



Communities of Excellence 2026  
Community of Excellence Application

**Excelsior Springs, Missouri**

## P.1 COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

### a. Community Environment

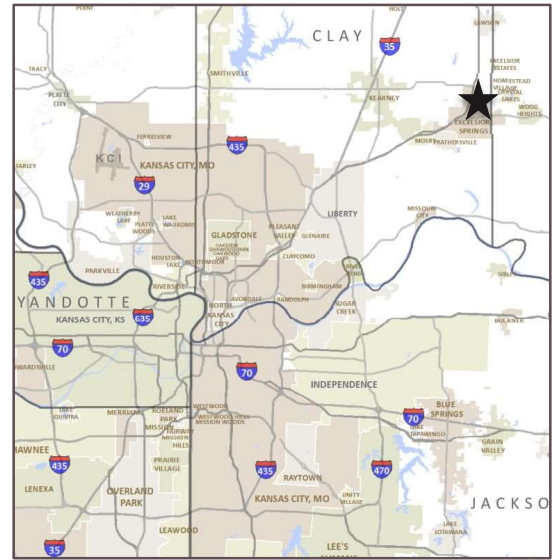
#### 1. Community Definition and Identity

Excelsior Springs, located in Clay County, is approximately 30 miles northeast of Kansas City, Missouri. The population within the city limits is approximately 11,000. Our geographic community, which includes residents that utilize Excelsior Springs' amenities and public services, is better reflected in the zip code population of approximately 17,000.<sup>1</sup> The population growth within the city limits is considerably slower than that of neighboring communities. Excelsior Springs is bordered by the larger Metro Kansas City area to the south, suburbs to the west, and rural areas to the north and east. Residents travel within the region for work, play, education, medical services, and commerce. Excelsior Springs residents share a strong sense of pride in the community. We are proud of our town's heritage and eager to meet the challenges that the future will bring.

#### 2. Community Offerings

##### Key Offerings: Health

- Excelsior Springs Hospital (ESH), 20-bed critical access hospital, affiliated/owned by the City of Excelsior Springs
- ESH outpatient clinics hosting area specialists ranging from cardiologists to surgeons
- Independent and ESH owned and operated physician clinics
- Skilled nursing facilities
- Two additional acute care hospitals within 20 miles of ES
- City operated emergency response ambulance service within the city limits and within the Eastern Clay Ambulance District located to the east of our city limits



**Metro Kansas City Area**

	Excelsior Springs	Kearney	Liberty	Smithville	Clay County
Population estimates as of 7/2019	11,731	10,858	32,100	10,795	249,948
Population percent change 4/2010 to 7/2019	5.9%	29.6%	9.8%	28.8%	12.6%

**Comparative Data<sup>2</sup>**

##### Key Offerings: Education

- Named as one of the top 25 most innovative school districts by the School Superintendents Association in 2018
- Seven schools including three elementary schools, a middle school, and high school as well as the Excelsior Springs Area Career Center (grades 10-12) and Early Childhood Center; the district also operates the Job Corps Technical High School (grades 9-12)
- A zero tax increase bond, passed in 2020, providing funding for a new elementary school building, a new preschool building, and much needed upgrades to all other buildings

##### Key Offerings: The Economy

- Approximately 5,000 people employed within the city limits; only 33% of city residents are employed within the city limits<sup>2</sup>
- 991 companies in Excelsior Springs (2012)
- The highest concentration of businesses can be found in these sectors: healthcare, retail, accommodations and food, financial and insurance, and manufacturing<sup>3</sup>
- Significant manufacturing industry which provides 14.5% of jobs and 14.14% of our overall property taxes<sup>4</sup>
- Retail sales are based predominantly on necessities such as grocery and general merchandise
- Mineral water history supports heritage tourism that is vital to future economic growth

##### Key Offerings: Quality of Life

- The Excelsior Springs Community Center offers a variety of wellness, fitness, and social activities for members of all ages
- Excelsior Springs Senior Center provides meals and social activities for senior citizens

