High School, Lexington Trails Middle School, and Starside Elementary School campuses, as well as the administrative offices of the De Soto Unified School District 232 are recent additions west of Lexington Avenue. Three restaurants and limited retail space are located to the south of the school campuses at a commercial node at the northwest corner of Lexington Avenue and K-10



Highway. In addition, over 300 acres of light industrial land was developed by Intervet Inc., a veterinary pharmaceutical corporation, for the development of an over 30 acre research and development campus.

The relatively unsubsidized or developed nature of the area, coupled with few physical limitations to development and access to multiple interchanges along K-10 Highway make this area a prime candidate for future growth of the City. However, substantial annexation and extension of utilities, infrastructure and services are required to facilitate further growth within the approximately 2,600 acres west of Sunflower Road.

Area 3A: Medium Density and Commercial De Soto Development

Area 3A is generally defined by Lexington Avenue to the north and west, Kill Creek to the east and K-10 Highway to the south. Developed primarily throughout the 1990s this area contains Commerce Park, De Soto's largest commercial area, De Meadows, a large medium density housing development, and the scattered commercial properties along Lexington Avenue. Commerce Park contains the industrial properties of Huhtamaki, Rehrig-Pacific, and Mr. Goodcents, along with several commercial uses including restaurants, a motel, bank and filling station. Though Commerce Park was platted over a decade ago and has readily available infrastructure, 18 of the 29 available parcels remain undeveloped. Although slow to develop, this is still anticipated to accommodate much of the City's near-term commercial and light-industrial growth.

Area 3B: Low Density De Soto Development

This area is defined by the Kansas River floodplain to the north, K-10 Highway to the south, Kill Creek to the west and the City boundaries to the east. Prior to 1980 much of this area was undeveloped. Only a few isolated rural subdivisions and farmsteads existed in this predominantly agricultural area. Since that time a slow but steady patten of lot splits, legal transfers and large-lot subdivisions have allowed for increased residential development. Within the past two decades, 27 subdivisions have been platted creating 287 new parcels. Much of this development is represented by Oak Country Estates, developed under the City's "R-O" residential suburban district with sewer service provided by individual septic systems. Similar subdivision has taken place along Corliss and Waverly Roads and east of Cedar Creek along the City's eastern boundary.

The remaining undeveloped ground west of Waverly has historically been projected for low-to-moderate density residential development because of the ability to provide public sanitary sewer services that gravity flow to the City treatment plant north of 83rd Street. This area contains over 300 acres of ground with a high potential for development or redevelopment including undeveloped parcels at the northeast corner of the K-10 Highway interchange. Recent development in the area includes Valley Spring Homes, a senior housing development.

Between Corliss Road and Cedar Creek much of the land is still vacant. Limited agricultural uses still exist, primarily within this area. Limitations to development in this area include the lack of utilities, the need for improvements to the existing road network and the established pockets of large lot residential development. Over forty unplatted parcels (each containing 10 acres or more) remain in the area totaling over 1,200 acres of developable land if infrastructure were to be extended.



Area 4A and 4B: Future Development

Areas 4A and 4B are defined as the areas south of K-10 Highway not including the 9,000 plus acre Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant which divides the two areas. Limited residential and industrial development has occurred in this area south of K-10 Highway primarily due to rural zoning restrictions and limited access to sewer service. The limitation posed by the lack of sewer service is most apparent in the area west of Lexington Avenue and north of 103rd Street. During the last decade numerous development plans have been approved but not developed or pursued due to the lack of sewer.

Annexation and sanitary sewer main extension are needed to serve urban growth in these areas. As utilities are extended it is anticipated that these areas will experience a significant growth increase in the coming decades. The nature of this development will depend on a variety of influences including the infrastructure and utility service provision, and the redevelopment of the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant.

As the area develops the patterns anticipated are significantly different. Because of the close proximity to three primary interchanges with K-10 Highway at Lexington Avenue, Evening Star Road and Edgerton Road and parallel arterials at 95th Street and 103rd Street, Area 4A is much more likely to develop with non-residential uses. Area 4B, however, is influenced more greatly by the existing large lot residential patterns and with the exception of non-residential opportunities near the Lexington Avenue and Kill Creek interchange, limited areas along 95th Street and neighborhood commercial nodes which could potentially be supported in the future. This area is anticipated to be predominantly residential in nature.

Major investments in the area include the acquisition of over 100 acres of parkland by Johnson County for the expansion of Kill Creek Recreation Park.

Area 5A and 5B: Kansas River Floodplain

The land adjacent to the Kansas River is occupied by agriculture and industrial uses, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, and De Soto's water wells and sewage treatment plant. The development of this area is greatly limited by the Kansas River's floodplain and it will not likely be targeted for future development. Rather, the City should focus on flood mitigation in these sub-areas.

Area 6: Sunflower Army Ammunitions Plant

The future of the 9,000 plus acre tract of land directly southwest of De Soto, a former Army Ammunitions Plant, has been in question since the land was declared as excess property by the federal government. Shortly after the declaration, Johnson County developed a preliminary future land use plan for the area which was adopted by the County and the City of De Soto. An ambitious redevelopment plan, which included a 225-acre theme park, was proposed by the OZ Entertainment Company in 2001. The plan was never approved nor was ownership of the land transferred. Since that time, the federal government has been unsuccessful in disposing of the property. It is unknown what is ahead for the former munitions plant or if the City of De Soto will play an active role in its redevelopment. What is clear is that whatever takes place on the over 9,000 acre site will have a significant impact on De Soto.



Single-Family Residential

In the current municipal boundaries of De Soto, the predominant land use is residential and the majority of the housing is low density, single-family residential development. Historically, this development has occurred in Area 1, north of Lexington Avenue and centered on the downtown business district. Before 1996, a fair amount of the land southeast of Lexington in Area 3B had been developed. In addition to subdivisions, many isolated rural single-family homes existed within De Soto's corporate boundary and the immediate vicinity. Since 1996, a number of changes have occurred. Many of the vacant residential lots have been filled, seven new subdivisions have been added, and additional territory has been annexed into the City.

The total number of De Soto single-family homes has increased significantly in the past decade. Until recently, the vast majority of this growth occurred in Area 3B. A driving force in this development was a decision by De Soto city officials to not extend the sanitary sewer system into this area and to allow the use of septic systems on relatively small one acre lots.

Concentrations of residential development away from De Soto's original core are primarily located along major north-south streets. Many east-west collector roads were not dedicated and improved during the past decades. Kill Creek, Waverly and Corliss Roads provide access to the majority of the low density residential subdivisions. Area 3B has grown substantially in the past two decades. In 1996, 17 residential subdivisions existed in the area with approximately 40 of the 436 lots undeveloped. This growth pattern has slowed since the Comprehensive Plan of 1996 was produced. Six subdivisions providing 46 lots have been created since that time. 58 single-family building permits were issued in Area 3B from 1996 to 1999. In the years 2000 through 2003, 30 were issued.

