






Food Desert No More: Allen County's G&W Story

KANSAS

POPULATED PLACES

- 100,000 – 499,999 • Kansas City
- 25,000 – 99,999 • Dodge City
- 24,999 and less • Liberal
- State capital ★ Topeka

TRANSPORTATION

- Interstate; limited access highway 
- Other principal highway 
- Railroad 

PHYSICAL FEATURES

- Streams: perennial; intermittent 
- Lakes 
- Highest elevation in state (feet) +4039
- The lowest elevation in Kansas is 679 feet above sea level (Verdigris River).

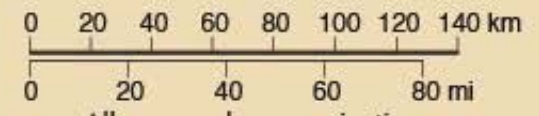


COLORADO

NEBRASKA

MISSOURI

OKLAHOMA



- 501(c)(3) coalition established 2007
- 9 staff
- Health/Wellness, Recreation, Education and Economic Development
- VISION: Allen County will be the healthiest rural county in Kansas





People are *frustrated*.

- 2007: Walmart opens a Supercenter in Iola
- 2009: Country Mart, Iola's lone supermarket (57,000sf), closes
- Blow to community morale
- 2013: Thrive Allen County launches Economic Development program

G&W FOODS

- **27 stores**
- **Primarily in county seat towns across 4 states**
- **Nearby stores-- Yates Center, Chanute, Fort Scott, Eureka, Independence, Girard....**
- **Want to own, not lease**

More Context

- In 2010, Allen County voters approved building a new hospital.
- 80,000sf old facility starts to rot
- Community has two high-priority challenges: housing, and lack of supermarket.

HOW ABOUT THE OLD HOSPITAL SITE?

- Pluses: infrastructure in place, city-owned utilities, publicly-owned site.
- Minuses: expensive removal, emotional attachment (lots of living and dying), hard to visualize it being anything else.



Mixed Use Site Plan at Madison & First Street

Partnerships: Key to Success

- First in: Allen County. Tore down hospital (\$200,000). Readied site (\$88,600).
- G&W Foods agrees to purchase old hospital site...as long as they don't have to go solo.
- Iola Industries agrees to build 24 apartment units for mixed-use development anchored by G&W (later reduced to 12...)
- City of Iola agrees to utility connections, site work







Lessons

- There's a reason nobody builds small town supermarkets. It's hard.
- Partnerships are essential.
- 5 years, start to finish.
- In-fill sites are superior.



Lessons (cont.)

- Public incentives are probably necessary. Deal with it.
- Construction costs are higher than you expect.
- Aesthetics matter—don't be afraid to push for better design.
- Use your residents—they want to help!
- Celebrate every success!

Thank You!

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