



Excelsior Springs  
Communities of Excellence 2026  
Community of Excellence Application  
2021

Excelsior Springs, Missouri

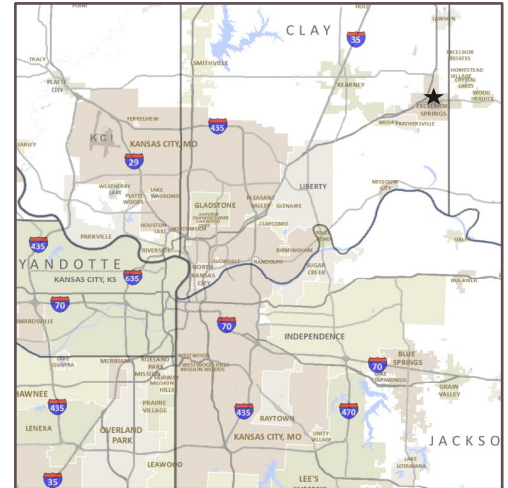
## P: COMMUNITY PROFILE

### P.1 Community Description

#### **a. Community Environment**

##### **1. Community Definition and Identity**

Excelsior Springs (ES), 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.



**Metro Kansas City Area**

##### **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

	Excelsior Springs	Kearney	Liberty	Smithville	Clay County
Population estimates (2019 5-year estimate)	11,640	10,095	31,328	9884	242,516
Population estimates (2018 5-year estimate)	11,731	10,858	32,100	10,795	249,948

**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
- Excelsior Springs Area Career Center recognized as a National Pacesetter Award Winner in 2021
- 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 includes the Job Corps Technical High School, serving Job Corp students aged 16-24
- 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>3</sup>
- 991 companies in Excelsior Springs (2012)

	Within city limits	Within zip code
Population	11,640	16,517
Median income	\$49,428	\$60,120
% of poverty	11.7%	10.1%
Adults with some college or higher	43.7%	43.8%
Median value of owner-occupied housing	\$135,400	\$142,700

**Economic Snapshot<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Source: 2014-2018 and 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

<sup>2</sup> Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

<sup>3</sup> Source: 2010 U.S. Census

- The highest concentration of businesses can be found in these sectors: healthcare, retail, accommodations and food, financial and insurance, and manufacturing<sup>4</sup>
- Significant manufacturing industry which provides 14.5% of jobs and 14.14% of our overall property taxes<sup>5</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
- 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
- Higher 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

### 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	7.1%	11.8%
Homeownership	68.8%	58.3%
Adults with a high school diploma	89.3%	86.2%
Uninsured	6.8%	11.5%
People in poverty	6.4%	17.5%
Median household income	\$62,152	\$38,736
Unemployment rate	2.3%	6.9%

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

X indicates this is a priority among the stakeholder group	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 Speed Internet Access	High-Quality	Neighborhood K-5 Schools	Well-trained Workforce
	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	X			x	x	x			x	x	x	
	x		x					x					x	x	x		x				x
Residents																					
Tourists																					

<sup>4</sup> Source: factfinder.census.gov

<sup>5</sup> Source: cityofesmo.com/financials/GASFinal-2018.pdf, page 104

<sup>6</sup> Source: Opportunity360 Measurement Report for Census Tracts 217.01 and 217.02 (as of 7/1/21)

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

Non-resident professionals	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Investors	x					x		x	x	x
Franchises				x		x		x	x	x
Small-business owners	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x
Users of rec facilities & amenities	x	x			x		x	x	x	x

*Expectations of Resident, Customer, and Stakeholder Groups*

#### 4. People 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

The community excellence group, branded as Thrive Excelsior, has established a mission, vision, and values to guide its work.

**Mission:** Working in harmony to create a thriving, sustainable community for all generations

**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 Thrive Excelsior initiative. The leadership team, referred to from this point forward as the steering team, includes representation from City government, school district, hospital, social service organizations, and private citizens. Many other sectors and organizations are represented through our task force structure including the following.

ES Hospital  
Healthcare providers  
County health department  
Insurance broker  
ES Senior Center  
Prevention  
Housing Authority

Banking and finance  
Real estate  
Small business owners  
Historic Preservation Commission  
Nonprofit and social services  
City government  
Mainstreet America (DEP)

Tourism/hospitality  
Manufacturing  
Chamber of Commerce  
School district  
Youth/students  
Newspaper  
Job Corps



### 3. Leadership System

The Thrive Excelsior leadership system includes these components.