Table 4.1: Residential Subdivisions, Platted 1980 - Present

Subdivision	1996 Parcels	% Occupied	2003 Parcels	% Occupied
Area 2 Cedar Ridge West			38	84.2%
Timber Trails			81	40.7%
Timber Lake Estates			68	
West Meadows	43	41.8%	43	100%
Area 3A DeMeadows	103	88.3%	140	100%
Country Village			22	
Area 3B Oak Country Estates	112	82%	104	96.1%
Cedar Junction Estates	23	95.6%	23	100%
Meadowlark Acres			10	90%
Spring Creek	11	9.1%	11	100%
Country Creek			17	94.1%
Cedar Springs II			8	100%
Area 4B Cherished Oaks			45	93%
Hickory Summit			10	90%
Willow Trace			16	87.5%
All Areas Other	66	77.2%	85	70.5%
Total	419	63.3%	721	77.6%

Source: BWR, 1995; City of De Soto, 2003

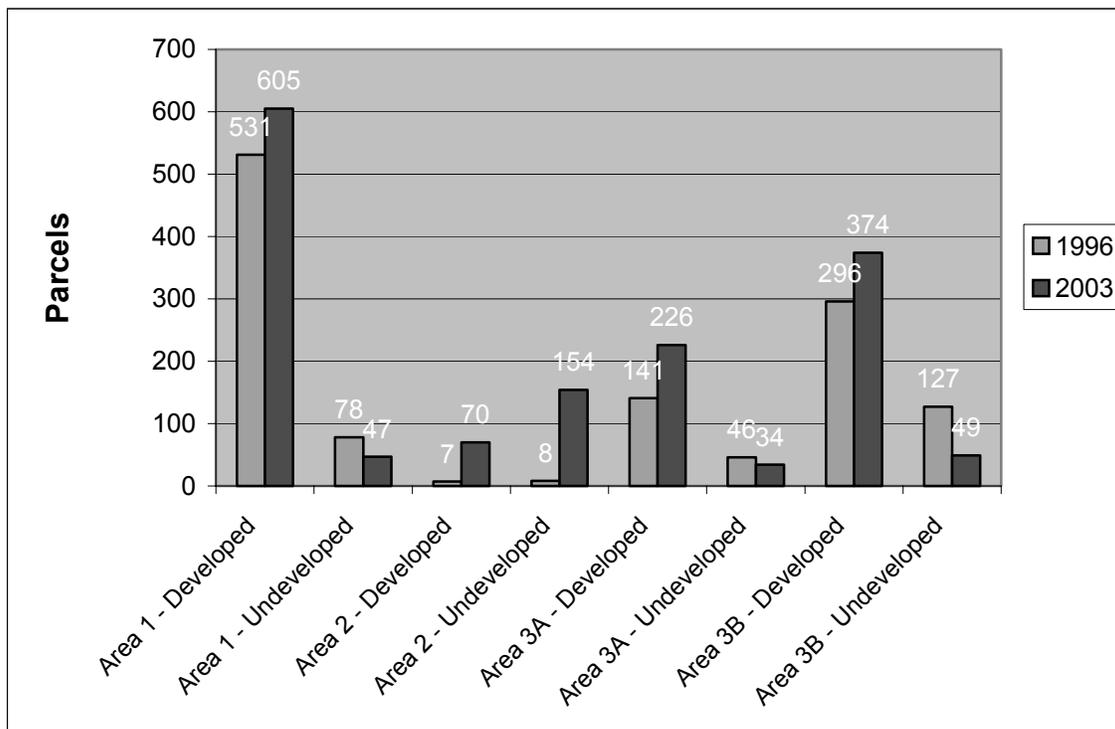


The growth of Area 2 has surpassed others recently with the construction of two large, medium density subdivisions: Cedar Ridge West and Timber Trails. The number of single-family residences jumped 172%, from 63 in 1996 to 150 in 2003, with 55 vacant lots remaining. An additional subdivision, Timber Lake Estates, is expected to near completion within the next three years, creating 68 medium density parcels. In Area 3A, the number of single-family parcels rose from 159 to 227 since 1996, an increase of nearly 30%, due almost entirely to the De Meadows subdivision. In the older section of De Soto, Area 1, the number of single-family parcels grew from 460 to 511, an increase of just 10% in seven years.

Area 4A has seen very little growth activity over the years, with an average of over 27 acres per single-family parcel. Of 51 single-family residences, all but nine were constructed prior to 1996. Area 4B grew to a considerable degree, from 184 residences in 1996 to 299 seven years later. Three new subdivisions in the area created 62 of these residences: Cherished Oaks, Hickory Summit and Willow Trace. These subdivisions, along with others platted in recent years, are listed in **Table 4.1: Residential Subdivisions, Platted 1980 - Present**.

Figure 4.2 displays the relationship between Areas 1, 2, 3A and 3B parcels in both 1996 and 2003. A significant number of platted but undeveloped residential parcels are located in Area 2. Many of these lots, located in the Cedar Ridge West and Timber Trails Subdivisions, will soon contain single-family homes. In Area 1, about 13% of residential lots were undeveloped in 1996. This decreased to just over 7% in 2003. Area 3A experienced a 160% increase in developed subdivided lots (from 141 to 226), while Area 3B grew 126% with a sizeable decrease in undeveloped lots (from 127 to 49).

Figure 4.2: Developed and Undeveloped Parcels



Source: BWR, 1995; City of De Soto, 2003



Other Residential

The majority of two-family and multifamily developments are scattered throughout “Old Town” De Soto (Area 1). Over the past decade, relatively few multifamily parcels have been created, especially when compared to the single-family parcel growth. In 1996, about 6% of developed residential lots in Areas 1, 3A and 3B were being used for two-family or multifamily uses. In 2003, less than 4% of the developed lots in these study areas are being used for two-family or multifamily use. Prospector’s Point, a 32 unit apartment complex in Area 4A, was constructed in 1998. There are plans to develop a large apartment complex with associated town homes within Area 3A. This should help to correct the disparity in housing accommodations.

Table 4.2: Residential Parcels by Area

Area 1:	1995	2003
SF Residential	460	511
2F and MF Residential	54	56
Manufactured Homes	17	19
Undeveloped Residential	78	47
Total	609	633

Area 3A & B:	1995	2003
SF Residential	352	677
2F and MF Residential	3	4
Manufactured Homes	7	5
Undeveloped Residential	161	149
Total	523	835

Source: BWR, 1995; City of De Soto, 2003

Commercial

The original location for commercial development in De Soto was along 83rd Street (formerly 2nd Street). The Old Kansas 10 Highway (now Lexington Avenue and 83rd Street) has been the location for scattered strip commercial development for the past 40 years. Until 1987, all of De Soto’s commercial business was located either in downtown or along old Highway 10. According to the Johnson County current land use map of 1994, about 35 parcels were being used for commercial purposes. Today most of these commercial uses still exist and offer opportunity for redevelopment.

The most significant change in the commercial landscape of De Soto is development of the K-10 interchange at Lexington Avenue. The development began with a small commercial building in 1987 and now contains a restaurant establishment, insurance agency and liquor store. To the north of this building are two fast-food franchises built in 2001. A second development, Commerce Park, is located directly east across Lexington Avenue and contains two restaurants, a bank and real estate office, several retail buildings and a motel. Commercial development of the 18 platted, vacant parcels in Commerce Park is expected to continue in the near future.



