

SECTION 1

Introduction

1.1 About Merriam

Merriam, Kansas is located in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area on the Kansas side in Johnson County. It was incorporated in 1950 during the Post-World War II era when the GI Bill helped many veterans leave Kansas City, Missouri for new housing in the suburbs. Merriam is one of many first-tier suburbs in the Kansas City Metropolitan area.

Merriam is surrounded by other incorporated cities. Without the potential for expansion outward, Merriam has looked inward to develop attractive residential areas for its citizens, while retaining enough commercial property to assure a stable and reliable tax base for city operations. Current population of the city is approximately 12,000. In addition, the city serves a region with a population of approximately 75,000. This population is well educated and affluent.

Merriam offers citizens much in the way of services: the city boasts the first hospital built in Johnson County, Shawnee Mission Medical Center. This state-of-the-art facility serves all of northern Johnson County. Other medical offices such as dentist, doctors and assisted care facilities are also located in the area. Merriam Town Center is a new regional shopping center that brings people from the region to Merriam to shop.

The City is fortunate to be part of the Shawnee Mission School District, which has a graduation rate of over 98 percent and a college attendance rate of over 90 percent. Public safety services include both police and fire department protection. The Merriam Fire Department holds the distinction of having the best fire insurance rating in Johnson County. Med-Act is also stationed at the station and provides fast response time to all of Merriam.

Merriam offers a variety of different housing options and types of neighborhoods. Home styles and price ranges vary and are



David G. Campbell settled what would become "Campbellton" and later Merriam in 1864.

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affordable in comparison to newer housing being built in western and southern Johnson County. Housing demand is high and homes are not on the market for long after listing, which indicates that Merriam is a highly desirable location. The City offers parkland, recreation and leisure programs.

1.2 The Need for Long-Range Planning

The City began a Comprehensive Planning process to help bring the community together to make coordinated plans for the future of Merriam. The City facilitates the process, but the plan will involve many organizations and individuals working to sustain and improve Merriam's future. The plan will focus on strategies to address changing demographics and service demands.

1.3 The Process

The process to develop the Merriam Comprehensive Plan was designed to meet the specific needs of the community. The planning process was community based, and the resulting plan reflects the consensus of the community participants. This process focused on defining the following community-specific outcomes:

- The community's vision for the future;
- The location, types and quality of new housing;
- Location and type of commercial and industrial activity;
- Infrastructure and facilities needed to adequately serve the community of the future; and
- Services and public facilities needed to meet a changing population.

Project Initiation

A clear direction for the planning process was initially defined. Consultants sat down with the Planning Commission and City Council in a joint work session to determine what the group would like to achieve as a result of the process. This phase also included preliminary identification of both short-term and long-term issues to be addressed.

Data Collection & Analysis

Background information was collected and analyzed to identify trends and issues. Information was collected from existing written sources and through key person interviews. An interim report was presented to the Planning Commission and City Council describing the opportunities and constraints facing the City of Merriam.

Plan Development

During this phase of the project, four community workshops were held. Focus group participants were recruited from the leaders of existing business and civic

organizations as well as neighborhood leaders and the general public. The purpose of the recruiting was to have a balanced group of individuals representing a cross-section of interests in the community. The first workshop was an orientation to the issues and initial brainstorming session. The second workshop was focused on developing recommended goals and preliminary implementation activities. The final two workshops were focused on developing a future land use plan and development principles. Based upon the outcomes of the community workshops, Planning Commission members prepared the recommendations of the plan that will be ultimately presented to the public and City Council during the plan adoption phase.

Plan Adoption

The draft Comprehensive Plan was presented to the Planning Commission. After several work sessions, the Planning Commission held a formal public hearing. Following the public hearing, the plan was formally adopted by the Planning Commission and recommended to the City Council who also adopted the plan.

1.4 Plan Format

The Plan contains background information and projected trends. It is a snapshot of where Merriam has been and where they are currently. This information was used to prepare the vision statement, goals, strategies and implementation activities. The plan includes the following sections:

Section 1 - Introduction

This section gives an overview of the planning process and the purpose of the Plan.

Section 2 – Planning Framework

Section 2 outlines the goals, strategies and activities necessary to reach the community's vision for the future. It is used along with Section 7 Future Land Use to make community development and redevelopment decisions.

Section 3 – Population Trends

This section includes information about the past, current and future population of Merriam. It is an important background section as it educates the reader about issues such as total population trends, age and gender structure, household structure and persons per household, and population projections.

Section 4 – Housing

This section includes background information about the housing stock in Merriam. Population trend information from the previous section was reviewed and a windshield survey was conducted to document housing and household characteristics of the community and make recommendations as to future needs.

Section 5 – Commercial and Industrial Development

This section details the economic structure of Merriam and its strategic location on I-35, which has resulted in much of the development activity in Merriam serving the regional metropolitan marketplace. Included in this discussion are: the impact of Merriam Town Center, the Downtown area and the overall site plan of the Historic Merriam Downtown, including the identification of new locations for expanded commercial or industrial opportunities.

Section 6 – Existing Land Use

This section describes the existing land use pattern for the City of Merriam and examines the existing development patterns in order to make decisions about future new development.

Section 7 – Future Land Use

This section includes recommendations regarding how land should be used in the future. This section also emphasizes strategies to position Merriam to respond to the outward expansion of Johnson County and how the city should respond to changing market conditions facing an inner ring city.

Section 8 – Parks and Recreation

This section is a summary of the draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan conducted by city staff. New information regarding population is included as well as a look at regional and school facilities available. A summary of the citizen survey response is also included as it relates to parks and recreation future needs. The plan reflects the desires of the community regarding future parks and recreation facilities and programs.

Section 9 – Public Facilities

Public facilities comprise most of the basic services for a community, including law enforcement, health care, emergency medical services, fire services, utilities, education and transportation networks. This section identified any major issues or plans that would impact the City. Also included are the improvements to existing facilities and strategies for initiating necessary changes or additions to Merriam's public facilities.

Section 10 – Transportation

Section 10 includes a summary of the various types of streets and designation of the major street system. It also includes a summary of existing conditions and identifies areas for further consideration including regional and alternative modes of transportation.

Addendum

This section contains information to document the planning process as well as educational materials used and excerpts from other reports or plans.