Option 1 – Make Topeka Safer
Ideas for Action plus Tradeoffs/Unintended Consequences

- Some cities document crimes less, so that crime stats look “better”
- Topeka Police Department is asking for $1.6 million from ARPA for CIT funding
- Focus less on low priority crimes
- Citizen patrol responds to car break in
- Minor traffic stops/headlight out limits interaction with police – this frees up police for violent situations
- CIT could be a mixed unit or social worker only
- 50% of violent crime committed by less than 1% of the population (0.05 or 0.06%) (need citation)
- The Shawnee County District Attorney and Topeka Police Department could be more transparent with the data behind decisions.
- Community groups could look at the stats to make sure analysis is bring done to inform decisions
- TAG/SAVE collaborative working since 2018 in Shawnee County with a committee to look at analysis –https://www.topeka.org/tpd/strategies-against-violence-everywhere/
- Police work in Topeka is NOT like on television. Not lots of “gun battles with master criminals” – a large part is a social work docket (probably).
- Training and agency cooperation and agencies needed to address the social work challenges – intervention instead of citation and a municipal court fine they can’t pay anyway
- At a previous workplace training, a person was told not to do the screening if they don’t have a place to send them for resources. More harmful to screen/diagnose than to not ask if it’s a problem, if you can’t offer resources.
- At a shelter – when a crisis - call TPD - jail is also a warm (safe) place and food. Is this the system we want? Probably better that we have less reliance on mental hospitals than before, but now we are lacking medical care for institutionalized people, and with COVID especially we are seeing the outcomes of that.

Options 2 – Make Topeka More Successful
Ideas for Action plus Tradeoffs/Unintended Consequences

- Action – affordable childcare to fit families needs
- Idea: City or Businesses provide incentives to expand and maintain Licensed Childcare Facilities
- Streamlining some management administrative things results in being able to pay childcare workers more
- Unintended consequence – an uneasy feeling that federal money leads to giant child care corporation of America instead of neighborhood level things
- Idea: Incentive money to improve physical spaces for childcare – for getting homes to child care code for home based childcare centers.
- Idea: City or Businesses provides for employees who need night shift childcare from those employers
- Train workplace programs for high school students to practice in early childhood – so that we have a more skilled workforce available
- Ex: Hope Street center for childcare in high schools or elsewhere
- Build early childcare and before and after hours childcare directly into the county and school district budgets for the needed wraparound childcare a community needs
- Kansas City recently got a 24 hour childcare center
- Security Benefit has childcare center onsite as part of their workplace benefits/ incentives
- Workplace childcare can benefit more than those kids – people could move laterally to the places with childcare and are more loyal to those places.
- When childcare is available, more skilled workforce is available, more people can get to work.
- Example: family friendly workplace initiative
- Less sick days
- Childcare accessibility/availability is affected by: sick parent or sick kid or sick child care provider.

Option 3 – Make Topeka More Fair

Ideas for Action plus Tradeoffs/Unintended Consequences

- Some local statistics focus on the importance of affordable housing as a way to make Topeka more fair
- ¼ of Topeka population cannot afford a safe 2 bedroom home in Topeka
- ¼ African American and ¼ Hispanic households live under the poverty line, which impacts access to quality housing.
- $788 rent (HUD for 2 bedroom) 33% cannot afford - 31% white, 36% Hispanic, 52% African American
- The Topeka Housing Study has more information on these topics.
- https://www.topeka.org/neighborhoodrelations/citywide-housing-market-study-strategy/
- According to the living wage calculator, a single parent with 3 kids in Topeka needs to make $43.79. $12.60 would be considered a poverty wage in that circumstance.
- Idea: City Council could create incentives for tenants/landlords for safe/affordable housing to address lack of safe and affordable homes especially in neighborhoods where housing and resources are inequitable
- Idea: Enforce landlord/tenant rights to benefit the tenant
- Tradeoffs include: Landlords need ways to make money, if this is their business
- Unintended consequence: Once a person gets housing, how will they maintain it in a low wage job?
- Unintended consequence – HUD practice currently – people can see online the people’s names that HUD has kicked out of their properties.
- But – some tenants are not good tenants and landlords need recourse.
• Examples/role models to emulate: Kansas City, Missouri’s Tenant Bill of Rights
  https://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/housing/tenant-resources
• Kansas City’s Tenant Advocate in City Hall
• Landlord University/Tenant University
• City could set a precedent of a $16.81 livable wage
• Idea: Make the housing practices reviewed by local agency and enforced, example HCCI
• County could create new agency for tenant rights
• County and City could require remedial training or probation for landlords or tenants
• Suggestion: Take 3 years where development incentives go to local improvements instead of luring new businesses to relocate here
• Tradeoff of current process- city and county too accommodating to large businesses and developers and that steals resources from residents (land/water) and creates a cycle with low wage earners or low wage skilled earners where we think we have more jobs but we don’t get equity
• Economic Development decision makers would like more businesses with good $/hour pay rates

Option 4 – Make Topeka More Fun

Idea: Diversity in Action pledge – organizations who offer programs and services pledge to take the event TO places for FREE, meeting you where you are (Example: Kansas City Library does this sometimes) (Unintended consequence: costly for organizations)
• Idea: Look at reinstating residency requirements for employees
• Idea: City/county invests locally for 3 years with existing businesses for incentives
• Suggested action: City council evaluates and reports out quarterly to the community the dollars provided to vendors –goals to increase minority and woman led business.
• Unintended consequence – when contracting out of city, then the business people aren’t local when something goes wrong, for example with repairs to TOTO grant appliances
• Idea: Change the mindset of what community investment looks like. Lack of childcare and living wage detract from entertainment options because even if the event exist, the opportunity to attend is not available to many
• Don’t always be targeting the dominant culture group.
• Outreach to underserved community to make the event/attraction affordable
• Example: Hillcrest gets Discovery Center brought to them as an outreach event
• Exposure is critical for all – what experiences for growth and development are we providing for everyone?
• Address civic pride – one challenge – Colmery wrote the GI Bill and to get it passed he developed redlining. Suggestion to take his name off of things “birthplace of Colmery” isn’t a source of pride for all

Reflection from participants
• What does it take to have the conversation and acknowledge we can’t ignore this?
• Whose job is it to raise awareness of how we should improve Topeka?
• Where can people get involved and be heard?
• This feels like the same Talk. I’ve been part of all the tings. I’ve become desensitized. Not just talk about it – be about it.
• I want this action oriented.
• How do we hold city council members accountable? And transparent?
• Can we make a rubric to evaluate their actions? A code of ethics?
• How can city council and county commissioner interact with public NOT just during campaigning?
• How do we find out how to interact with them? Are they asking – what are you hearing? What do you need?
• I tend to go for the long game – make contributions to incoming mayor, I make myself heard if I want to be heard. Maybe I can make some suggestions to people.
• A lot of us struggling with the action piece of it all. Kansas and Topeka plays a lot of “Kansas nice” politics and it’s impossible to get things done when you are trying to be nice.
• “Infiltrating” a way to do the work and have those conversations.
• I’ve started to bring in my council person and understand how they think and work with them to share my ideas.
• These conversations and reporting back out and having more conversations can be a feedback loop with elected officials and citizens.