Mayor – Sandy Sanders

City Administrator – Ray Gosack

City Clerk – Sherri Gard

Board of Directors

Ward 1 – Keith D. Lau
Ward 2 – Andre' Good
Ward 3 – Mike Lorenz
Ward 4 – George Catsavis
At Large Position 5 – Pam Weber
At Large Position 6 – Kevin Settle
At Large Position 7 – Philip H. Merry Jr.

AGENDA

Fort Smith Board of Directors
SPECIAL MEETING & STUDY SESSION
December 9, 2014 ~ 12:00 Noon
Fort Smith Public Library Community Room
3201 Rogers Avenue

SPECIAL MEETING

ROLL CALL

PRESENTATION BY MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING
(Section 2-37 of Ordinance No. 24-10)

1. Ordinance to adopt the fiscal year 2015 Operating Budget and to provide other matters related thereto ** *Second Reading* **

ADJOURN

STUDY SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

1. Presentation of proposed Comprehensive Plan

2. Review preliminary agenda for the December 16, 2014 regular meeting

ADJOURN

The City of Fort Smith ARKANSAS

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
Sherri Gard, CMC, City Clerk
Heather Iames, Assistant City Clerk

MEDIA RELEASE

December 3, 2014

Directors Keith Lau, Andre' Good, George Catsavis and Pam Weber have called a special meeting for 12:00 Noon, Tuesday, December 9, 2014 at the Fort Smith Public Library Community Room, 3201 Rogers Avenue, to accommodate the second reading of the following:

- Ordinance to adopt the fiscal year 2015 Operating Budget and to provide other matters relating thereto ** *Second Reading* **

The previously scheduled study session on same date will occur immediately following adjournment of the special meeting.

For agenda information, please contact the City Clerk's Office at 784-2208. Once finalized, the agenda for the special meeting and study session will be posted on the City's website, *www.fortsmithar.gov*.

Sherri Gard

Sherri Gard, City Clerk

623 Garrison Avenue
P.O. Box 1908
Fort Smith, Arkansas 72902
(479) 784-2208
FAX (479) 784-2256
E-mail: cityclerk@fortsmithar.gov

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SM1

ORDINANCE NO._____

AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT THE FISCAL YEAR 2015
OPERATING BUDGET AND TO PROVIDE OTHER
MATTERS RELATING THERETO

BE IT ORDAINED AND ENACTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CITY OF FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS THAT:

Section 1: The City of Fort Smith fiscal year 2015 Operating Budget is approved and authorized as on file in the City Clerk's office.

Section 2: The City Administrator is hereby authorized to transfer appropriated monies among and within authorized programs.

Section 3: The 2014 year end encumbrances are hereby appropriated in the 2015 Budget.

Section 4: All ordinances and resolutions in conflict with the budget hereby are amended to conform with the budget hereby approved.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 2nd DAY OF DECEMBER 2014.

APPROVED:

_____
Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
City Clerk

Approved as to form:

_____
Publish One Time

City of Fort Smith
FY15
Budget Comparison Summary-General Fund

	Estimated FY14	Budget FY15	Increase (Decrease)	Projected FY16
Revenues				
Intergovernmental	$ 4,354,652	$ 3,202,314	$ (1,152,338)	$ 3,253,514
Taxes and Assessments	33,873,096	34,345,838	472,742	34,919,898
Court Fines and Forfeitures	2,270,000	2,225,000	(45,000)	2,225,000
Licenses and Permits	1,335,120	1,462,400	127,280	1,470,000
Service Charges and Fees	639,851	663,623	23,772	665,623
Miscellaneous	922,467	1,076,069	153,602	1,083,293
Transfers	2,918,633	2,991,310	72,677	3,064,600
Total	$ 46,313,819	$ 45,966,554	$ (347,265)	$ 46,681,928
Expenditures				
Policy and Administration Services	$ 2,719,327	$ 2,706,370	$ (12,957)	$ 2,737,673
Management Services	2,585,295	2,775,376	190,081	2,785,791
Development Services	2,879,953	2,832,896	(47,057)	2,863,162
Police Services	15,495,608	16,443,600	947,992	16,516,700
Fire Services	15,455,967	13,457,850	(1,998,117)	13,811,870
Operation Services	8,747,312	7,501,930	(1,245,382)	8,189,524
Non-Departmental	2,884,517	2,396,860	(487,657)	2,510,525
Total	$ 50,767,979	$ 48,114,882	$ (2,653,097)	$ 49,415,245
Excess (Deficiency) Revenues Over Expenditures	$ (4,454,160)	$ (2,148,328)	$ 2,305,832	$ (2,733,317)
Fund Balance, Beginning of Year	10,065,932	5,611,772	(4,454,160)	3,463,444
Fund Balance, End of Year	$ 5,611,772	$ 3,463,444	$ (2,148,328)	$ 730,127

City of Fort Smith
FY15
Budget Comparison Summary-Street Maintenance Fund

	Estimated FY14	Budget FY15	Increase (Decrease)	Projected FY16
Revenues				
Intergovernmental	$ 5,603,585	$ 5,612,206	$ 8,621	$ 5,612,206
Taxes and Assessments	2,056,000	2,097,120	41,120	2,139,000
Licenses and Permits	170,448	165,000	(5,448)	165,000
Miscellaneous	8,355	8,500	145	8,500
Total	$ 7,838,388	$ 7,882,826	$ 44,438	$ 7,924,706
Expenditures				
Policy and Administration Services	$ 162,574	$ 160,119	$ (2,455)	$ 165,214
Management Services	410,351	425,934	15,583	428,503
Development Services	75,164	77,807	2,643	77,877
Operation Services	6,589,748	6,673,440	83,692	6,641,806
Non-Departmental	739,982	492,185	(247,797)	577,400
Total	$ 7,977,819	$ 7,829,485	$ (148,334)	$ 7,890,800
Excess (Deficiency) Revenues Over Expenditures	$ (139,431)	$ 53,341	$ 192,772	$ 33,906
Fund Balance, Beginning of Year	1,572,231	1,432,800	(139,431)	1,486,141
Fund Balance, End of Year	$ 1,432,800	$ 1,486,141	$ 53,341	$ 1,520,047

City of Fort Smith
FY15
Budget Comparison Summary-Water and Sewer Operating Fund

	Estimated FY14	Budget FY15	Increase (Decrease)	Projected FY16
Revenues				
Services Charges and Fees	$ 36,766,429	$ 37,366,120	$ 599,691	$ 38,023,284
Miscellaneous	114,317	117,000	2,683	117,000
Total	$ 36,880,746	$ 37,483,120	$ 602,374	$ 38,140,284
Expenses				
Policy and Administration Services	$ 390,318	$ 391,356	$ 1,038	$ 404,472
Management Services	2,776,997	2,747,129	(29,868)	2,776,445
Development Services	282,218	269,807	(12,411)	271,312
Operation Services	35,363,124	35,384,300	21,176	34,464,920
Non-Departmental	337,100	363,610	26,510	367,400
Total	$ 39,149,757	$ 39,156,202	$ 6,445	$ 38,284,549
Excess (Deficiency) Revenues Over Expenditures	$ (2,269,011)	$ (1,673,082)	$ 595,929	$ (144,265)
Working Capital, Beginning of Year	9,384,941	5,685,930	(3,699,011)	3,562,848
Working Capital, End of Year	$ 7,115,930	$ 4,012,848	$ (3,103,082)	$ 3,418,583
Adjustment for CIP Transfers	(1,430,000)	(450,000)	980,000	(850,000)
Adjusted Working Capital, End of Year	$ 5,685,930	$ 3,562,848	$ 2,123,082	$ 2,568,583

City of Fort Smith
FY15
Budget Comparison Summary-Sanitation Operating Fund

	Estimated FY14	Budget FY15	Increase (Decrease)	Projected FY16
Revenues				
Service Charges and Fees	$ 12,982,378	$ 13,071,000	$ 88,622	$ 13,117,000
Miscellaneous	20,131	32,300	12,169	32,300
Total	$ 13,002,509	$ 13,103,300	$ 100,791	$ 13,149,300
Expenses				
Policy and Administration Services	$ 204,771	$ 202,425	$ (2,346)	$ 208,940
Management Services	791,649	804,671	13,022	811,421
Operation Services	10,854,403	9,802,350	(1,052,053)	9,298,000
Non-Departmental	1,815,479	1,810,146	(5,333)	1,822,400
Total	$ 13,666,302	$ 12,619,592	$ (1,046,710)	$ 12,140,761
Excess (Deficiency) Revenues Over Expenditures	$ (663,793)	$ 483,708	$ 1,147,501	$ 1,008,539
Working Capital, Beginning of Year	3,122,590	1,758,797	(1,363,793)	1,542,505
Working Capital, End of Year	$ 2,458,797	$ 2,242,505	$ (216,292)	$ 2,551,044
Adjustment for CIP Transfers	(700,000)	(700,000)	0	(700,000)
Adjusted Working Capital, End of Year	$ 1,758,797	$ 1,542,505	$ (216,292)	$ 1,851,044

MEMORANDUM

December 1, 2014

TO: Ray Gosack, City Administrator

FROM : Kara Bushkuhl, Director of Finance Kara

SUBJECT: 2015 Budget Hearing and Approval

During the budget review sessions with the Board, the following adjustments to the proposed 2015 Budget were made:

1. The reductions to the Transit program budget have an impact upon the reimbursement from the government. The net decrease in grant funding is $76,200.
2. The latest review of franchise fee revenue in 2014 to date indicates that an additional $50,000 will be received during 2014. This same increase is estimated for 2015 as well.
3. The adjustment for the Street Maintenance Fund ad valorem taxes for 2014 carries over to 2015 in the amount of $91,800 in additional revenue.
4. The estimated amount of revenue from amending the city's alcohol related permits and fees is $89,000 for 2015. The city's ordinances will need to be updated to reflect that the city will follow state law by charging the amounts authorized by the state.
5. Increased fees for cemetery plots are anticipated to generate an additional $25,000 for 2015.
6. The net effect of changes in expenditures for the District Court programs impacts the reimbursement from Sebastian County. The net increase in reimbursement is $6,829.
7. The transfer in from the Water and Sewer Fund to the Street Maintenance Fund of $60,000 for 2015 has been eliminated.
8. The 1% COLA and implementation of step/merit pay have been added to each program at a total cost of $1,425,808.
9. The positions eliminated include: 1 Police Records Clerk; 2 Patrol Officers; 2 parks positions – a lifeguard and a seasonal laborer; 1 Transit Dispatcher; and 1 Cross Connection Technician in Utilities. This reduces the total number of positions authorized for 2015 from 943.83 FTE to 936.83 FTE. This compares to the authorized positions in 2014 of 943.33 FTE. The net decrease to appropriations in 2015 is $309,790.
10. The 1% reduction in the operating costs in all General Fund programs totaled $468,818 among all four operating funds. Due to the cost allocation for various General Fund programs, the Street Maintenance Fund and the Water & Sewer Operating Fund reflect reductions as well as the General Fund.

