



# *City of Lawson, MO*

## Comprehensive Report 2017

## RESOLUTION PAGE

A resolution approving a Long-Range Comprehensive  
Plan for the City of Lawson, Missouri.

To be added when approved by Planning & Zoning.

### **Note:**

The Comprehensive Plan does not “technically” become a plan until the City Council creates goals, which are then adopted by the Council.

- a. Until then, it is more a Comprehensive Report
- b. We will continue to amend the report, until which time the Council legally adopts it.
- c. At that time, it become a Comprehensive City Plan.
- d. All a matter of semantics. The survey data and reports collected from Ray and Clay County reports are intended to assist the Council as they establish goals for the city.

Typically, a Goal is more general. For example:

- a. “Bring in a local grocery store”
- b. “Clean up the City ...make it look nicer in general”
- c. “Add more things for both kids and adults to do in Lawson”
- d. “Open up new land for develop and see more new homes built in Lawson”

All worthy goals. But, what happens next is THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP IN THE PROCESS. And, that would be developing a strategic plan (more exactly, a comprehensive strategic plan) to accomplish each goal. THE strategic plan to actually “clean up the city” might be 2, 3 or 20 pages long. Same with the strategic steps (plan) needed to bring a new grocery store into town. As we start the process of accomplishing our goals, it will be necessary to reach out to other community groups (EDC, Chamber of Commerce, Parks and Rec, Rotary, Masonic Lodge, Scouting Groups, School, Booster Club, etc., etc) to help with very specific tasks, needed to eventually accomplish the more general goal. Once goals are established, the Comprehensive Strategic Plan will be the guiding light providing direction for the City of Lawson. Direction based on community input.

Of course, please continue to provide input. The Comprehensive Report will be refined as we go. The actual “Plan” will be a living document and (forever) be updated as goals are completed and new goals added. Priorities will change according to the current needs/wants of the community.

Steve L. Sellers  
City Administrator

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(Left to Right)

Jack Woodring, Alderman, Ward II

Rick Thomas, President, Alderman Ward I

Greg Taylor, Mayor

Matt Nolker, Alderman, Ward I

Mark Bales, Alderman, Ward II

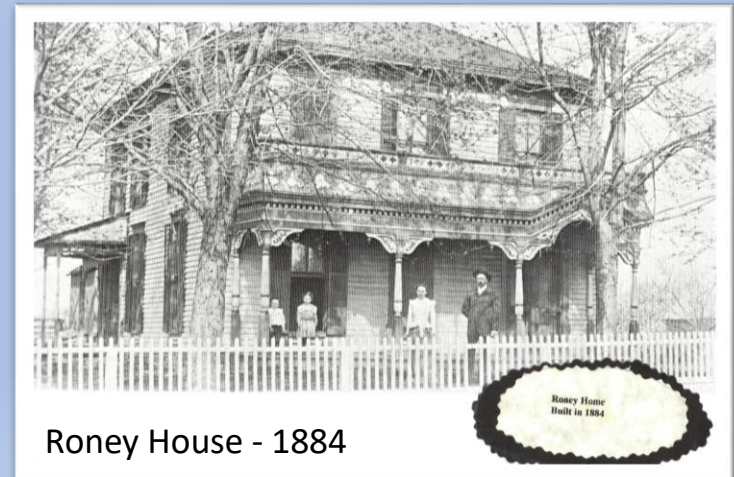
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PO Box 185  
Lawson, MO 64062  
816-580-3217



# Historical Mapping - Lawson, MO 1877

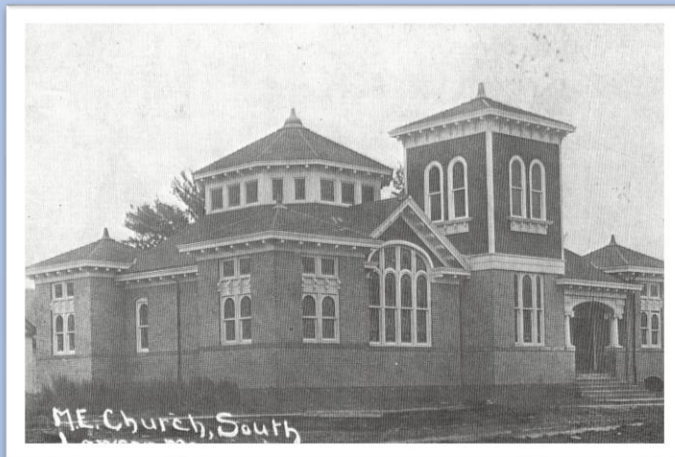


Lawson Public School - 1886

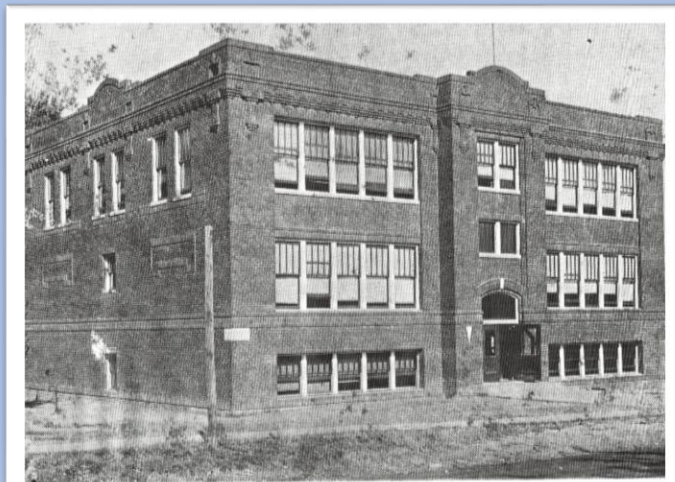


Roney House - 1884

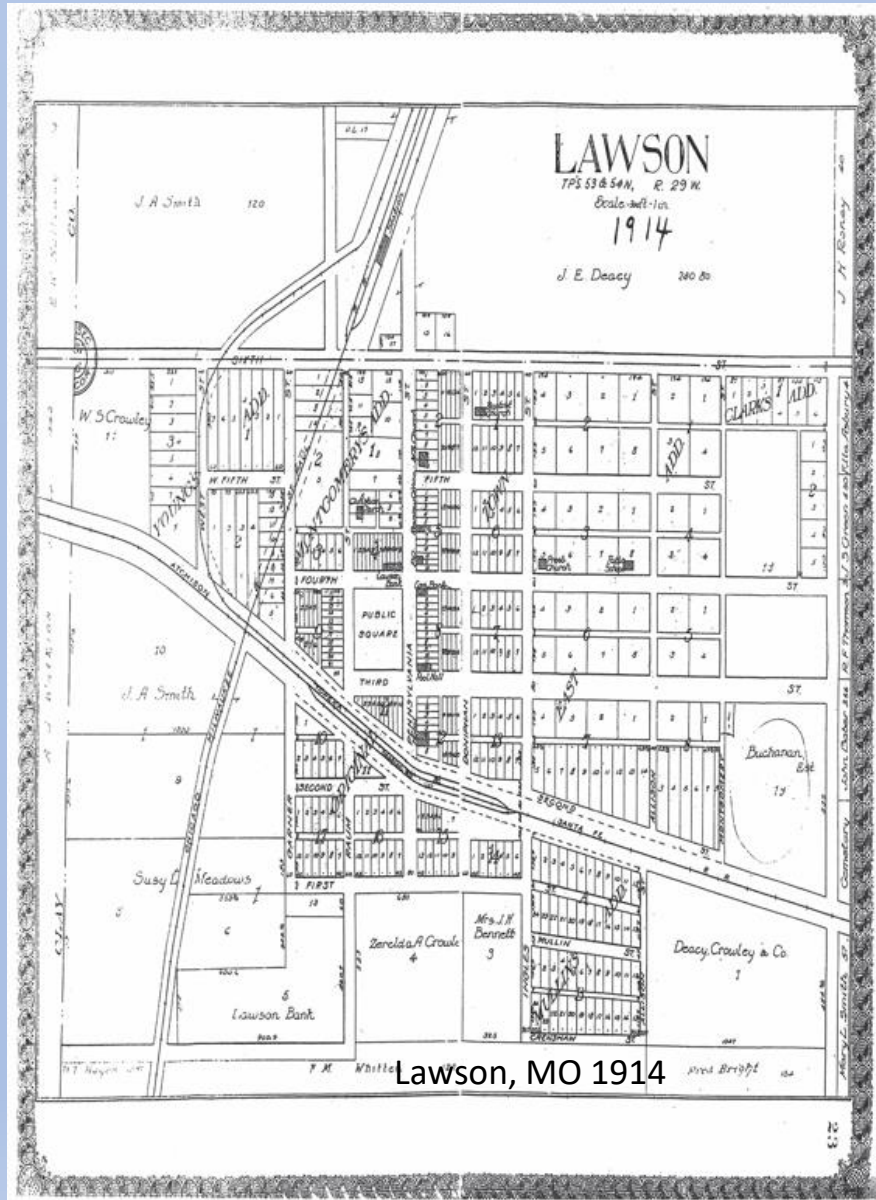




Methodist Church Built in 1911

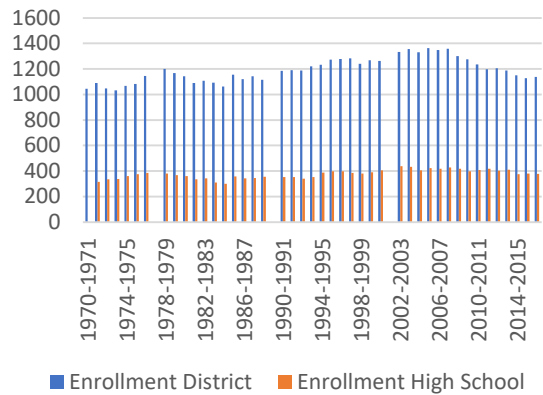


Lawson Public School built in 1915.

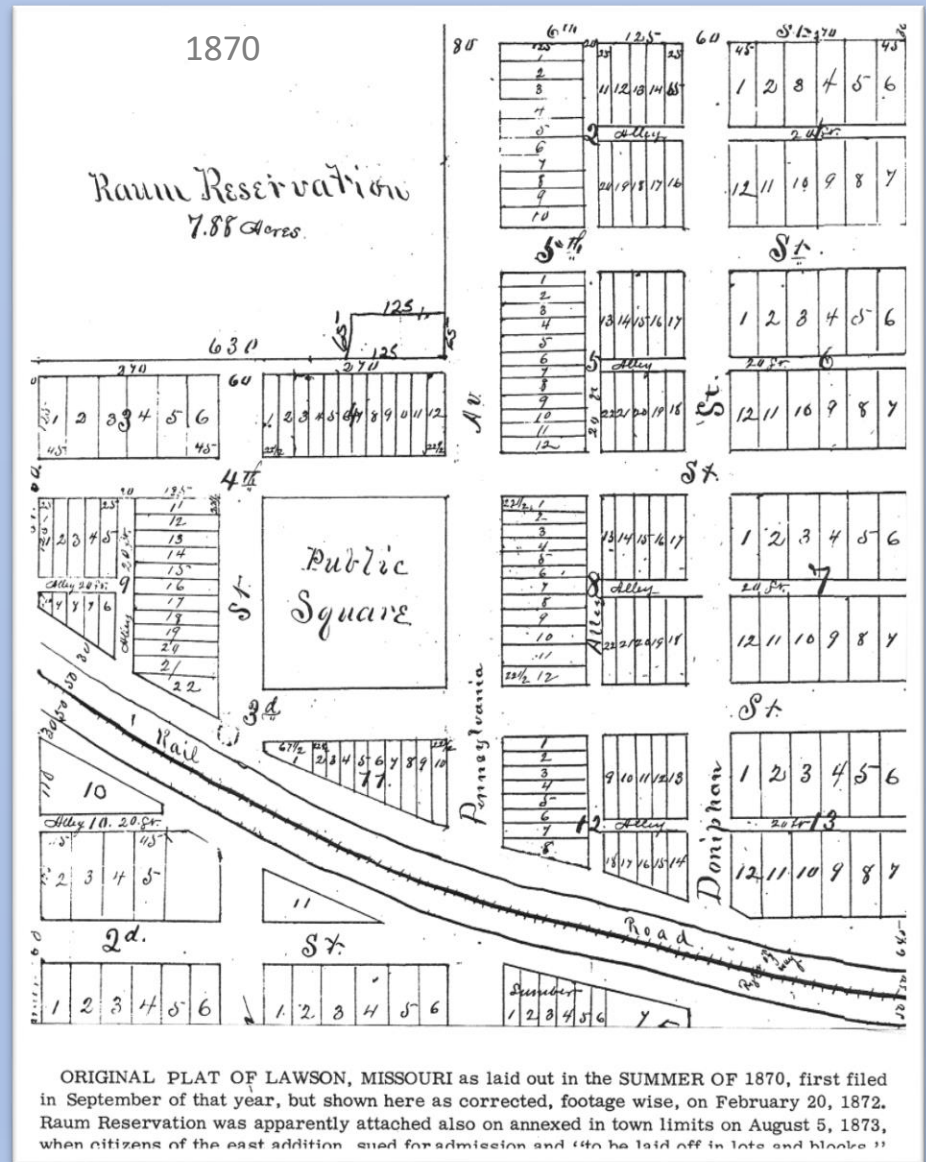


Lawson, MO 1914

## Lawson School District Enrollment 1970-2017



Milwaukee Depot - Built in the late 1800's



ORIGINAL PLAT OF LAWSON, MISSOURI as laid out in the SUMMER OF 1870, first filed in September of that year, but shown here as corrected, footage wise, on February 20, 1872. Raum Reservation was apparently attached also on annexed in town limits on August 5, 1873, when citizens of the east addition sued for admission and "to be laid off in lots and blocks."



PO Box 185 • 103 S. Pennsylvania Ave  
Lawson, MO 64062  
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## Mayor's Introduction

The City of Lawson Missouri was founded in 1871 (plat was filed with the county recorder September 20, 1870 and formally became a city in 1871). In the early days, Lawson was a railroad town, but even before Lawson became an “official” town, there were stores in town to serve the growing community.

Jump ahead 147 years and that is still the case. There are still shops and stores serving the community. No doubt about it, the improved transportation system, high percentage of the local population working outside of town internet shopping has made it much harder on local merchants.

January 2017, the Lawson Board of Aldermen passed a motion to have an updated Comprehensive Plan completed. Collect and record the normal demographics, but also to survey the community and high school students as to how they perceived the City of Lawson. There were a variety of questions asked, to include:

- What do you consider to be the strengths of Lawson?
- What does Lawson need to grow?
- If you could add one thing to do, or change one thing, what would it be?
- How can/should the City do to better support local businesses?
- For students ... how likely are you to settle in Lawson and raise your children here?
- Then a follow-up question on “why?”

There were three versions of the survey developed. One for students, one for business owners/operators and one for community members. Surveys were dropped off at every business in town, as well as made available at City Hall, delivered to the High School and sent out (with a school paper) to each mailing address within the Lawson School District. Surveys were also dropped off at every business in town, as well as made available at City Hall, delivered to the High School and sent out (with a school paper) to each mailing address within the Lawson School District.





Eventually, over 600 surveys were returned. The survey forms were collected, analyzed and recorded by a volunteer group from Lawson:

Amy Kanning  
Kelley Uthe  
Barbara Sloop

Larry Kanning  
Karen Dolt  
Val Swearingin

Mike VanWinkle  
Roxann Shook

Mary VanWinkle,  
Darlene Statt

The data was then represented on charts, graphs and by narrative by Dea Dea Craye, Ben Hyde, Collin Jones, Amy Klintworth, and Rhonda Oulman.

A tremendous amount of time and effort went into the Comprehensive Plan document. I believe you will find the information most interesting. From this collection of data and demographics, the City Council will create and amend goals for the City of Lawson ... to reflect community ideas and input. For everyone involved, and especially community members who took time to complete and return a survey.

Thank You!

Greg Taylor  
Mayor, Lawson, MO



# Officials, Employees & Committee Members *City of Lawson, Missouri*

*May 2017*

## *Board of Aldermen*

Greg Taylor, Mayor

Rick Thomas, President, Alderman Ward I

Mark Bales, Alderman, Ward II

Matt Nolker, Alderman, Ward I

Jack Woodring, Alderman, Ward II

## *Finance Committee*

Rick Thomas, Chairman

Matt Nolker, Alderman Member

David Armstrong, Citizen Member

Nancy Nolker, Citizen Member

## *Administration*

Steve Sellers, City Administrator

Rhonda Oulman, City Clerk

Dea Dea Craye, Admin Assistant

Robert Smith, Police Chief

Norm Hemmerling, Admin Chief

Allen Boydston, Public Works Super.

Ben Hyde, Economic Development Dir.