Industrial

De Soto's 1984 Comprehensive Plan reported only 1.4 acres of industrial development. The number of industrial uses increased dramatically from 1984 to 1995 to over 100 acres. These gains were primarily due to annexation and also included the Huhtamaki manufacturing plant and Engineered Air. Since 1995, several more industrial sites have been established, namely Intervet Inc., Rehrig-Pacific, Mr. Goodcents, and Custom Foods. In 2001, Intervet, a veterinary vaccine and pharmaceutical research corporation, located its 370-acre research and development campus west of Lexington Avenue on the former Bayer research site in Area 2. Although only approximately 30 acres of the site was developed for actual campus, the development represents a significant milestone in the City's history and identifies the potential to attract large employers to the City.

Currently there are approximately 1,030 acres of industrial development within City limits, a dramatic increase from the 1.4 acres of 20 years ago. Industrial development is projected to grow at a slower rate than commercial development, though recent trends indicate a continued market interest in the K-10 Corridor as an industrial area, particularly in areas south of the highway.

Undeveloped Land

De Soto has acquired a significant amount of undeveloped land within its municipal boundary, much of which is the result of recent annexations. This undeveloped land accounts for De Soto's population density of only 403 persons per square mile, the lowest in Johnson County (Johnson County, 2000). Most of the undeveloped land is located in Area 3B, east of Kill Creek. Much of this area was not planned for public sanitary sewer service which limited development to low-density development patterns. Large acreages of undeveloped land also exist north of 83rd Street within the floodplain of the Kansas River. Although limited in area as compared to the north and east, much of the land south of K-10 Highway also contains undeveloped parcels. This area is anticipated to remain largely undeveloped until sanitary sewer services can be extended.

Land Use Summation

Since its completion in 1985, K-10 Highway has had a dramatic impact on land use in De Soto. Before K-10's completion, De Soto's growth was limited to a fairly compact area. Since the highway's construction, growth has been predominantly to the east of Kill Creek, between 83rd Street and K-10 Highway, and more recently to the west (Area 2). While better accessibility has driven growth toward the area, the new residential development has been almost exclusively single-family subdivisions. While numerous single-family rental properties are scattered throughout Old Town De Soto (Area 1), there remains a void in duplex or multifamily housing. Likewise, De Soto does not have a proportionate share of affordable housing for sale outside of the Old Town district (Area 1). Providing a variety of housing options, from quality rental properties to executive housing, is fundamental to a City's ability to both attract and retain its residents.

Industrial land uses have become prominent in the area while commercial development has been slower to progress. The bulk of the commercial growth has focused around the Lexington Avenue interchange, again a result of K-10 Highway. This trend is expected to continue along the other interchanges, its



progress determined by the increased demand produced by residential development and expansion of basic infrastructure.

The City of De Soto has influenced a mixed-use development pattern of commercial, industrial and residential land uses in its growth area during the past decades. How the City plans for land use and administers zoning regulations will continue to influence private sector decisions in years to come.

EXISTING ZONING

Like existing land use, a review of existing zoning patterns provides insight into development patterns and trends in the community. Unlike existing land use, however, existing zoning provides additional insight into near term potential for growth and development based on the potential uses permitted in each district. Although land may currently be vacant, the existing zoning gives an indication of the development pattern that may be anticipated.

Map 2 shows the City's zoning as of summer 2003. Although much of the existing zoning is reflective of the current land uses, a significant amount of vacant land near the Lexington Avenue and K-10 Highway Interchange has been zoned for commercial and light industrial uses. Similar patterns of commercial zoning are found along the Lexington Avenue corridor north and south of K-10. Vacant ground zoned for heavy industrial uses is located south of K-10 with access from Lexington Avenue and 95th Street. Smaller acreages of heavy industrial zoning are also found at the intersection of Kill Creek and 83rd Street in the north central portion of the City.

Review of the existing zoning indicates that the City has near-term non-residential development potential subject to the ability to provide adequate utilities and public services, and the ability of the road network to accommodate non-residential traffic in these locations. To that extent, this potential is apparent in four primary locations:

- South of K-10 Highway on the west side of Lexington Avenue;
- 91st Street west of Lexington Avenue;
- Within the existing K-10 Commerce Park west of Lexington Avenue; and
- Near the intersection of Kill Creek Road and 83rd Street.

The existing residential zoning is substantially in keeping with the single-family residential character of the City. The majority of the existing residential zoning for vacant land near the core of the community is "R-1" Residential – Low Density which allows single-family residential uses on minimum lot sizes of 10,350 square feet. The existing "R-1" zoning pattern is substantially in keeping with the City's projected ability to provide sewer service (discussed in detail in Chapter 6, Public Facilities).

Much of the City's vacant land is also zoned "R-O" Residential Suburban which is intended to accommodate a minimum lot size of one acre. Residential uses in this zoning district are typically developed on private septic systems. The existing pattern of zoning is substantially consistent with the City's prior projections for areas not to be served by public sewer. However, it should be noted that until the late 1990s any land that was annexed into the City was automatically zoned "R-O," the City's most restrictive zoning district. This policy was changed in the late 1990s in conjunction with large scale annexation to the south and east. At that time the City's regulations were changed to require annexed



land to retain its County zoning until a rezoning application was initiated. As such, large portions of the City particularly to the south and east are zoned “RUR” Rural, a county zoning designation for large-lot residential development.

OTHER DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

In addition to the existing land use and zoning patterns, other development patterns and trends such as platting, parcel acreage and time of development can provide insight into the City’s development history and potential.

Platted Land

Map 3 shows those portions of the City and surrounding planning area that have been platted. A review of this platting as compared to existing land use indicates that much of the residential development surround the core of the community has taken place without platting. A significant number of large lot residential uses exist to the south and east of the community core. Many of the uses likely developed through lot splits and legal transfers of land. Development on unplatted parcels is predominantly stripped of the existing county road network. It appears that with few exceptions, no major infrastructure improvements including local road improvements have been made in conjunction with unplatted development. These patterns are often associated with areas where public utilities have not been planned or made available.

The most interesting pattern in the unplatted parcels is what can be described as rings radiating out from the core of the community. These rings are most apparent south and east of the City’s core. The first rings contain unplatted land followed by a second ring of platted land. This may in part represent patterns of annexation and development of land under County regulation prior to annexation in to the City.

The City’s policies on infrastructure call for development to pay its own way, contributing its fair share of infrastructure improvement costs. Much of the platted and unplatted land development at the community fringe as described above has not been developed according to this policy. Rather, needed improvements have been deferred passing increased costs on to the community as a whole. In keeping with the City’s current policies, the City does not plan to improve roads or other utilities in the areas beyond the City’s existing infrastructure. Rather, public improvements are planned based on communitywide needs as opposed to those of individual private developments.

Parcel Acreage

Reviewing parcel acreage in relation to existing land use can provide insight to development and redevelopment potential of an area. Generally, large undeveloped parcels provide the greatest development opportunity. Undeveloped parcels larger than 20 acres are considered to have high potential for development. However, in addition to size, the proximity to existing development and services must also be considered. Contiguous vacant parcels in the 10 to 20 acre range can also indicate development potential, although consolidation of multiple parcels is often necessary to allow for efficient use of the land.