The attached summary schedule provides the details of the above adjustments to the 2015 Budget. The schedules attached to the 2015 Budget adoption ordinance have been amended to reflect all of these changes.

I recommend the approval of the 2015 Budget, as amended.

If you have any questions or require more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

pc: Jeff Dingman

SS1.

MEMORANDUM

To: Ray Gosack, City Administrator
From: Wally Bailey, Director of Development Services
Date: December 4, 2014
Subject: Comprehensive Plan Update

The comprehensive plan update is near conclusion as we are now in the final phase seeking approval by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, the Planning Commission and the Board of Directors. A chart showing the project work schedule is attached.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC) has been working with our comprehensive plan consultant Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT).

The Comprehensive Plan was developed in coordination with the CPSC and includes updated goals, policies, and actions based on the public input collected throughout the planning process.

The CPSC and WRT hosted two community forums, three open houses and twelve meetings in a box. For anyone who was unable to attend a meeting an online survey was made available to collect their ideas. The public input included approximately 1,600 ideas, and 600 priorities. Also, much credit and thanks should be given to the citizens of Fort Smith for the time they took to attend our meetings and offer their recommendations and ideas for the Future of Fort Smith.

Members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and a representative from the consultant team will present the Final "Future Fort Smith" Comprehensive Plan Update with a brief overview of the planning process and a focus on the next steps for the City.

The final plan represents the culmination of an 18 month community-based planning effort to update the City's 2002 Comprehensive Plan. The updated plan is scheduled for adoption by the Planning Commission on December 9th, and will be on the agenda for Board adoption on December 16th.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

PHASE I - 1 MONTH

Mobilization

Project Scoping

Organizational Plan

Data Book

Kickoff Events

Board of Directors / Planning Commission Briefing

Open House # 1

"Introduction to the Process"

PHASE II - 10 MONTHS

Vision / Community Assessment (5 months)

Articulating the Vision

Forum Series #1

"Issues and Aspirations"

Community Assessment

- Land Use / Development Pattern
- Demographics
- Economics / Market Analysis
- Housing & Neighborhoods
- Community Character
- Transportation / Infrastructure
- Public Facilities / Services
- Natural / Cultural Resources

Dynamics of Growth & Change / Future Scenarios (5 Months)

Dynamics of Growth

- Growth Projections
- Susceptibility to Change
- Factors for Change
- Trend Scenario Development

Forum Series #2

"Imagining Alternative Futures"

Open House #2

"Selecting a Preferred Future"

Board of Directors / Planning Commission Briefing

PHASE III - 6 MONTHS

Plan Development

Strategic Directions

- Goals
- Policies
- Strategies and Actions

Implementation Plan

Draft Plan Document

Open House #3

"Public Plan Review"

Final Plan Document

Board of Directors / Planning Commission Review and Adoption

A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE CITY OF FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS

December, 2014

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Endorsement

December 8, 2014

Fort Smith Planning Commission Adoption

December 9, 2014

Fort Smith Board of Directors Adoption

December 16, 2014

Prepared by WRT for The City of Fort Smith

With Support From Ricker Cunningham, Williams/Crawford, and Mindmixer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Citizens of Fort Smith

Fort Smith Board of Directors 2013-14

Sandy Sanders, Mayor
George Catsavis
André Good
Keith Lau
Mike Lorenz
Philip H. Merry, Jr.
Kevin Settle
Pam Weber

Planning Commission 2013-14

Bob Cooper, Jr.
Brandon Cox
Steve Griffin
Michelle Hood
Rett Howard
John Huffman
Don Keesee
Walton Maurras
Vicki Newton
Jennifer Parks
Michael Redd
Marshall Sharpe
Richard Spearman

Comprehensive Plan Technical Resource Team

Ray Gosack - City Administrator
Jeff Dingman - Deputy City Administrator
Mike Alsup – Director of Parks and Recreation
Wally Bailey – Director of Development Services
Russell Gibson – Director of Information and Technology
Claude Legris – Director of the Fort Smith Convention and Visitors Bureau
Kevin Lindsey – Chief of Police
Baridi Nkokheli - Director of Sanitation
Steve Parke – Director of Utilities
Mike Richards – Fire Chief
Greg Riley – Director of Streets and Traffic Control
Ken Savage – Director of Transit
Stan Snodgrass – Director of Engineering
Tracy Winchell – Communications Manager

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee 2013-14

Bobby Aldridge
Donna Bragg
Rob Coleman
John Cooley
Dr. Leroy Cox
Joel Culberson
Rham Cunningham
Ed Devero
Jack Green
Pete Hanham
Michelle Hood
Galen Hunter
Matt Keep
Teresa Keller
Bruce King
Zena Marshall
Mitch Minnick
Alex Nguyen
Megan Raynor
Alex Sanchez
Sam Sicard
Jeff Smith
Jim Spears
Sherry Toliver
Rocky Walker
Ulysses Washington
Phil White
Whitney Yoder

City of Fort Smith Planning & Zoning

Sincere thanks to all other organizations and participants throughout the planning process.

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CHAPTER I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Fort Smith stands at an important juncture in its history. Like many former manufacturing centers across the U.S., the city experienced substantial economic losses over the past two decades. Between 2000 and 2010, the community grew by less than 6,000 people and shed thousands of jobs.

During the same period, Fort Smith's land area expanded by nearly 12 square miles by annexing a portion of the decommissioned area of Fort Chaffee. With future population projections indicating the continuation of modest growth rate trends, the community faces the conundrum of how to appropriately balance population and investment among the various sectors of the city, with limited fiscal resources.

The response to this challenge is that Fort Smith must exert influence on where and how future growth occurs, to maintain and increase investment in downtown and avoid obsolescence in existing neighborhoods, while continuing to support new development at Chaffee Crossing.

To do so, it is necessary to start with a new comprehensive plan that provides the "big new picture" for Future Fort Smith –an over-arching vision and a set of strategic directions to set a new course, founded on the long-term vision of the city's residents.

The Existing Plan

Fort Smith adopted its first citywide Comprehensive Plan in 2002 as both a physical plan for future growth and development, as well as a day-to-day decision-making guide for city staff and elected and appointed officials.

The 2002 plan was intended to be a working document that would be reviewed, amended, and updated as needed and as elements of the plan are implemented. Although the document effectively served to guide decisions and municipal functions, no amendments to the plan were adopted over the subsequent ten years, and the first comprehensive analysis of its implementation occurred in October of 2011. At the time, the Board of Directors decided to undertake a Plan Update with the assistance of a consultant team to facilitate a public engagement strategy and produce an updated Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan.

Following a rigorous solicitation process, a team led by WRT Planning and Design was selected based on their extensive experience, technical competence, and a record of successful action-oriented comprehensive planning.

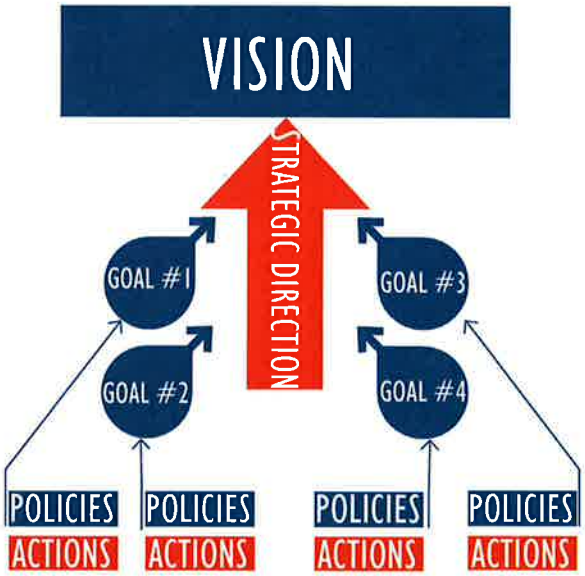
The Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

The Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan is a document containing goals, policies, and actions that define and support a common vision and purpose. The Plan sets a direction that will be used by the city of Fort Smith to proactively manage future change. While the present document is an update, the original purpose of the Comprehensive Plan remains as stated below:

"The Comprehensive Plan provides goals, policies, and land planning principles for guiding the future development of the City. It is used to assist the Planning Commission, the Board of Directors and City Staff as they make decisions on land use and zoning issues, capital improvement programming, transportation, and coordination efforts with other jurisdictions and agencies. It also serves as a guide to creating the future Fort Smith envisioned by the community as a whole."

The Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan is comprehensive in the topics that it addresses and in its geographic scope, encompassing the city as a whole. The legal authority to implement and track the progress of the Plan, stated in Title 14 of the Arkansas Statutes and Codes, resides with the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The overarching goal that guides the comprehensive plan is the community-based Vision Statement and supporting Strategic Directions. The plan document is organized consistent with this framework, with each goal and policy identified with the Strategic Direction it is intended to support. Although the content of the plan is formatted to align with specific topic-based elements, this connection to the Vision Statement ties each specific action directly back to the community's Vision for the Future of Fort Smith.



Key Challenges & Opportunities

As part of the process to update the 2002 Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan, a Community Assessment was developed to characterize the challenges and opportunities currently facing the city of Fort Smith. The Community Assessment focused on using available data to analyze existing conditions, trends, deficiencies, and key challenges. This document provided the information necessary to develop policy recommendations for the plan, and established a baseline to measure progress in implementation.

