

It is a story of—

People, and the leaders they selected to bring about the betterment and vitalization of their community.

The American governmental process, particularly the close collaboration between local, State, and Federal activities; and the highly motivated sense of social responsibility shown by all of these levels of government.

The close relationship between leadership capability and economic growth; with the former having the predominant role in bringing about the latter.

Salina is a community of some 45,000, located almost in the geographic center of the contiguous 48 States. It is a trade and service center in a predominantly agricultural region—one which extends into Nebraska, Colorado, and Oklahoma. Population growth in the 1950's was phenomenal (65 percent). This expansion, however, was closely tied into the growth of Schilling Air Force Base, which had been reopened in 1952. It was in this context—the local commitment to Schilling as the basis for growth—that the community received the Department of Defense notice of the planned June 1965 closing of the Base.

The Salina story is presented in chronological sequence, beginning with a brief summary of Salina life in 1964, before the closure announcement. It ends with a description of Salina in mid-1966, after the major planning, organizing, and implementing phases of the adjustment had been completed.

The appendix includes more detailed discussions of the major elements of the adjustment program, as well as statistical data covering the major local economic indicators.

Salina's story is one of community resiliency—and it is a tribute to the persistence, patience, and devotion to a cause, exhibited by all of those who played a part.

Chapter I

SALINA, 1964

In September 1964, the Salina City Planning Commission forwarded a comprehensive plan for the city's growth to the city commissioners. The document opens with the following statement:

In 1724 a French emissary, who was in the area of what is now Salina, wrote: "This is a fine country, and the most beautiful land in the world. The meadows are rolling like the sea and abound in wild animals, especially in the ox, cow, hind, and stag in such quantities as to surpass the imagination * * *"

The report proceeds to describe Salina in terms of its excellent schools (the Salina Senior High School ranked highest in the State in State scholarships for 12 of the past 13 years); the major population growth (Salina County was second in population growth in the State during the 1950's); the ever-increasing dependence on trade, the 50 churches, two private colleges, and the city's plans for future growth (a population of 59,000 was expected by 1975, increasing to 72,000 by 1985).

Salina's transportation resources are superb—located at the intersection of two interstate highways (I-70 and I-35W); served by four major railroads, a scheduled airline, and numerous trucking and bus concerns.