Map 4 shows existing acreages within the City and surrounding planning area. Development patterns within the core of the community are consistent with urban development patterns of most small communities. The majority of the existing development is in residential uses on lot sizes generally less than a quarter acre. However, outside the core of the community the predominant development pattern reflects lots between one and 10 acres. Beyond the City limits, particularly to the south, a pattern of existing residential development reflects predominantly five to twenty acre lots. These large lot residential patterns pose potentially significant obstacles to the future provision of utilities and services necessary to support continued growth of the community.

The notable exceptions to this pattern are to the southeast and west. Both of these areas have remained relatively undeveloped and parcels are generally 40 acres or larger. However, the impact of natural features must also be considered. Natural features appear to have a more significant impact on the undeveloped area to the southeast.

Construction Patterns

Map 5 shows construction patterns by indicating the year that primary structures were built. As would be expected for a once rural community, much of the development prior to the 1940s took place near downtown De Soto or on what was likely farmsteads dispersed throughout the surrounding countryside. A large amount of development can be seen during the period from 1940 through 1960. Much of this growth was associated with the operation of the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant. Although the automobile provided greater flexibility in choosing residential locations, the majority of development during this time continued to radiate from the core of De Soto.

During the period from the 1960s through the 1980s that pattern changed drastically. Large numbers of large-lot residential development took place throughout what was once predominantly agricultural land. This may in part be due to improved roads and downturns in the agricultural economy resulting in an increased desire of many long-time farmers to sell off land often to support farm operations. This is also likely representative of mass shifts in the population away from the Kansas City urban core. During the period from the 1980s to present, this pattern continued on a larger scale. More and more people moved to the edge of the community.

The result of this dispersed development pattern has been an increased cost for the provision of services and infrastructure. In particular, road infrastructure has been spread across large areas of relatively low density development increasing the miles of road required to be maintained while passing the cost for this maintenance on to a relatively small population. In addition, this development pattern poses substantial obstacles to the provision of other City services including water and sewer service.

NATURAL FEATURES

Map 6 shows natural features in De Soto and the surrounding planning area. The City is positioned along the Kansas River at the headwaters of two major creeks – Kill Creek and Cedar Creek. A third creek, Captain Creek, is located within the planning area. Much of the area surrounding the river and these creeks is floodplain, steep slopes and is heavily vegetated. These natural features will substantially limit development opportunities in their close proximity.



Ridge lines rising among the three major creeks define the area drainage basins. Because the City is located at the headwaters of two of these creeks, the majority of the area gravity flows back to the core of the community. In particular, Kill Creek is located approximately within the center of the planning area and the Kill Creek basin encompasses approximately half of the planning area. Development within this basin could be served by gravity flow sewers subject to available treatment capacity and the availability of other sanitary sewer infrastructure.

Just as waste water flows back toward the City, so does runoff and drainage. Because the City is located at the bottom of two major drainage basins, there must be consideration and planning for upstream development impact. To that extent, the City prepared and adopted a Flood Mitigation Plan in the fall of 2003 (copies are available at City Hall). The general conclusions of the plan were that the community may greatly benefit by preserving natural features, including drainageways, in order to preserve their drainage capacity and function, and minimize downstream impacts. Similarly, the plan concluded that development should be limited near these corridors ensuring adequate setbacks and preservation of the natural channels to protect their function and capacity.

Two areas to the south and west generally have fewer limitations posed by natural features. The areas west of Lexington Avenue and south into the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant in particular have the fewest natural limitations to the development.

PARKS AND RECREATION

One of the most visible measures of the quality of life in a community is its parks system. Parks and recreational facilities provide opportunities for exercise and relaxation as well as a visual and physical break from the routine of daily life. This section includes an inventory of De Soto parkland and recreational facilities. The inventory is compared with national, state and local standards to establish recommendations for park system improvements and to determine if these standards have been met or exceeded.

National Park Standards

Currently one developed park, three undeveloped parks and one leased park from Johnson County exist within the City. In order to determine how effectively these public parks serve the City, a benchmark or standard needs to be applied for comparison. This standard helps, along with public input, to identify the existing deficiencies and/or surplus of available facilities and programs.

To analyze the City's inventory of parks and determine if the acreage is sufficient and/or if they are properly positioned in the community, the minimum standards of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) are used. NRPA standards provide baseline information by which De Soto's population can be compared to the number of facilities available. It should be noted that NRPA standards are only a guideline and that the level of service (LOS) provided by the City must be developed in concert with the citizens to meet those standards. In order to implement these guidelines, the City must in part determine what the community will support, identifying what they feel are reasonable and affordable improvements for the City of De Soto.



The first step in analyzing the adequacy of a park system is to review the type, size and location of existing parkland. Different types of parks serve different functions in the community and each type has its own requirement for size, location and equipment. Parks are classified in several ways: mini-parks, community parks, neighborhood parks, regional parks, special use parks, linear parks/greenways, natural resource areas and undeveloped areas.

There is often overlap between these categories. In particular, community parks often double as neighborhood parks for the immediate surrounding area. It is also common for a park to be in one category based on size but another category based on function. These standards are described in **Table 4.3**.

Table 4.3: Parks and Open Space Classifications and Benchmarks

Park Category	Function	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres / 1,000 Pop.	Desirable Site Characteristics
Mini-Park/ Play Lot	Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population; or specific group such as tots or senior citizens.	Less than ¼-mile radius.	1.0 acre or less	3.0 acres	Within neighborhoods and in close proximity to apartment complexes, townhouse developments or housing for the elderly.
Neighborhood Park/ Playground	Area for intense recreational activities, such as field games, court games, crafts playground apparatus area, skating, picnicking, wading pools, etc.	¼ to ½-mile radius to serve a population up to 5,000, such as in a neighborhood.	3.0 to 12.0 acres	7.0 acres	Suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhood population, geographically centered with safe walking and bike access. May be developed as a school-park facility.
Community Park	Area of diverse environmental qualities. May include areas suited for intense recreational facilities, such as athletic complexes or large swimming pools. May be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation, such as walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking. May be any combination of the above, depending upon site suitability and community need.	Several neighbor-hoods. 1 to 2 mile radius	25+ acres	8.0 to 10.0 acres	May include natural features, such as water bodies and areas suited for intense development. Easily accessible to the community served.
Regional/ Metropolitan Park	Area of natural or ornamental qualities for outdoor recreation, such as picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping and trail uses; may include play areas.	Communities within 1 hour driving time.	200+ acres	12.0 to 18.0 acres	Contiguous to or encompassing natural resources.



Park Category	Function	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres / 1,000 Pop.	Desirable Site Characteristics
Linear Park	Area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel, such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, canoeing and pleasure driving. May include active play areas and can link one or more of the above categories of parks.	No applicable standard	Sufficient width to protect the resource and provide maximum use.	Variable	Built or natural corridors, such as utility rights-of-way, bluff liens, vegetation patterns, and roads that link other components of the recreation system or community facilities, such as school, libraries, commercial areas, and other park areas.
Special Use Park	Areas for specialized or single purpose recreational activities, such as golf courses, nature centers, marinas, zoos, conservatories, arboreta, display gardens, arenas, outdoor theaters, gun ranges, or downhill ski areas, or areas that preserve, maintain, and interpret buildings, sites, and objects of archeological significance. Also plazas or squares in or near commercial centers, boulevards, parkways.	No applicable standard	Sufficient size to protect the resource and provide maximum use.	Variable depending on desired size.	Accessible to communities and/or tourists and tourist amenities.