Based on key findings from the Community Assessment, the five greatest challenges and opportunities facing the Fort Smith over the next two decades include:

1. **Promoting Economic Diversification:** While the Fort Smith MSA lost over one third of its manufacturing workforce during the last decade, employment in sectors such as Health, Education and Government grew apace and will continue to do so in the future, along with the Professional and Business Services, Financial Activities, Leisure and Hospitality sectors. When combined with a high educational attainment, the presence of the University of Arkansas Fort Smith, and a younger and more diverse population offer great potential for the city's economic growth and diversification.

2. **Capitalizing on Location:** Fort Smith is strategically located just south of I-40, which links North Carolina to California and the many employment hubs and tourist destinations in between. Interstate 540 (Hwy 71) connects the city to I-40. With I-49 now under construction–its easternmost bridge bisecting Chaffee Crossing next to Fort Chaffee–Fort Smith will be at the crossroads of two of the nation's most traveled interstates, along with major rail and waterway transportation connections, creating tremendous opportunities for becoming a regional transportation hub for future commerce.

3. **Integrating the Riverfront:** The city is uniquely situated at a sweeping bend of the Arkansas River which wraps three sides of the city as the river flows from Oklahoma to the southeast. Although the amphitheater and several other civic facilities exist or are planned to enjoy a riverfront location, the connection to the river remains largely unfulfilled.

4. **Maintaining Neighborhood Livability:** Fort Smith has numerous well established stable neighborhoods, however, as these neighborhoods age and the areas around them transition, there is a need for both preservation and neighborhood stabilization efforts, as well as redevelopment strategies to introduce mixed-use development and to diversify housing types in response to changing housing preferences. There are also opportunities for new neighborhood nodes to target redevelopment into certain areas of the city.

5. **Enhancing Community Character:** Fort Smith has a proud, colorful heritage dating back to the days of Judge Parker on the edge of the old west frontier. The present day image is one of perseverance and resiliency; stability and change; movement and balance. There are challenges and opportunities in celebrating this image of Fort Smith–in looking back on the city's historic roots while looking forward to sustainable development solutions.

Strategic Directions

The plan update process started with the creation of a community-based Vision Statement that describes what "we, the citizens" want our community to be like in the future. At its core, the vision of Future Fort Smith is one where the city is recognized throughout the region and the nation as an exceptional community, characterized by its authenticity and proud frontier heritage, its outstanding quality of life, home town character, vibrant downtown, and scenic riverfront.

The Vision Statement was adopted in October of 2013. Subsequently, the community selected a Preferred Future based on the Vision.

Together, the Vision and Preferred Future served to establish the plan's foundation of Strategic Directions – four key courses of action designed to lead Fort Smith to the achievement of the community's Vision and Preferred Future. These Strategic Directions are:

- Retaining and Enhancing Community Character and Quality of Life
- Promoting Sound Growth and Development
- Growing and Diversifying Our Economy
- Uniting or People, Institutions and Government

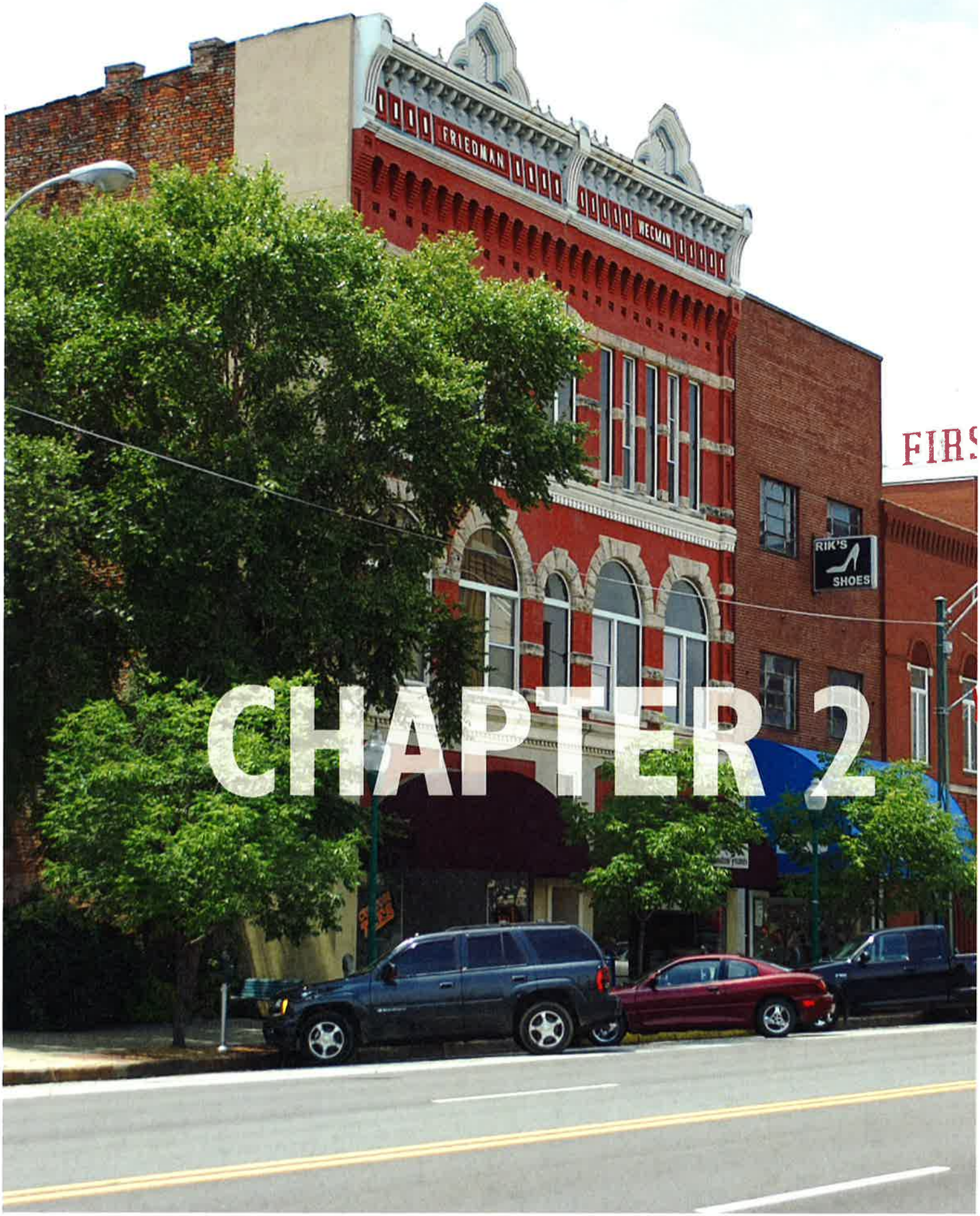
A Focus on Action

A comprehensive plan is meant to provide a framework for decision-making by elected officials, but if it mostly sits on a shelf, all it will ever be is a nice reference document. The success of the plan can only really be measured through the evidence of results. In turn, results are only achieved through persistent, incremental action.

The Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan Update is an action-oriented plan. It translates the Plan's goals and policies into

nearly 200 actions that the community intends to undertake over the next 20 years to advance the vision of Future Fort Smith established by residents through the planning process. The Plan's Implementation Strategy establishes the roadmap to get the city "from here to there" by identifying the metrics, anticipated timeframes and entities responsible for implementation of each action. Many of the Plan's actions will necessitate partnerships between several groups, including institutions, private sector, and nonprofit organizations.

This document is designed to be consulted and applied by city staff, Planning Commission, and elected officials on a daily basis when making decisions to accommodate change. As a measure of success, the Plan's recommendations should guide development processes, be built into programs and initiatives, and inform budgeting, capital improvements financing and fiscal strategies over time.



CHAPTER 2

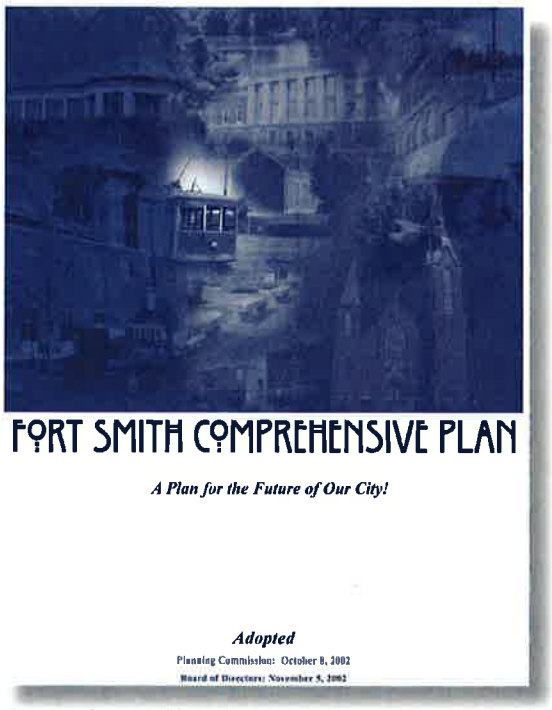
BACKGROUND + PLANNING PROCESS

BACKGROUND

The Existing Plan

The City of Fort Smith adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 2002 as both a physical plan for future growth and development, as well as a day-to-day decision-making guide for City staff and elected and appointed officials. The need for a comprehensive plan was identified by the Fort Smith Board of Directors in 1999 based on several factors, including; the demilitarization and annexation of Fort Chaffee; new tourism and service industry development; a renewed focus on downtown; the evolution of the Westark Community College into the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith; and the consensus that the City lacked a common focus and documented direction to effectively reach its full potential. The plan was completed and adopted in 2002.

The 2002 plan was identified as a living document, with a long range focus, general in nature, and comprehensive in scope. Through the direction of a broad-based citizen Steering Committee, the consultant team and City staff worked with the community to identify key issues, examine alternative growth scenarios, and develop a policy framework with specific goals and recommended actions.



The City of Fort Smith's Existing Comprehensive Plan

The original plan was intended to be a working document that would be reviewed, amended, and updated as needed and as elements of the plan are implemented. Although the document effectively served to guide decisions and municipal functions, no amendments to the plan were adopted over the subsequent ten years. The first comprehensive analysis of its implementation occurred in October of 2011. City staff prepared a status update of the Plan's priorities and actions, and outlined potential options to make the plan more relevant by bringing it up to date. The Board of Directors ultimately decided to undertake a Plan Update with the assistance of a consultant team to facilitate a public engagement strategy and produce an updated Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan.