Shirley Nolker, Payables Clerk

Amy Klintworth, Project Manager

Joseph Lauber, P.C., City Attorney

## *Water, Sewer, Streets*

Collin Jones, Clerk

Kenny Fisher

Steve Bales

Troy Stevens

Jerricho Richardson

John Craye

## *Police Department*

Bruce Summa, Sergeant

Scott Robeson, Officer

Clifton Cashatt, Officer

Kenneth Stieh, Officer

Ray Orth, Officer

Andraya Kreiling, Officer

Justin Boyles, Officer

Michael Marvin, Officer

Tara Watson, Clerk

## *Court*

Jeffrey Eastman, Judge

Ellen Jacobs, Prosecutor

Dea Dea Craye, Court Clerk

## *Planning & Zoning*

Kelly Lampkin, Chairman

Dale Stark, Vice Chairman

Jim Willis, Secretary

Kenny Hale, Commissioner

Greg Taylor, Mayor Member

Rick Thomas, Alderman Member

## *Board of Adjustments*

Vester Cates, Chairman

Belinda Dolt, Secretary

Sandy Haskins, Member

Tammy Pollard, Alternate

Matthew Defries, Alternate

## *Park & Recreation Board*

Tim Broughton, President

Eric Klintworth, Vice President

Emma Duncan, Secretary

Trey Green, Treasurer

Clint Briant, Member

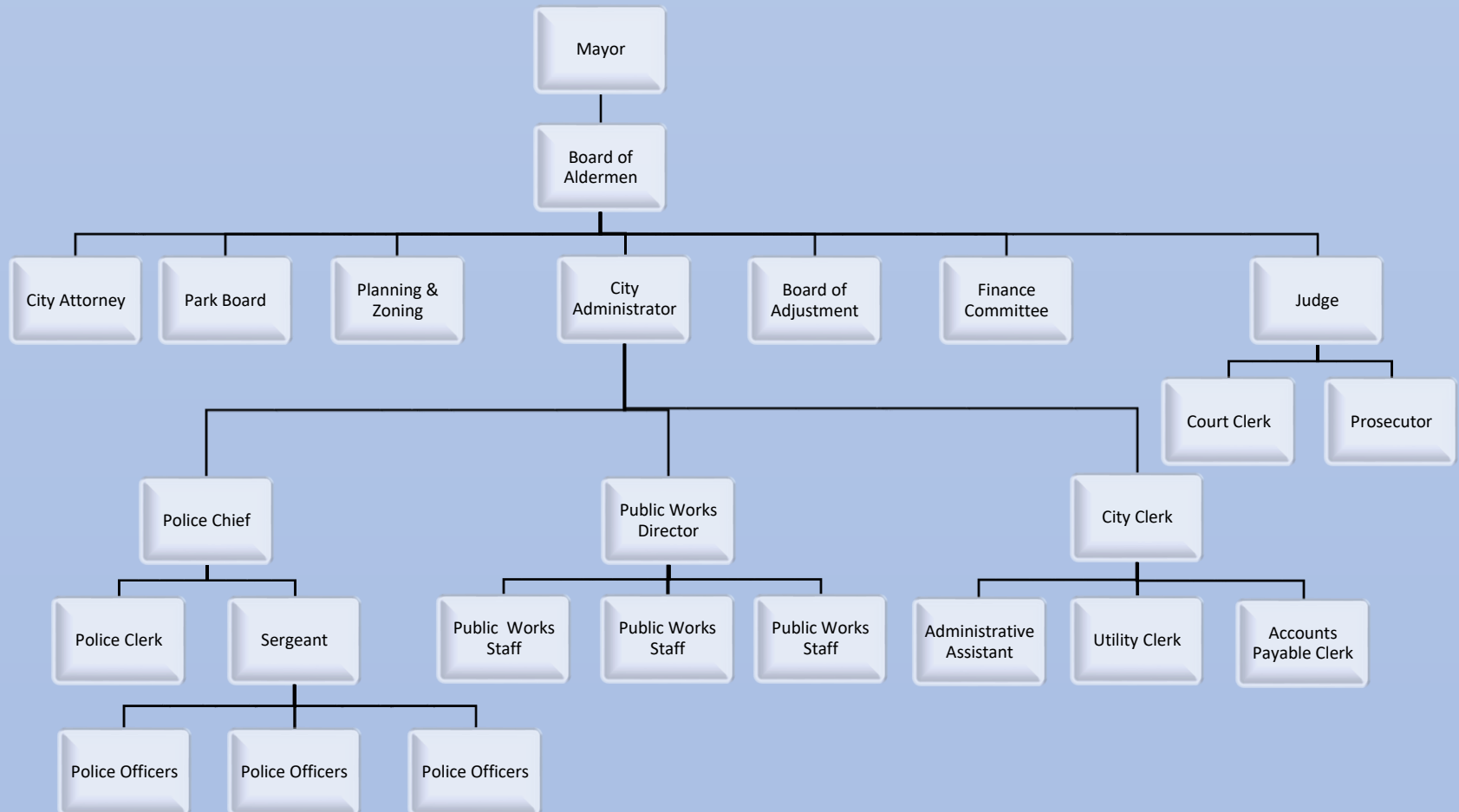
Stephanie Craig, Honorary Member

Amanda Crowley, Honorary Member

Becky Harrold, Honorary Member

Debbie Willis, Honorary Member

# *City of Lawson Organizational Chart*





Census Bureau

Estimated population as of July 1, 2016 was 2,517.

Highest population in history of Lawson, MO



## *Quick Facts...more information to follow.*

- The population in Lawson was on an upward trend dating back to 1950, peaking in 2010 at 2,473. There was a slight decline from 2010 to 2015; However the estimated population as of July 1, 2016 was 2,517, which would be the largest population figure since Lawson first became a City in 1870.
- Looking at population charts, while the population continues to trend up, Lawson has lost numbers in the 24-45 age group. In that age group, Lawson's population has decreased by nearly 150 in the last ten years.
- Lawson's population in the 24-45 age group is 23.2% (of total population) compared to the state average of 26.9% and 30.3% national average.
- Between 1996 and 2005, Lawson averaged 9.1 new single family homes being built per year.
- Between 2006 and 2015, Lawson averaged 0.9 new single family homes being built per year, a decrease of 75 homes over the previous 10 years.
- As of May 2017 there are 5 homes currently being built, with expectations for 3-4 others by the end of the year.
- According to the 2014 US Census Bureau and American Community Survey, Lawson's median household income was \$54,412. The mean (average) household income in Ray County is \$52,400, compared to \$60,900 in Clay County and \$53,600 in Clinton County. (Median household income tends to run lower than the mean when scattered high end incomes averaged in.)
- Lawson School District attendance rate has averaged 95.87%, compared to 92% average for the State of Missouri.
- The drop rate for Lawson HS has averaged 1.36% over the last 10 years, just slightly more than 1 student per year. During this same period of time, 6.5% of the high school students dropped out statewide.
- Lawson School District was the first to gain an Exemplary Rating in the State of Missouri. Having earned that distinction in 1993, they have maintained that status for the last 24 years.
- In 1883, Lawson built their first multi-room school (located on same property school district still owns at 4<sup>th</sup> St & Allison)

# Comprehensive Plans Dating Back to 1965

The City of Lawson, Missouri constructed a Comprehensive Plan in 1965, followed by an updated version in 1975 and another update in 1989. The information gathered from these documents was immensely helpful in generating the demographic data for the 2017 Comprehensive Plan.

During 1963 to 1966, the Mayor of Lawson was R.R. Coffman. Aldermen during that period of time included:

Bill J. Decker  
Maurice Smith

L.D. Estill  
J.S. Smith

Dr. D.E. McNeely  
Orville E. Yokum

Vernon King

Bill R. Morrow was Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission from 1963-1965. Members included:

L.D. Estill  
R.R. Coffman

A.W. Jarman  
Kenneth Dasset

Edith O'Dell  
John Eppenauer

Anabel Smith  
J.S. Smith

1963



April 30, 1971



F. Anderson, C. Lockamy,  
Mr. Koehler, D. Moberly,  
L. Estile, L. Lockamy

During 1975-1976 when the original Comprehensive Plan was first updated, both Jack Monroe and Van F. Bright served as Mayor. Aldermen included:

John Briant

Murle Nolker

Stephen Nolker

Larry Swearingin

Vester Cates

1975 Planning and Zoning Commission members included:

Bruce McCollough (Chairman)

Fern Nolker (Secretary-Treasurer)

Gene Gulley

Helen Green

# *1975 Advisory Committee & 1989 Comprehensive Plan*

In 1975, members of the Citizens Advisory Committee included:

Jim Beaumont	Bryce Bogard	Ina Faye Briant
Vester Cates	Loren Crosky	Hazel Denton
Bob Gill	W.D. McQuerrey	Bill Morrow
Virginia Nolker	B.F. Walker	Anita Swearingin
Norma Bush	Randall Elliott	Gene Neas
Judy Zeikle		

From 1986 to 1989, both Kennel Calvert and Gerrie Anderson served as Mayor.

Aldermen from that time period included:

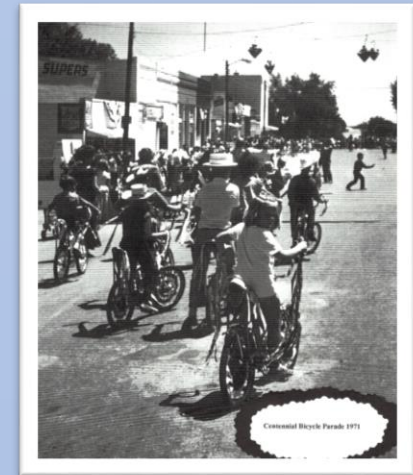
Stephen Nolker	Vester Cates	Richard E. Nolker
Clay Carter	Sam Phipps	Lindell Petree
Charlie Lebold	Ross Akers	Larenda Dravenstott

Dennis Baldwin served as Chairperson of the Planning and Zoning Commission during that period of time. Members included:

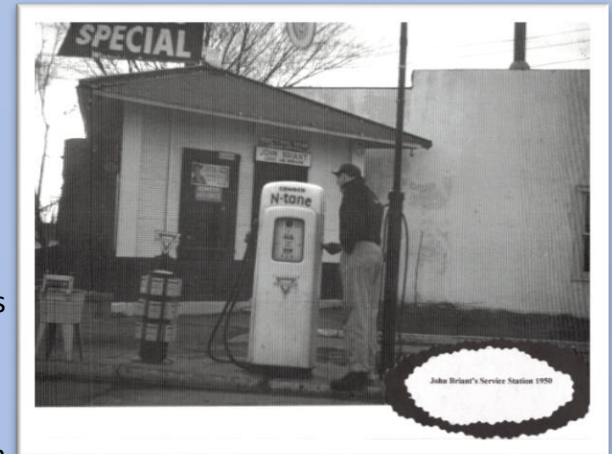
Tim Vick	Fern Nolker	Fred Evans Jr.
Kennel Calvert	Gerrie Anderson	Steve Nolker
Vester Cates	Clay Carter	Dale Foland
Bill Morrow, Jr.	Larenda Dravenstott	

During this time period, both Sheldon Hunter and John Tracy served as City Administrator. Those who served as Mayor, City Aldermen, members of the Planning and Zoning Commission and on the Citizens Advisory Board are mentions for good reason.

These are the people who volunteered their time and kept the City growing and vibrant. Without THEIR leadership, there might not be a Lawson, Missouri. Certainly, the City would NOT be as developed and progressive as it is today.



Centennial  
Bicycle Parade 1971



John Briant's Service Station 1950



## Current State of Economic Development in Lawson

Based on 2016 estimates, Lawson's population is 2,473, which is the largest the city has ever been.

Hidden Valley The Villas is a new subdivision that is being built off 184<sup>th</sup> Street and Salem Road. It will consist of 19 zero maintenance homes. In addition to this subdivision, as of May 2017, there are 4 new homes that are being finished and 3 more are expected by the end of 2017.



However, cost of living in Lawson is substantially lower than the surrounding area, indicating that Lawson is an affordable place to live with a lot of opportunities for people to raise a family here.

From 2000 to 2010, Ray County's population decreased from 23,393 to 22,810. However, Lawson's population has gone from 2,351 to 2,473 in the same time frame. Lawson is a city that is growing and there are lots of opportunities for investors.



According to data pulled off the 2015 census, median gross rents in Lawson are \$805. Median household income is \$41,875 and median family income is \$49,918, both lower than the United States averages of \$41,994 and \$50,046, respectively.

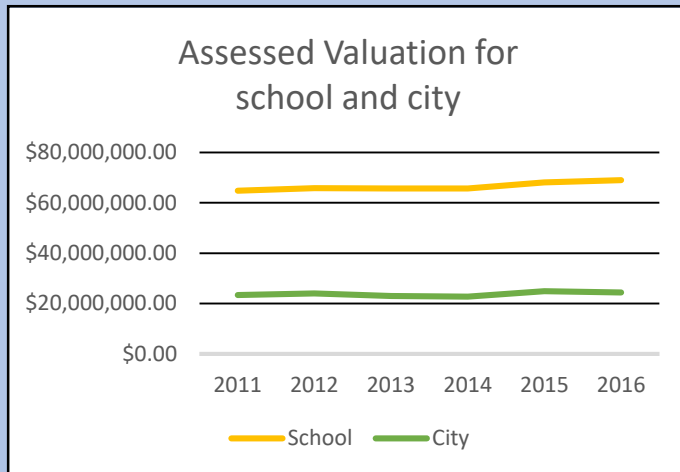
Lawson		
Year Housing Built	Number	Percent
Built 1939 or earlier	76	8%
Built 1940 to 1949	23	3%
Built 1950 to 1959	84	9%
Built 1960 to 1969	166	18%
Built 1970 to 1979	253	28%
Built 1980 to 1989	111	12%
Built 1990 to 1999	105	12%
Built 2000 to 2009	86	9%
Built 2010 or later	6	1%

According to Mike Van Winkle of Reece Nichols, as of May 2017, there are currently 24 homes for sale in the Lawson area. They range in price from \$69,933 to \$845,000. The average price of homes for sale is \$242,784. 30 homes have sold in Lawson area. The selling price ranges from \$45,000 to \$340,000 for an average price of \$140,486. The average Lawson home is on the market for approximately 35 days according to real estate agent Dawn Pointer of ReMax.



At no cost to the city, Missouri Gas Energy is extending the gas line from 184<sup>th</sup> Street up 69 highway to the Ryther complex. There are future plans to build the pipeline from D highway west past the gas station and south on 69 to connect up with the additions going in by the Ryther complex.

Fiber is coming to Lawson. As of April 2017, fiber had been laid down Silvey Road from South to North on the West side of road. The plan is to expand across Lawson over the next 12 months.



Above is a chart breaking out the assessed valuation of the school and city of Lawson for the years 2011-2016. If conditions remain the same, there will be little growth to keep up with interest rates in the area.



The following chart shows the tax levy 2010 to 2016.

Year	General Revenue	Debt Service
2010	\$0.67	\$1.05
2011	\$0.68	\$1.06
2012	\$0.68	\$1.37
2013	\$0.71	\$1.37
2014	\$0.72	\$1.84
2015	\$0.69	\$1.23
2016	\$0.71	\$1.28

As of April 2017, the city has the following balances left to pay off.

Purpose	Principal Owed	Total Principal and Interest	Annual Payment	Payoff Date
Ballfield Lights	\$164,138.00	\$183,656.00	\$26,236.00	3/1/2024
Water Tower: meters	\$205,140.00	\$240,920.00	\$26,769.00	9/1/2025
2001A Bond	\$185,000.00	\$216,410.00	\$33,346.00	2022
2002B Bond	\$530,000.00	\$628,625.00	\$79,582.00	2024
2005A Bond	\$165,000.00	\$203,100.00	\$22,525.00	2025
2016 Series Bond	\$3,868,600.00	\$5,096,129.00	\$268,237.00	3/1/2036
Ford Explorer Police Car	\$6,112.89	\$6,317.00	\$6,317.00	2/15/2018
Ford Taurus Police Car	\$32,652.50	\$36,092.35	\$7,218.47	4/5/2022
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$5,156,643.39</b>	<b>\$6,611,249.35</b>	<b>\$470,230.47</b>	



### Business responses:

- 37 years is the average of businesses operating in Lawson
- 8 businesses under 10 years operating in Lawson
- 8 businesses over 10 years operating in Lawson

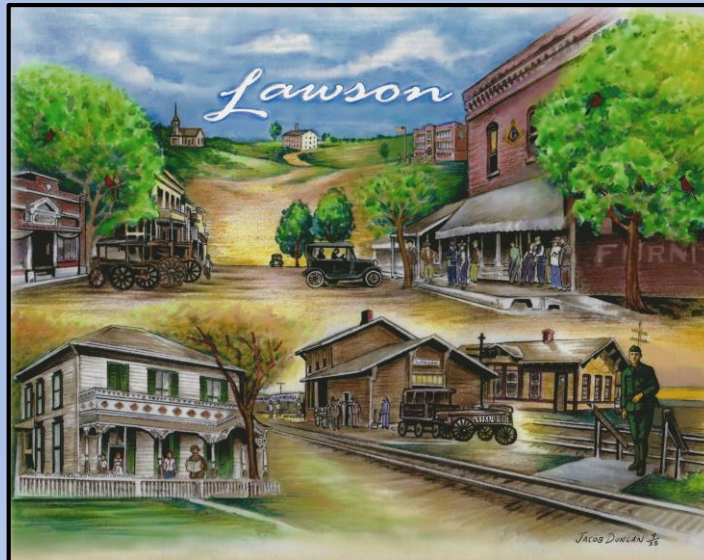
## Business Owner Survey Data

### Ideas on how Lawson can better support your business:

Referrals	Attract industry	Clean up town	Loyalty
Construction Jobs	Buy local ideas	Grocery Store	Better website
Grow population	Pave alleys	More attractive to visitors	Make D Hwy more appealing
Commercial development (along 69 Hwy)		Need better communications-data options(fiber)	

### Would you encourage others to start new business in Lawson?

YES – 85%	Why?	Support • Cost • Room to Expand • Growth • Small town Little direct competition • Great People • New spirit in the town
NO – 15%	Why?	Not a lot of local support • We need new homes



*Mural by: Jacob Duncan in 2016*

## A limited number of business owners responded to the survey ... they provided some excellent insight.

- \* Of those who responded, they had been in business an average of 37 years in Lawson
- \* 8 had been in business under 10 years and 8 over 10 years, so the responses are somewhat representative of businesses with a wide range of experience in Lawson.



Established in 1883



Established in 1885



Established in 2010

## When asked for suggestions on how “Lawson” (and this includes City Hall) could better support their business...they responded:

- |                                     |   |                           |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| More Referrals                      | Attract more industry                     | Construction Jobs         |
| Clean up town                       | More attractive to visitors               | Buy local ideas           |
| Shopping Loyalty                    | Grocery Store                             | Make D Hwy more appealing |
| Better website                      | Grow population                           | Pave alleys               |
| Commercial development along 69 Hwy | Better communications-data options(fiber) |                           |

## When asked ... would you encourage others to start new business in Lawson?

YES – 85%

Those who responded YES commented:

- |                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Support                   | Growth       |
| Room to expand            | Great People |
| Little direct competition |              |
| New spirit in the town    |              |
| Small town atmosphere     |              |
| Lower cost to operate     |              |



NO – 15%

Those who answered NO commented:

- Not a lot of local support
- Need new homes

See our City Website [www.cityoflawsonmo.org](http://www.cityoflawsonmo.org)

## What are other ideas on how we better support our local businesses?

# GROW. GROW. GROW.

Throughout the survey, it was noted that “*Growing Lawson*” was a top priority.  
That was true on student, business and community surveys.

## When business owners were asked:

### If you could change one thing that would help Lawson grow, what would it be?

Grocery store  
More jobs  
More unique shops  
Better quality water

Remove old homes & sell lots  
Police  
Streets swept & cleared  
Less rentals

Get rid of Excelsior Springs  
Entrance into town is an eye sore  
More educated people

### When asked ... What is the greatest strength of Lawson?

Support  
People  
Integrity  
Location

Convenient  
Ethical  
Low property costs  
Amount of competition

Reputation  
Schools  
Low taxes



### General Comments from business owners included:

Appreciate the community  
Special place to live and work  
Grow cautiously  
Glad to see proactively working to build economy

Thanks for current improvements & leadership  
Like to see newer homes built  
Good things are happening!



# *Community Feedback*

## Businesses Needed

As a follow-up, students and residents were asked to rank the greatest business need in Lawson. 298 people said that they want the following types of businesses in Lawson.

	Amount of Responses	%
Grocery Store	172	57.72%
Restaurant	31	16.78%
Retail	50	10.40%
Entertainment	22	7.38%
Manufacturing	11	3.69%
Other	12	4.03%
	298	100.00%

- Nearly 60 percent said they want a grocery store in the city
- 17 percent of the respondents want more types of restaurants and
- 10 percent of the respondents want different options for retail
- Less than 10 percent of those surveyed want entertainment options

The Grocery Store was the number one response by far for the types of businesses people want in the community.