*Backbone Organization:* City of Excelsior Springs, provides funding and administrative support for Thrive Excelsior efforts.

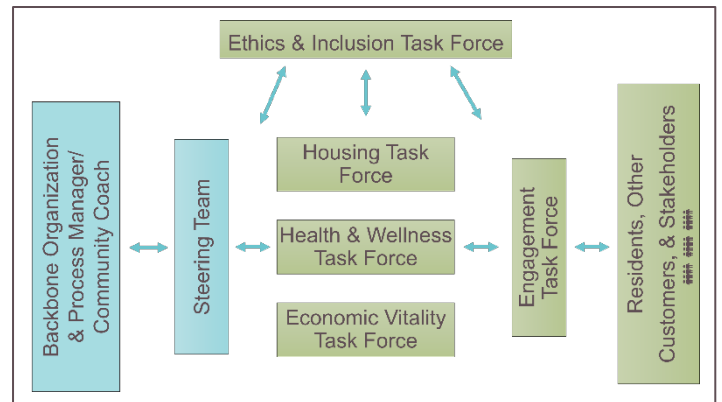
*Process Manager/Community Coach:* This position is provided backbone organization to provide process management and facilitation services and implement communication strategies.

*Steering Team:* Sets strategy and also provides governance and oversight for the overall effort. (P.1b[2]), (7.4[2])

*Housing, Health & Wellness, and Economic Vitality Task Forces:* Implement strategy related to increasing life span and quality of life. (P.1b[2])

*Engagement Task Force:* Implement strategy related to resident and community engagement. (P.1b[2])

*Ethics and Inclusion Task Force:* Part of the governance structure, provide oversight and direction to ensure ethical, equitable, and inclusive practices. (P.1b[2])



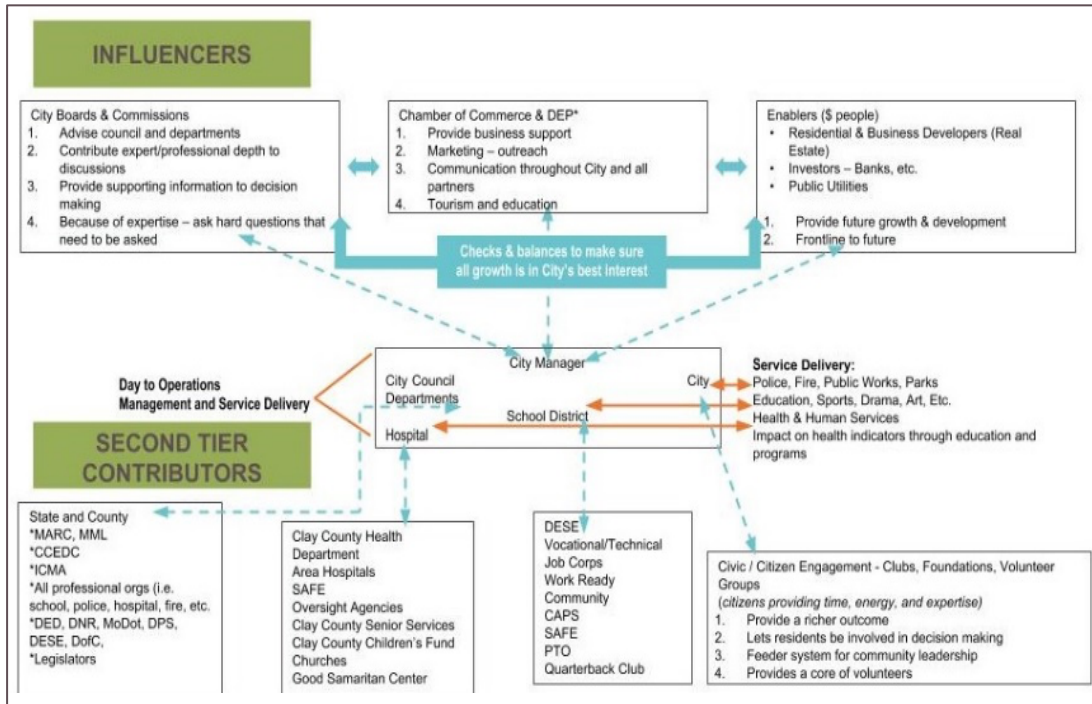
### 4. Programs and Services

Due to the nature of our community excellence leadership structure, most programs and services that are developed under the auspices of Thrive Excelsior will eventually rest with another organization. At this time the following programs and services are offered or being developed through Thrive Excelsior. (2.2a[1]), (7.2[1]&[2])