A request for proposals was issued in September of 2012, inviting planning firms to submit qualifications and proposed strategies to update the City's comprehensive plan. The request outlined the Board of Director's expectations that the plan update process include significant community engagement, and focus on innovative planning strategies. Following a review of proposals and a series of interviews, the final consultant team led by WRT was selected, with sub consultants specializing in interactive web-based community engagement, economic development, community outreach, and public relations. The team was selected based on their experience, technical competence, and a record of successful action-oriented comprehensive planning. The City of Fort Smith Board of Directors executed an agreement with the consultant team in January of 2013.

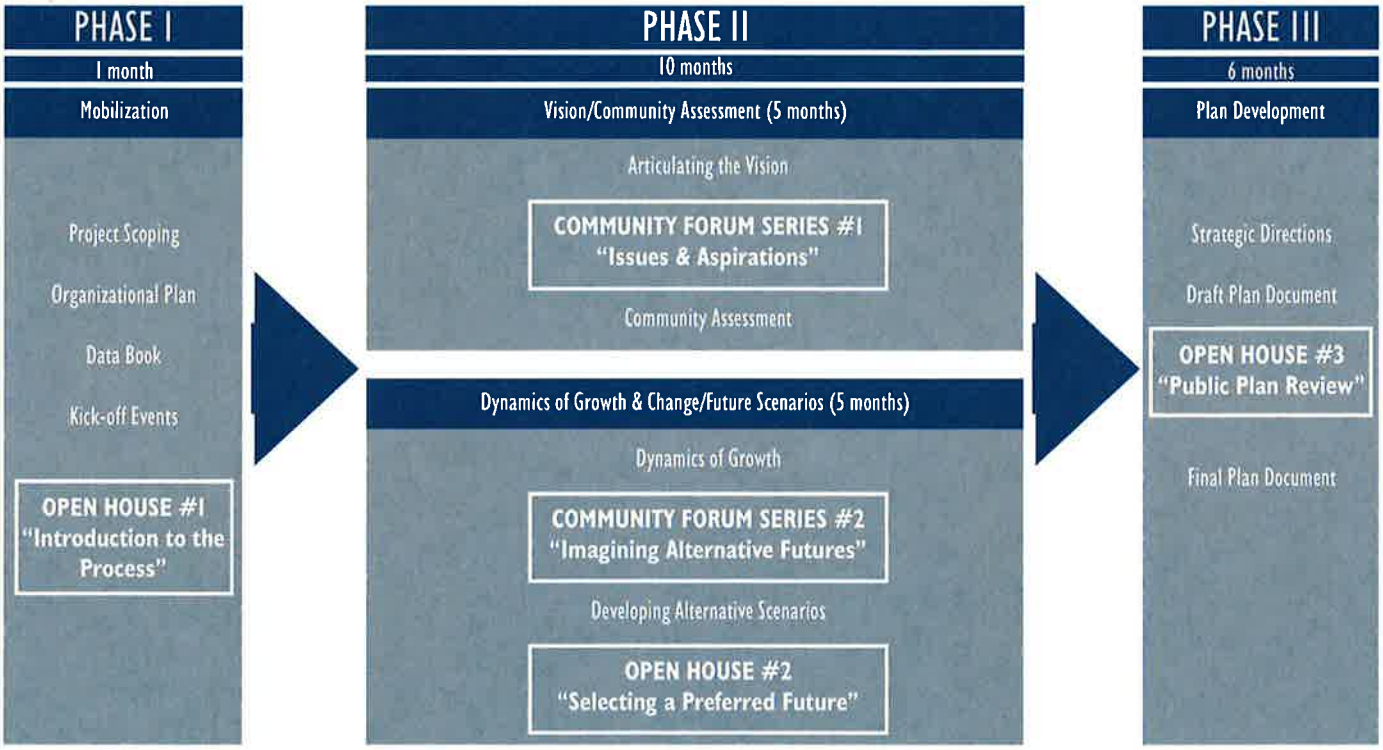
PLANNING PROCESS

Public Engagement Strategy

City staff and the consultant team focused on implementing a consistent and ongoing public engagement strategy to provide opportunities for meaningful community input throughout the entire plan update process. This strategy consisted of establishing a three phase planning process (outlined below) with a citizen-led advisory group, setting up an online forum for discussion, and convening community meetings at key points in the planning process.

The central component of this strategy was the appointment by the Board of Directors of a citizen-based Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC) that would be tasked with working directly with the consultant team and City staff to guide, develop, and review plan content as well as serve as a link between residents at large and the Plan. Members of the CPSC were identified to represent a diverse range of residents from a variety of neighborhoods, economic sectors and business interests. In addition to their role of guiding the direction of the Plan update, it is the goal of the CPSC to remain engaged throughout the Plan's implementation and assist with tracking future progress.

With the CPSC established, community outreach efforts commenced by March of 2013 with the development of the "Future Fort Smith" logo and a new web-based citizen input platform managed by MindMixer on the FutureFortSmith.com website. This website served as a central location and ongoing communication platform for residents to remain continuously engaged in throughout planning process, particularly in between public meetings. Steering Committee members were identified along with the City's department heads and the consultant team on the site's "Who is listening" page. Over the course of the planning



process, over 400 residents registered through the site, which was linked to the City's Facebook page and a new Future Fort Smith Facebook page with over 850 "Likes." Online discussion topics ranged from community aesthetics and character, to economic development and education, with over 250 ideas posted, 4,150 unique site visits, and over 30,000 viewed discussions.

Kick-Off Event

The Comprehensive Plan update launched with a Kick-Off Open House on April 30th, 2013 as an opportunity to introduce residents to the planning process, provide background about the Comprehensive Plan, and invite everyone to participate at future meetings and on the MindMixer site. Members of the CPSC were present, along with City staff and the consultant team to ask residents about their "Fort Smith Story," and identify some of the key issues that should be addressed through a plan update.

A resident identifies "Cooperation" as his idea to improve the future in the Fort Smith Story exercise at the Kick-off Open House

Residents in attendance were also asked to think of a big and bold idea to improve the future of Fort Smith. Outcomes from the Kick-Off Open House were recorded and transcribed to the FutureFortSmith.com site to initiate the online discussions, establish the context for future community forum series, and the production of a Community Assessment.

The public meetings following the Open House were organized as a series of Community Forum events to provide multiple opportunities for resident input during different times of the day and/or different days of the week. This strategy also included the development and distribution of "Meetings-in-a-Box" and "Meetings-to-Go" as a resource for City staff and CPSC members to facilitate smaller scale meetings with local community groups and organizations.

Community Forum Series 1: Issues and Aspirations

The first Community Forum Series was held July 29th-30th, 2013 with the primary goal of establishing a shared community vision while encouraging an interactive dialogue about the City of Fort Smith today, and more importantly what it could become in the future. Participants were organized into small groups to engage in discussions facilitated by CPSC members, City staff, and the consultant team. Each group discussed the City's existing strengths and weaknesses, as well as projected opportunities and potential threats that the City will face in the near and long term future. Each resident had the opportunity to voice their ideas and work within the group to come to a consensus about their priorities.

The results of these meetings, and subsequent local "Meetings-in-a-Box," as well as input received through an online survey, were tabulated and synthesized to identify areas of consensus and establish common ground as the basis of an overall vision for the update to the Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan. A diverse mix of over 415 residents were directly involved in this visioning process, each identifying their priorities for the future of Fort Smith. The themes identified through this effort shaped the Vision Statement and provided direction throughout the remainder of the comprehensive planning process, including the development of the Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy.

Residents discuss opportunities for the future of Fort Smith at Community Forum Series 1

These meetings and discussions successfully explored the community's values and expectations for the future of Fort Smith, leading to a Vision Statement that says: "this is what we, the citizens want our City to be like in the future," and a series of Strategic Directions necessary to achieve that vision. The Vision Statement was then used to articulate the City's intended destination, comparing where Fort Smith stands today to where it is going in the future based on the dynamics of expected growth and change uncovered through the Community Assessment, or existing conditions analysis, (described in the following section.)

Community Forum Series 2: Imagining Alternative Futures

The second Community Forum Series was held on November 18th and 19th, 2013; with community members invited to participate in a "Chip Exercise" that involved coming to a consensus about where future development should occur in the city. Alternative futures, or potential scenarios, were developed by residents working in groups to distribute a fixed amount of projected growth across a fixed area, but in varying configurations.

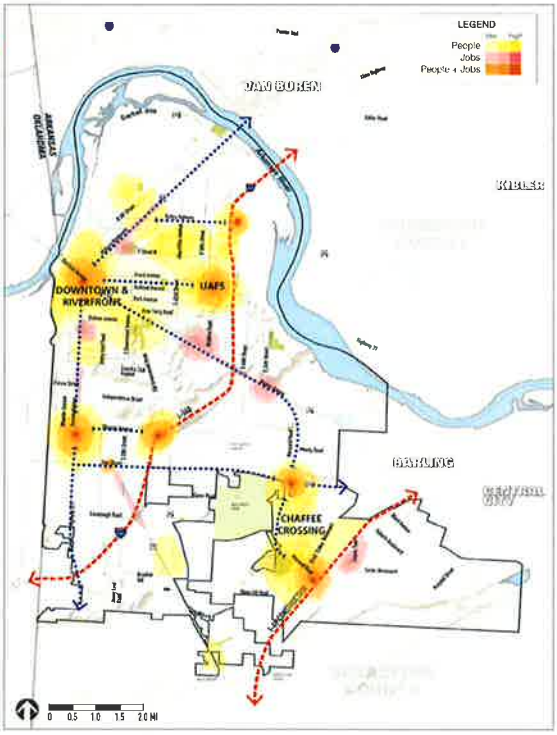
This process was initiated in Fort Smith by presenting the Trend Scenario to the community and asking what alternative patterns of growth residents want to see over the next twenty years that would help achieve the Future Fort Smith Vision Statement. Working in small groups, participants in these community meetings and subsequent Meetings-in-a-Box were asked to review the growth trend, compare it to the Vision Statement, and illustrate on a map where and how they would prefer to see Fort Smith grow in the future. Each group of participants were given a set of stickers representing a variety of land use types (mixed-use corridors, neighborhood

centers, high density residential, low density residential, retail/services, etc) and densities and worked together to place their development in their preferred patterns. Each participant had the opportunity to offer their ideas about the future density and location of people and jobs throughout Fort Smith and discuss how that growth would move the city toward achieving its vision. Over one hundred residents participated in these forum events and the results of this effort were synthesized to produce a series of alternatives that represented the concepts developed by residents.