Source: National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

De Soto Park Facilities

The City of De Soto Parks and Recreation Department currently provides 11.6 developed acres of parks at Miller Memorial Park and an additional 100.32 acres of undeveloped parkland at Wilderness Park, Widow Big Knife and the corner of Lexington and Commerce. The City also improves and maintains the athletic fields at Sunflower Park which is leased from Johnson County. These parks are classified as follows.

1. Mini-Parks. Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population, isolated development area or unique recreational opportunity.

There are no mini-parks provided by the City at this time.

2. Neighborhood Parks. The neighborhood park is the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal active and passive recreation. Neighborhood parks provided in De Soto are:

There are no neighborhood parks provided by the City at this time.



3. Community Parks. Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Community parks provided in De Soto are:

Miller Memorial Park 11.6 acres

4. Undeveloped Parks. Undeveloped parkland owned by the City that provides future opportunities to meet the City’s parks and recreation needs. Undeveloped park areas provided in De Soto are:

Wilderness Park 68.0 acres
Widow Big Knife 26.0 acres
Parkland at Lexington and Commerce 6.32 acres

5. Other Parks. As mentioned above the City also improves and maintains the athletic fields at Sunflower Park which is leased from Johnson County. Like recreational facilities available through USD 232, these facilities help serve the community’s parks and recreation needs. However, because they are not currently owned by the City they have not been factored into this assessment.

Comparison to National Guidelines

Compared to the NRPA benchmarks, the City’s provision of public parks and open space is deficient. The following table compares these standards to the City’s existing public parks and open spaces based on the City’s 2000 population and a 2010 population projection of 9,000 residents. Although a much lower growth rate is anticipated, the City should plan for the potential for higher growth rates.

Table 4.4: Parks and Open Space Guidelines

Classification	<i>Existing Acres</i>	Recommended Standards ¹	Acres Currently Needed to Meet Standards ²	Additional Acreage Currently Needed ³	Acreage Needed by 2020 ⁴
Mini Park	0	3.0 ac./ 1,000 pop.	14.0 acres	14.0	23.0
Neighborhood Park	0	7.0 ac./ 1,000 pop	32.0 acres	32.0	52.0
Community Park		8-10 ac./ 1,000 pop.			
▪ Miller Memorial Park	11.6		37.0 – 46.0 acres	25.4 – 34.4	60.0-75.0

1 National Recreation and Park Association standards.
 2 Based upon 2000 population of 4,600.
 3 Does not take into account access to facilities made available to the public by the De Soto School District and Johnson County.
 4 Based upon 2020 population projection of approximately 7,500.

Source: National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), BWR

Since a percentage of the City’s population is currently developed in low-density residential developments, park demand may be less than projected. In areas where the overall density is less than 1.0



unit to the acre, the City would not provide public neighborhood park improvements. Rather these areas would be served by private open space and private amenities.

Regional Parks

Citizens of De Soto have access to a variety of recreational opportunities provided by regional parks. Johnson County has over 6,000 acres of beautiful parkland and many miles of trails, much of which is easily accessible to De Soto residents. Future Johnson County plans call for even more parkland to be added. According to the Johnson County Parks and Recreation District Master Action Plan (MAP 2020), the County will acquire over 1,500 acres of park and streamway land over the next 20 years within the De Soto school district area. There are also plans to expend over \$8 million towards park and facility development in the De Soto area within five years. The County’s goal is to meet the national county parkland standards of 22 acres per 1,000 residents. Currently, there are 14 acres of county parkland for every 1,000 residents.

Shawnee Mission Park is located five miles east of De Soto and has a 150-acre lake with a marina and beach area. A wide range of recreational activities are available, along with a vast network of hiking, jogging and bicycling trails. The park also has an outdoor theater, archery range, model plane flying field, and lookout tower.

Table 4.5: Regional Parkland Accessible to De Soto Residents

Park	Acres	Approx. Distance from De Soto	Owner
Shawnee Mission Park	1,250	5 miles	Johnson County
Mill Creek Streamway Park	517	5 miles	Johnson County
Ernie Miller Park	116	5 miles	Johnson County
Kill Creek Park	860	1.5 miles	Johnson County
Sunflower Nature Park	60	0.5 miles	Johnson County

City of De Soto, 2003

Shawnee Mission Park connects to the south with Mill Creek Streamway Park, a linear park crossing southward through the cities of Shawnee, Lenexa and Olathe. The park boasts over 21 miles of pedestrian, biking and riding trails, along with three shelter areas.

Ernie Miller Park and Nature Center, located five miles Southeast of De Soto, has an outdoor amphitheatre and over three miles of nature trails. Also on site is the Ernie Miller Nature Center, offering educational programs and interpretive services for residents.

The recently developed Kill Creek Park, located within two miles of the City, contains a large lake with a beach, playground equipment, picnicking areas and a paved trail network. When complete, Kill Creek Park will also contain an equestrian facility, camping and active sports areas. The park will eventually connect with the Kill Creek Streamway Park, providing five miles of natural stream frontage and bicycle and pedestrian access from De Soto to the park.



Figure 4.3: Existing Community Shelter at Kill Creek Park



Figure 4.4: Existing Play Equipment at Kill Creek Park



Within ½ mile of De Soto is Sunflower Nature Park which has a fishing pond, new game wildlife habitat area, and a nature trail. The park also has two ball fields which are used extensively by De Soto residents. The City of De Soto and the De Soto School District help to maintain the ball fields.

Community Parks

Currently, De Soto has one community park – Miller Memorial Park. A community park is defined as one which is shared by several neighborhoods. As a designated community park, Miller Memorial Park is not of sufficient size to accommodate current population and expected growth. National standards recommend eight to ten acres of community parkland per 1,000 persons. With close to 5,000 residents, De Soto is in need of an additional 25 to 35 acres of community parkland to meet current needs. According to the population projections from Chapter 2, the City has the potential to add nearly 3,000 residents by 2020. Based on these projections a total of 60 to 75 acres of community parkland will be needed. If the City expands significantly south of K-10 Highway, Kill Creek Park and/or Sunflower Park could double as both community and regional parks. Similarly De Soto School District facilities may help serve some of the need for community parks particularly to the west.

Although not currently sufficient to meet the City’s projected park needs, Miller Memorial Park, located on an 11.6 acre parcel at the eastern edge of the Historic “Old Town” district, serves a variety of functions. The park contains a swimming pool, three baseball fields, tennis, basketball and sand



volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, a walking trail and cascading fountain, a shelter for picnickers, and a playground with equipment.

Recently, the City of De Soto made some extensive improvements to these facilities:

- In 2000, the City purchased infield maintenance equipment and improved public restroom facilities to ADA standards.
- In 2001, the City resurfaced the tennis courts and ball fields, installed new 'C' field fencing, refurbished or replaced the playground equipment, and planted additional landscaping.
- In 2002, the City constructed a path connecting the parking lot to the shelter house, reshingled and painted the gazebo and concession stand, reconstructed the equipment building, and added a sand volleyball pit.

