



“We Have Tomorrow — Bright Before Us, Like A Flame.”

Langston Hughes



City of Lawrence

The Flame | September 2021

Now accepting Utility Assistance Program donations

The City of Lawrence is now accepting donations for the new Utility Assistance Program. The program was created to offer a resource to those members of the Lawrence community who have fallen behind on City utility payments.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated a problem with outstanding utility payments as it left some of our community members unable to keep up with bills due to lost employment, an inability to work, or other circumstances. To assist these households, the City halted utility shut-offs during the pandemic.

While we do not currently have a set date, once service disconnections resume, customers who have a delinquent balance of more than 22 days will be subject to utility shut offs. The City created the Utility Assistance Program as a resource to these households.

The program is the first of its kind for the City of Lawrence and it will be completely community funded. Anyone who is a City utility customer can opt-in to a recurring monthly donation by completing the online donation form on the City website: lawrenceks.org/utility-billing/donate.

Participants can choose any donation amount, and it will be added to their monthly utility bills moving forward. You can choose to start or stop at any time.

As of early August, approximately 10% of the City's residential customers were more than 22 days past due on utility payments, and the total outstanding balance was more than \$1.7 million. Any contribution will be helpful for those

households that have past due bills. As an example, if half of all City utility customers were to donate \$8 a month for a year, the donations would more than cover the current outstanding balance and help set up the Utility Assistance Program to continue into the future.

Through the end of 2021, the City will only be collecting donations. Funds from the Utility Assistance Program will be administered through a partnership between the City and Catholic Charities

of Northeast Kansas. We anticipate that community members will be able to apply for funds beginning in January 2022. More information, and instructions for those interested in applying, will be shared as we get closer to that point.

More information about utility billing is online: lawrenceks.org/utility-billing. You can contribute to the Utility Assistance Program through the online donation form available at: lawrenceks.org/utility-billing/donate.

Utility Assistance Program FAQs

WHO CAN APPLY FOR THE FUNDS?

We anticipate that we will begin accepting applications to use Utility Assistance Program funds in January 2022. The program will be administered through Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas, and funds will be awarded based on the needs of the applicant. Anyone with an outstanding balance of more than 22 days for their City utilities can apply.

DO I HAVE AN OUTSTANDING BALANCE?

Your utility bill is due 20 days from the billing date. If your bill is overdue, a "Notice of Delinquent Account" will be included in your next bill. The past due amount will be on the bill in a red font.

CAN I WRITE A CHECK INSTEAD OF SIGNING UP FOR MONTHLY DONATIONS?

At this time, monthly charges to your utility bill are the only way the City is

collecting donations for the program. You can start or stop monthly donations at any time.

CAN MY REGULAR UTILITY BILL PAYMENT BENEFIT THIS PROGRAM?

City utility payments directly fund the associated utility service, which includes the cost of providing the service and the cost of future infrastructure improvements. The City cannot use funds from regular utility payments toward the outstanding balance because that would create a funding deficit that would put the utility systems, including water, wastewater, stormwater and solid waste, at risk.

It's easy to add the donation to your monthly bill. Go online and fill out the one-time form to have payments (at any amount you choose) added onto your monthly bill moving forward.



CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

DOUGLAS COUNTY | CITY OF LAWRENCE

Lawrence and Douglas County are impacted by climate change in ways that seriously affect our people, ecosystems, and businesses. We're building a Climate Action Plan to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate and do our part to slow climate change. In creating the plan, we are looking for voices from every corner of the community. That includes you.

Visit our website to learn more and participate: lawrenceks.org/climate.



USE YOUR VOICE!

Protect against trash cart fires

Lawrence-Douglas County Fire Medical (LDCFM) responded to several structure fires in Lawrence this summer, some of which involved improper disposal of hot ashes or smoking materials in trash cans.

Properly disposing of hot ash and smoking materials is an easy way for homeowners and renters to keep their home safe. Here are some tips from LDCFM:

- Allow ashes or coals to cool for several days in the area where you had the fire.
- When it is time to dispose of the ashes, transfer them to a metal container and wet them down.
- Keep the metal container outside of your home and away from any combustibles until the container is hauled away.
- Do NOT place any combustibles in the metal container.
- Do NOT use a combustible container for ashes or other related materials.

Beyond hot ashes and smoking materials, there are other materials that can be a fire hazard if improperly disposed of in your trash can or cart. When these types of items are mixed or come in contact with

other substances that might be in the trash, the combination can result in a fire. Examples of these materials include:

- Flammable liquids, combustible liquids, or oil-based products that support spontaneous combustion



- Hazardous materials and chemicals (ammonia, bleach, pesticides, pool chemicals, etc.)



- Cylinders containing compressed gas (propane, helium, acetylene and oxygen) or fire extinguishers



- Rechargeable batteries (lithium-ion, nickel-cadmium or lead-acid)



The City's Household Hazardous Waste Facility is a terrific option for properly disposing of hazardous waste items.

Visit our website for more information on accepted items and to make your appointment: lawrenceks.org/hhw. Due to COVID-19 safety protocols, the Household Hazardous Waste Facility is currently available by appointment only.

Learn more about the Lawrence Strategic Plan

LAWRENCE STRATEGIC PLAN



 City of Lawrence

In July 2021, the City of Lawrence published an overview of the Lawrence Strategic Plan on our website. This plan was born out of community engagement and interpreted by our elected leaders before being translated into plans of action. Together, our community created a plan that outlines:

- Why the City does what it does
- What it will take to achieve the future we have described
- How we will accomplish our work with commitment

The recently published overview document shares more information on the Strategic Plan framework, which includes the City's mission, vision and organizational values, as well as the five outcomes and six commitments. The overview also includes progress indicators and strategies for achieving our outcomes.

The Strategic Plan is centered around the City's five strategic outcomes, which represent what we plan to accomplish for our community. While much of what the City has always done is foundational to these areas, we're now building plans that are targeted at achieving these outcomes with excellence. The five outcomes are:

1. Unmistakable Identity
2. Strong, Welcoming Neighborhoods
3. Safe and Secure
4. Prosperity and Economic Security
5. Connected City

The Strategic Plan overview document is online at: lawrenceks.org/strategic-plan.

As its next step, City staff are working to gather data related to each of the progress indicators. Once compiled, that data will be available online for anyone in Lawrence to view and stay up-to-date on how the City is moving toward its future.

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We create a community where all enjoy life and feel at home.