Selecting a Preferred Future Open House

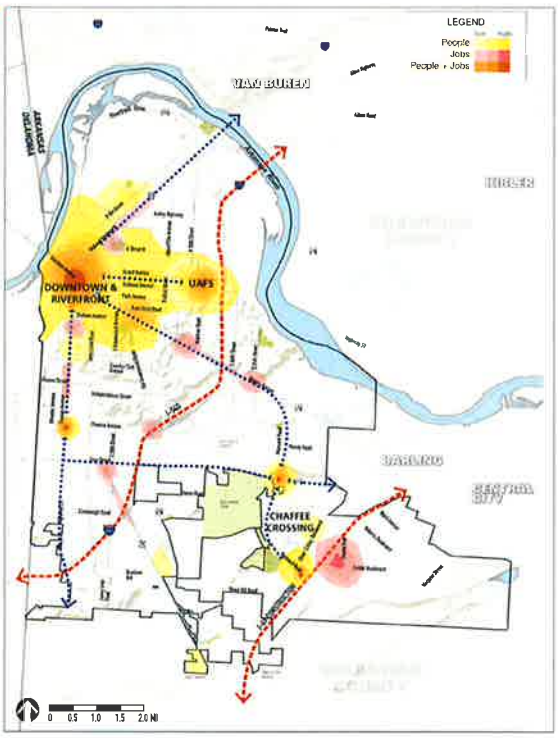
Once three distinct Alternative Scenarios were developed based on the outcomes of the Community Forum Series 2 Chip Game, residents were invited to an Open House on March 17, 2014 to review the information and asked to vote for their preferred future.

ALTERNATIVE A



GROWTH TREND

ALTERNATIVE B



In addition to the Trend Scenario, participants had two compact alternatives to select from as their preferred future; one with the majority of future development concentrated in the Downtown and Riverfront areas, and the other with growth clustered in centers at key intersections throughout the city. The results of the Alternative Futures Open House, and subsequent online voting through FutureFortSmith.com were tabulated and synthesized to develop a Preferred Future. This Preferred Future represents a citywide growth framework that will serve as Fort Smith's blueprint to achieve the community's vision.

Strategic Directions

With a community-based Vision Statement adopted and a Preferred Future established by residents, the CPSC held a joint workshop on May 12, 2014 with the City's department heads to confirm the plan's Strategic Directions and begin the development of a framework of policies and actions for the plan. By utilizing the Strategic Directions, or the four main elements of the Vision Statement;

- **Retaining and Enhancing Community Character and Quality of Life**
- **Promoting Sound Growth and Development**
- **Growing and Diversifying Our Economy**
- **Uniting or People, Institutions and Government**

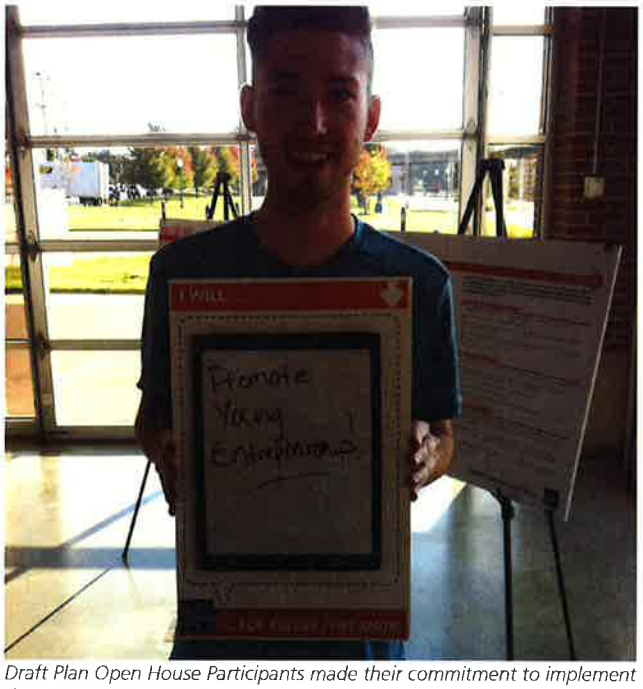
CPSC members were able to focus on identifying additional goals and policies to include with the plan update.

Policy Framework

A draft Policy Framework was developed collectively by the CPSC over the summer months of 2014, with input from City staff, the consultant team, and recommendations based on public input received throughout the planning process. The framework consists of specific Goals, Policies, and Actions that were identified under each of the Comprehensive Plan Elements, intended to achieve the over-arching goals of the Strategic Directions. A final draft of the Policy Framework was approved by the CPSC on September 8th, 2014, and presented to the Board of Directors for their direction to move forward on September 9th, 2014. This framework established the content outline for the updated Comprehensive Plan Elements and provided the consultant team with the direction needed to prepare a Draft Plan and Final Plan Update.

Draft and Final Plan Development

With direction from the CPSC and the Fort Smith Board of Directors, a Draft Plan was prepared and presented to the public for review at an Open House on October 21st, 2014. A series of stations at the event were hosted by CPSC members and the consultant team to provide an opportunity for residents to review the content in the Draft Plan, and ask any questions. Through this process, participants were able to see how the plan was developed, how it impacts them as residents, and more importantly what they can do as individuals to help implement the plan.



Draft Plan Open House Participants made their commitment to implement the Future Fort Smith Plan

EXISTING CONDITIONS

A Community Assessment was developed to provide the context to characterize the challenges and opportunities currently facing the city of Fort Smith. As part of the process to update the 2002 Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan, this report focused on using available data to analyze existing conditions, trends, deficiencies, and key challenges. In addition to providing the information necessary to develop policy recommendations, this analysis drove the development of the scenarios and the allotment of land use types in the Community Forum Series.

The report, available online, is organized according to comprehensive plan elements, with contextual data and analysis, in addition to the identification of key findings.

Population and Households

Fort Smith remains the largest city in the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), growing at a 0.7% average annual rate over the period 2000 to 2010. The larger MSA, as well as the State of Arkansas, grew at comparable, if slightly higher, rates over the same period. Despite the losses in manufacturing jobs over the last decade, the City has continued to exhibit steady and slow growth. Current projections show slightly lower population growth rates for all three areas over the next 5 to 10 years (Figure 2.1). Growth in households shows a similar trend for the City, MSA and the State, although average annual growth rates for households are slightly higher than for population, assuming a slight decrease in household sizes over time (Figure 2.2).

Ethnicity & Race

Race data, summarized in Figure 2.3, shows greater diversity in the City, with slightly more non-white residents, including African-Americans, compared to the MSA. The portion of the population identifying as non-white increased by 46.3% while the population identifying as "some other race" increased by over 100%.[1] The Hispanic population is 18% in

1 City of Fort Smith; US Census Bureau

FIGURE 2.1: POPULATION GROWTH

INDICATOR	CITY OF FORT SMITH	FORT SMITH MSA	STATE OF ARKANSAS
1990 Population	72,798	234,078	2,350,725
2000 Population	80,617	273,173	2,673,400
2010 Population	86,209	298,592	2,915,918
2015 Population*	89,400	309,400	3,018,300
2020 Population*	91,900	321,685	3,139,300
2025 Population*	94,400	333,700	3,260,400
2035 Population*	100,200	357,676	3,506,900
Annual Growth Rates**			
2000-2010	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%
2010-2015	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%
2015-2025	0.6%	0.8%	0.8%
2015-2035	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%

**Projected*
***Compound Average Annual Growth Rate*
Source: US Census Bureau; UALR Institute for Economic Advancement; Frontier MPO; Oklahoma Dept. of Commerce; Claritas, Inc; and Ricker I Cunningham

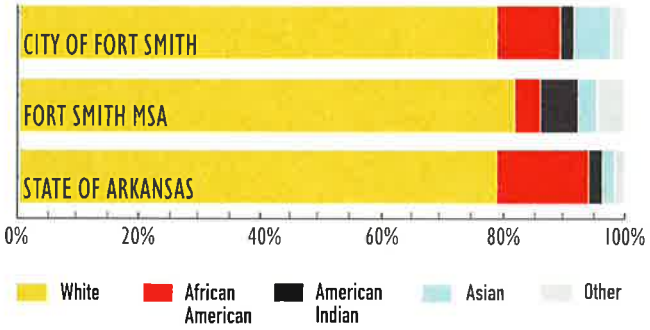
FIGURE 2.2: HOUSEHOLD GROWTH

INDICATOR	CITY OF FORT SMITH	FORT SMITH MSA	STATE OF ARKANSAS
2000 Households	32,582	104,614	1,042,696
2010 Households	34,352	115,169	1,147,084
2015 Households*	35,700	119,200	1,189,600
2025 Households*	38,200	129,800	1,292,800
2035 Households*	41,000	139,800	1,395,100
Annual Growth Rates**			
2000-2010	0.5%	1.0%	1.0%
2010-2015	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%
2015-2025	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%
2015-2035	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%