<sup>1</sup> Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

<sup>2</sup> Source: 2010 U.S. Census

<sup>3</sup> Source: factfinder.census.gov

<sup>4</sup> Source: cityofesmo.com/financials/GASFinal-2018.pdf, page 104

- 5.5 miles of trails and 14 parks within the city limits
- Robust recreational sports league and events for youth and adults
- Frequent community-wide events
- Low crime rates
- High rate of affordable housing compared with other Metro cities
- Positive protective factors (which reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in substance use) including school policies to reduce bullying, coordinated initiatives from Excelsior Springs SAFE funded by federal a Drug-Free Communities grant, laws unfavorable toward substance use, and opportunities for youth engagement

	Within city limits	Within zip code
Population	11,555	17,082
Mean income	\$57,282	\$62,358
% of poverty	15.3%	13.3%
% in labor force, 16+ of age	62.1%	62.4%
Unemployment rate	6.2%	5.5%
Average travel time to work	23.8 minutes	25.3 minutes
Median value of owner-occupied housing	\$116,900	\$126,300

Economic Snapshot <sup>5</sup>

### 3. Residents, Other Customers, and Stakeholders

#### Residents

The two primary resident groups in Excelsior Springs are defined by geography. Educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and health outcomes differ greatly between these two resident groups.

#### Other Customers and Stakeholders

There are several other customer and stakeholder groups that make important contributions to Excelsior Springs including:

- Tourists and visitors who visit for an overall experience and typically use multiple amenities; they may or may not require overnight accommodations
- Users of recreational facilities or amenities, defined as anyone who visits to utilize a singular, specific amenity
- Professionals who work but do not reside in the city<sup>7</sup>
- Investors, defined as internal and external stakeholders who financially invest in Excelsior Springs
- Franchises in our zip code
- Small business-owners

Characteristic	Westside residents (Census tract 1)	Eastside residents (Census tract 2)
Low-income and severely cost-burdened by housing costs	17%	34%
Homeownership	71%	58%
Adults with a high school diploma	93%	86%
Adults with fair or poor reported health	16%	21%
People in poverty	7%	22%
Median household income	\$61,229	\$39,438
Unemployment rate	1%	11%

Characteristics of Key Resident Groups<sup>6</sup>

	HOUSING					HEALTHCARE					ECONOMIC				EDUCATION					
	Safety	Affordability	Curb Appeal	Overnight Availability	Rooftops	Convenient Access	High-Quality	Emergency Access	Primary Care	Specialized Services	Professional Affiliation	Favorable Patient Reviews	Variety of Retail & Dining Outlets	Recreational activities	Community Events	Profitability	Unique Traditions	High-Quality	Neighborhood K-5 Schools	Well-trained Workforce
<b>Residents</b>	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	X			x	x	x			x	x	
<b>Tourists</b>	x		x					x					x	x	x		x			x
<b>Non-resident professionals</b>	x		x	x	x			x			x		x							x
<b>Investors</b>	x										x					x				x
<b>Franchises</b>					x						x					x				x
<b>Small-business owners</b>	x		x		x			x							x	x				x
<b>Users of rec facilities &amp; amenities</b>	x		x					x					x	x	x					x

Expectations of Resident, Customer, and Stakeholder Groups

<sup>5</sup> Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

<sup>6</sup> Source: Opportunity360 Measurement Report for Census Tracts 217.01 and 217.02

<sup>7</sup> Approximately 50% of certified employees in the Excelsior Springs School District and approximately 66% of hospital employees are not residents.

