

Douglas County Heritage Conservation Council

Strategic Plan, Updated December 2025

Mission: As an advisor to the Board of Douglas County Commissioners, the Heritage Conservation Council promotes and advocates for the conservation of tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage to honor the past, enrich the present, and inspire the future.

Vision: The Heritage Conservation Council fosters a County in which all communities benefit from and understand the value of conserving both natural and cultural heritages.

Values:

- **Collaboration:** We are committed to partnership, supportive of cross-organizational coordination, and seek out community input.
- **Inclusivity:** We have an expansive and community-driven definition of heritage and strive to be inclusive and welcoming to all of Douglas County.
- **Diversity:** We strive to represent diverse sectors of Douglas County on our Council and in our programming.
- **Accountability:** We take responsibility for our role as stewards of Douglas County heritage and welcome public feedback on our work.
- **Transparency:** We communicate transparently about Council operations and decisions.

Goal 1: Reducing Destruction and Encouraging Sustainable Development

The Heritage Conservation Council strives to minimize the destruction of natural and cultural resources, cultural and agricultural heritages, and historic sites; conserves and documents their existence; and encourages smart, sustainable development and adaptive reuse.

Strategies:

1.1: Conserve Douglas County's high priority open spaces, including natural environments, cultural landscapes, and recreational spaces by providing information and recommendations on the value of those resources and advocating for their conservation.

1.2: Conserve tangible and intangible cultural heritages by inviting all Douglas County residents to see their histories as valuable, with an emphasis on uplifting historically underrepresented communities.

1.3: Conserve Douglas County's historic structures and sites by acting as a Certified Local Government (CLG) in partnership with the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office and contributing to the Kansas Historic Resources Inventory.

1.4: Model flexibility and balance by strategically compromising on lesser conservation priorities while reserving political influence for major conservation priorities.

Goal 2: Serving through Advising

The Heritage Conservation Council is an essential advisory council to the Board of Douglas County Commissioners, County staff, and community and nonprofit organizations in the sector.

Strategies:

2.1: Maintain strong relationships with County Commissioners and County staff, working to support interdepartmental relationships especially on topics related to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage and seeking and sharing advice as appropriate.

2.2: Initiate inventories and surveys and support community-driven planning processes to help Commissioners and the public understand and protect the County's natural and cultural heritage.

2.3: Advocate for conservation of natural and cultural resources as necessary, while acknowledging the County's need for balanced, sustainable growth and compromising when community needs outweigh conservation priorities.

2.4: Ensure that County efforts are in line with the Douglas County Climate Action Plan, Open Space Plan, Food System Plan, Rural Historic Resources Guide, and Plan 2040, as well as the National Parks Service, as they work to create more equitable heritage preservation policies.

Goal 3: Uplifting Partner Organizations

The Heritage Conservation Council uplifts partner heritage organizations and catalyzes their collaboration by providing funding and building capacity.

Strategies:

3.1: Administer the Natural and Cultural Heritage Grant Program annually, providing funding and building capacity to heritage organizations and projects from across the County.

3.2: Maintain a Natural and Cultural Heritage Grant program that is equitable and accessible to all, with an emphasis on supporting communities whose heritages have historically been underrepresented and/or undervalued in Douglas County.

3.3: Encourage partnership among Douglas County's heritage organizations as a means of providing public educational programming on conservation to the Douglas County community.

3.4: Promote the work of community heritage organizations, especially those working with underrepresented communities, and work to maintain trusted and reciprocal relationships with them.

Goal 4: Encouraging Accessibility

The Heritage Conservation Council encourages the accessibility of Douglas County's natural and cultural resources and evaluates their continued use and value to the community.

Strategies:

4.1: Recognize the importance of public access and work to ensure that, as feasible, conserved resources can be experienced by as many people as possible for as long as possible.

4.2: Acknowledge that some natural and cultural resources may require restricted public access for the sake of sustainability.

4.3: Partner with organizations that can provide insights into accessibility of resources from a diversity of perspectives.