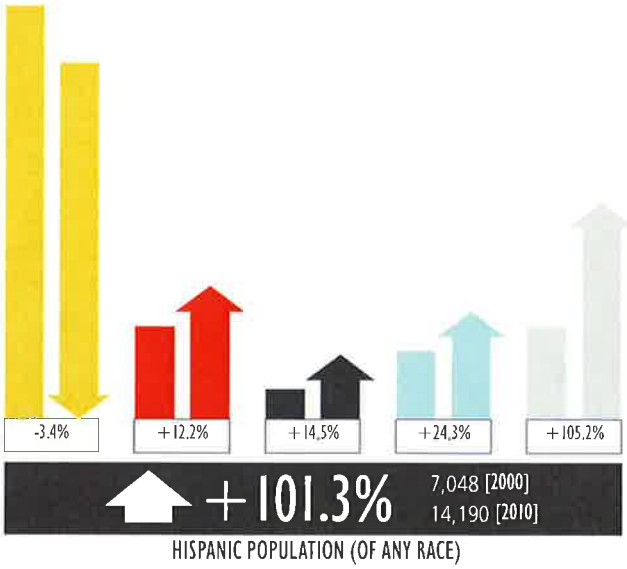
**Projected*
***Compound Average Annual Growth Rate*
Source: US Census Bureau; UALR Institute for Economic Advancement; Frontier MPO; Oklahoma Dept. of Commerce; Claritas, Inc; and Ricker I Cunningham

the City, compared to 6% in the state, and 9% in the MSA. Over the decade between 2000 and 2010, as has happened throughout many U.S. cities, the Hispanic population in the City grew at an average annual rate of 7.3%, over ten times faster than the total population. Without the increase in the Hispanic or Latino population between 2000 and 2010, the city would have experienced a population loss of over 1,000. The increase in diversity is even more apparent in school enrollment demographics with 28.6% of school children identifying as Hispanic or Latino and 11.5% identifying as African American. Although the city is becoming increasingly

FIGURE 2.3: RACE & ETHNICITY



Source: US Census Bureau, Claritas, Inc., And Ricker | Cunningham



Source: US Census Bureau for the City of Fort Smith; Percent Change between 2000 and 2010.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

- **FORT SMITH GREW BY LESS THAN 6,000 BETWEEN 2000 AND 2010.**
- **THE CITY'S LAND AREA EXPANDED BY ALMOST 12 SQUARE MILES.**
- **CHAFFEE CROSSING IS A CENTER OF RESIDENTIAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY.**
- **THE FORT SMITH MSA HAS LOST OVER A THIRD OF ITS MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE AND ABOUT 13,000 JOBS TOTAL.**
- **EMPLOYMENT IN OTHER SECTORS, SUCH AS HEALTH AND EDUCATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT GREW APACE.**

racially diverse, whites still make up almost 70% of the population followed by African Americans at 9% and Asians at 5.3% of the population.

Household Characteristics

The U.S. Census defines a "family" household as two or more related persons living together in the same dwelling. As shown in Figure 2.4, over one-third of City residents live in non-family household arrangements (either single or unrelated roommates). In comparison, the MSA has 31 percent, and the State has 32 percent of their households living in non-family situations. This is also reflected in the

FIGURE 2.4: HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

INDICATOR	CITY OF FORT SMITH	FORT SMITH MSA	STATE OF ARKANSAS
% Non-Family Households	38%	31%	32%
Average Household Size (2010)	2.45	2.55	2.47
% Renter (2010)	46%	31%	33%

Source: US Census Bureau, Claritas, Inc., And Ricker I Cunningham

lower average household size in the City and higher percent of renters. These figures likely show the impact of the University of Arkansas Fort Smith (UAFS), as cities with a strong university presence typically show a significantly higher share of renters.

Household Income Distribution

As shown in Figure 2.5, median household incomes in the MSA (Figure 2.7) and the State are slightly higher than those in the City, although the City has a number of households in high-income categories ($100,000+) that is comparable to the MSA.

FIGURE 2.5: HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION

HOUSEHOLD INCOME RANGE	CITY OF FORT SMITH	FORT SMITH MSA	STATE OF ARKANSAS
$0 - 25,000	36%	34%	30%
$25 - 35,000	15%	14%	13%
$35 - 50,000	17%	16%	17%
$50 - 75,000	15%	19%	18%
$75 - 100,000	8%	8%	9%
$100 - 150,000	6%	7%	9%
$150,000 +	3%	2%	6%
Average Household Income	**$50,186**	**$47,581**	**$57,745**
Per Capita Income	**$17,462**	**$18,443**	**$24,265**

Source: US Census Bureau, Claritas, Inc., And Ricker I Cunningham

FIGURE 2.6: EMPLOYMENT GROWTH (FORT SMITH MSA)

INDUSTRY CATEGORY	2000	2013	% AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH
Mining and Construction	5,600	7,100	1.8%
Manufacturing	31,300	18,600	-3.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	22,500	25,600	1.0%
Information	1,900	1,400	-2.3%
Financial Activities	4,100	4,400	0.5%
Professional and Business Services	11,700	11,700	0%
Educational and Health Services	12,900	17,800	2.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	8,000	9,500	1.3%
Other Services	3,200	4,600	2.8%
Government	14,800	16,700	0.9%
Total	**116,000**	**117,400**	**0.1%**

Source: US Census Bureau, Claritas, Inc., And Ricker I Cunningham

Employment Growth

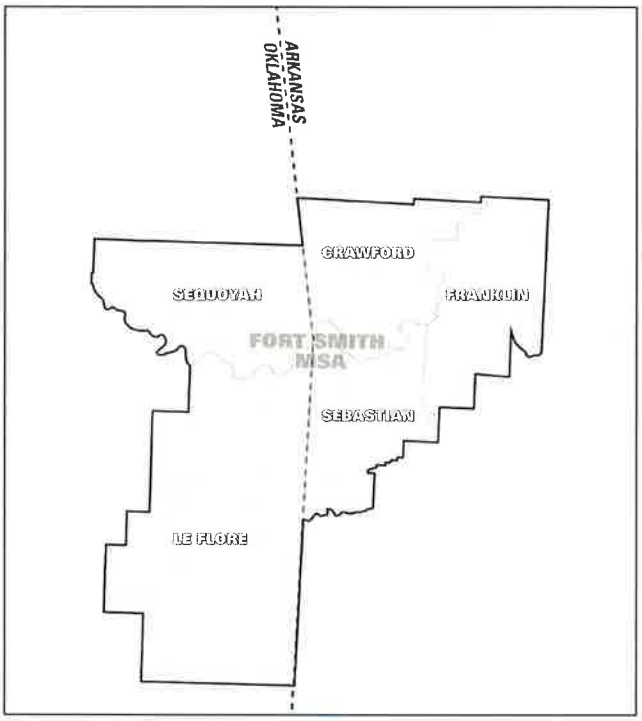
Figure 2.6 summarizes growth in employment for the Fort Smith MSA over the past 13 years. As shown, total employment in the MSA increased at a relatively flat rate of 0.1 percent annually, from 116,000 jobs in 2000, to 117,400 jobs in 2013 (as of July). The fastest growing industries over that time period included: Other Services; Educational and Health Services; and Mining and Construction. Industries which lost employees or remained constant included: Manufacturing; Information; and Professional and Business Services.

Market and Economic Conditions

The market analysis described below, focused on identifying market opportunities within a project trade area representative of multiple land uses. A trade area is a geographic region from which a project or specific area will draw the majority of its residents (housing), patrons (retail) and employees (office). The identified trade area will likely be a source of competition and demand. The boundaries of the trade area are often irregular as they are influenced by the following conditions:

- Physical Barriers – the presence of certain physical barriers including highways, arterials, and significant structures which influence driving and shopping patterns;
- Location of Possible Competition – inventory of potentially competitive project which could diminish the market share available to the project;
- Proximity to Population and/or Employment Concentrations –concentrations in an area which could translate into more population and households to support the project (density and "rooftops");
- Zoning – restrictive or favorable regulatory environment which will influence a developer's interest in delivering projects in one location vs. another;

FIGURE 2.7: FORT SMITH MSA MAP



- Market Factors – conditions which will set sale and lease prices, influence a developer's interest, or impact the project's revenue potential (value);
- Drive Times, Spending and Commuting Patterns – habits and patterns that have been established which could impact the project's ability to capture market share (or require re-education).

Development Climate

During the latter part of 2008, new real estate development throughout the United States nearly ceased to exist. In the years that followed, among those markets that have seen modest levels of activity, the nature of real estate evolved from what it was in earlier decades. Successful real estate development now requires a paradigm shift in underlying evaluation metrics. This, the new face of real

estate, is being driven by multiple factors including: limited development capital; technology; changing demographics and psychographics (lifestyle segmentation data); and more informed municipal policies.

Every year, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and Pricewaterhouse Coopers release their Emerging Trends in Real Estate publication, an annual forecast of commercial real estate based on interviews with developers and investors. The following are trends and opportunities identified in the 2012 publication that could influence real estate development over the near- and mid-terms in and around the Fort Smith MSA.

Development Trends

- 'Generation Y', individuals aged 15 to mid-30s, a larger group than Baby Boomers, are more frugal, comfortable in smaller spaces, and desiring of living units convenient to work, shopping and recreation / entertainment districts supporting continued growth in mixed-use environments.
- Generation "X", now between 31 and 46, are redefining the "givens" of the past several decades. These individuals want equal parts traditionalism, work and leisure, but gravitate toward smaller, higher-quality homes.
- Individuals and couples ages 18 to 34 as well as empty nesters age 55 and over are two age segments who prefer low-maintenance housing options (e.g., downtown apartments and condos, townhomes and rowhouses, flats and co-ops). These two segments comprise 46% of the Trade Area population.
- Over the last several years and into the near term, consumers will seek ways to save on gas, shortening the desire to commute to work and shopping. This will generate more opportunities in urban infill and downtown markets.

FIGURE 2.8: RESIDENTIAL DEMAND BY TENURE (MSA)

TENURE	NEW UNITS	PERCENT
Rental	3,320	33%
Ownership	6,629	67%
Total	**9,949**	**100%**

Source: US Census Bureau, UALR Institute for Economic Advancement, and Ricker I Cunningham

FIGURE 2.9: RESIDENTIAL DEMAND BY TYPE ($15K+)

TYPE	NEW UNITS	PERCENT
Single Family Detached	3,979	65%
Single Family Attached	2,143	35%
Total	**6,122**	**100%**

Source: US Census Bureau, UALR Institute for Economic Advancement, and Ricker I Cunningham

- Ethnic retailing, non-store brick and mortar (smart phones) concepts, and experience show rooms will dominate the retail field.
- Big box retailers will continue to deliver new boutique stores, particularly in inner-city locations.