Figure 4.5: Existing Play Equipment at Miller Memorial Park



Within five years, the City plans to complete drainage improvements to areas surrounding three ball fields, resurface the basketball court, construct a stage in the gazebo, expand and resurface the parking lot, and improve the lighting of pathways, basketball and tennis courts.

The City has also taken steps to begin the planning process for a new community swimming pool. The swimming pool facility at Miller Memorial Park is nearing the end of its useful life, requiring more maintenance and repair than is justifiable for its continued operation. The Miller Memorial Park pool is also undersized for the growing community. It is only 3,500 square feet, lacking lap lanes and adequate deck space.

The City is currently exploring opportunities for new pool construction behind the De Soto City Hall and Community Center. Final estimates are forthcoming, and the matter is expected to appear on the April, 2004 election ballot. If the ballot item passes and the pool is constructed at City Hall, a shelter house and playground may also be constructed helping meet the City's additional community park needs.



Figure 4.6: Existing Pool Facilities at Miller Memorial Park



Neighborhood Parks

The intention of a neighborhood park is to serve residents of a small area of the City. Most are between two and eight acres in size. A neighborhood park should be within easy walking distance ($\frac{1}{2}$ mile) of every home in a community, with the exception of low-density areas (areas with a density of 1.0 unit per acre or less) which would not support neighborhood parks. De Soto does not have any sites which serve solely as neighborhood parks. However, Miller Memorial Park and De Soto's public school playgrounds double as neighborhood parks for the immediate surrounding areas. Starside Elementary, located within close proximity of three subdivisions, has a playground area.

The City plans to develop a five acre neighborhood park at the Southwest corner of Lexington Avenue and Commerce Drive in the near future. This could also be connected to the Kill Creek Streamway Path network along a railroad easement.

The areas of De Soto which are most deficient of neighborhood park space are those recently developed. Oak Country Estates has a golf course but this does not serve as a neighborhood park because it lacks a structured recreation area for young children or passive recreation areas for adults. Recent developments along Waverly and Corliss Roads lack any type of neighborhood park space. Most of these contain large, one to five acre lots, increasing the distance from residences to potential neighborhood park locations. In many subdivisions, home associations will raise funds to develop dedicated lots into neighborhood parks. Unfortunately, this has not been the case for developments within De Soto.

Special Use and Other Parks

Johnson County Parks and Recreation constructed the Kill Creek Streamway Path in 2002. The path extends northward from 95th Street, dead-ending to the east of De Meadows subdivision and north of 88th Terrace. The path trailhead contains an off-leash area for dogs and parking. The County plans to extend the path eastward along Lexington Avenue and under the Kill Creek Bridge in 2004, connecting with the Miller Memorial Park walking path to the west.



Figure 4.7: Trail Head at Kill Creek Streamway Path



Wilderness Park, located 4.5 miles Southwest of De Soto, is used primarily by the Sportsmen’s Club for skeet shooting, and to a lesser degree by other private organizations for camping and hiking activities. The park is located directly west of the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant, between 127th and 135th Streets. At just over 68 acres, it is by far the largest of De Soto’s parks. However, its distance from town and secluded, rural surroundings make extensive development unlikely. The City has been approached by the Sportmen’s Club regarding making improvements to the facilities and expanding the use to include a gun range. The Club is actively seeking funds and has shown interest in possibly entering into a lease agreement with the City. There are no capital improvement plans for the park at this time.

The City also owns just over 26 acres one and a half miles northwest of town along the Kansas River, at the extreme Northwest of Johnson County. Like Wilderness Park, Widow Big Knife has not been developed by the City for structured recreational uses and is currently being underutilized as a recreational resource, but has potential as a future site for camping and recreational activities including unpaved hiking, riding and bicycling trails. Organizations and individuals currently engage in camping, hiking, and fishing activities on site which may indicate the park would be best utilized for further camping, fishing and similar uses. An unpaved hiking, riding and mountain biking trail system would be of benefit, as would the construction of a boat ramp to facilitate canoeing and fishing along the river. However, there are no capital improvement plans for these park improvements.

The City operates and maintains two baseball diamonds and associated parking directly west of Sunflower Nature Park under an agreement with Johnson County. The baseball diamonds are located east of Edgerton Road along 103rd Street. The Sunflower Ball Fields are used extensively for the local high school’s baseball program as well as the De Soto Youth Baseball Association and the City of De Soto Youth and Adult Softball Leagues. The City and Unified School District 232 have made numerous improvements to the facilities recently:

- In 2001, the City resurfaced the three fields.
- In 2002, the City planted 25 pine trees. USD 232 constructed new dugouts, backstops and a scoreboard for the south field.



- In 2003, the City constructed fencing, added a new scoreboard, lighting and dugouts to the north field and planted 30 trees.

The City is researching adding permanent bathrooms and playground equipment in the near future.

Figure 4.8: Baseball Fields west of Sunflower Nature Park



The City of De Soto Community Center, located in the “Old Town” district alongside City Hall, also provides accommodations for area residents. A senior center and full size gym with stage host many activities for local organizations, including the City Parks and Recreation programs. The gym facility has been reserved for meetings, dances, basketball games, and even weddings from time to time.

The development of a golf course as part of the Oak Country Estates subdivision provides another recreational activity for De Soto residents. Although privately owned and operated, this 18-hole golf course is accessible to the entire community. Another privately owned golf course, Burning Tree, was recently annexed into the City. The nine-hole “executive” course is located across the Wyandotte bridge to the north.

Parks and Recreation Summation

De Soto residents have access to a number of regional park and recreational opportunities. However, the City is quickly outgrowing its community parkland areas, and particularly the community pool. With the projected increase in De Soto’s population over the next seven years, an additional 33 acres of community parkland and a new municipal pool will be needed to meet the community’s expectations.

Most areas of De Soto lack neighborhood park space. According to national standards, residents should be able to walk to a neighborhood park which is within half a mile of their home. The City plans to develop centrally located parcels into neighborhood parks in the near future. However, many areas of town will remain deficient in terms of neighborhood park space. To that extent, **Map 13** identifies areas that should be targeted for future park improvements in conjunction with future development. The resulting service radius for each park is shown as an overlay of the **Future Land Use Map (Map 12)**.



