

Our Shared Vision: Cowley County in 2020

[provisional, September 14, 2005]

Preamble:

From the soothing charm of the Flint Hills to the buzz of commerce and culture in our towns and cities, Cowley County boasts abundant life and attraction. We are rural and small town, but not small in thought and action. We value closeness and connectedness. We see economic and cultural possibilities spreading all across our corner of the Great American Prairie. Education, music, and the arts enrich our lives – lives bound by family, community, and a commitment to opportunity and inclusion. Together, we commit our time and talent to this shared vision for the future of Cowley County:

- **Cowley County is a safe and drug-free place to live, rear children, work and play.**

Neighborhoods, businesses, schools, and law enforcement work together to maintain public safety and keep crime rates low. Parents know their children are safe in schools, neighborhoods, parks and other public spaces. Effective drug and alcohol prevention and treatment programs are readily available. The health and safety of our residents, especially families with children is our top priority.

- **We boast a strong economy with good jobs, lively downtowns and a modern transportation infrastructure to support us.**

Cowley County offers well-paying industrial, manufacturing, and service jobs. We work together to create or seize new business opportunities throughout our region. Our business districts, especially downtowns, are bustling with shops, restaurants, entertainment venues, and service enterprises. We have fully developed the transportation and information networks that support our continued economic growth and development. We nourish our entrepreneurial culture. We actively support agri-tourism in our rural communities. At Strother Field and our other business and industrial areas, we promote the continued success of our existing businesses. Risk-taking entrepreneurs are the life-blood of our vibrant, adaptable, and diversified economy. We enthusiastically welcome and encourage new businesses that contribute to our quality of life.

- **We accomplish many of our goals through creative, forward-thinking public-private partnerships.**

Cooperative planning and investment bring together the many fertile ideas that our business community, our local government leaders, and our other public and private partners have to offer. These partnerships spur progress in many areas. We offer activities for teens and other young people. We address the problems created by poverty, and work to eliminate it. Every willing person, and every child, merits our support as he or she strives for a better life. We preserve our historical buildings and artifacts. We promote a positive image for our communities, based on real

achievements and capabilities. Our partnerships also help to fund and promote economic development activities at local, county, and regional levels.

- **Cowley County attracts and retains youth and young families.**

Children and youth are nurtured, mentored and taken seriously, which cements a lifelong tie to Cowley County. Our optimistic and enthusiastic residents promote our family-friendly communities among their own friends and relations. Cowley County's employment opportunities, recreational activities, and competitive cost of living encourage young families to make their homes here.

- **Our schools help each individual develop his or her talents and interests to their fullest potential.**

Our schools help their students achieve the high educational standards the community expects. We support our students and their teachers in word and deed. We assure every student, preschool through adult, has a safe and challenging learning environment. Our schools prepare their students for successful careers, fulfilling lives, and valuable contributions to civic life.

- **Our private and public spaces reflect the pride and creativity of our people.**

Cowley County looks as good as is. Our businesses, neighborhoods and countryside are attractive and well maintained. We accept and share responsibility for the upkeep. Our city and county entrances reflect our rich heritage and our optimism. Our public spaces are clean and inviting.

- **Our community charm and tourism attractions lure visitors.**

Cowley County's communities and countryside have developed unique identities to become favored tourist destinations. Residents rally around these qualities. Together, we promote each of our communities' special brands. Small-town life and prairie living are "in." Our agri-tourism and other ag-based industries are thriving. Our farmers and ranchers are prospering. We welcome visitors and artisans from throughout the world, encouraging them to make Cowley County their home.

- **Cowley County treasures our historic, cultural, financial and human resources.**

We retain local wealth and preserve our natural and historic assets. Cowley County is rich in arts, music and lush parks. Southwestern College and Cowley County Community College are important focal points for cultural and civic events. Our festivals and other cultural attractions can boast of international audience appeal. The people of Cowley County are imaginative, creative and resourceful.

- **All residents have safe, affordable and suitable housing.**

Housing options are plentiful for all income levels and lifestyles. Both public and private entities ensure this need is met.

- **Cowley County is a healthy community blessed with good doctors and other health care professionals.**

We actively pursue every opportunity to enhance our health care capabilities, to attract needed professionals, and to encourage new health care enterprises. Residents are able to choose local providers to meet their health care needs. Families and employers can afford health care and health insurance. We encourage and promote healthy lifestyles.

- **Diversity enriches all of us.**

Every individual is welcomed into civic life and treated fairly. Inclusion guides us. We accept the challenges that diversity in ethnicity, experience, aptitude and thought can present, and we resolve differences in a civil and respectful manner. Our laws and enforcement of them are colorblind and ignorant of wealth and social standing. Our youth are valued and taken seriously. Our seniors are respected and cared for.

Coda:

This is the future that we, the people of Cowley County, have determined that we will achieve and maintain. Many voices have shared their worries and their dreams in a spirit of hope and trust. To honor those voices we will fund a long-term community development partnership. We will attract others to join with us. We will work together throughout the years to bring this shared vision to life.