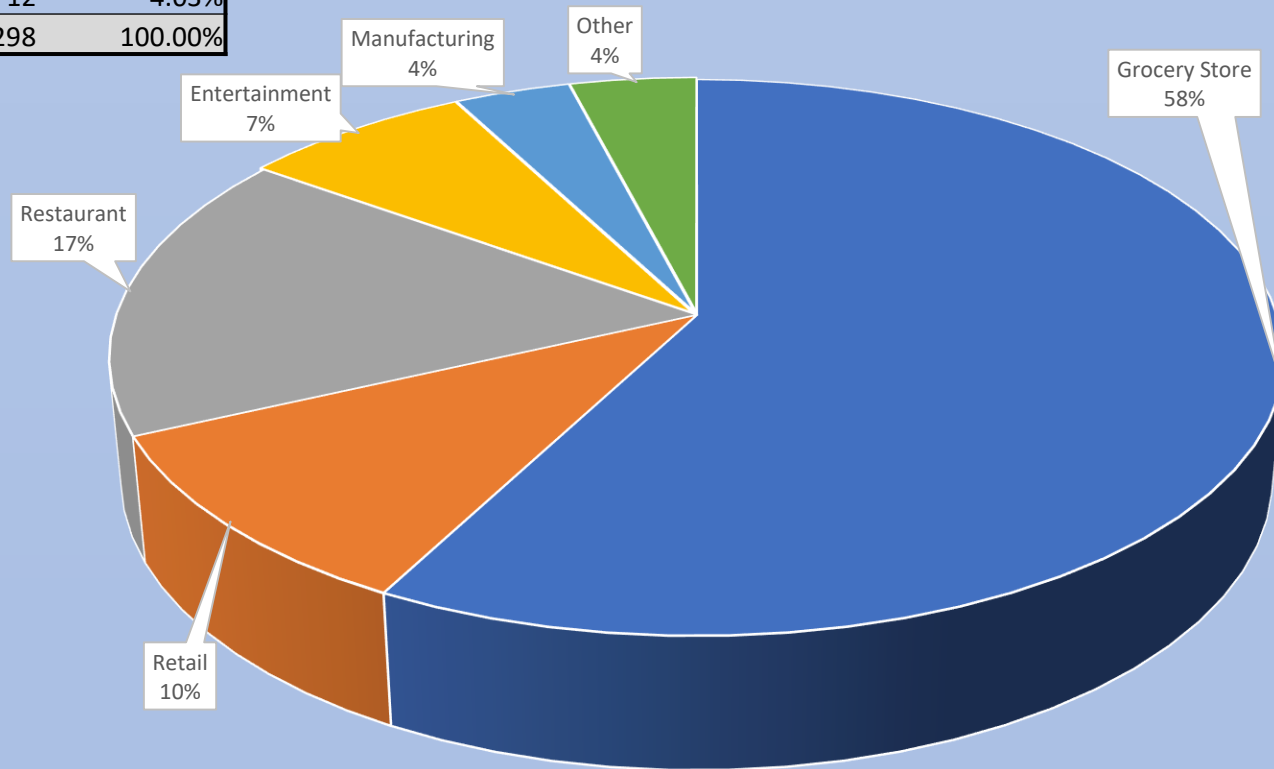
There was still a lot of comments about building a community center, indicating that people in the community, especially the youth, want places to hang out.

Note: The community (adult) responses differed from student responses in regard to entertainment options.

Community Need	Amount of Responses	%
Grocery Store	172	57.72%
Retail	31	10.40%
Restaurant	50	16.78%
Entertainment	22	7.38%
Manufacturing	11	3.69%
Other	12	4.03%
	298	100.00%

## Community Feedback

What Type of  
Businesses Needed?

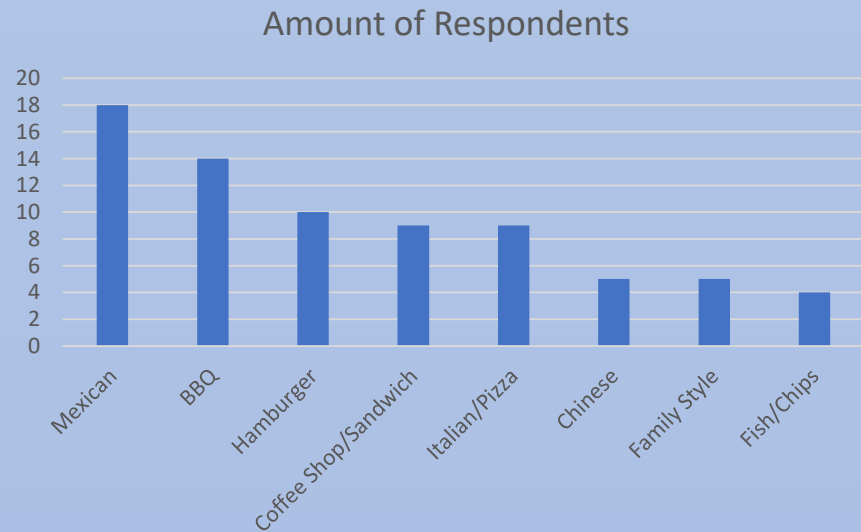


# Residents Responded Follow up Survey *Community Feedback* Top Restaurant Choices

74 people responded to what their top restaurant choices would be for the City of Lawson.

Restaurant	Amount of Respondents	Percentages
Mexican	18	24.32%
BBQ	14	18.92%
Hamburger	10	13.51%
Coffee Shop/Sandwich	9	12.16%
Italian/Pizza	9	12.16%
Chinese	5	6.76%
Family Style	5	6.76%
Fish/Chips	4	5.41%
Total	74	100.00%

Top 3  
Mexican  
BBQ  
Hamburger

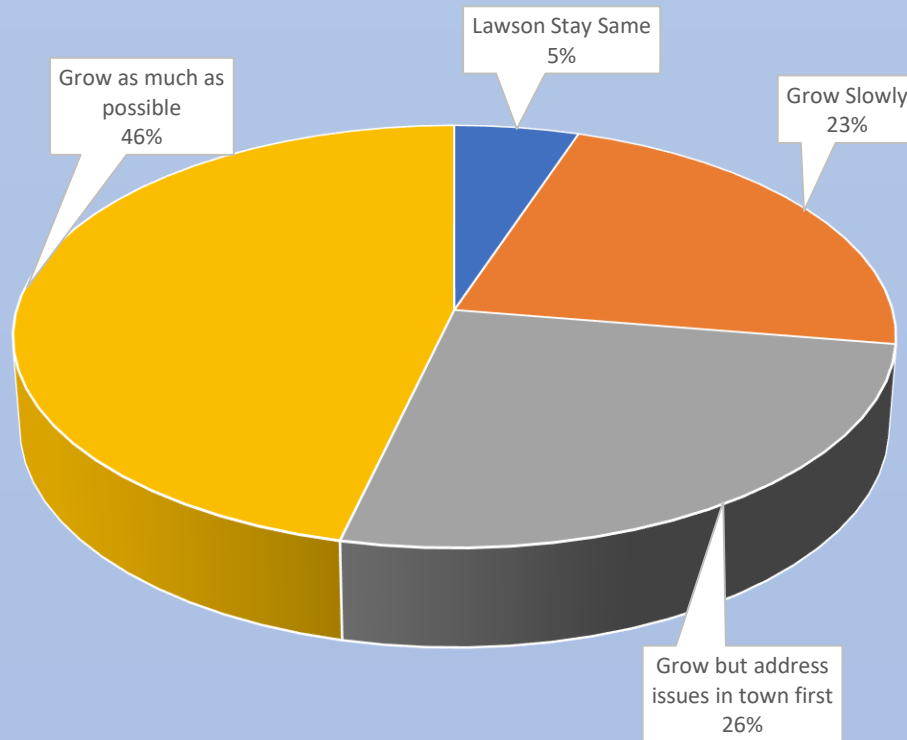


This was a follow-up questionnaire question to the community based on earlier survey responses when adults indicated an interest in an additional restaurant in town.

# Community Feedback

## Growth of Community

When asked their thoughts on growing Lawson...



Thoughts on Growing Lawson	Amount of Responses	%
Lawson Stay Same	14	5.50%
Grow Slowly	61	22.43%
Grow but address	71	26.10%
Grow as much as	126	46.32%
Total	272	100.00%



# *Community Feedback*

## Growth of Community

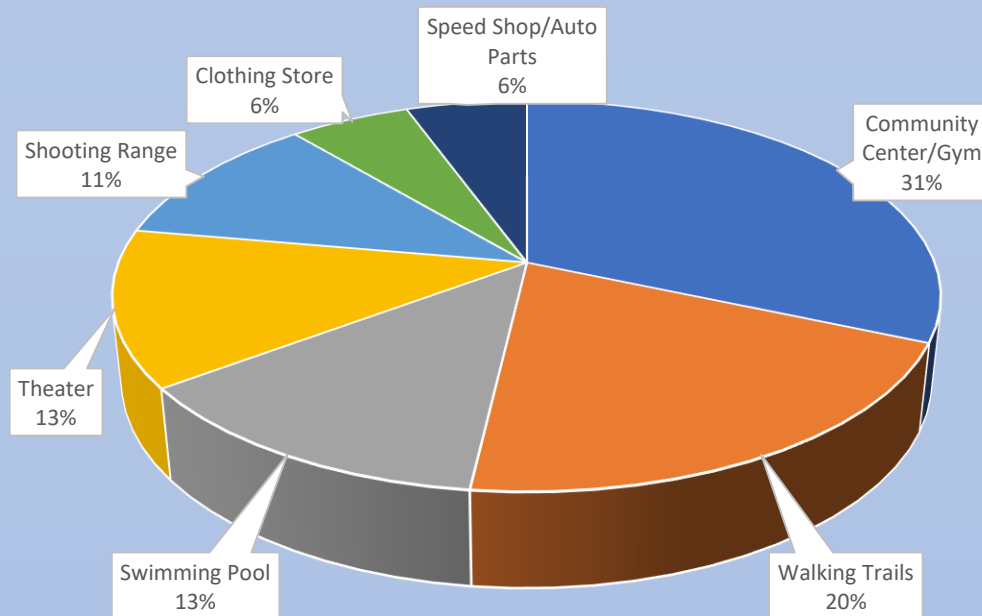
272 people had the following responses to how they want the community to grow.

Community Need	Amount of Responses	%
Lawson Stay Same	14	5.15%
Grow Slowly	61	22.43%
Grow but address issues in town first	71	26.10%
Grow as much as possible	126	46.32%
Total	272	100.00%

There is a desire to see us do everything we can to help the community grow.

- Nearly half of those who participated in the survey said they want Lawson to Grow as much as possible.
- Less than 30 percent of the respondents want the community to stay the same or grow slowly.





Community Needs  
Follow up Survey  
***Community Feedback***  
54 people responded back  
with what the city should focus on  
for community needs.

Top 3  
Community Center/Gym – 17  
Walking Trails – 11  
Swimming – 7

88% of the responses  
indicated a need for  
more things  
to do in Lawson!

## Follow up Survey *Community Feedback* Community Needs

54 people responded back with what the city should focus on for community needs.

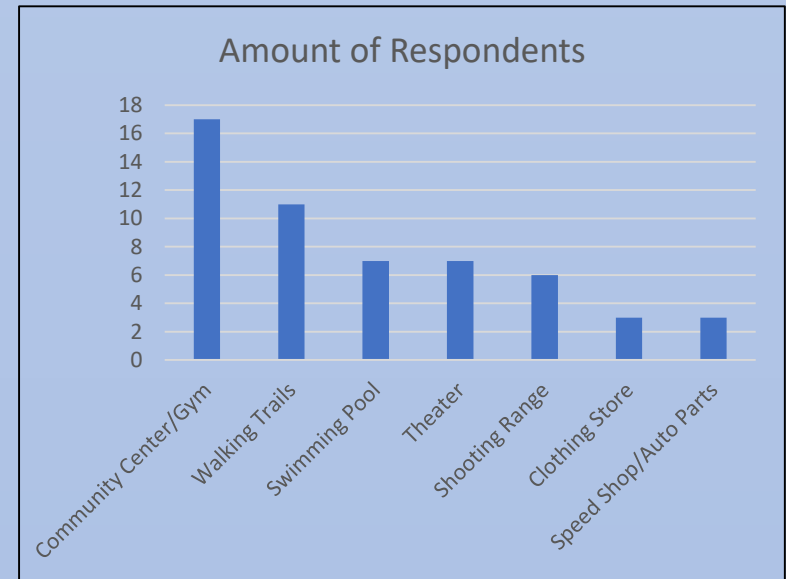
### Top 3

Community Center/Gym – 17

Walking Trails – 11

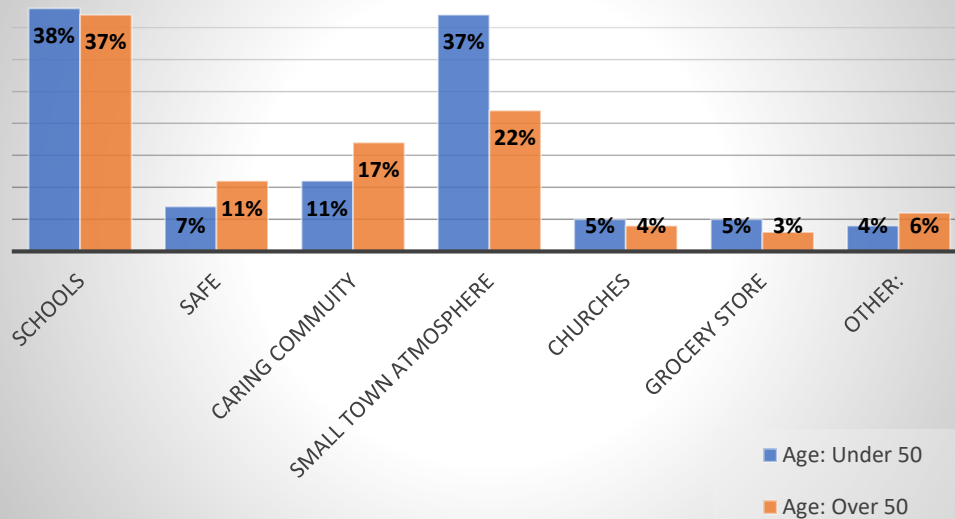
Swimming – 7

Community Need	Amount of Respondents	Percentages
Community Center/Gym	17	31.48%
Walking Trails	11	20.37%
Swimming Pool	7	12.96%
Theater	7	12.96%
Shooting Range	6	11.11%
Clothing Store	3	5.56%
Speed Shop/Auto Parts Store	3	5.56%
Total	54	100.00%

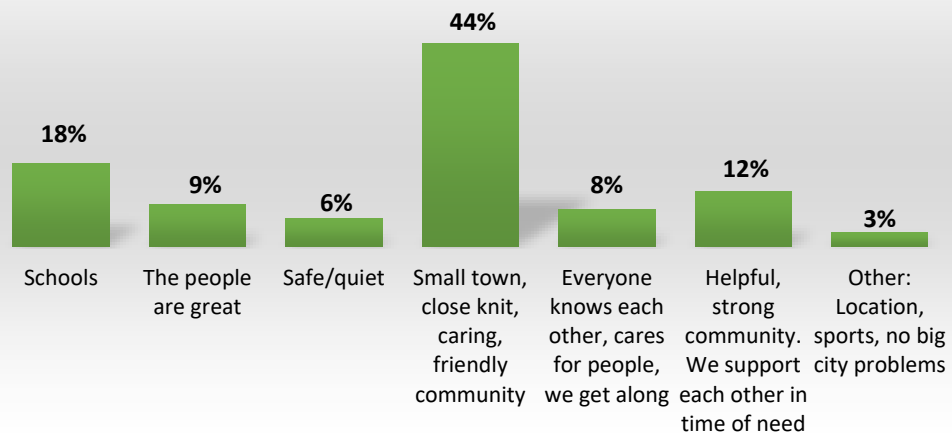


The Community Center was also the #1 community need on the student survey

## Best reason for living in Lawson



## When students were asked the best reason for living in Lawson



Note that responses were very similar whether over or under 50

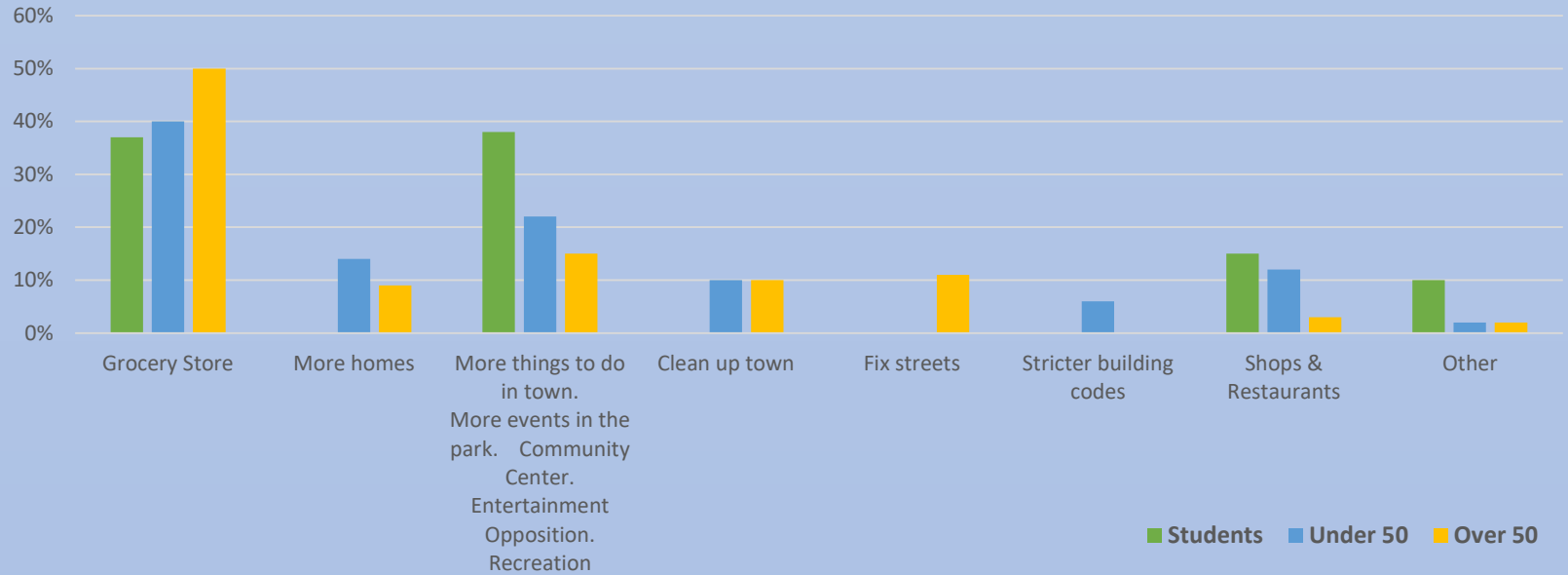


### Student comment:

*"The school system is the best one around and for the most part our town is a safe and humble environment"*

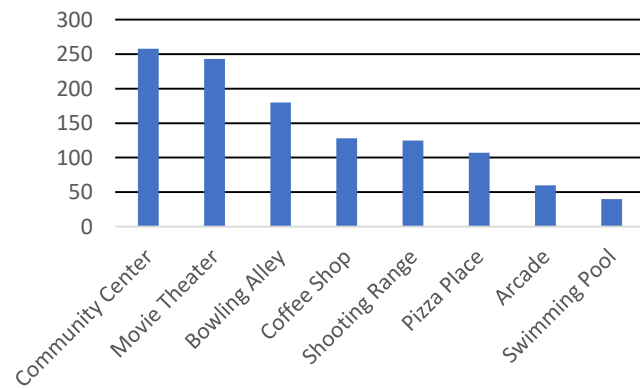


## What students and adults consider to be the greatest need for Lawson

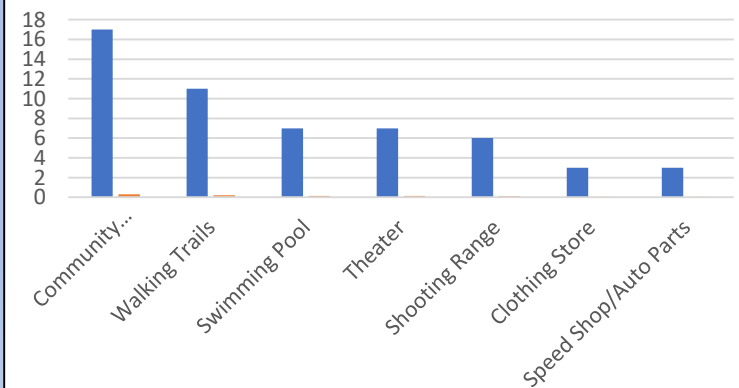


A follow up survey on what students and adults consider to be the greatest need for Lawson was sent out. Results are below.