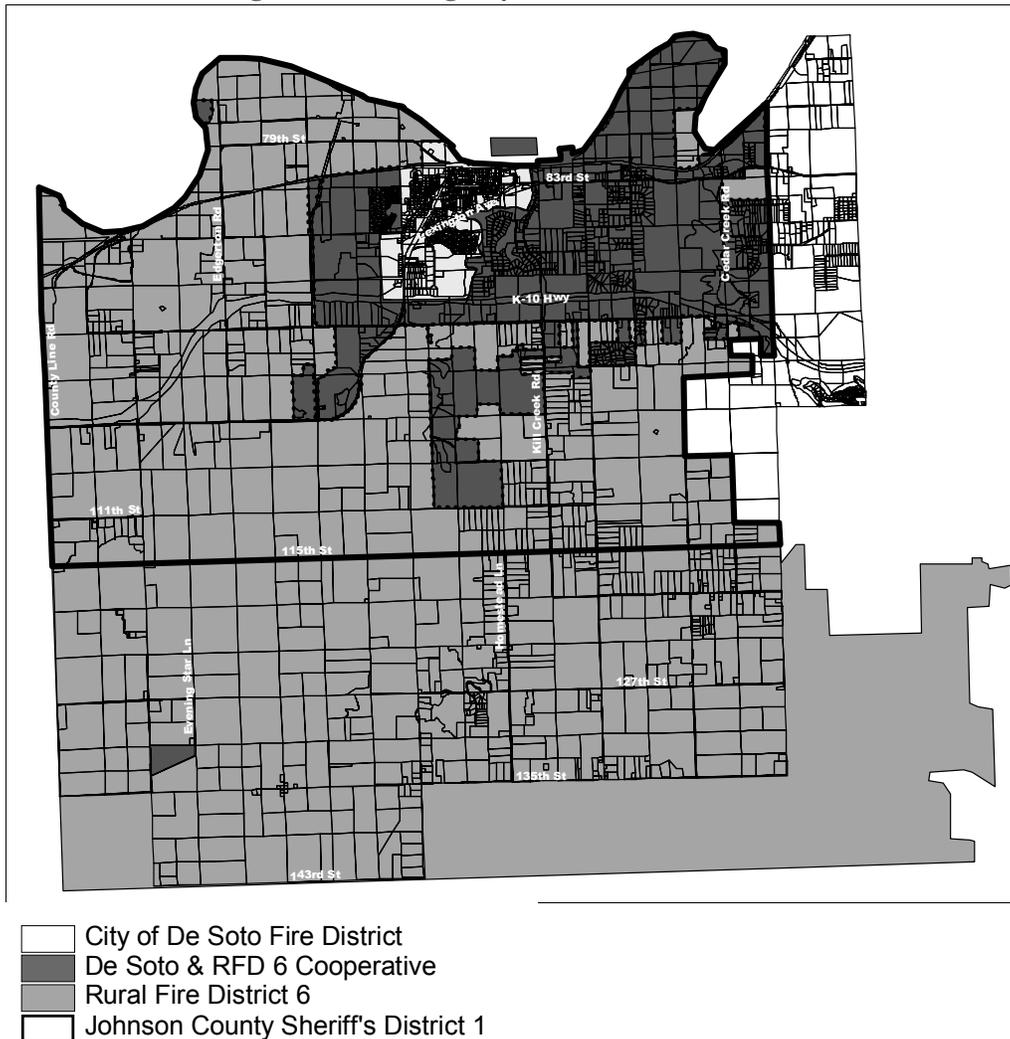
EMERGENCY SERVICES

Emergency services include the arenas of law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency response. Protecting life and personal property is the priority for all organizations involved in the process.

Law Enforcement

Police protection is afforded to De Soto residents by the Johnson County Sheriff's Department. Johnson County provides law enforcement services to two cities, De Soto and Edgerton, as well as unincorporated areas of the county. De Soto's service area is District 1, which extends north and west to the county line, south to 115th Street and east to Moonlight Road (see **Figure 4.9**). The Sheriff's office maintains mutual use agreements with all police departments located in the county. These agreements allow for additional resources to be called in as needed from surrounding areas.

Figure 4.9: Emergency Services District Areas



Source: City of De Soto, 2003



The Johnson County Sheriff’s substation facility for District 6 is located by the De Soto Community Center and City Hall at 32905 W. 84th Street. The facility is usually unmanned and functions as an office for the five officers that patrol in District 6. The Sheriff’s Department main administration building is located at 125 N. Cherry Street in Olathe. The main operations facility is located in New Century at 27747 W. 159th Street. Both facilities contain adult detention centers. According to Lieutenant Daryl Reece of the Sheriff’s Office, the County is planning to expand the prisoner facilities, and is looking into adding K-9, air response, and crime scene evidence units, though these items are not yet budgeted.

There are over four hundred deputies employed by the county. One officer is on duty and patrolling at all times, except during shift change, within District 1. The community officer spends a majority of his or her time patrolling within city limits. A school resource officer is stationed during normal school hours at De Soto High School. The County also provides support for special functions, such as athletic events and festivals. Specialized duties performed by the Sheriff’s department include the issuance of warrants and civil papers, drug enforcement, criminal investigations, and inmate processing and detention. The community officers often deliver civil papers within the District, though no more than 5 are permitted per shift. The majority of civil process and warrants are issued by Field Operations Unit officers, who may also be re-directed to any region if needed for additional manpower.

In August of 2003, the Johnson County Sheriff’s Department averaged 8 minutes per emergency response call in District 1. For non-emergency calls, the average response time was 13 minutes. De Soto amended its contract in 2003 to include an additional patrol car. This second unit worked a 40-hour per week power shift, patrolling problem areas and covering the shift change for the district officer. In August of 2003, the City removed the second patrol from their contract, citing lack of funding. Most cities which are similar in population to De Soto have two or three officers on duty at all times. Edgerton, with roughly a third of De Soto’s population, contracts with the County for the same level of service as De Soto: one patrol car within the district. Though there appear to be no national standards for the ratio of population per officer, the Overland Park Police Department recently conducted research to support their request for additional officers. Overland Park provided the following information:

Table 4.6: Average Officers per 1,000 Population

Region/County/City	Average Number of Officers
Nationwide	2.4
Midwest	2.2
Kansas City Metropolitan Area	1.8
Johnson County	1.6
Roeland Park and Merriam	2.4
Mission	2.3
Lenexa	1.9
Shawnee	1.7
Prairie Village	1.6
Olathe	1.5
Overland Park	1.3
De Soto	1.0

Courtesy of the City of Overland Park, Kansas Police Department, 2003



Though not all cities were included in **Table 4.6**, countywide, De Soto has the fewest officers per population. It is important to bear in mind that there is one district officer patrolling for not only the City of De Soto, but the entire District 1, as depicted in **Figure 4.9**. From October 1, 2001 through September 31, 2002, there were 6,843 emergency calls from within the De Soto city limits directed to the Johnson County Sheriff's Department. During this same one year period, 1,153 calls were issued from elsewhere in District 1 (Johnson County Sheriff's Dept., 2003). From this viewpoint, the level of service the City currently provides is sub-standard. According to Lieutenant Daryl Reece of the Johnson County Sheriff's office, most cities of De Soto's size have 2 or 3 officers on duty at all times. The addition of one, if not two, full-time patrols to District 1 would provide adequate law enforcement services.

Fire Protection

Fire protection is provided to De Soto residents by two entities. As seen in **Figure 4.9**, the City of De Soto Fire Department serves the Historic "Old Town" district as well as areas west of Kill Creek and south to K-10 Highway. The remainder of De Soto receives fire protection through the cooperative efforts of the De Soto Fire Department and Rural Fire District 3.

The De Soto Fire & Rescue Department performs a variety of functions within the city limits, including fire suppression, emergency medical rescue, and BLS (Basic Life Systems) first response. 27 volunteers support the department's one full-time and 18 part-time firefighters. There is only one full-time firefighter, Deputy Chief Bob McCoy. Operating with three 24-hour shifts, the department schedules one paid firefighter/EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) per shift. While inadequate staffing is an issue, Fire Chief Kevin Ritter believes that volunteers help to correct the situation. They respond to pager notifications and many are able to reach the station within several minutes. Ritter believes that additional full-time personnel and an in-house EMT program will be needed within 5 years. Three paid personnel per shift would meet the community's current needs.