Market Demand

An analysis of the current performance of real estate products within an overall market, as well as competitive projects within a trade area, provides an indication of whether a property or area may be ready for new redevelopment. It also helps to identify potential gaps in the market—niches that new development and/or redevelopment could fill. In order to identify potential future market opportunities given the City's competitive position and prevailing market conditions, market demand estimates were prepared for residential, retail, and office land uses over the next 10 years. The information which follows presents a summary of current

demand conditions for competitive land uses within the Fort Smith Trade Area (Fort Smith MSA).

Residential Demand

Demand for residential units in Fort Smith is a function of projected household growth across a wider geography—in this case, the Fort Smith MSA. In other words, Fort Smith will compete with other locations in the MSA as a potential home for newly formed households, whether they arise through natural increase or net in-migration. The following residential demand is for the next ten years.

The 2013 base of 117,600 households is expected to grow at 0.8 percent annually to arrive at 127,354 households by 2023 – an addition of 9,754 units. Applying a 2 percent factor to account for a vacancy/turnover buffer, demolition and a modest amount of second-home purchase activity, results in an adjusted 10-year demand for approximately 9,949 units for the Fort Smith MSA. Based on current home ownership and rental rates, there should be demand for 3,320 additional rental units and 6,629 additional ownership housing units by 2023.

Figure 2.8 and Figure 2.9 show reasonable attainable demand for single family detached units in the Fort Smith MSA for households earning at least $15,000 per year. This analysis assumes that detached homes will account for around 65 percent of all ownership demand, with the balance coming in the form of attached products (condominium, townhome, rowhome, loft, patio home, etc.). Therefore, over the next ten years, the Fort Smith MSA could support approximately 3,979 new single family detached units.

This gross unit demand is further allocated into approximate income-qualified rent and home price groups. The analysis assumes a moderate increase in household incomes over time (using constant 2013 dollars), as employment conditions gradually improve over time. In other words, new households are expected to be somewhat more affluent than existing households.

Generally speaking, infill neighborhood areas are more suitable to attached ownership housing, particularly near a downtown or central business district. Neighborhoods in and around Downtown Fort Smith, which include significant areas of detached residential development, vacant land and marginal housing, would be potential candidates for this type of infill housing. For vacant areas, detached development could be relatively dense, with patio homes, bungalow courts and other small-lot development working within this relatively urban setting. Redevelopment of existing single-family home sites, however, would likely need to conform to current zoning and lot sizes. Demand for this type of ownership attached housing, shown in Figure 2.8, should total approximately 2,143 units, MSA-wide, over the next 10 years.

While condominium-type construction has been adversely impacted nationally by the mortgage lending crisis and over-building in recent years, the low-maintenance and potentially pedestrian-friendly aspects of attached housing should grow in share as it finds appeal among an aging Baby Boomer population as well as young professionals. This absorption could take the form of loft condominiums within upper floor commercial buildings, as well as in new townhome or rowhome construction on underutilized parcels scattered around Fort Smith.

The projected rental apartment demand for the Fort Smith MSA is 2,136 new units by 2023 (for households earning over $15,000). Fort Smith is well-positioned to attract prospective renters with its proximity to major employers and activity centers (e.g., UAFS).

Retail Demand

Future demand for retail space (including restaurant, entertainment, service, etc.) is determined by the potential level of retail expenditures in a given trade area from two sources: those dollars spent by trade area residents outside the trade area, or "leakage;" and those generated by new household growth. For each major retail category, current household retail expenditures (demand) were compared to current retail sales (supply) in the Trade Area to determine if there is a retail "surplus" (supply exceeds demand) or "leakage" (demand exceeds supply). Figure 2.10 shows that "leakage" exists in the following retail categories:

- Furniture and home furnishings;
- Food and beverage (grocery);
- Health and personal care;
- Clothing and accessories;
- General merchandise;
- Miscellaneous stores; and
- Food service and drinking.

The remaining categories currently have retail surpluses, i.e., supply exceeds demand. Projected demand from new household formation over the next ten years is determined by multiplying growth in households with that portion of household income typically spent on general retail and service purchases.

Office Demand

Demand for new office space is derived from two primary sources: expansion of existing industry; and the relocation of new companies into the market. Employment projections by

FIGURE 2.10: RETAIL LEAKAGE/VOID FORT SMITH MSA

Source: US Census Bureau, Urban Land Institute (ULI), and Ricker | Cunningham

industry classification for the Fort Smith MSA were used to estimate demand over the next 10 years. Applying current growth rate estimates by industry category nets an overall 0.5% sustained annual employment growth rate, resulting in demand for approximately 1,682 new office employees over the next 10 years. Assuming differing levels of office space needed across various industry categories, the analysis revealed demand for over 300,000 square feet of new office space over this period.

Industrial Demand

As with office, demand for new industrial space is derived from two primary sources: expansion of existing industry; and the relocation of new companies into the market. Employment projections by industry classification for the Fort Smith MSA were used to estimate demand over the next 10 years. Applying current growth rate estimates by industry category nets an overall 0.5% sustained annual employment growth rate, resulting in demand for approximately 1,241 new industrial employees over the next 10 years. Assuming differing levels of industrial space needed across various industry categories, the analysis revealed demand for nearly 500,000 square feet of new industrial space over this period.

FIGURE 2.11: SUMMARY OF MARKET DEMAND

LAND USE TYPE	MSA DEMAND (10-YEAR)
Residential (Units)	
Single Family Detached	3,979 Units
Single Family Attached	2,143 Units
Rental Apartments	2,136 Units
Residential Total	**8,258 Units**
Non-Residential (SF)	
Retail	3,207,619 SF
Office	302,788 SF
Industrial	496,372 SF
Non-Residential Total	**4,006,779 SF**

Source: Ricker I Cunningham

Fort Smith Housing

Market Demand Summary

Figure 2.11 summarizes potential Fort Smith MSA absorption of land uses over the next 10 years.

Housing

Between 1990 and 2010, housing in Fort Smith increased by 15%, or 4,845 housing units, while the population increased by just over 18% during the same period. Of the 35,341 housing units in the city, 49.1% are owner-occupied, 41.5% are renter-occupied, and 9.4% are vacant. The housing in Fort Smith is generally older with 34.8% of housing stock built before 1940 and only 12.25% constructed since 1990. While many of the pre-1940 structures have been well maintained, especially those within the City's three historic districts, there are pockets of blight and disinvestment in older neighborhoods north of Downtown Fort Smith. The city reported that more than 365 residential lots were being developed in 2012, pointing to an increased investment in housing.

The median value for owner-occupied houses in 2010 was $113,700, which was higher than the $105,100 median value for the state. However, median home value varies greatly between neighborhoods in the city. Some neighborhoods have median house values of twice the median for the city, while others have median house values of less than half that of the city.

The median rent for the city was seemingly affordable at $578 per month in 2010. However, 46.7% of renters in the city paid 30% or more of their household income in rent each month, which is considered unsustainable by federal standards. Subsidized and assisted housing is provided through 288 units in the Nelson Hall Homes public housing development, 1,239 Section 8 vouchers, and 172 low-income tax credit financed single-family and duplex homes at North Pointe and Clayton Heights.

While the exact number of homeless individuals is not known, a survey of the homeless population in Fort Smith revealed a 57% increase between 2007 and 2012. Both surveys, conducted by the Old Fort Homeless Coalition, documented the point-in-time count of Fort Smith's homeless population. The 2007 survey recorded 200 homeless persons while the 2012 survey recorded 314 homeless persons.[2] In addition to the voluntary surveys conducted by the Old Fort Homeless Coalition, Fort Smith Public Schools reports the status of homeless children. During the 2012-2013 school year, 343 Fort Smith children were homeless including those living in shelters, unsheltered, living in hotels, and unaccompanied youth.[3]

According to population projections and anticipated home ownership and rental rates, there will be an anticipated demand for 3,642 new single family housing units, and 1,819 new multi-family units by 2035. The city is in a position to both capture a larger portion of the growth from the MSA, as well as determine the most appropriate pattern to accommodate this growth over the next twenty years.

Neighborhoods

Fort Smith, recently named by Forbes as the number one city for cost of living in the United States, can be described as a city of neighborhoods. The neighborhoods in the southeast portion of the city south of I-540, have the highest median home values, the most affluent residents and the greatest access to amenities such as parks, recreation space, and local retail. The residential neighborhood located in the southeast of the city north of the airport, is typified by large houses in secluded subdivisions with a median house value of $221,388, the highest in the city. This neighborhood is also home to wealthier residents, with a median household income of over $70,000. Alternately, the neighborhoods in the northwest portion of the city have the lowest median home values, the highest concentrations of poverty, fewer amenities, and more industrial and commercial land uses. The North 11th Street / North L Street neighborhood in the north central portion of the city has a median income of less than $22,000 and is characterized by higher-density subdivisions with older, less maintained housing stock. The median home value in this neighborhood, the lowest for any neighborhood in the city, is $47,454.

Existing Land Use and Development

COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

Fort Smith is a city of neighborhoods; some with higher median incomes and home values to the southeast, and others with higher concentrations of poverty, lower median home values adjacent to more industrial and commercial land uses to the Northwest. As the City's population grows and continues to diversify over the next twenty years, these neighborhoods will be in a position to adapt in order to maintain and enhance the quality of life enjoyed by residents.

2 2011-2015 Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development; City of Fort Smith, Arkansas
3 Old Fort Homeless Coalition

Mercy Hospital Fort Smith

Clayton House

Downtown Fort Smith, Garrison Avenue

CORRIDORS & CENTERS

Fort Smith has a variety of commercial corridors and centers each with a unique character and identity. With the exception of Midland Boulevard, the majority of the commercial clusters within the city are located south of Garrison and Rogers Avenue, including Towson Avenue, Waldron Road, Zero Street, Highway 71, South 74th Street, and the emerging Phoenix Avenue, Massard Road, Kelley Highway, and Massard & Chad Colley Centers.

The oldest, most compact, and concentrated commercial center is located downtown within the Central Business Improvement District (CBID) along Garrison Avenue in the northwest section of the city. In 2012, sixteen new businesses opened in Downtown Fort Smith and private investments along the corridor reached over $3 million[4].