### Students top hangout/things to do

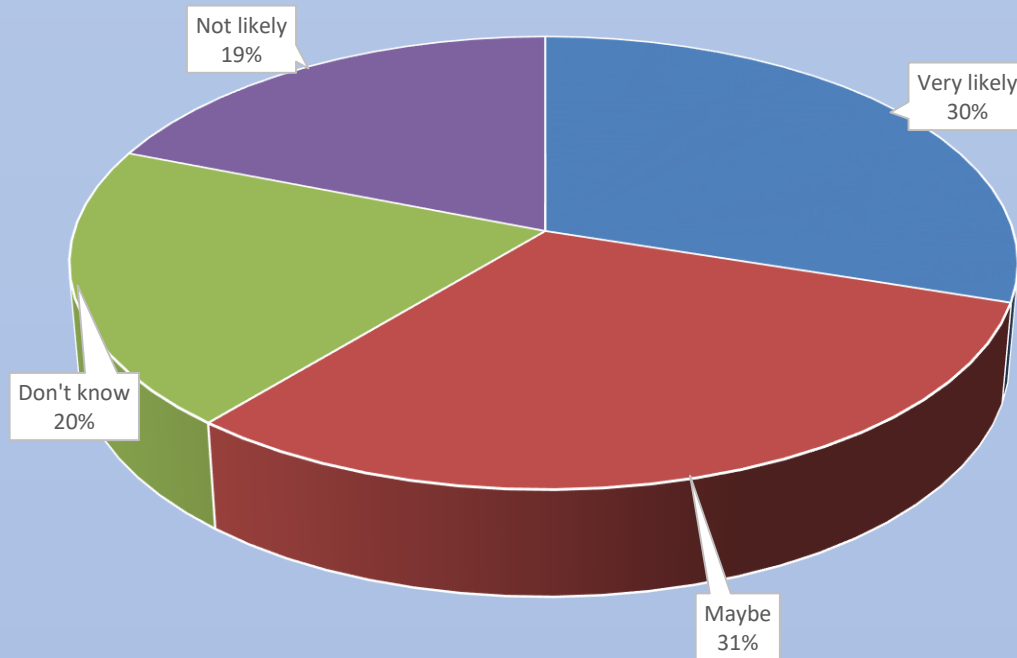


### Adults top hangout/things to do



# Student Feedback

How likely students in grades 9-10-11-12 are to stay in Lawson and raise their families?



Very likely	30%
Maybe	31%
Don't know	20%
Not likely	19%

When asked why they would stay in the community:

- Great Community
- Family/Church ties
- Small town
- Love the People

Those who answered not likely:

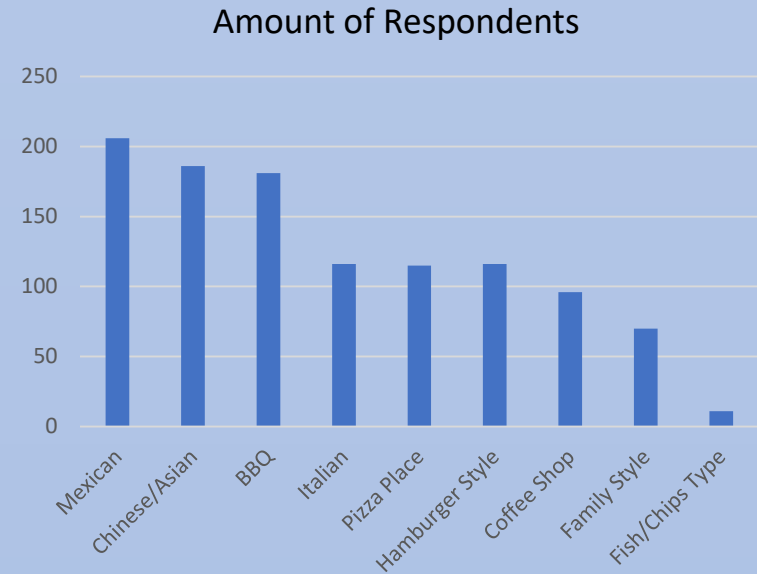
- Lawson is just too small
- Not enough good jobs
- Too far from the city

## Student Feedback

### Top Restaurant Choices

High School students responded back to what their top restaurant choices for a future restaurant in the city of Lawson.

Restaurant	Number of Respondents
Mexican	206
Chinese/Asian	186
BBQ	181
Italian	116
Pizza Place	115
Hamburger Style	116
Coffee Shop	96
Family Style	70
Fish/Chips Type	11
Total	1097



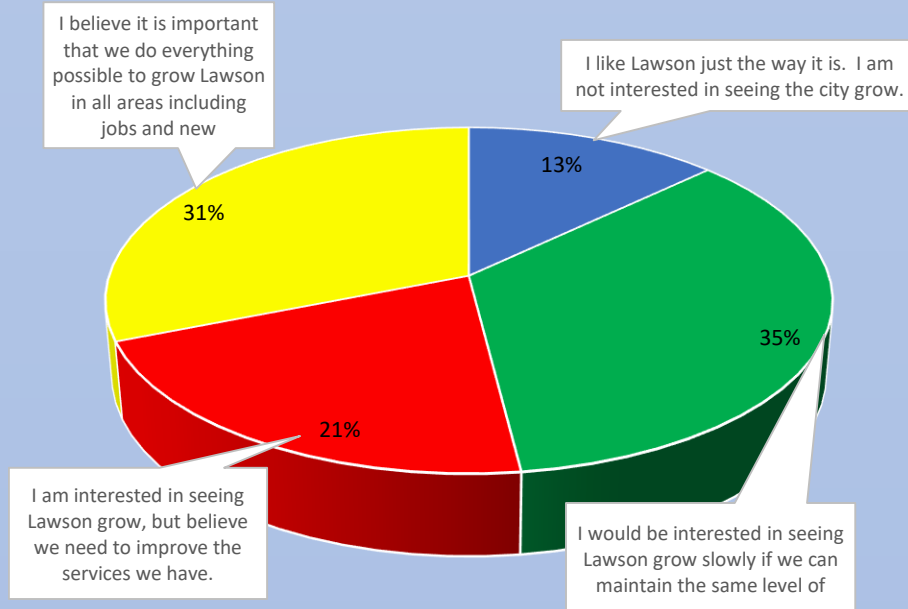
#### Top 3 Restaurant Choices

Mexican – 206

Chinese/Asian – 186

BBQ – 181

*When students were asked about change and whether they wanted to see Lawson grow...*



### *“Quotes from Students”*

*“Everyone in Lawson is welcoming and having the sense of community is amazing. We grieve and celebrate as one.”*

*“I like the small town feeling and couldn’t imagine living in a bigger city. Lawson is a very safe place.”*

*“I love the small town, the people in it, and would love for my kids to experience school here.”*

*“The school system is the best one around and for the most part, our town is a safe and humble environment.”*

*“We come together as a community when we struggle. We are very close, what’s not to love?”*

**City Park - Spring 2017**



**4<sup>th</sup> Annual Easter Egg Hunt  
Parks & Rec - April 2017**





## *Student Feedback*

### Top Hangout Spots & Things To Do

Students responded back with what top hangout spots they wanted in the city of Lawson.

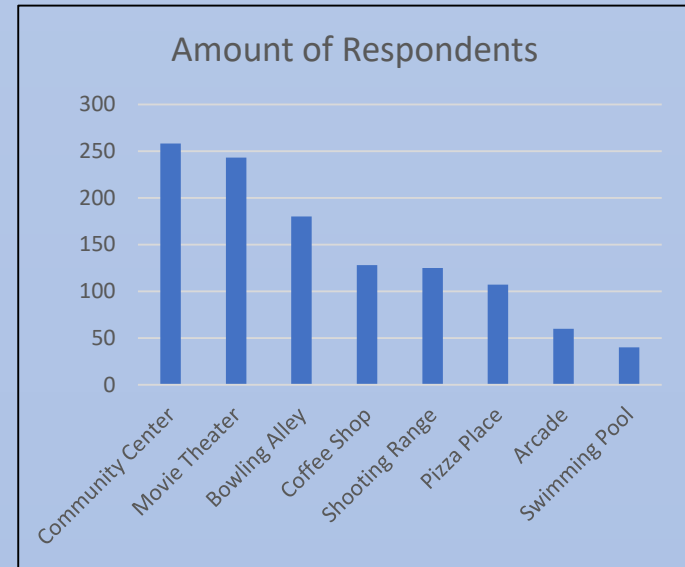
#### Top 3 – Things to do Wish List

Community Center – 258

Movie Theater – 243

Bowling – 180

Ideal Hangout Spot	Number of Respondents
Community Center	258
Movie Theater	243
Bowling Alley	180
Coffee Shop	128
Shooting Range	125
Pizza Place	107
Arcade	60
Swimming Pool	40
Paintball	15
Total	1156



#### Comments:

Students said Lawson has...

...a very close community

...great schools

...great sports teams

However, many of the students do not feel there is enough job opportunities or things for kids to do in the area.

## Community Feedback

Everyone was excited to participate in the community survey. They provided us with comments of what they like about Lawson and what they see as community needs. Not every comment was positive, but even those negative were welcomed constructive criticism. See a samples of responses below...



*“Everyone should take pride where they live. Clean up town, make us proud of where we live.”*

*“The community could really use more diversity and different types of restaurants.”*

*“There are areas in town where we need better drainage for water when it rains.”*

*“A good town, great place to live and raise children. Good schools! We need more shops and people should shop locally.”*

*“Be nice if local stores could open longer. Great to see more shops and businesses opening in town!”*

*“The reason I state that a community center would be great, is not only would it bring in great business to Lawson, but also keep everyone, especially teens, out of trouble.”*

*“Thanks for moving in the right direction.”*



*“Very excited about the recent growth in town plus the new housing and fiber coming to town.”*

*“We need to continue work to fix streets.”*

*“Survey was a good idea. Thanks for asking our opinions. I hope something comes from our input and you don’t just ignore things people are telling you.”*

# Sewer & Water Report

The 2015 summary of the water and sewer report is currently on the website ([Water Quality Report](#)).

## Sewer

There are two basic parts of a sewer system. The treatment and discharge portions of the system and a collection system. During the winter and spring months of 2016 and 2017, Lawson had an extensive report put together to assess the effectiveness of the sewer system. When the report comes out in late May 2017, it will be added to the City website.

ACE (ACE Pipe Cleaning, Inc) was in the City of Lawson most of February and March finishing a 5 year contract to clean and video tape the inside of the entire sewer system. They completed their work and the system has now been cleaned and a video recorded.

The city public works crew did draw down testing on the Schwarz lift station and the information was given to Olsson Engineering. It was determined to be operating at 390 (400 was maximum possible) gallons per minute per pump or at 98% efficiency. Olsson Engineering gave the City of Lawson high praise for how well that station worked. In fact, the overall report on the discharge portion of the system was positive. Although, the lift station at the Lagoon was operating at (under) 60% of its capacity and, in fact, that pump is over 40 years old. The life expectancy of most pump stations is 15-20 years. This is an obvious concern as that this lift station has a capacity of 500 gallons per minute per pump, but operates at 290 gallons per minute per pump or at (58%) of its capacity.





The wastewater collection system is the sewer mains and the lift stations that receives the gray water from homes and businesses to the Lagoon. The lagoon is a four cell system that relies on solids “falling out” of the waste water. Thus creating sludge that must be removed every 20 years this is something that has not been done since the lagoon system was built back in the 1970’s.

At the moment, the system operates within the DNR compliance guidelines. Two or three times a year, the water is discharged into Brushy Creek.

Beginning 2020, the DNR regulations for compliance will be changing. At that time, a new system (or significant changes to the existing system) will be necessary. The water will need to be disinfected prior to water being discharged.

To further complicate matters, a different (chemical) will need to be added to offset the disinfectant that was added before it can be released into the stream if a chemical disinfectant is used.

As of April, 2017 ... the system operates fine. On peak days 768,093 gallons pass through the system. The industry standard is 84 gallons of wastewater, per person per day. On an average day in Lawson, that is 207,984 gallons. In order for Lawson to plan for growth, the system is adequate, but ... must be operating at peak capacity and efficiency. Regardless, significant improvements will be necessary prior to the year 2020.

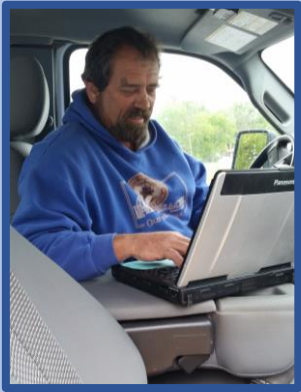
Looking ahead to 2020 and beyond, the discharge system will require major improvements, to include something to control ammonia levels and nutrient levels. In addition an in-cell aeration system will be needed to help remove sludge from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cells and to help control the ammonia levels. That is further complicated by the need to lower cell levels to 60% capacity, which will be a struggle, in that, discharge cannot take place until water is properly treated before it can be release into the stream.

This is not just a problem facing Lawson. Other smaller communities across the State are facing the same challenges. Fortunately for Lawson, the system is functioning well at the moment, while the Council ponders on the different options.



## Water

Allen Boydston, Steve Bales, Kenny Fisher, Troy Stevens, Jerricho Richardson, and John Craye of the Lawson Maintenance Crew routinely do water samples across town or sometimes those samples are checked in house. Other times, they are sent to DNR for analysis. You might remember receiving a notification that Lawson water was out of compliance? In March 2017, that was the case. The Chlorine that is added to the water to disinfect will start to break down unless the water is “moving”. Which is why, looping water lines is so important. Of course looping water lines also improves and



levels out water pressure. In February 2017, the water tested just over the limit for the by-products of the Chlorine. Thus, we sent out a notification. The water was not harmful, but was tested to be out of compliance. And, Lawson was not out of compliance City wide, only in 2 of testing areas.

There are two main water looping projects this summer, both on the south end of the distribution system where problems have been more consistent. When the water was tested the next quarter, Lawson was in compliance for all tested sections of the City. Typically, Lawson is in compliance; however, it should be noted, “compliance” is a moving target and DNR is in the process of establishing new compliance guidelines. Fortunately, Lawson has kept up with DNR guidelines and qualified “Water Specialists” have worked for the City. For example, Mr. Boydston has the highest level of water certification offered by The Department of Natural Resources. Lawson does buy water from

the City of Excelsior Springs. Before the water leaves Excelsior Springs it is tested. Once the water arrives in Lawson it is stored in one of the two water towers. The good news is ... the dual water tank system provides an ample amount of water. The bad news is ... when we don’t consume/use that water fast enough (keeping a constant flow in tanks and movement in the lines) the potential for the disinfectant to break down increases. Not exactly simple chemistry, but the very element placed in the water to disinfect will, in fact, break down and impact on compliance. All elements, regardless of size tend to “fall out of water” when not kept in motion.

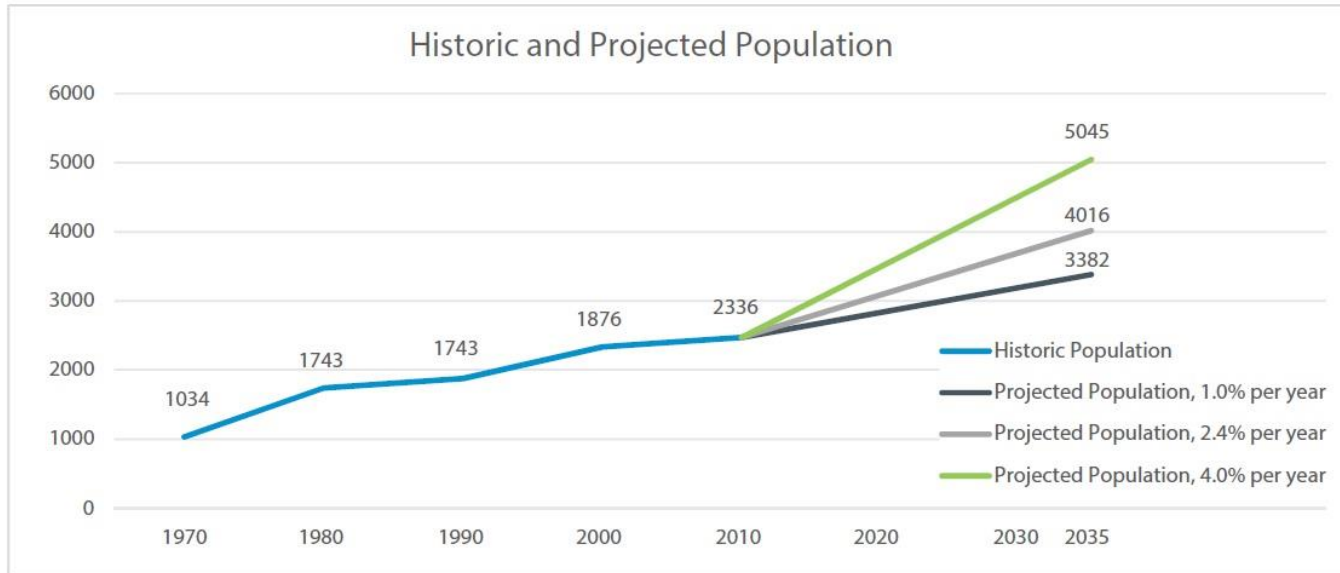
The water side of the equation regarding water/sewer assets is in better shape. While Lawson needs to continue the water looping program, make sure all fire hydrants are in good working order and upgrade water meters, the system functions and has the capacity to add more customers.

The bottom line, Lawson has done a nice job over the years with their water and sewer assets. The 7 lift stations are sufficient to move gray/sewer water through the system to the lagoon. The lift stations are each checked daily, each and maintenance is on-going. Actually, as you might suspect, water and sewer are top priorities of the Lawson Public Works Team.

Water and sewer services are not only important, but valuable. Estimated value of Lawson’s water and sewer assets is in the \$4,000,000-\$5,000,000 range. Surprised? Don’t be over the years the folks in Lawson have done a tremendous job maintaining the water and sewer systems.



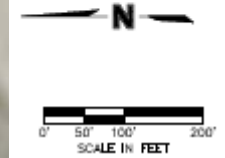
# City of Lawson



Flow	Units	2015-2016 Avg.	gpcpd	Peaking Factor
Average Annual	GPD	207,984	84	-
Max Month	GPD	378,443	153	1.8
Peak Day	GPD	768,093	311	3.7

**NOTE:**

1. CELL CAPACITIES SHOWN ARE ORIGINAL DESIGN CAPACITIES. THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE ANY LOSS OF VOLUME AS A RESULT OF SLUDGE ACCUMULATION.