The De Soto fire station is centrally located in the "Old Town" district at 33150 W. 83rd Street (see **Figure 4.10**). Two engine trucks, one brush truck and an all-purpose vehicle are located at the facility.

Figure 4.10: City of De Soto Fire & Rescue Equipment, 33150 W. 83rd St.



Source: De Soto Chamber of Commerce, 2003



A second facility, 8125 Ottawa St., is being used to house equipment that cannot be accommodated by the fire station. This building, depicted in **Figure 4.11**, houses one engine, one tanker and two brush units.

Figure 4.11: City of De Soto Fire and Rescue Equipment, 8125 Ottawa St.



Source: City of De Soto, 2003

The De Soto fire stations are not meeting the needs of the department in terms of office, lodging and equipment storage space. The City's Capital Improvement Plan has tentatively earmarked \$1.2 million for the construction of a new station at the Northeast corner of Lexington and Penner Avenues in the year 2012. The feasibility of the project, however, will rely in the ability of the department to acquire additional territory beyond its current service area.

While a new facility and additional full-time personnel are the primary concerns, equipment that is out of date must be replaced periodically. In addition to the department's equipment replacement program, Fire Chief Ritter has recognized a growing need to purchase new equipment, namely a ladder truck, rescue boat and technical rescue equipment. The department handled 374 documented calls in the year 2002. Historically, the majority of calls have been medical in nature. The average response time is approximately five minutes or less, depending upon the location of the emergency and numerous other factors.

Rural Fire District 3 provides EMS (Emergency Medical Support), rescue and fire suppression services for an area extending south to 143rd Street and west to the county line, as depicted in **Figure 4.9**. There are 9 full-time firefighters who work three 24-hour shifts with support from 15 area volunteers. Fire Chief Terry Zahner believes the district would benefit from the addition of a full-time employee to work during normal business hours 5 days a week. The District operates three fire stations within its boundaries, with Lexington Station One the nearest in proximity to De Soto. According to Fire Chief Zahner, the facility is in need of an expansion. Future needs include two additional bays for fire apparatus, and updated employee lodging. Johnson County has responded to these needs with plans to construct a 3,200 to 3,800 square foot addition to the station in 2004. The district maintains a program for replacing equipment due to age.

District 3 responded to 428 documented calls in the year 2002. The majority of calls are related to medical emergencies. There are approximately 2 or 3 structure fire calls per year. Response times are typically around 2 minutes, but have been as much as 15 minutes due to proximity.



Emergency Response

The Johnson County Emergency Communication Center fields fire and EMS calls for all of Johnson County and a portion of Miami County. Dispatchers provide citizens with pre-arrival instructions and document all call activities, including the progress and action taken at a call scene during the duration of the response. There are 33 staff members, all of whom undergo an intensive 9-month training process. Dispatchers man four 12-hour shifts at seven consoles. Speaking on behalf of the Center, Emergency Communications Specialist Mark Whelan noted a future need to increase staff by around 7 persons and revamp the continuing education and new hire training programs.

The main dispatch facility, at 6000 Lamar in Shawnee, has 7 dispatch consoles which are in constant use. Though there was an addition to the building in 1996, more on-duty staff has been necessary, leaving no room for growth. Johnson County is planning to construct a new center at 119th and Ridgeview within 5 years. A mobile command post will be put into operation in April of 2004. Equipment and staff will be on board a 28-foot Winnebago remotely operating the radio system and serving as on-site offices for the commander. More satellite receiver sites for radio communications and upgraded equipment will also be needed during this time. The Center responded to over 38,000 emergency 911 calls within the service area in 2002.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Public education within De Soto is provided by the De Soto School District, or USD 232. The District has long been praised for its quality facilities, programs and staff, and is considered one of the top school districts in the area. For these reasons, the school system has been widely considered one of the most valuable attributes of the community, and no doubt will continue to attract new residents to the area.

De Soto School District

One of six districts in Johnson County, the De Soto School District consists of five elementary schools, two middle and two high schools. There were 4,418 students enrolled during the 2003-2004 school year. Enrollment is expected to increase at around 400 students per year for the next six years, with a projected total population of over 7,000 students in the year 2010. **Table 4.7** illustrates the calculated and projected enrollments for the years 1995 through 2010 for the District as a whole, as well as for the three schools located within De Soto.

The De Soto schools have been experiencing growth at a slower rate than the District as a whole. The District's student population has been increasing regularly at around 10% per year. By comparison, in recent years the schools within De Soto have grown at a 3-5% rate. These slower growth scenarios may be attributed, in part, to the recent boundary delineation changes. It is more likely, however, that De Soto's lower enrollment percentages are indicative of a slower housing market than other cities represented in the District: Lenexa, Shawnee and Olathe.



Table 4.7: USD 232 Projected Enrollment Totals 1995-2010

Year	De Soto Elementary	De Soto Middle	De Soto High	USD 232 Elementary	USD 232 Middle	USD 232 High	USD 232 Total
95-96	401	320	581	840	670	581	2,091
96-97	381	327	654	860	724	654	2,238
97-98	436	340	657	983	767	657	2,407
98-99	512	247	730	1,308	600	730	2,638
99-00	576	242	757	1,506	647	757	2,910
00-01	477	256	351	1,637	694	884	3,215
01-02	491	290	369	1,848	791	978	3,617
02-03	513	322	377	2,049	895	1,076	4,020
03-04	486	356	410	2,239	1,009	1,170	4,418
04-05*	510	390	430	2,455	1,125	1,245	4,825
05-06*	525	425	450	2,675	1,245	1,320	5,240
06-07*	540	455	475	2,890	1,365	1,400	5,655
07-08*	560	485	500	3,180	1,505	1,485	6,170
08-09*	575	515	525	3,400	1,650	1,570	6,620
09-10*	605	545	550	3,570	1,790	1,655	7,015

* Enrollments figures for future years are projections

Source: De Soto Unified School District 232, 2004

De Soto Schools

Three of the District's nine schools and both administrative offices are located within De Soto city limits. The Starside Elementary, Lexington Trails Middle and De Soto High School campuses are located at the Northwest corner of Lexington Avenue and 91st Street. Countryside Learning Center, a former elementary school located directly west of Lexington Avenue and north of 103rd Street, is now utilized for special education, at-risk behavioral and vo-tech student programs.

De Soto High and Lexington Trails Middle School, both with a maximum capacity of 750 students, are not expected to near capacity in the foreseeable future. Starside Elementary, with a maximum capacity of 550 students, should reach capacity within several years. Jack Deyoe, the Director of Research and Development for USD 232, stated that the bond approved by taxpayers in 2002 has provided the funds needed to acquire additional land for future elementary school sites. Exactly where the future school sites will be located is dependent on the development of the area and available infrastructure. The District's response to growth is purely reactionary; it seeks neither to drive nor limit development. A real concern for De Soto, however, is that it will continue to carry more than its share of the cost for new schools, the majority of which will likely be built elsewhere if the tax base is not diversified.



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