

Derby is in his veins, as Austin was born and raised here and his father served as one of the original 13 volunteer firefighters with the Derby Fire Department. There is even a room named after his parents (Sam and Phyllis) not far from his office at city hall, in the Derby Welcome Center. Having those close ties and seeing his father's commitment to the community pushed Austin to pursue a similar career.

"I spent time with him at the fire station, which was right next to city hall. [With a] smaller town, smaller than it is now, you just knew a lot of the people involved in the organization – not only as employees, but volunteers," Austin said. "I just saw public service as a good thing to do, as an admirable path."

Pursuing his master's in urban affairs (now public administration) at Wichita State University, Austin completed an internship with the city of Derby as part of his coursework. Following that, former City Manager Ward Clements brought him on in a part-time role to help with special projects – one of the first being to secure computers for city hall.

Over the years, Austin has worn a number of hats for the city – from assistant city manager to Director of Public Safety to his current role as Director of Operations. Austin was hired on full time in the latter role (following his

retirement after 21 years with the Wichita Fire Department) starting in 1996, a position that kept him fairly busy.

"The Director of Operations has had a number of tasks. When I first made that transition, I was just handling building items," Austin said. "I've at one time also been in charge of the senior center and the court. They were just some reorganizational changes and I had those under my supervision. We've since rotated those back out, so now operations is back to kind of where that started – buildings and IT."

Being in charge of all building and IT-related functions (including security, cameras, etc.), Austin said he has

worked with or in almost every department in the city of Derby. In his 38 years working for the city, he has also had a hand in a number of new buildings constructed – including Fire Stations 81 and 82, the library, city hall and the municipal court building.

"When you're building those buildings, you're trying to figure out spaces for 20 years into the future, not today, and that's a challenge. It's hard to make that all work, but I love those challenges," Austin said. "I think we've done a pretty good job of not being extravagant but trying to provide for the people."

Along with the buildings, the people have changed over the years – with more employees around city hall now than

when Austin first started. That, admittedly, is what Austin said he will miss the most, speaking to the quality of employees the city has.

Noting he enjoys work, Austin admitted retiring now offers some time to enjoy that experience – with a cruise in the immediate future and more time with grandkids and at the cabin on the lake down the road.

Like his initial college plans (trading a degree in computers for one in fire science), Austin has continued to adapt his career aspirations. While wanting to serve as a fire chief in Wichita, he identified another leadership path and is grateful to have had the opportunity to serve the city he calls home – with city staff happy to have him as well.

"Ted Austin has been more than instrumental in growing the city and managing the organization," said City Manager Kathy Sexton. "He set the example of a dedicated public servant who is frugal with tax dollars and always exhibits grace under pressure."

"I just enjoyed being able to provide a service that helps our citizens have the quality of life that they'd like to have," Austin said. "I hope that the work I've done here has been of value and quality service. The city has certainly given me plenty of opportunities to learn, grow and try different things. I feel like I've stepped up and done well in those areas." >>



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**One of Austin's first official tasks working for Derby was to bring computers to city hall. Here he is shown working with the technology in 1994.**

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