SHEET 1	EXISTING LAGOON TREATMENT SYSTEM LAYOUT		REV. NO.	DATE	REVISION DESCRIPTION	BY
	WASTEWATER STUDY					
LAWSON, MO		2017	REVISIONS			

Drawn by: J. L. L. L.

Checked by: J. L. L. L.

Designed by: J. L. L. L.

Approved by: J. L. L. L.

Project no.: J. L. L. L.

Scale: J. L. L. L.

Date: J. L. L. L.

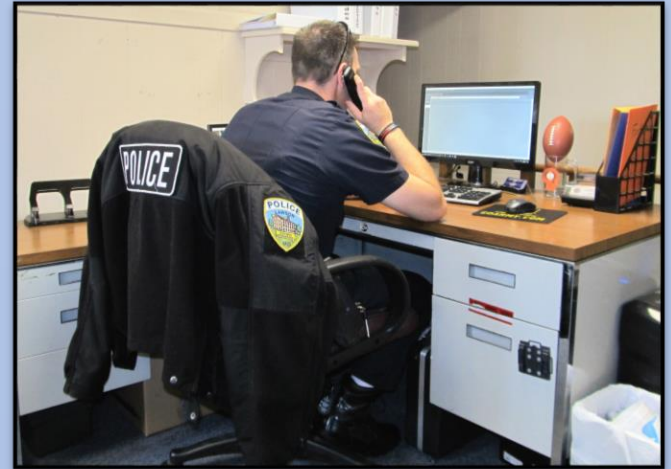
**MOLSSON ASSOCIATES**

Olsson Associates - Civil Engineering  
Professional Certificate of Authority #  
1251 HWY 60 West, Suite 10  
Kansas City, MO 64116  
TEL: 816.361.1177  
FAX: 816.361.1188  
www.olssonassociates.com



# LAWSON POLICE DEPARTMENT

- 24/7 Community Coverage
- 5 full-time and 4 part-time
- Police Administration – 21 year average experience
- Full-time officers – 13 years average experience
- Part-time officer – 8.25 year average experience
- Current Police Department building was donated by VFW Post 9065 in 1970
- The Park/Walk/Talk Program has resulted in 4,782 citizen contacts in the last 5 years
- Police Department offers free resident checks for homeowners within the city limits
- The Department averages 43,901 miles per year patrolling Lawson
- Equipment includes in-car video cameras and wearable body cameras
- Over the last 3 years, the police department has average of 146.5 arrest per year
- Felony arrest average 22 per year

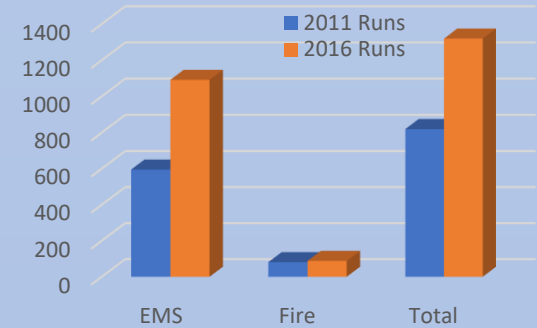




# Lawson Fire & Rescue Department

2<sup>nd</sup> largest employer in Lawson, MO

- City of Lawson ISO rating – 3
- 14 full-time employees
- 26 part-time employees
- 18 Volunteers
- 4 Pumpers
- 3 Brush Trucks
- 3 Tankers
- HAZMAT Trailer
- 4 warning sirens (the first siren was placed at the City Park in 1961)
- 3 ambulances in service 24/7
- 1 Rescue Squad
- 1 Rescue Boat
- Grain Bin Extrication Equipment
- Cover 110 square miles



The Lawson Fire Department runs have increased over the last few years, especially the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) runs.



# Lawson Park Board

The Lawson Board consists of 5 volunteer members as well as honorary members. The Park Board manages the city lake, the city park and the Cardinal Complex. Their mission is to provide improvements and maintenance of parks used for recreational activities for the citizen of Lawson. Lawson Youth Sports Association (LYSA) is a committee under the park board that manages various sports opportunities for the people of Lawson. Lawson Farmer's Market has joined the Lawson Park Board.

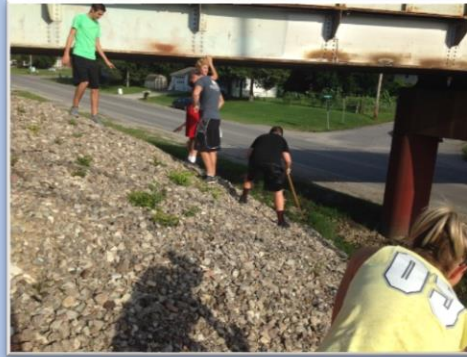
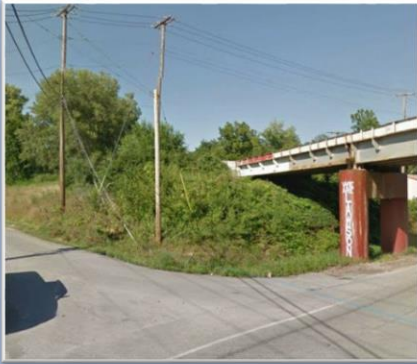


**Here are just a few of the many projects that the Lawson Park Board members have completed:**

- Fire Department open house & ribbon cutting roof on WWI memorial at city park
- Movies in the Park
- Boat dock at the city lake, in collaboration with Lawson Rotary
- Landscape rock around path at Cardinal Complex
- Handicap parking at the Cardinal Complex
- 5 primitive campsites added at city lake
- Dugout covers at Cardinal Complex
- Rework baseball fields for water run off
- Fence cap on all ball fields
- Repair fence at Cardinal Complex
- New garage door at Cardinal Complex
- Asphalt path at Cardinal Complex
- 15 cubic yards of mulch at city park
- Concession stand built at city park
- Roof on shelter house at city park
- Lawson Picnic
- Fall festival
- Bat houses for parks
- Roof on restrooms at city park
- Painted WWI memorial
- Police officer appreciation day
- Community Easter egg hunt
- Homerun derby at city picnic
- Car show at city picnic



# *Beautification Committee*



The Beautification Committee is made up of Lawson citizens interested in making Lawson more visually appealing. It is a joint effort as part of both the Chamber of Commerce and Park Board. The committee has painted the underpasses, cleared brush and landscaped the east underpass (the L).

They have started the Lawson “Fixer Upper” project. This project is designed to work with community businesses to give store fronts a facelift with the committee providing the labor to keep costs lower for the business.

The committee has had success due to volunteer work from the committee members, Lawson athletes, especially the Lawson Football team, *Journey to the Best Me* and others. We have also had private donations or services from Porth Construction, Candyman and Cutting Edge Landscapes.

## *Committee Members*

Becky Harrold, Chair  
Lari Bunch  
Jessica Daugherty  
Kysha Harris  
Paula McCrary  
Tayarra Sharp  
Jacque Taylor  
Andrea & Chris Toomay  
Starla Yarbrough

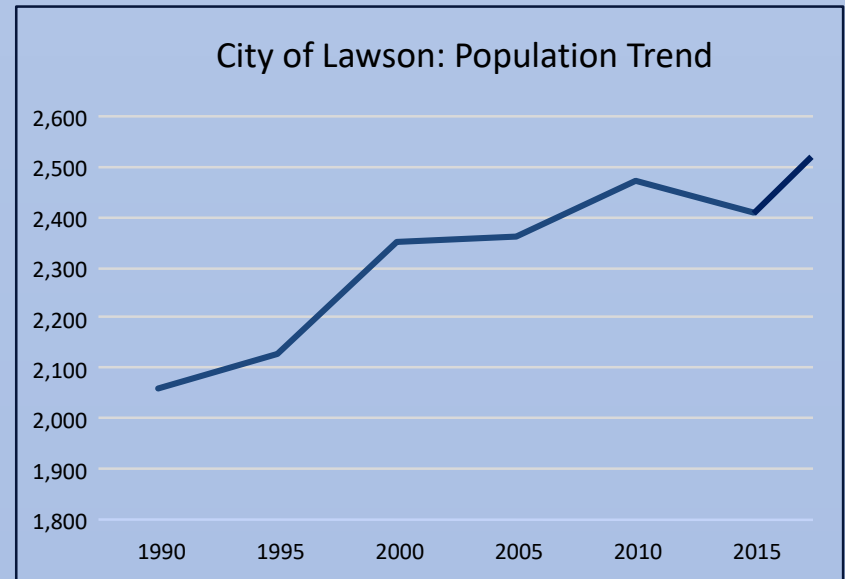
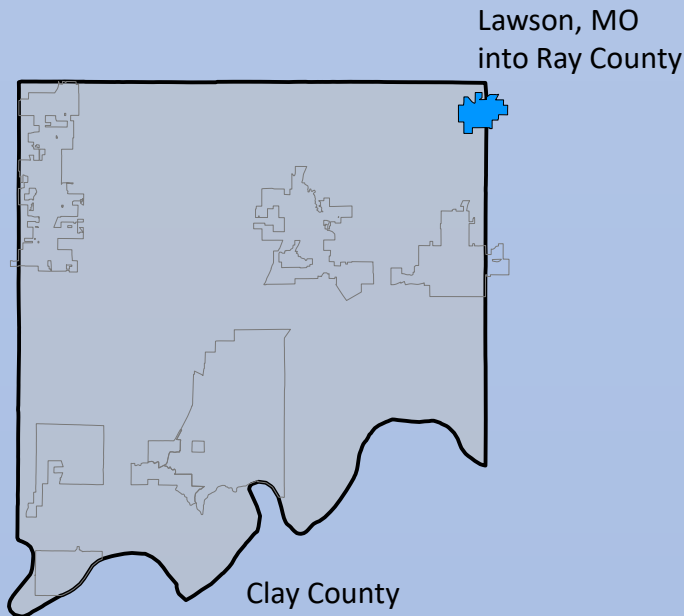
Melissa Bartlett  
Kim Dolt  
Amy & Eric Klintworth  
Liz Sapp  
Kim Shook  
Jennie Teegarden  
Stephanie Weber

Jessica & Shawn Courter  
Brandy Eskew  
Angie Knaak  
Amy Schnetzler  
Charla Stephan  
Lynda & Jason Thummel  
Debbie Willis

# City Profile

## Lawson, Missouri

Lawson straddles the county line between Clay and Ray counties. The city's population has trended upwards growing from 2,060 in 1990 to 2,409 in 2015. As of 2016, the estimated population is 2,517, which would be the largest Lawson has ever been since it became a city. The city projects to continue to grow as more families move into the area.



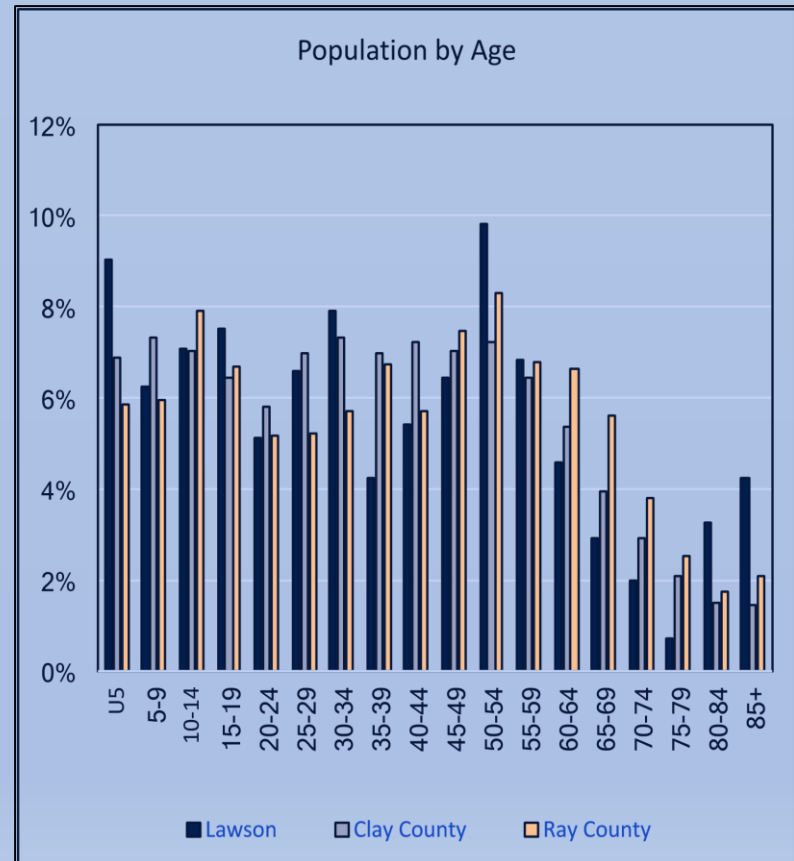
Source: US Census Bureau

- As of July 1, 2016 the estimated population of Lawson was 2,517.
- Note: 2,517 would be the highest population in the history of Lawson.

# Population by Age

- The median age of Lawson residents is 35.4, just slightly lower than the Clay County median of 36.5.
- Ray County's median is 40.7. However, the distribution by age is somewhat unique. Lawson has higher percentages of senior residents (7 percent are 80 and over).
- On the other end of the chart, Lawson has larger percentages of children under 5. This perhaps indicates that young families are starting out in Lawson.

Lawson		
	Number	Percent
U5	208	9.1%
5-9	143	6.2%
10-14	163	7.1%
15-19	173	7.5%
20-24	118	5.1%
25-29	151	6.6%
30-34	182	7.9%
35-39	97	4.2%
40-44	124	5.4%
45-49	148	6.4%
50-54	225	9.8%
55-59	157	6.8%
60-64	105	4.6%
65-69	67	2.9%
70-74	46	2.0%
75-79	17	0.7%
80-84	75	3.3%
85+	97	4.2%

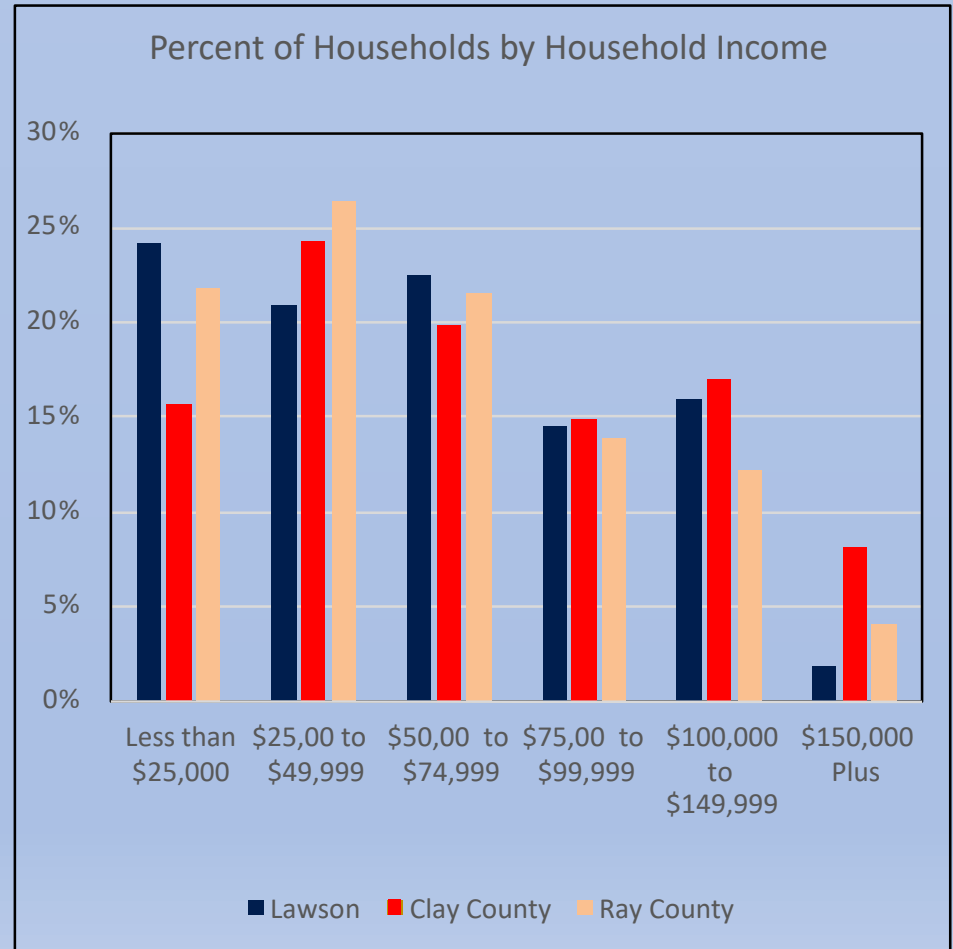




# Household Income

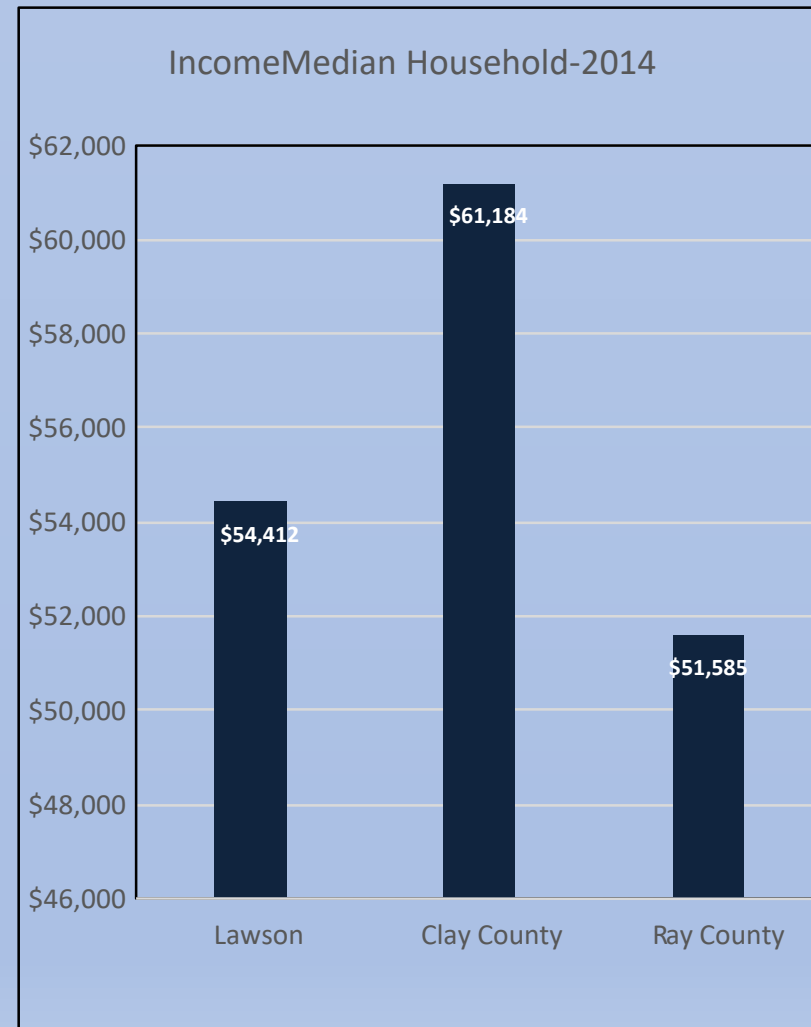
- The distribution of household incomes trends toward lower end.
- Nearly a quarter of Lawson households have annual incomes below \$25,000.
- At the higher end of the scale, less than 2 percent of Lawson households have annual incomes above \$150,000, compared to 8 percent in Clay County and 4 percent in Ray County.