- Citizens Leadership Academy (Engagement Task Force): Launching in September 2021, this 6-month program will allow Excelsior Springs residents and other customers to learn about key community work systems and develop skills needed to serve in elected or appointed community leadership roles.
- Smoke-free Housing program (Health and Wellness Task Force): This initiative encourages owners of multi-unit rental properties to develop smoke-free policies and provides resources to support landlords in implementing new policies.
- Be Local. Buy Local. Thrive local. campaign (Economic Vitality Task Force): This campaign encourages residents and tourists to support local businesses.
- Curb Appeal Award (Housing Task Force): This program recognizes homeowners who go above and beyond to maintain their homes and properties, contributing to the overall beauty of the community.

### 5. Suppliers, Partners, and Collaborators

Excelsior Springs is dependent upon key relationships with influencers (partners), suppliers (who carry out day to day operations within the community), and second tier contributors (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	90.4%	89.7%	94.6%	93.2%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$135,400	\$188,700	\$182,000	\$174,900
Median gross rent	\$685	\$1,063	\$922	\$965
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years	88.5%	95%	94.9%	93.3%
Total retail sales, 2017 (\$1,000)	\$153,939	\$134,564	\$366,269	\$390,8365
Median household income (2019 inflation adjusted dollars)	\$49,428	\$85,561	\$76,577	\$70,510
Persons in poverty, percent	11.7%	2.6%	7.6%	8.2%

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

#### **2. Competitiveness Changes**

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.

Competition in healthcare remains strong, and during the year, COVID-19 continued to provide challenges within the community. Hospitals throughout the greater Kansas City metro partnered together to assure that community members had access to COVID vaccinations. Hospital volumes improved during the pandemic and stayed strong even as COVID restrictions were lifted. Clinic and surgery volumes continue to grow, and the community has rallied around the healthcare systems, workers and medical staff. The Excelsior Springs Hospital and its affiliated service lines continue to adapt to new challenges, and are successfully recruiting and retaining staff, medical professionals and developing new programs to be able to meet the needs for healthcare in the community. The hospital recently has recruited and hired two Family Medicine specialists, a Board-Certified Emergency Medicine Physician, a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) and has contracted with seven new specialty service providers. Surgical and ancillary volumes have doubled in the last year. Grant funding provided great opportunities for the telehealth platforms, addiction medicine approaches and the purchase/renovation of an affiliated rural health clinic just a few miles from the hospital. Challenges continue to exist with recruitment of behavioral health and psychiatric specialties.

#### **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 secondary 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.

### **b. Strategic Context**

#### **1. Core Competencies**

Thrive Excelsior's 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.

<sup>8</sup> Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimate: except for total retail sales which is reported from Statistics for Employer Firms by Industry, Sex, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status for the U.S., States, Metro Areas, Counties, and Places: 2017



## 2. Challenges and Advantages

### *Strategic Challenge: Housing*

On a 2020 survey of residents and stakeholders, 54% 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. 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 (Liberty/Kansas City), 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*

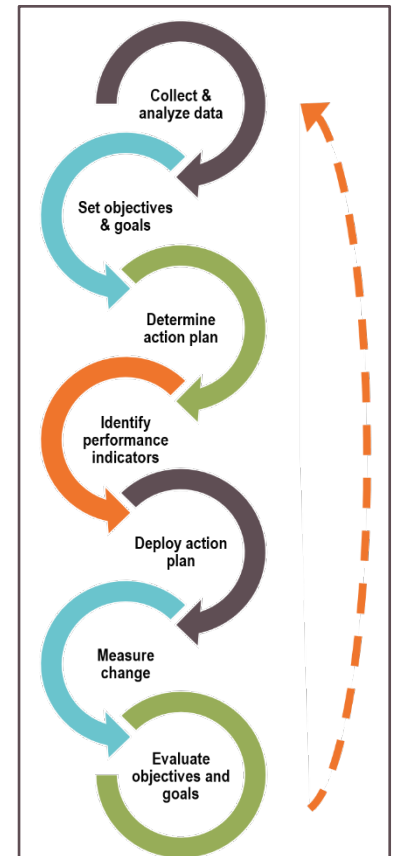
67% of survey respondents indicated that “availability of local living wage jobs” was a “moderate” or “serious problem.” However, employers across all sectors report that they are unable to find qualified workers. Residents, including current HS students, are unaware that there are living-wage jobs not 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 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

## Glossary

**353 Incentives Program:** Created to assist in the removal of blight by providing local property tax abatement to development projects located within a 353 Area.

