



"We Have Tomorrow – Bright Before Us, Like A Flame." *Langston Hughes*



Volunteer for Safe Winter Walkways!

Safe Winter Walkways is a resource for community members who are unable to keep their sidewalks clear following snow events. Volunteers are matched with residents needing assistance, and the program makes every effort to match volunteers with residents in their neighborhoods. All volunteers are asked to commit to the entire snow season and be willing to shovel the public sidewalk of their assigned house after each winter weather event.

Interested community members can go online for more information or to sign up as a volunteer: lawrenceks.org/safe-winter-walkways.



On the ballot this November!

Two local initiatives will be on the ballot for Lawrence voters this November: Form of Government and the Affordable Housing and Emergency Sheltering Services Sales Tax. This article will give you a primer on each proposed ballot measure.

FORM OF GOVERNMENT

This November, Lawrence residents will vote on whether to modify the City's form of government. The question on ballots will be:

Shall the City of Lawrence, Kansas, abandon the Commission-Manager form of government and adopt a Modified Mayor-Council Manager form of government and become a city operating under a Modified Mayor-Council Manager form of government?

In our current Commission-Manager government, the City of Lawrence has five commissioners who are elected at-large on a non-partisan basis for four-year terms. Elections are held every two years. The five commissioners vote on who will be the Mayor and Vice Mayor for the following year.

In a modified Mayor-Council-Manager government, the City of Lawrence would have a directly elected, nonpartisan Mayor who would serve a four-year term. The Mayor would only vote if they are breaking a tie among the other council members.

The governing body would also have six non-partisan council members. Four council members would represent specific districts. Two council members would represent the city at-large. All six council members would serve four-year terms, which would be staggered so that three council seats are up for election every two years.

Lawrence would continue to have a City Manager who provides complex administrative support to the City Commission and oversees the day-to-day operations of the city.

If voters choose to go to a modified Mayor-Council-Manager form of government, the City Council districts would be determined after the election.

SALES TAX

Currently, the City of Lawrence has an affordable housing sales tax that was passed by voters in November 2017, along with two other special sales taxes for infrastructure and equipment and transit services. Collection for this sales tax began April 1,

Continued on back page

OUR MISSION

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

City information is available at lawrenceks.org and on cable Channel 25.

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2019, and was set to continue for 10 years – through March 31, 2029.

The ballot question for Lawrence voters this November will be whether to repeal the existing 0.05% sales tax for affordable housing projects and programs and replace it with a sales tax of 0.10% that would fund both affordable housing projects and programs and temporary emergency shelter facilities and related services for people experiencing homelessness.

With the affordable housing sales tax at 0.05%, there is \$0.50 collected per \$1,000 of purchases. With an affordable housing and emergency shelter services sales tax at 0.10%, there would be \$1.00 collected per \$1,000 in purchases.

The current sales tax generates about \$1.25 million annually, and if the increased sales tax is passed, it is estimated to generate revenue of approximately \$2.5 million annually. The City anticipates splitting the collected funds, with 50% of funds going toward affordable housing projects and programs and 50% of funds toward emergency shelter facilities and related services for people experiencing homelessness.

If the proposed sales tax ballot measure is passed, the current sales tax would be repealed and collection on the new tax would begin April 1, 2025, and continue through March 31, 2035. If the ballot measure is not passed, the current sales tax at the rate of 0.05% would not be repealed. The current sales tax would continue through March 31, 2029. There would likely be an additional vote in November 2027 asking Lawrence voters to decide whether to extend the sales tax beyond the initial 10 years. More information would be available ahead of that vote.

Five-year progress of Affordable Housing Sales Tax

Currently, funds collected for the Affordable Housing Sales Tax go toward the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Every year, community organizations have the opportunity to apply for money from the trust fund for projects that accomplish the following:

- Provide and improve quality, availability and affordability of housing in Lawrence
- Acquire land for future affordable housing units
- Invest in private/public partnerships for the provision of affordable housing
- Other related affordable housing purposes that may be in the best interest of the City of Lawrence

The Lawrence City Commission is in its sixth year of allocating funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. In its first five years, money collected from the affordable housing sales tax was able to support the following initiatives:

- Creating 645 new affordable housing units for renters and homeowners
- Modifying 65 homes to be accessible for residents with disabilities
- Making health and safety improvements on 160 units
- Serving 1,128 residents with housing vouchers or rental assistance so they can remain housed

In the next five years of the trust fund, the Affordable Housing Advisory Board has set a goal to provide 1,200 more units of affordable housing in our community. Any

future funding allocations will be subject to Lawrence City Commission approval.

To view all projects supported through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, please visit the Affordable Housing Advisory Board projects dashboard on our website: lawrenceks.org/pds/affordable-housing.

Funding for Emergency Shelter

If the proposed sales tax ballot measure is passed, the City anticipates allocating half of all collected funds toward providing temporary emergency shelter as well as related services for people experiencing homelessness, which could include:

- Immediate benefits such as food, laundry, transportation, storage, non-prescription medical supplies, case management and outreach services
- Homeless prevention services such as rent stabilization funding, utility assistance, and assistance obtaining government identification cards and government benefits
- And other related programs and services for people experiencing homelessness

The City of Lawrence works with community partners on several of its programs and services for people experiencing homelessness. The City has a contract with the Lawrence Community Shelter (LCS) to operate an emergency shelter for community members in need. With City support, LCS was able to expand its operations in 2024 to service up to 200 people a night, including additional wrap-around and support services to help people get the housing they need. The City of Lawrence also opened The Village in 2024, which is another emergency shelter solution operated by LCS.

Additionally, the City of Lawrence formed a new multi-disciplinary Homeless Response Team in 2024 that is focused on reaching people who are chronically homeless. The Homeless Response Team is working to reach these individuals so they can form relationships and connect them with resources they need to become sheltered. The team provides outreach and services three days a week for six hours a day.

Services provided by the Homeless Response Team and at the Lawrence Community Shelter and The Village could all be supported by funds collected from an affordable housing and emergency shelter services sales tax.

The election is November 5, 2024. Your vote counts – make your voice heard!

Pictured left: The multi-disciplinary Homeless Response Team in May 2024. *Pictured front:* A community member moving into affordable housing from Tenants to Homeowners.