#### 4. People and Organizational Resources

Health	Education	The Economy	Quality of Life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ES Hospital (ESH)</li> <li>• ESH Foundation</li> <li>• City of ES</li> <li>• Physicians and specialists</li> <li>• Excelsior Springs Nursing</li> <li>• Valley Manor &amp; Rehab Center</li> <li>• Liberty Hospital</li> <li>• North Kansas City Hospital</li> <li>• Pharmacies</li> <li>• Allied health professionals</li> <li>• Advanced Life Support services</li> <li>• ES Community Center</li> <li>• Clay County Public Health Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excelsior Springs School District</li> <li>• Excelsior Springs Educational Foundation</li> <li>• Excelsior Springs Area Career Center</li> <li>• Job Corps (federal program)</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Teachers &amp; administrators</li> <li>• Students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Franchise owners</li> <li>• Small business owners</li> <li>• Manufacturers</li> <li>• Hospitality industry</li> <li>• Investors</li> <li>• Tourists</li> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Downtown Excelsior Partnership</li> <li>• City of ES</li> <li>• Employers</li> <li>• Employees</li> <li>• Educators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social service agencies</li> <li>• Nonprofit and civic organizations</li> <li>• ES Community Center</li> <li>• ES Parks &amp; Rec Dept.</li> <li>• SAFE</li> <li>• Educators</li> <li>• Public safety officials</li> <li>• City of ES</li> </ul>

*Groups and Segments Involved in Delivery of Key Offerings*

#### 5. Regulatory Environment

The City government is regulated by local ordinances legislated by our mayor and city council which are enabled by our state statutes. Our environmental resources (air, water, and land) are protected by federal regulatory agencies, which mandate ongoing improvements. These improvements require the cost to be passed on to the consumers. In addition to community property taxes, the school system is largely funded by state revenues. Local education decisions are influenced by the state funding model for K-12 education in order to garner the most revenue from the state. Healthcare providers structure programs and services that provide for more reliable state and federal medical reimbursements. All health service providers in the city are subject to similar DHSS, state, and federal guidelines, based on the level of certification.

#### b. Community Excellence Group

##### 1. Mission, Vision, and Values

**Mission:** Bringing together old and new to make Excelsior Springs a place that matters

**Vision:** To become your favorite place to live, work, learn, and play

**Values:**

*Pioneering:* Open to innovative and creative solutions

*Generosity:* A desire to give for the greater good

*Hospitality:* Going the extra mile to welcome others

*Can-do attitude:* With hard work, success is possible

*Pride in heritage & traditions:* Celebrate our history

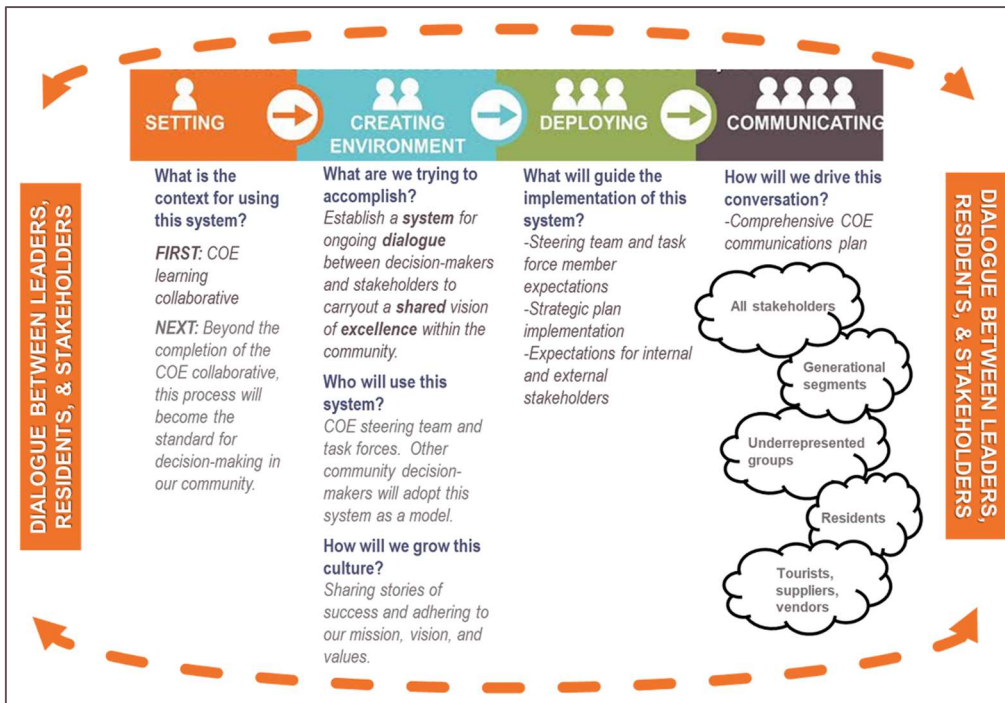
##### 2. Composition

The City of Excelsior Springs serves as the backbone organization for the Communities of Excellence initiative. The leadership team, referred to from this point forward as the COE steering team, includes representation from City government, school district, hospital, social service organizations, and private citizens. Many other sectors are represented through our task force structure including:

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ES Hospital</li> <li>• Healthcare providers</li> <li>• County health department</li> <li>• Insurance broker</li> <li>• ES Senior Center</li> <li>• Prevention</li> <li>• Housing Authority</li> <li>• Banking and finance</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real estate</li> <li>• Historic Preservation Commission</li> <li>• Nonprofit and social services</li> <li>• City government</li> <li>• Small business owners</li> <li>• Mainstreet America (DEP)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism/hospitality</li> <li>• Manufacturing</li> <li>• Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• School district</li> <li>• Youth/students</li> <li>• Newspaper</li> <li>• Job Corps</li> </ul> |
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### 3. Leadership System



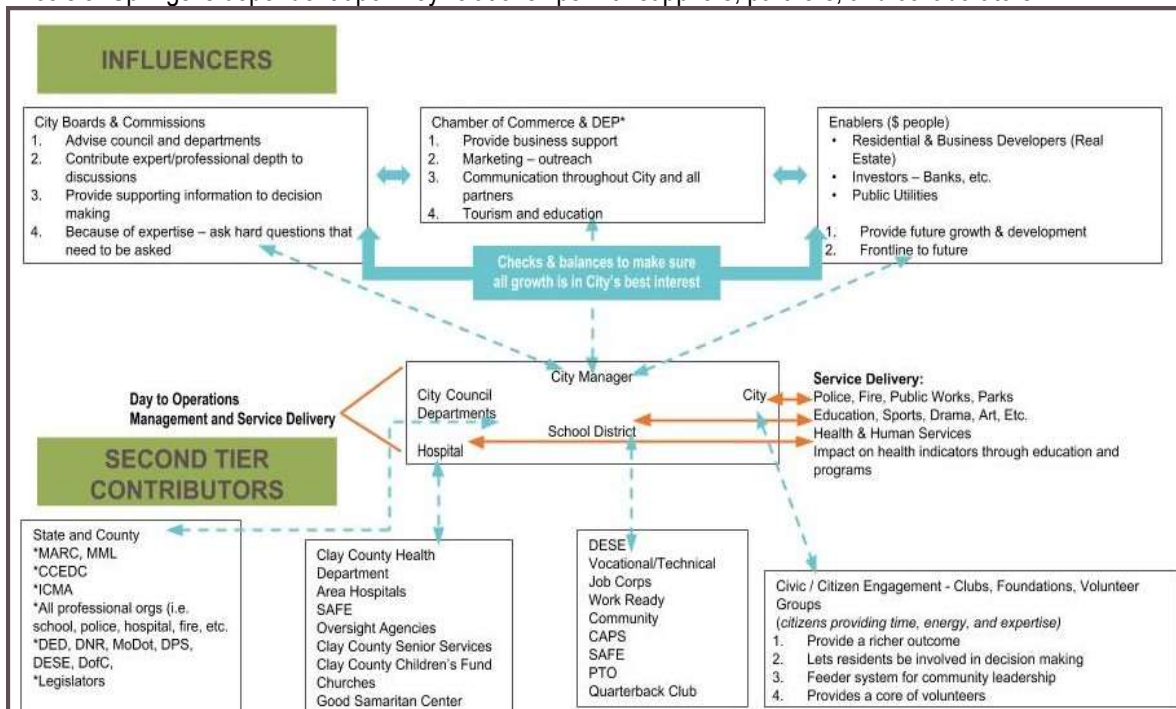
Excelsior Springs Leadership System

### 4. Programs and Services

Due to the nature of our community excellence leadership structure, most programs and services that are developed under the auspices of Communities of Excellence will eventually rest with another organization. For example, a new drop-in homeless shelter will be operated by an existing social service agency. Other programs and services that are under development are a community-wide collaborative health and wellness campaign and initiatives to introduce high school students and underemployed adults to living-wage jobs within the community.