Lawson		
Income	Number	Percent
Households	880	100.0%
Less than \$25,000	213	24.2%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	184	20.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	198	22.5%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	128	14.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	141	16.0%
\$150,000 Plus	16	1.8%



# Household Median Income

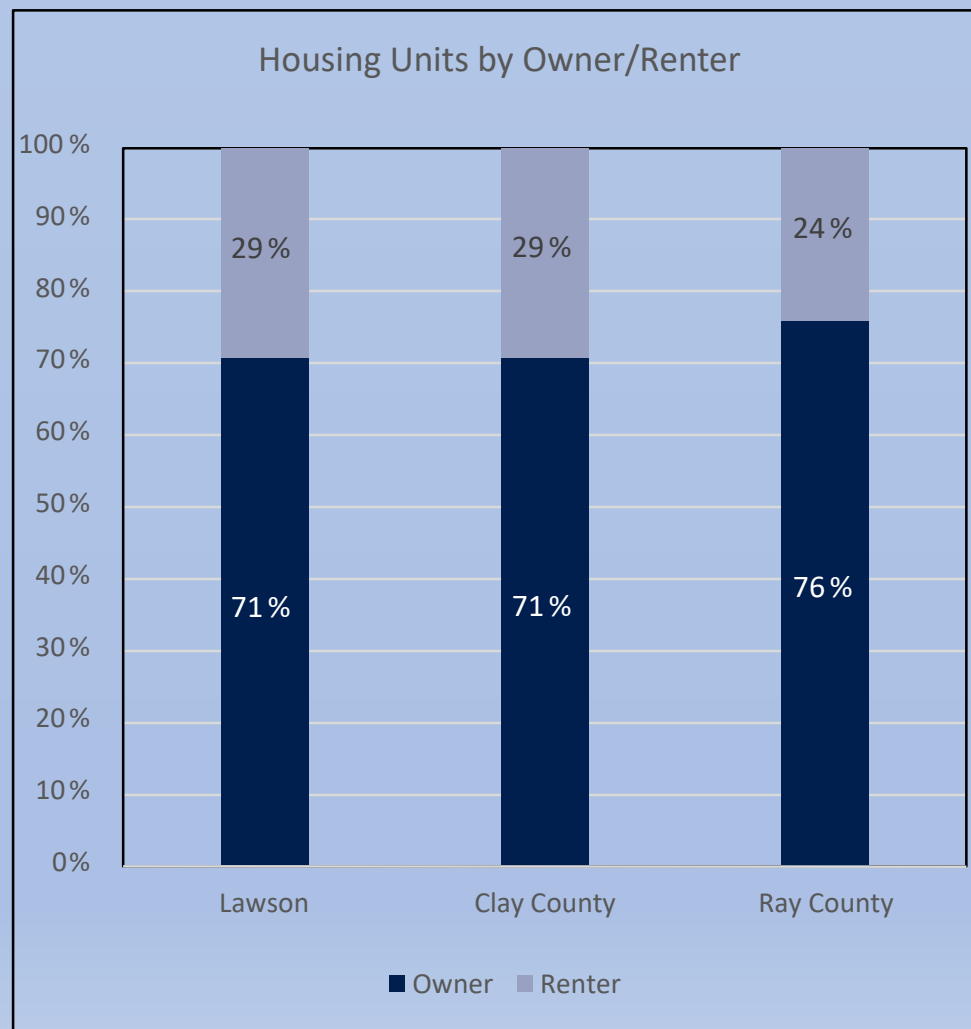
Lawson's median household income is lower than the Clay County median but higher than Ray County.



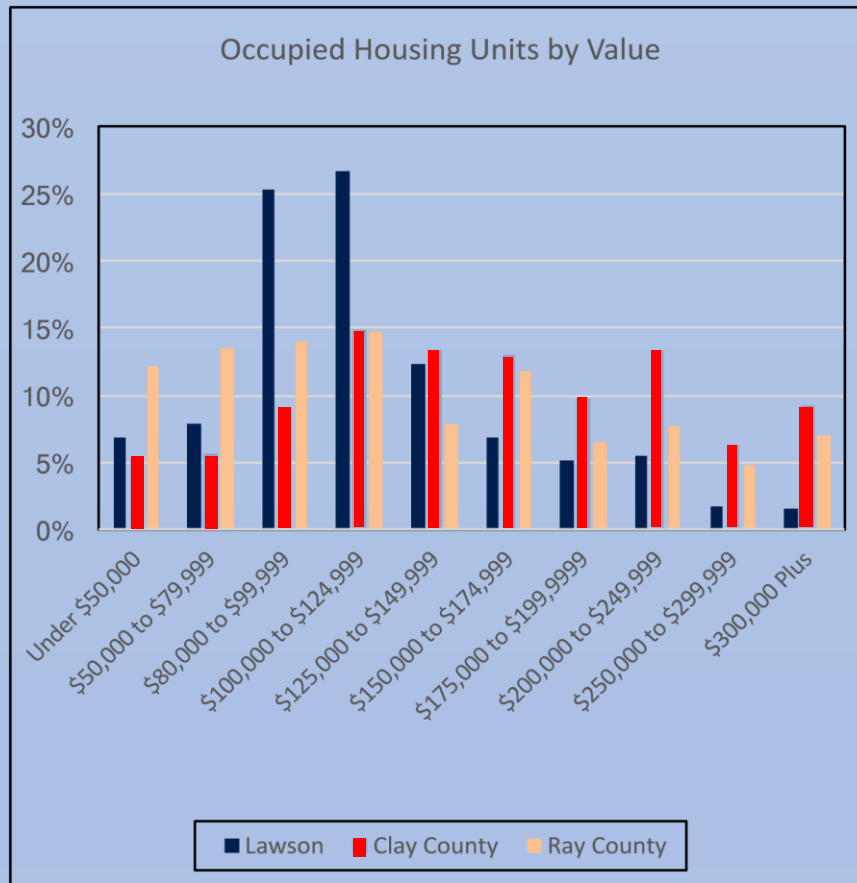
# Ownership vs Renter

29% of housing units in Lawson are renter occupied. The exact same ratio as the rest of Clay County. Renting is less common in Ray County (24%).

Lawson		
Housing Units	Number	Percent
Total	880	100.0%
Owner	622	70.7%
Renter	258	29.3%



## Occupied Housing Units by Value



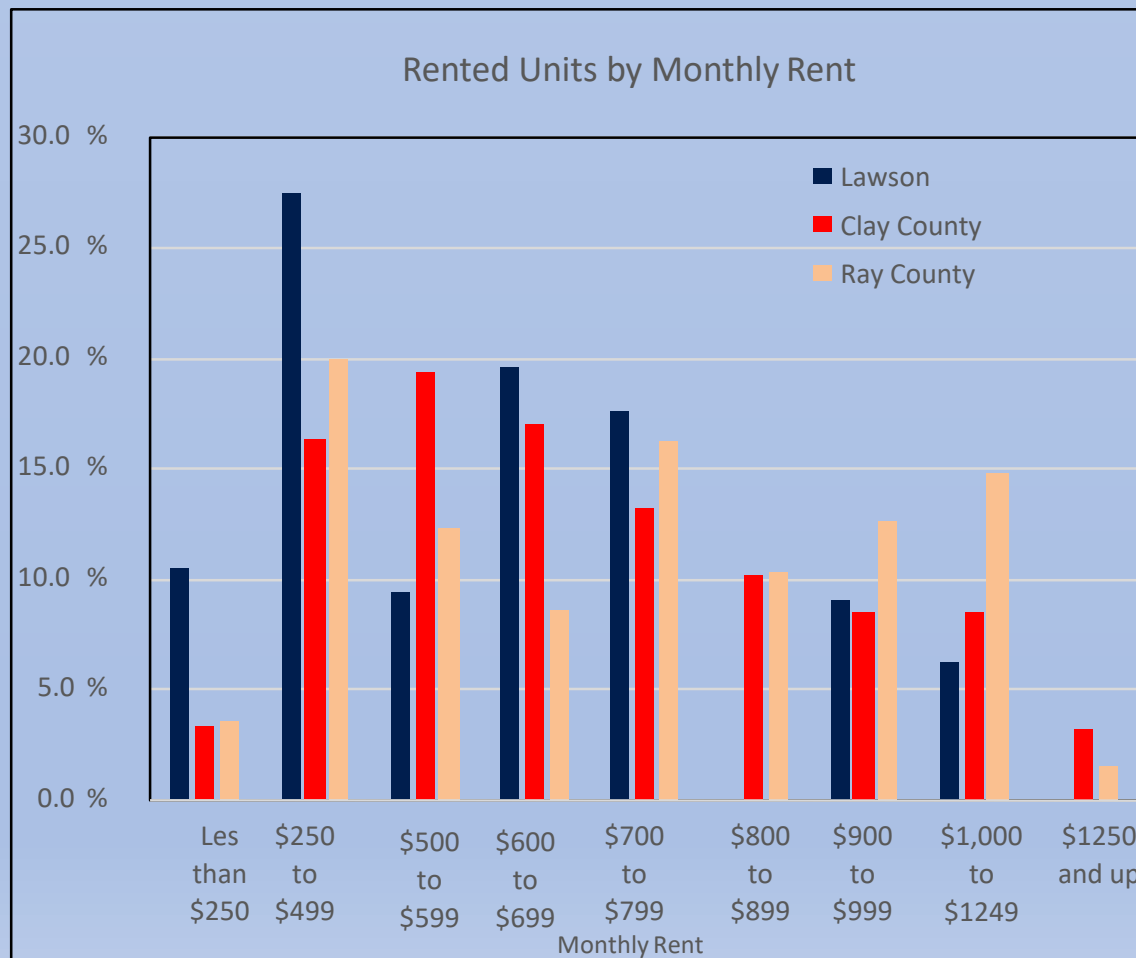
- Lawson has 622 housing units; according to a 2015 survey 79% of those are valued at \$150,000 or less.
- Lawson has a higher percentage of affordable 'First Time' buyer homes than anywhere else in Ray or Clay County.

Lawson		
Home Value	Number	Percent
Owner Occ. Hsing. Units	622	100.0%
Under \$50,000	43	6.9%
\$50,000 to \$79,999	49	7.9%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	157	25.2%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	166	26.7%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	77	12.4%
\$150,000 to \$174,999	43	6.9%
\$175,000 to \$199,999	32	5.1%
\$200,000 to \$249,999	34	5.5%
\$250,000 to \$299,999	11	1.8%
\$300,000 Plus	10	1.6%

# Rental Values

The rents tend to be lower in Lawson than the rest of Clay County. Nearly 40% of units rent for less than \$600 a month. While there are more expensive units available in Lawson, affordable housing and rentals are prevalent.

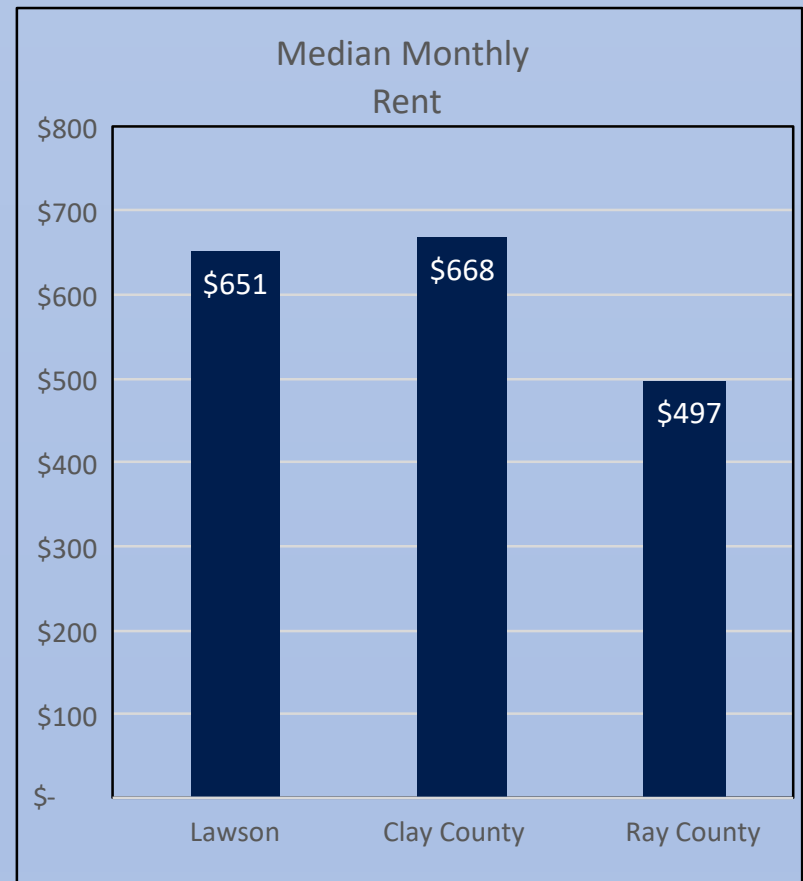
Lawson		
Home Value	Number	Percent
Units with Cash Rent	255	100.0%
Less than \$250	27	10.6%
\$250 to \$499	70	27.5%
\$500 to \$599	24	9.4%
\$600 to \$699	50	19.6%
\$700 to \$799	45	17.6%
\$800 to \$899	-	0.0%
\$900 to \$999	23	9.0%
\$1,000 to \$1249	16	6.3%
\$1250 and up	-	0.0%





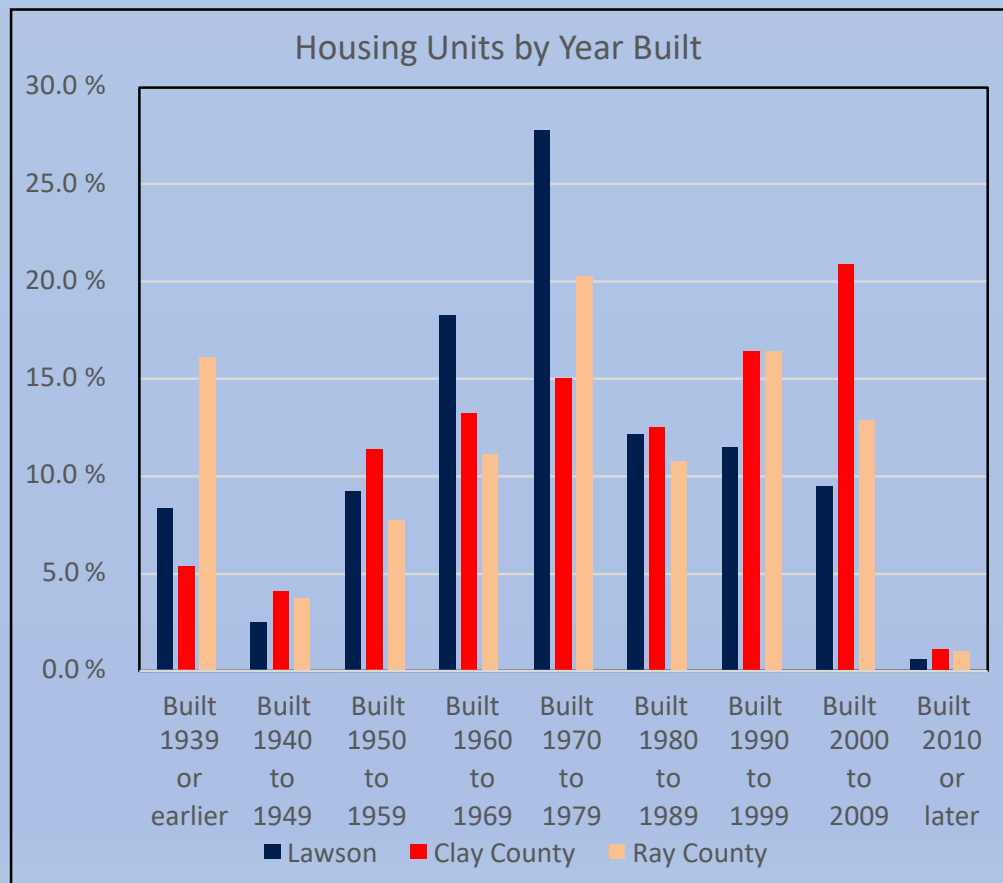
# Median Monthly Rate

Median rent is slightly lower in Lawson than Clay County average, but higher than Ray County.



# Age of Housing

Lawson has an older housing inventory with most homes built prior to 1980, indicating a need for new single-family homes.

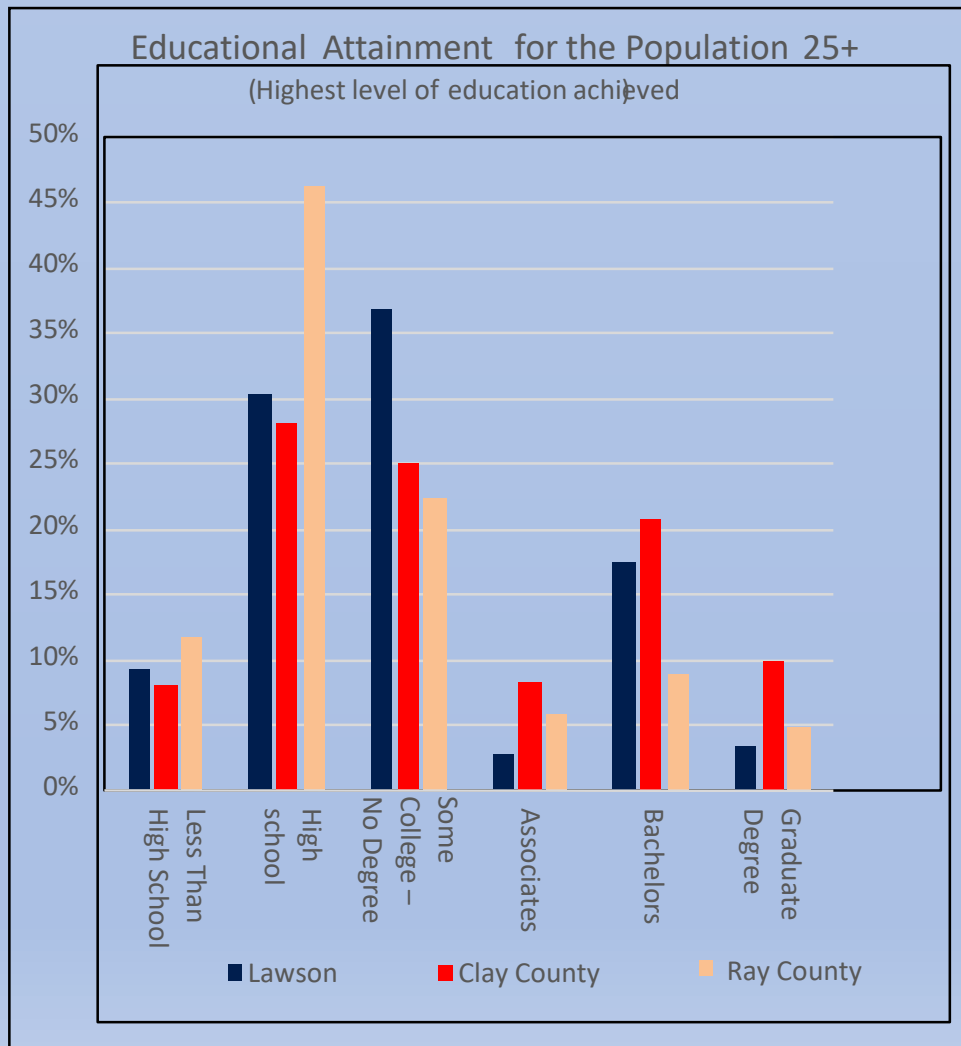


# Educational Attainment

Educational attainment levels are slightly lower in Lawson with high percentages of the adult population with a high school diploma or less.