**CAPS:** Northland Center for Advanced Professional Studies provides high school students in the Northland with a professional, innovative, and entrepreneurial education through full immersion in high demand/high skill careers.

**Career Center:** Excelsior Springs Area Career Center provides career and technical training to students from Excelsior Springs and surrounding communities.

**Clay County Children's Fund:** Generated from one-quarter of a cent sales tax for the purchase of services to protect the well-being and safety of children and youth nineteen years of age or less and to strengthen families. Fund is administered by a board appointed by the Clay County Commission.

**Community Connect:** Resource fair to provide services to those who are homeless and at risk of homelessness.

**Community Excellence Group:** Collective reference to the steering team and all task forces

**DED:** Department of Economic Development.

**DESE:** Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**DHSS:** Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

**DNR:** Department of Natural Resources.

**DofC:** Department of Conservation.

**Downtown Excelsior Partnership (DEP):** Formed in 2006 by local businesses, individuals, and downtown building owners to create a vibrant downtown Excelsior Springs. Utilizes the revitalization framework of the National Trust Main Street Program to preserve and revitalize a historic downtown.

**DPS:** Department of Public Safety.

**ESSD:** Excelsior Springs School District.

**Excelsior Springs Chamber of Commerce:** Local chamber of commerce that works to support the economic development of Excelsior Springs and the surrounding area.

**Excelsior Springs Community Center:** Owned and operated by the City of Excelsior Springs. The facility is over 50,000 square feet and features an indoor aquatic space, group exercise/spin classes, exercise and strength training equipment, elevated track, basketball/volleyball courts, racquetball courts, and childcare services. The Community Center is viewed as a strategic advantage for the city.

**Excelsior Springs Hospital (ESH):** 25-bed critical access hospital owned by the City of Excelsior Springs.

**Full Employment Council:** Business-led, private, nonprofit corporation whose mission is to obtain public and private sector employment for the unemployed and underemployed residents of the Greater Kansas City area

**Good Samaritan Center:** Independent social service agency giving emergency assistance and advocacy to families and individuals in Excelsior Springs and the surrounding rural areas of Clay and Ray Counties, who were lacking or at risk of not having, basic necessities.

**Job Corps:** A no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 to 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training.

**MARC:** Mid-America Regional Council, nonprofit association of city and county governments and the metropolitan planning organization for the bi-state Kansas City region.

**Meet the Need:** Volunteer organization that provides assistance to the working poor in northern Clay and Ray counties through crisis situations in life.

**Mineral Water Heritage:** Expansive growth and development of Excelsior Springs beginning in the 1880's after the healing properties of the city's mineral water springs were discovered. Popularity of the mineral water spas began to decline in the late 1950's.

**MML:** Missouri Municipal League.

**MoDot:** Missouri Department of Transportation.

**Northland Health Alliance:** Comprised of hospitals and health care agencies in the Northland area of the Metro Kansas City area. Conducts community health needs assessments and works together to improve the overall health of the Northland.

**NPO:** Nonprofit organization.

**Opportunity Zone:** Federal economic development program in which new investors in a designated economically-distressed community may be eligible for preferential tax treatment.

**PTO:** School-based parent-teacher organizations.

**Quarterback Club:** Nonprofit organization formed to provide support and funding to local programming for kids in the Excelsior Springs area.

**SAFE:** Substance Abuse Free Environment. Community coalition that works to reduce substance use among youth through evidence-based strategies.

**Senior Center:** Operated by the City of Excelsior Springs and housed within the Community Center. The Senior Center provides recreational activities and hot meals to seniors and adults with intellectual disabilities.

**Steering Team:** Leadership team of the Community Excellence Group which Sets strategy and also provides governance and oversight for the overall effort

**Task Force:** Work groups within the Community Excellence Group charged with carrying out specific tasks or strategies

**The City:** The city government of Excelsior Springs.

**Thrive Excelsior:** Official name and brand of the Community Excellence Group

**Tobacco 21:** An initiative to raise the minimum age for purchasing tobacco from 18 to 21.