### 5. Suppliers, Partners, and Collaborators

Excelsior Springs is dependent upon key relationships with suppliers, partners, and collaborators.



Suppliers, Partners, and Collaborators

## P.2: COMMUNITY SITUATION

### a. Competitive Environment

#### 1. Competitive Position

The competitive position of Excelsior Springs can be measured against nearby cities and Clay County as a whole. Liberty and Kearney, in large part due to proximity, are viewed as the most direct competitors to Excelsior Springs.

	Excelsior Springs	Kearney	Liberty	Clay County
Owner-occupied housing unit rate (2013-2017)	62.2%	69.3%	73.7%	69.1%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units (2013-2017)	\$116,900	\$165,600	\$169,100	\$160,900
Median gross rent (2013-2017)	\$649	\$1,090	\$870	\$887
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years (2013-2017)	89.2%	94.3%	93.8%	92.9%
Total accommodation and food services sales, 2013 (\$1,000)	\$27,369	\$17,983	\$57,818	\$756,416
Total retail sales, 2013 (\$1,000)	\$229,647	\$146,394	\$300,927	\$3,862,101
Median household income (in 2017 dollars, 2013-2017)	\$49,029	\$72,593	\$70,066	\$65,675
Persons in poverty, percent	15.3%	4.1%	8.3%	7.4%

*Comparative Data<sup>8</sup>*

Although Excelsior Springs is growing much more slowly than its local competitors, there are advantages to a slower pace of growth. Unchecked growth could undermine the city's historical flavor and independent businesses, both of which are vital to heritage tourism. Growth must be balanced and intentional.

#### 2. Competitiveness Changes

##### *Local Government*

Competitive changes that the City government is working to address include: strengthening reserve funds by ensuring utility rates produce sufficient revenues for operation; long-range financial planning to identify critical items left out of annual budgets such as deferred maintenance; focus on community attractiveness to increase property values and reinvestment using a mixture of incentives and enforcement; streamline internal processes to ensure customer needs are met; marketing our newly designated Opportunity Zone to internal and external investors; conversations with existing businesses to address community needs; tax incentives for substantial rehabilitation of property in the downtown area; and expansion of the Community Center to continue to improve community wellness and quality of life.

##### *Healthcare*

Competition in healthcare is always strong, however, COVID-19 brought significant changes to all healthcare facilities during the early months of 2020. Hospitals across the region joined together in their approach to the virus, following county and CDC guidelines in an attempt to slow or stop the virus. Hospitals prepared for the worst-case scenario by ramping up in ICU and respiratory coverage. Elective procedures and outpatient physician visits were cancelled due to the risk associated with the virus. As hospital volumes decreased, staffing levels and hours worked also followed. Hospitals in the Kansas City metro area agreed to reopen for services in early May, including clinics and surgery schedules. A second surge of the virus is currently underway, causing a second strain of business interruption. While hospitals continue to compete for patient volumes while dealing with COVID concerns, recruitment for specialty services is still a challenge, mainly in the fields of primary care and psychiatric medicine. Hospitals in general are working in concert to communicate that hospitals are open for business and able to care for our community members.

#### 3. Comparative Data

Data sets from these categories are taken into consideration:

- Resident data, which deals specifically with characteristics and behaviors of residents
- City data, which deals with the overall state of the community at large
- Tourist data, which deals with outcomes impacted by tourists and visitors

Very little extant data, except for Census tract data, is segmented out beyond the zip code level. Although more segmented data would be helpful as we attempt to define the differences between our key resident, customer, and stakeholder groups, reliable data sources that provide this level of detail have yet to be identified.