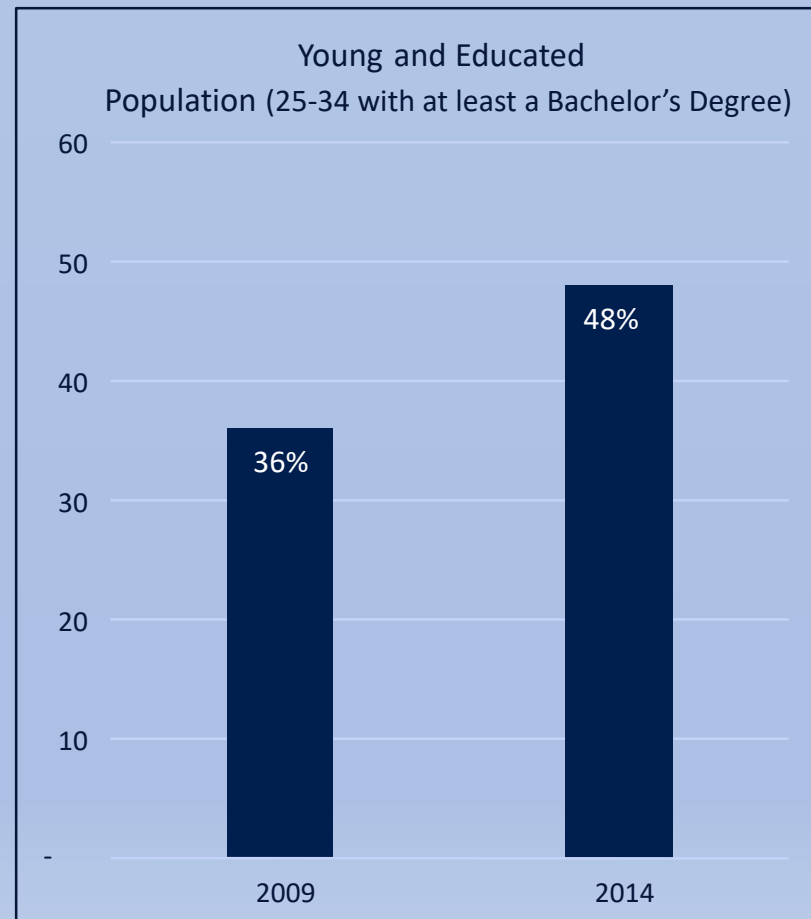
Educational Attainment		
Educational Attainment	Number	Percent
Total 25+	2,299	-
Less Than High School	213	8%
High School	698	28%
Some College No Deg.	845	25%
Associates	64	8%
Bachelors	402	21%
Graduate Degree	77	10%



# Young and Educated

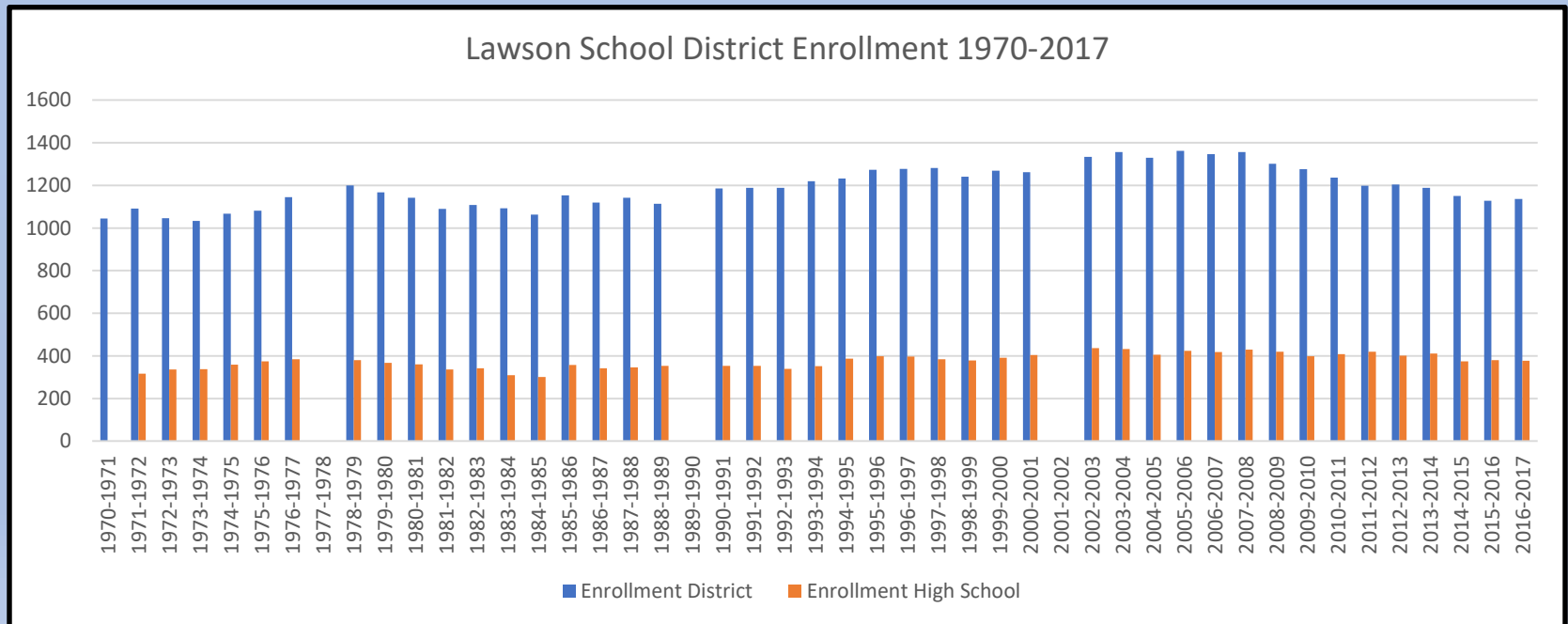
Retaining and growing the young and educated population (those age 25-34 with at least a bachelor's degree) is key in economic development. This population is relatively small in Lawson, but it has grown between 2009 and 2014.

Lawson  
Middle School/High School  
Media Center



# Lawson School District Enrollment

- Lawson School District has seen moderate growth since they started collecting the data in 1970.
- The more impressive factor is that they have only had 0.5% to 2.4% drop out rates and 95.7% to 96.1% attendance, showing that these schools are excelling at making sure students get a high school diploma.
- With a competitive robotics program, these students are prime for the 21<sup>st</sup> century type of job growth.

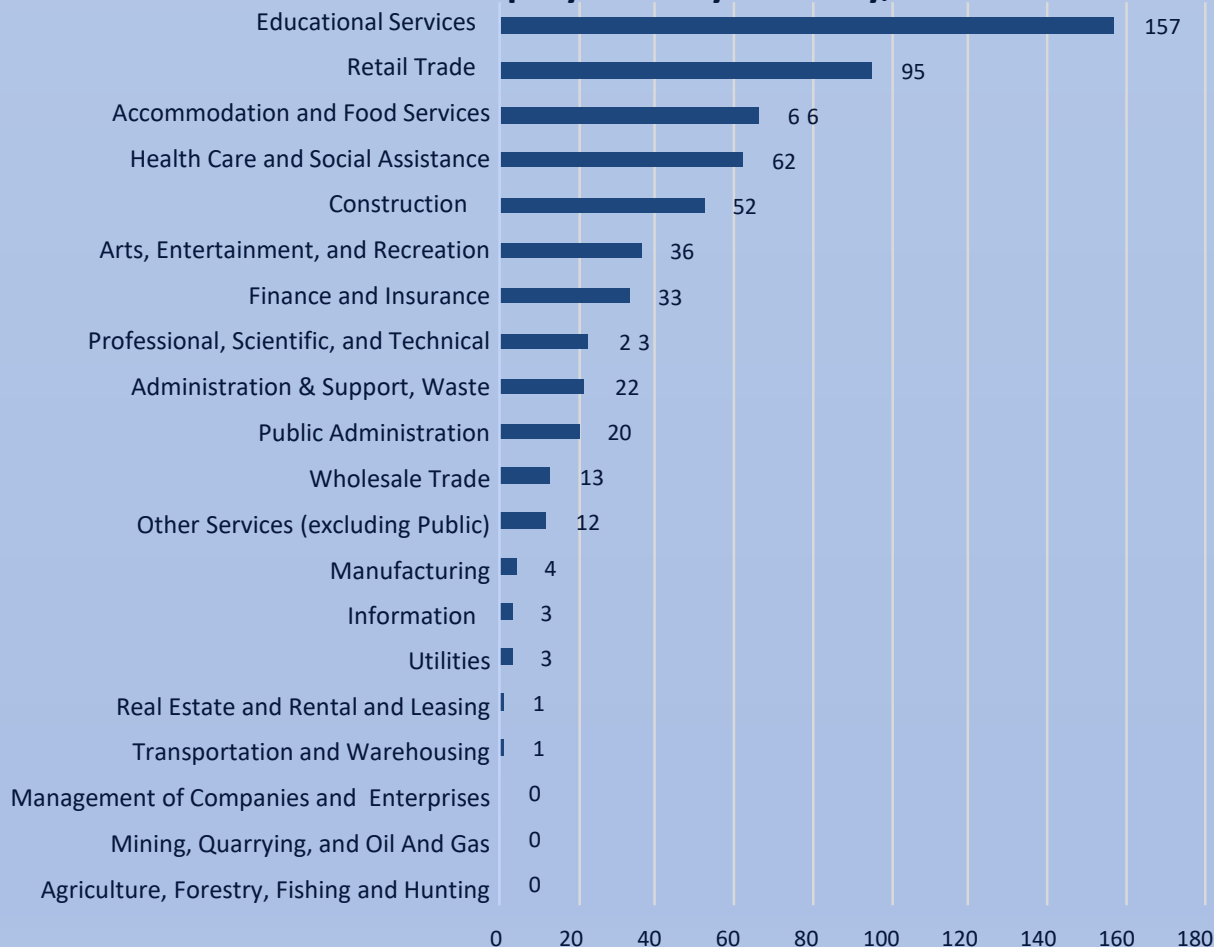




# Employment by Industry (Jobs located in Lawson)

Educational services is the largest employing industry in Lawson followed by Retail and Accommodations and Food Services. Other key industries like manufacturing and professional-technical services are not well represented in Lawson

## Lawson Employment by Industry, 2014



Southwest Elementary



Lawson Middle School



City Hall

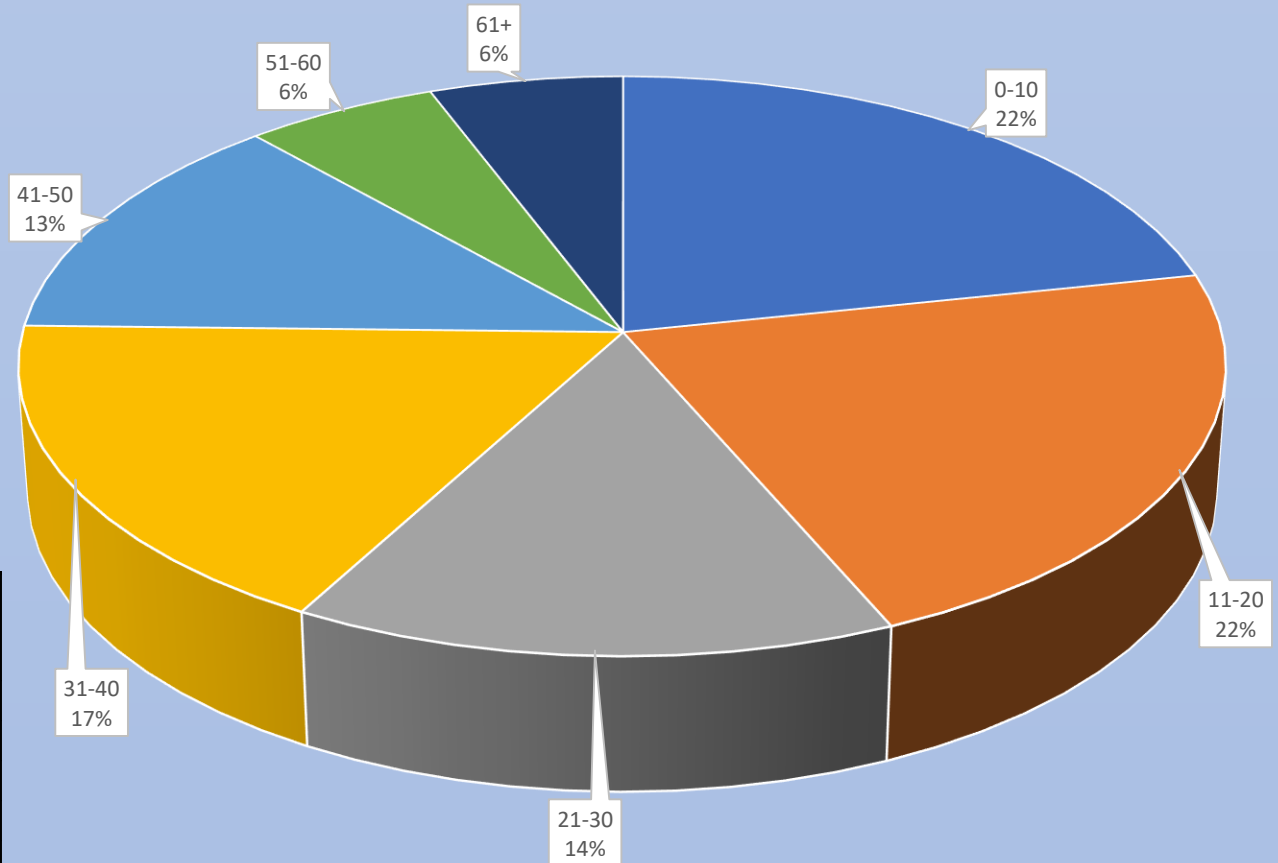
# Community Feedback

## Workers Commuting to Work

When asked how far residents travel to work one way, residents responded...

Commuters are traveling anywhere from 6 to 100 miles one way. This is a breakout by distance.

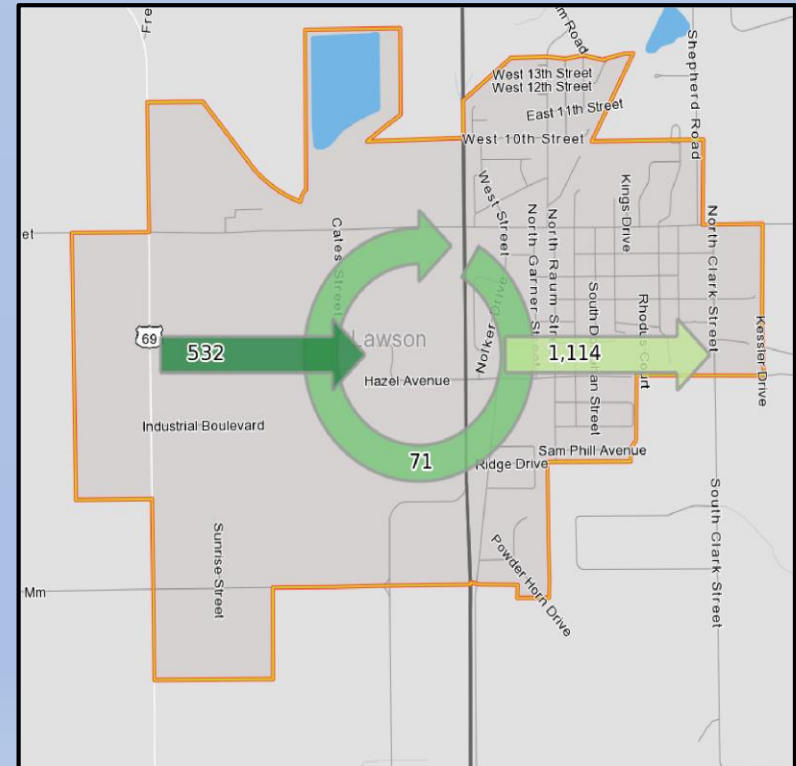
Distance Traveled (Miles)	Number of People	%
1-10	15	21.74%
11-20	15	21.74%
21-30	10	14.49%
31-40	12	17.39%
41-50	9	13.04%
51-60	4	5.80%
61+	4	5.80%
Total	69	100.00%



# Commuting Patterns

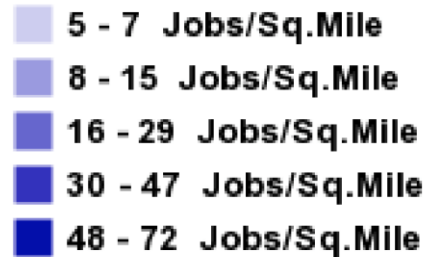
1,114 Lawson residents commute outside of the city to work while 532 non-residents commute into Lawson. 71 Lawson residents both live and work in the city limits.

- Approximately 50% of Lawson residents commute to work outside the city limits.
- There are a few residents who drive 60 miles plus each way to work. They stated that “Living in Lawson made the long drive worth it”.

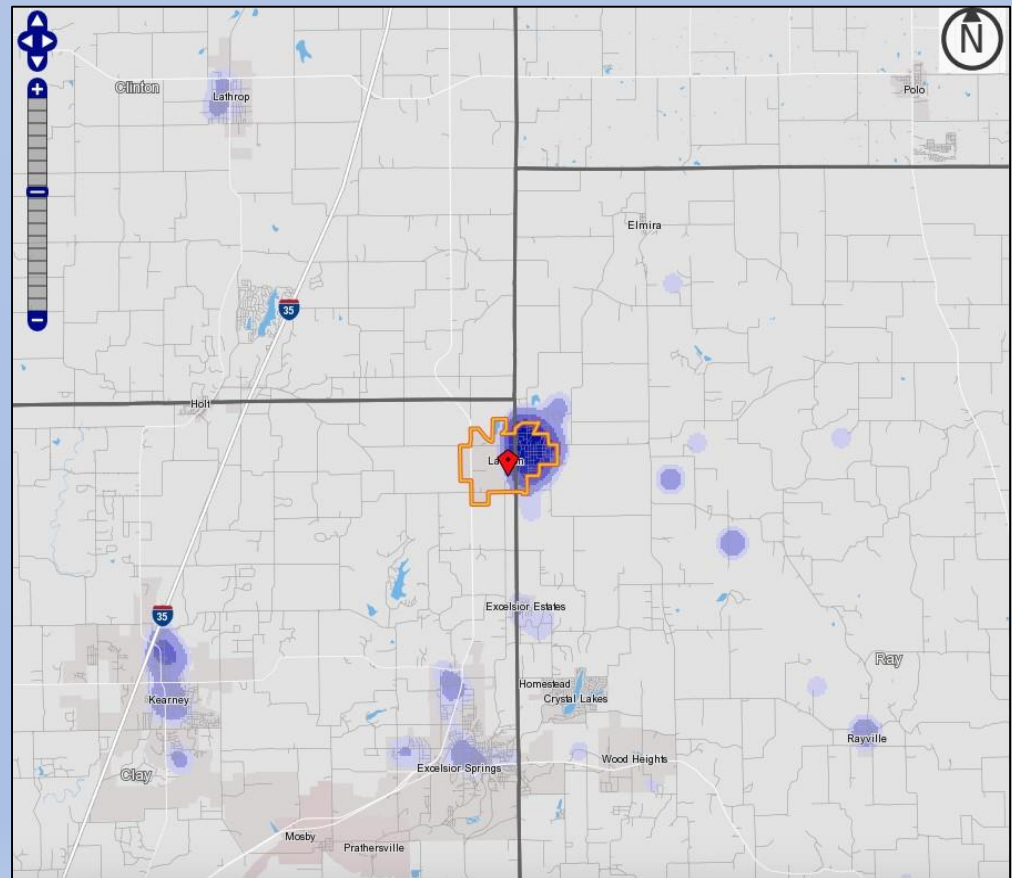


# Commuting Patterns Where Lawson Workers Live

For jobs located in Lawson, Lawson draws workers from the surrounding area, particularly Kearney and Excelsior Springs.

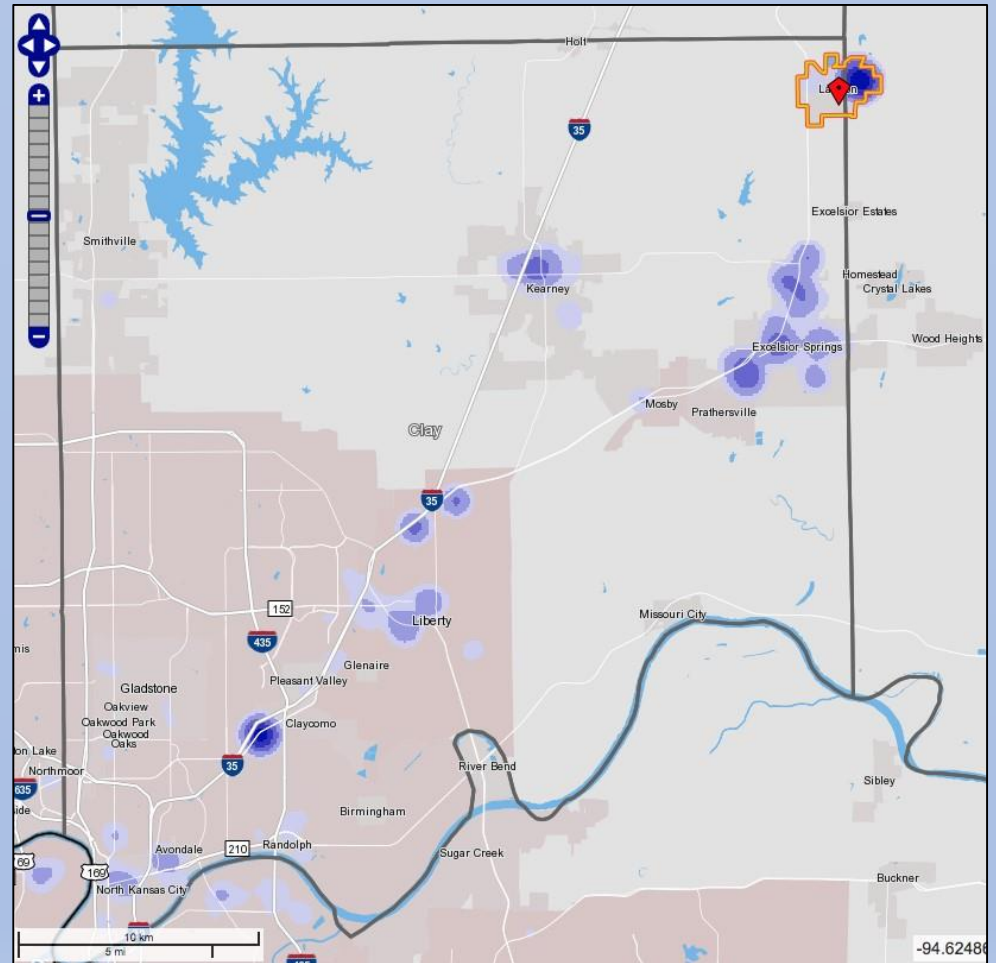
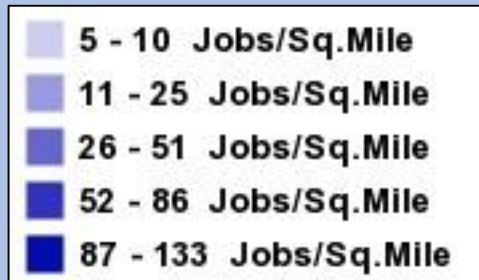


On the survey, numerous residents and students mentioned that  
*“Lawson needed more jobs in town.”*



## Commuting Patterns - Where Lawson Residents Work

Lawson workers who commute out of the city work in other employment centers in Clay County, especially Claycomo, North Kansas City and Liberty.





## *Summary of Survey Comments*

### Strengths & Needs in Lawson, MO

(in no particular order)

#### *Strengths*

- ☐ Caring Community
- ☐ Outstanding Schools – Blue Ribbon
- ☐ Safe Place to Live
- ☐ City Lake
- ☐ City Park & Cardinal Complex
- ☐ Parks & Rec Activities
- ☐ Strong Family Ties
- ☐ High School Sports
- ☐ Churches & Church Activities
- ☐ High School Activities
- ☐ Small Town Values
- ☐ Fire & Police Support 24/7
- ☐ Affordable Land and Room to Expand
- ☐ Convenience to Kansas City
- ☐ Low Property Taxes

#### *Areas of Concern or Needs*

- ☐ Make People Proud of How Town Looks
- ☐ More Things for Kids to Do
- ☐ Community Center
- ☐ Grocery Store
- ☐ More Housing in Town
- ☐ More Support for Local Merchants
- ☐ Clean up the City
- ☐ More Walking Trails
- ☐ Other Places to Eat and Hang Out for Kids
- ☐ Water/Sewer improvements
- ☐ Lack of Growth in Recent Years
- ☐ Improvement to Streets & Storm water
- ☐ More Affordable Homes for 1<sup>st</sup> Time Buyers
- ☐ More Jobs in Town for Adults & Kids

*Coming Soon...*  
*Goals in Priority Order*

To be established by Lawson City Council

Based on Community Input. Strategic plan for each goal to follow.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

# *History of Lawson, MO*

In 1989, the City Council was wise enough to ask that the “History of Lawson”, that originally appeared in the 1965 Comprehensive Plan, be included in the 1989 version. The 2017 Council is equally as wise and have asked that that same history be part of the 2017 City of Lawson Comprehensive Plan.

## **HISTORY**

The earlier history of the mid-continent Great Plains area dates back before the year 1500 when many Indian tribes, including the Osage, were believed to have lived near the Ohio River. Sometime prior to 1540 these tribes moved down the Ohio River valley and separated. Some, including the Omahas and Osage, traveled northward to the Missouri River and then along it to the mouth of the Osage River. Here, the Osage tribe remained while the Omahas and Poncas moved north, and the Kansas tribe followed the Missouri River to the mouth of the Kansas River. The City of Lawson, and the counties adjoining the Missouri River valley, were areas frequented by Indian tribes.

The earliest record of the white man to this general vicinity was an exploratory party headed by Sieur de Bourgmont, who in 1734 marched a troop of his men from Fort Orleans at the mouth of the Grand River and along the north side of the Missouri River and then crossing the river in their canoes to the Indian village of "Canzes", which was located near where downtown Kansas City is today.

The Louisiana Purchase was consummated between the United States and France in 1803, including the area which is now the State of Missouri. In 1812, the name of the territory was changed to that of Missouri.



In 1808, Fort Osage was established along the south bank of the Missouri River in Jackson County at the first white settlement in this general vicinity. A few years later, in 1821, a trading post was established by Francois Chouteau near the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri Rivers. This was also the year that Missouri was formally admitted into the Union.

In 1825, the Osage Indians relinquished their rights to the "Twenty-Four Mile Strip" adjoining the west edge of Missouri and extending south to Arkansas. For this land, plus all their remaining land in Missouri, Arkansas, and part of Kansas, the U. S. Government paid them \$7,000 per year for seven years.

Howard County was originally organized in 1816 to include all of Missouri west of a line extending north from the mouth of the Osage River and all territory between the Missouri and Osage Rivers. Ray County was officially established in 1821, Clay County in 1822, and Clinton County in 1833. The location of Lawson in close proximity to the corner of Clay and Clinton Counties has given it the informal name of the "Three County Community".

The history of the City of Lawson predates its official founding in 1870. Its past is inextricably bound up in the early history of the "three county" area, which received its first migrants from Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina in 1822.

The earliest inhabitants settled primarily in the timberlands and near springs for water. As the timber was cut for log houses and fuel, the land was then tilled for crops. The earliest log houses had mud daubed in the cracks, stick chimneys, no windows, and no floors. no windows, and no floors.

Typical of the early frontier village, the churches came first, with schools and other town development later. Today, the City of Lawson is situated in the center of an area which produced several historic churches and villages.



The Union Church is located approximately five miles southeast of Lawson. It had its beginning in 1844. The old Salem Church, located approximately five miles south of Lawson, was dedicated in 1906, although its beginning was in the early 1840's. The New Hope Baptist Church, six miles west of Lawson, stems from a group which began in 1827. The Mt. Vernon Church, constructed in 1871, is now a part of the Watkins Mill State Park. Its group was organized in 1854, with Mr. Watkins as a charter member, and who later furnished two-thirds of the cost of the building.

The six neighboring communities which surrounded the present City of Lawson, include: (1) Lisbonville, located southeast of Elmira, (2) Pleasant View, a few miles northeast of Lawson, (3) Claysville, four miles south of Lawson, and west of the county line, (4) Greenville, three miles west of Claysville, (5) Barnesville, approximately four miles north of Lawson and west of the county line, and (6) Haynesville, five miles west of Lawson, and northwest of Holt. Today, Greenville, Barnesville, and Haynesville are still identified on the State Highway County maps, although very little of the original settlement remains, and the other three have virtually vanished.

Watkins Mill, then and now, occupies a unique place in the history of the City of Lawson. Waltus L. Watkins, a Kentuckian, came to Clay County in the late twenties or early thirties. During the late thirties and early forties he operated a saw mill and grist mill. At one time his land holdings extended all the way to the present site of Lawson, and beyond. In 1845, Mr. Watkins began building his permanent homestead. It was finished in 1851. In 1852 he built the octagonal shaped, two room, brick school house. In 1859 he began construction of the three story brick woolen mill, the first of its kind west of the Mississippi. All of the foregoing construction was by slave labor, but experienced mill hands were brought from the woolen mills of Philadelphia. The mill was in full operation in 1863, and continued to operate until the middle eighteen nineties by the three Watkins sons, following their father's death in 1884.

The present townsite of the City of Lawson was purchased by Benjamin Elston in 1864 from Waltus Watkins. This eighty-acre tract was purchased by Josephe Raum in 1870. A few months later he



sold forty acres to the St. Joseph Land Co., which had the same directors as the St. Joseph Railroad Co. which was constructing a line from St. Joseph to a point in southern Ray County, across the river from Lexington. It is further reported that work was begun immediately for a railroad depot\* even before the streets were laid out.

The new town was to be called Doniphan, until it was discovered that another community had utilized that name. Therefore, the name Lawson was a second choice in honor of the president of the new railroad line, and a former St. Joe citizen who had become a member of the Donnell, Lawson and Company banking firm of New York. When it was later found that this name, too, had been preempted, the name Lawson Station was selected. Later, when the other community decided to change its name, the word "Station" was dropped.

Mr. George Young was the first to open a business establishment. His stock of merchandise included paints, oils, notions, and groceries. Also, in 1870, Robert J. Clark and J.T. Hurt of Claysville built a general store on the present site of the Lawson Bank. Mr. Clark also became Lawson's first postmaster from 1870 to 1881.

Incorporation procedures for the City of Lawson were completed in 1871. The exact date is unknown because of a fire which destroyed all City records in 1914.

The town park was given to the City of Lawson by the Land Company, as noted in the following excerpt from the abstract:

"The Saint Joseph Land company here declares that it is the sole owner and proprietor of the Town of Lawson (except specific lots disposed of as stated in various deeds, with each of which a map is given designating such area) and that said Town was laid out by said company and including what was appropriated for right of way by said railway purposes, which excepting the right of way grounds aforesaid was subdivided into public square and lots blocks bounded by streets and alleys."

In 1887, the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad constructed its line through the City of Lawson.

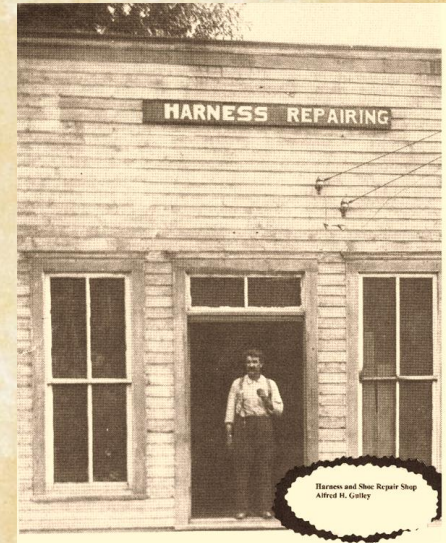


The Methodists and Presbyterians were the first to build a house of worship, which they jointly shared for several years. The Masonic Lodge was the first of the fraternal and civic organizations to organize in 1870.

The first School District was organized in 1871, immediately after the town was incorporated. In 1883 a two story, three room brick school building was erected on the present administrative office site, two additional rooms were added in 1905. The present school building was constructed in 1915. In 1921 the District was expanded by adding East Fork and part of Riggs District, and adopting the Junior-Senior High School Plan. Free text books were voted in 1931. A small Negro school was also in operation during the early years, ranging in attendance from eight to twenty five, but it ceased in 1906. School busses were added by the Lawson School District in 1937, and a few years later the district boundaries were expanded under a state wide redistricting program to include practically all of the area previously referred to in this historical narrative.

In the late eighties, plans were being made to locate an institution of higher learning in this general area. Many Lawson citizens worked hard for its location to be in this City, but the final location for the Woodson Institute was the City of Richmond. However, local interest continued and the Lawson Presbyterian Academy was organized in 1891. A new college building was constructed immediately north of the elementary school site in 1898, but it was destroyed by fire the same year.

In 1873 a group of citizens organized the Lawson Cemetery Company. The original two acres has since been expanded. This company was incorporated in 1930 and continues to operate this facility.



Harness and Shoe  
Repair Shop  
Alfred H. Gulley



The Lawson Bank was established in 1883, the oldest existing bank in Ray County.

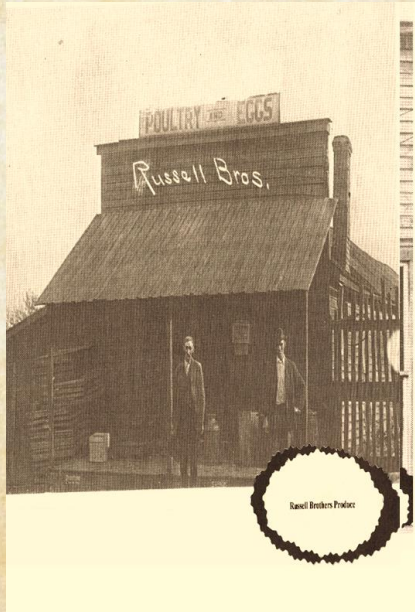
The next oldest business firm is the Morrow & Sons, Lumber, Hardware and Building Supplies. It was originally established by J. M. Morrow in 1888.

The Lawson District Fair, organized in 1886, was a major event for more than a decade, with a wide variety of events and exhibits.

Since 1902, the Lawson Picnic, originally sponsored by the Odd Fellows and the Modern Woodmen, has been a major annual event. As the years went on it grew and grew, and both railroads put on special trains to bring the crowds here from all of the surrounding counties. In 1922, it was reported that there were two thousand cars in Lawson, and the crowd estimated at five thousand. This celebration has traditionally been held in the Rhodus Grove, west of town, or in the city park.

The Lawson Gazette was first published in 1881. In 1889, W. L. Bales purchased the paper and changed its name to The Lawson Journal. The paper changed hands again in this general period, and another paper started titled The Lawson Leader. These two were soon combined as The Ray County Review. In 1916 the paper was purchased by Sam Halstead, who changed its name to The Lawson Review, which continues to this day and is the oldest newspaper in Ray County.

The Missouri Valley Fox Hunt Association was formed in 1906 "to revive memories of a time when the woods and prairies of this Missouri region abounded with fox, the wolf, and other species of wild life. " It died out in the Great Depression years of the early



Russell Brothers  
Produce



thirties, but the record indicates that crowds of five thousand were frequently in attendance.

In 1931, the Rock Island Railroad constructed its line through the City of Lawson, and U. S. Highway No. 69 was built one mile west of town.

In 1949 the Elmira Coal Mine was closed.

In 1952 the City voted a bond issue for a new water system. More recently a bond issue has provided for a complete sanitary sewer system. These facilities were completed in 1964.

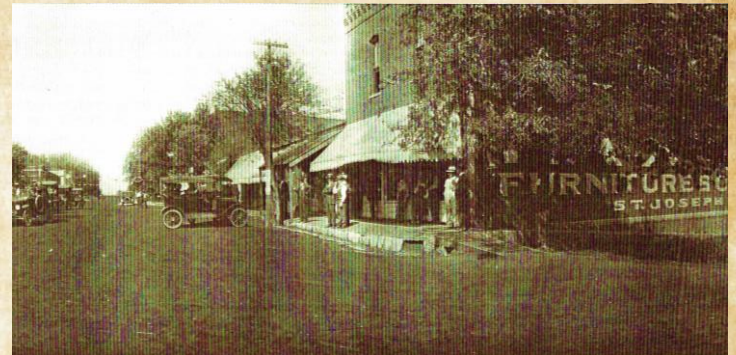
The installation of a Nike Base one mile east of town in the late fifties adds a significant relationship to the community, as does the acceptance of the Watkins Mill estate into the State Park system in recent years.

The current rebuilding of State Highway D connecting to U. S. Highway No, 69, plus the construction of the Interstate Freeway six miles to the west are all significant factors which will affect the potential growth and development of the City of Lawson.

Although the City of Lawson today is a small community of approximately one thousand population, its past has been varied and colorful, and its future in good measure will depend upon what its citizens and civic leaders want to make of it.

The City of Lawson remains a small community, however, it has shown a high rate of growth over the last forty years, increasing from 486 in 1950 to an estimated 2362 in 1989.

The Nike Base, located near the city, has been abandoned and no longer affects the community as a missile base complex. The small industrial plant operating in the building has a minimal effect on the economy of the area. The Watkins Mill State Park is constantly growing and increasing in popularity resulting in a positive effect to the community.



Northwest Missouri L.O.O.F. Association  
Convention held in Lawson around 1915