<sup>8</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 Population Estimates

## b. Strategic Context

### 1. Core Competencies

Excelsior Springs' core competencies allow us to fulfill our shared mission of making this community a place that matters. These assets are vital to our current and future success as a community. Our core competencies are:

- Collaboration: We seek to share ideas and resources for the greater good.
- Creative problem solving: New ideas and innovation drive our community initiatives.
- Strong educational system: A quality education will prepare the leaders of tomorrow.

### 2. Challenges and Advantages

#### *Strategic Challenge: Housing*

On a 2019 survey of residents and stakeholders, 48% of respondents indicated that "housing in general" was a "moderate" or "serious problem." Survey respondents cited the lack of mid-range (workforce) housing options for rent and sale and a surplus of rundown or vacant housing as their primary concerns. However, the city is not without advantages to address these issues including a strong infrastructure to support new development. In addition, there are many available lots for construction as well as existing homes in the mid-range (\$150k - \$175k) that are suitable for rehabbing. 47% of survey respondents indicated that "homelessness" was a "moderate" or "serious problem." The lack of economy, short-term housing contributes to this problem. Safe and affordable housing opportunities for all Excelsior Springs residents must be available to fully realize the vision of becoming the favorite place to live, work, learn, and play.

#### *Strategic Challenge: Healthcare*

Chronic disease contributes to a decrease in life span of several years compared to surrounding zip codes. In Clay County, there is a difference in life expectancy of 8.3 years between 64024 (Excelsior Springs) and zip code 64158, less than 25 miles away.<sup>9</sup> Excelsior Springs Hospital and other local healthcare providers are committed to addressing these issues through collaborative initiatives.

#### *Strategic Challenge: Economic Vitality*

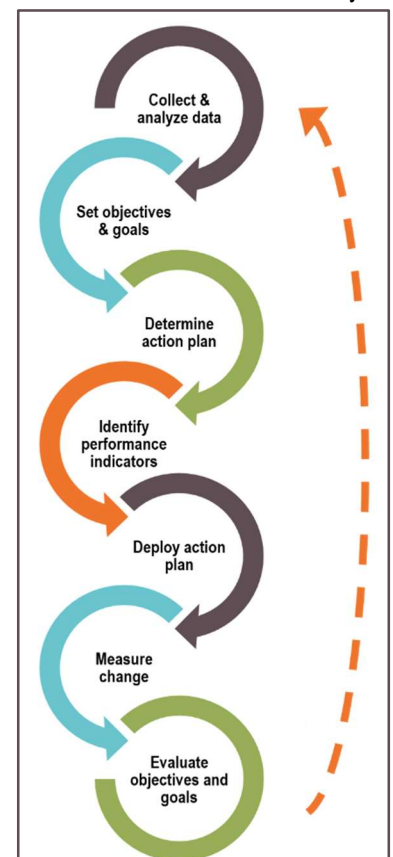
62% of survey respondents indicated that "availability of local living wage jobs" was a "moderate" or "serious problem." However, employers across all sectors report that they are unable to find qualified workers. Residents, including current HS students, are unaware that there are living-wage jobs not requiring 4-year degrees available locally. These types of jobs offer the promise of economic security.

#### *Strategic Advantages*

Excelsior Springs is fortunate to have several strategic advantages, many resulting from its location and history. The community's rich mineral water heritage, dating back to the late 1800's, provides a unique setting for heritage tourism. Excelsior Springs is home to a high-end hotel and spa as well as several bed and breakfasts, event venues, and quaint shops and restaurants. Excelsior Springs is easily accessible to I-35, making it an ideal location for a weekend getaway or wedding. Affordable retail properties, along with resources from the Downtown Excelsior Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, and local government make Excelsior Springs attractive to business owners.

### c. Performance Improvement System

The COE steering team oversees the performance improvement system as a whole. A task force was appointed to work towards improvement on each strategic challenge. The task forces engage experts in the sector and community members with a broad range of perspectives. The task forces work collaboratively with the COE steering team to collect and analyze data, set specific objectives, define the action plan, determine overall goals, and identify the metrics by which improvement will be measured. Action plans, strategies, and goals are continually evaluated and adjusted.



Performance Improvement System

<sup>9</sup> Source: Clay County Public Health Center 2016 report