The Midland Boulevard corridor, located north of downtown, includes a mix of commercial, industrial, and recreational uses including the fairgrounds. To the south, Rogers Avenue is a major gateway and thoroughfare that provides connections to the northern and southern sections of the city including Chaffee Crossing, however, the quality of the landscape and the development along this corridor is substantially lacking. Significant challenges facing Rogers Avenue include growing commercial obsolescence as retail moves to new centers, an absence of landscaping, dangerous pedestrian crossings, and traffic congestion.

The Towson Avenue commercial corridor, extending from Rogers Avenue south to Zero Street, contains a mix of strip suburban retail, big box stores, car dealerships, and industrial office parks, becoming less dense as the corridor stretches south. The city plans to begin construction in early 2014 on the continuation of the Garrison Avenue Streetscape Project along Towson Avenue south to South A Street. The streetscaping project on Garrison Avenue was a twelve-year,

4 City of Fort Smith, "2013 Accomplishments"

$5.8 million project to stimulate investment in downtown by creating an inviting pedestrian environment with enhanced sidewalks and landscaping.[5]

The Waldron Road commercial center, located along Rogers Avenue, consists of Central Mall surrounded by smaller shopping centers, such as the Quarry and Waldron Square, and a number of restaurants. Central Mall, opened in 1972, has over 90 stores, representing 861,929 square feet of leasable area, and a trade area that covers two states.[6]

The South Zero Street Corridor, stretching from Towson Avenue to I-540, contains a mix of dispersed, suburban-style strip retail, big box stores, and industrial buildings. The corridor performs a dual function as major freight route for the city. Commercial development along the Highway 71 corridor, from Zero Street to the city limits, consists of low-density supply stores and car dealerships.

The South 74th Street center is located along Rogers Avenue north of the Fort Smith Regional Airport. Medical and health center facilities such as Gentiva Health Service, Mercy Hospital, the River Valley Musculoskeletal Center, as well as a number of banks and restaurants are located within the center.

In addition to established commercial corridors and centers, a number of centers are beginning to emerge along major thoroughfares (Figure 2.12). The Phoenix Avenue corridor, extending from Towson Avenue to South 21st Street, contains a mixture of restaurants, strip malls, and grocery stores with the potential for mixed use development in the future. Further down the corridor, near Old Greenwood Road, is an emerging center focused on the Fort Smith Pavilion shopping center. Other emerging centers with plans for future development include the Massard Road Center, the Massard & Colley Center, and the Kelley Highway Center.

The northern part the city has fewer commercial strips. Instead, smaller, more dispersed neighborhood retail occurs along Grand Avenue, North O Street, and Phoenix Avenue. New centers are emerging at key intersections, including Massard Road and Zero Street, Massard Road, 1-49 and Chad Colley Boulevard, and along the Phoenix Avenue Corridor.

SPECIAL USE DISTRICTS

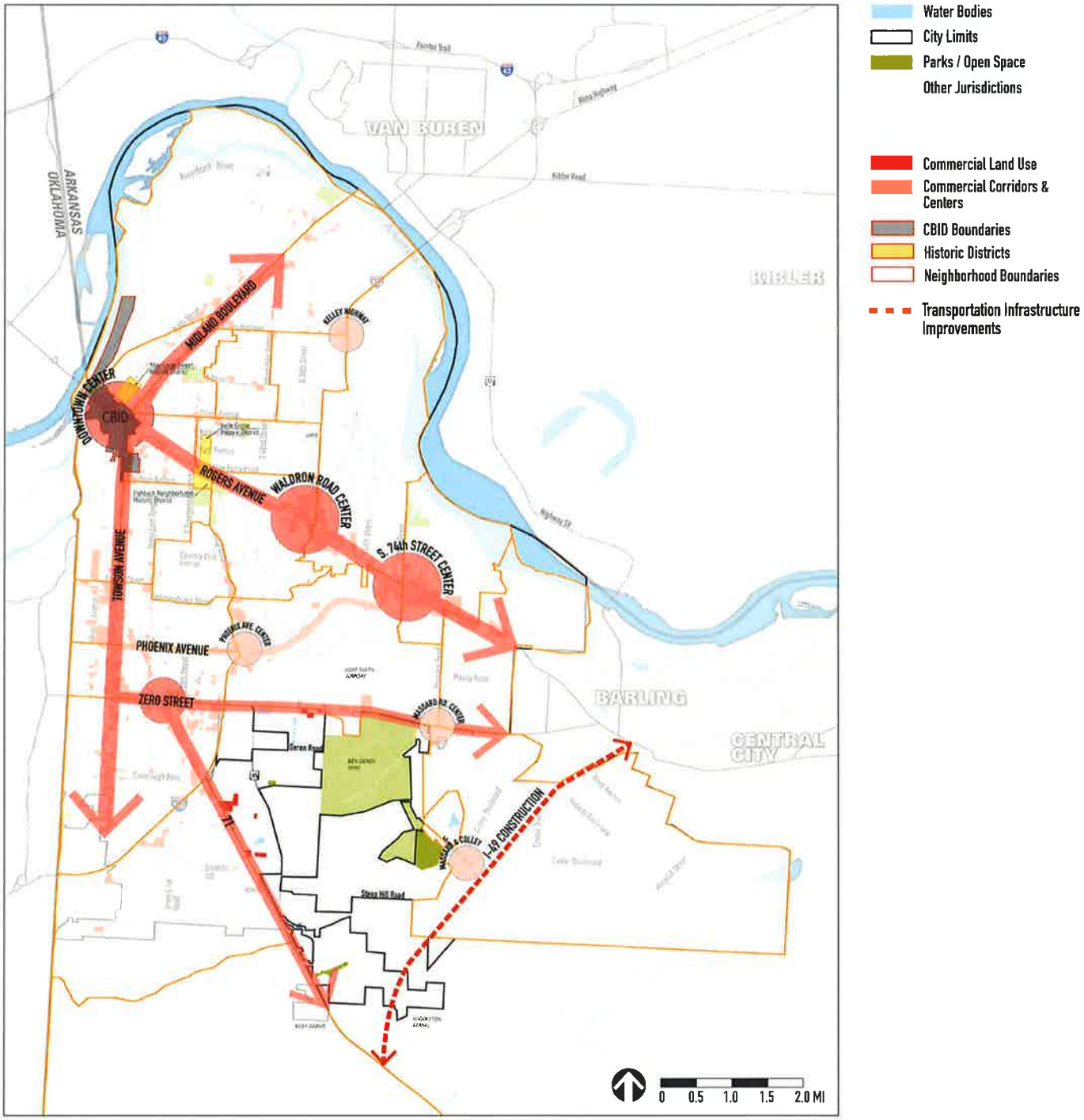
In addition to the city's two, primarily commercial historic districts, Garrison Avenue and Fort Chaffee, Fort Smith is home to three residential historic districts. The rich architectural history of the city is highlighted in each of these districts: the Belle Grove Historic District, the Fishback Neighborhood Historic District, and the May-Lecta-Sweet Historic District.

The Belle Grove Historic District, located just northwest of downtown, is comprised of 22 blocks with Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne, Eastlake Victorian Renaissance, Gothic Revival, Craftsman, Prairie, Federal and Neoclassical architecture spanning over 150 years. One of the District's most notable homes is The Darby House, an 1850s Victorian Renaissance Baroque mansion formerly owned by William O. Darby, the founder and leader of "Darby's Rangers," who fought in Italy in World War II. Two of the District's homes—The Bonneville House and the W.H.H. Clayton House—are listed separately in the National Historic Register.

The Fishback Historic District, located south of Rogers Avenue, developed as a middle and upper class residential neighborhood between 1910 and 1930. It contains a large collection of historic Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, and Craftsman-style homes from the early 20th Century.

5 City of Fort Smith, "2013 Accomplishments"
6 www.centralmallfortsmith.com

FIGURE 2.12: DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS



The May-Lecta-Sweet Historic District is adjacent to the Fishback Neighborhood Historic District along Rogers Avenue extending north to Kinkead Avenue. The majority of the historic structures are Craftsman or Colonial Revival homes built between the early 1900s and the late 1950s. These neighborhoods are stable and have the potential to exert a positive impact on surrounding areas with depressed home values and pockets of blight.

Downtown Fort Smith

Downtown Fort Smith is the historic and current center of commercial and government activity. The Central Business Improvement District (CBID) was created in 1976 to support and promote new and existing businesses in Downtown Fort Smith by encouraging investment and building partnerships. The district begins on Garrison Avenue, follows the river to the north to just past P Street, and then extends south along Towson Avenue to Dodson. Additionally, a portion of the CBID falls within the Garrison Avenue Historic District.

Over 38% of the land within the CBID is commercial with Office Research/Light Industrial following close behind with 27% of the District's land. Public and Institutional land use, including many of the City of Fort Smith's government offices, makes up 15% of land within the District. Residential land use, making up 10% of land use within the District, is primarily downtown apartments and condominiums.

In the 37 years since its founding, the CBID has lobbied for State and Federal Historic Tax Credits to restore historic structures, created a branding strategy for the Downtown business corridor, developed a series of design guidelines for downtown, and facilitated and executed a number of public – private partnerships to construct both residential and commercial developments including a new parking lot at North 2nd and North B Streets.[7] Downtown Fort Smith has seen a resurgence in investment over the last 10 years and the CBID continues to take proactive measures to ensure the long-term success of the area. Since 2006, $60 million of public and private investment has been funneled into the CBID. In 2012 alone, private investment in the CBID was estimated at over $3 million which included sixteen new businesses. Future plans are in place to build a U.S. Marshals Museum along the riverfront and a recently completed water and sewer infrastructure project along Riverfront Drive is expected to further support private investment and development. Despite recent investments, there are still some vacant buildings in the Downtown district. Furthermore, large assemblages of industrial and vacant land, more than 6% of land within the CBID have constrained downtown Fort Smith's development potential.

7 www.GoDowntownFS.com

Garrison Avenue Downtown Streetscape

Aerial View: Downtown Fort Smith

Chaffee Crossing

In addition to the city's established neighborhoods, Fort Smith annexed a portion–6,000 acres–of the decommissioned area that was released from Fort Chaffee (once a 76,000 acre military base) in 2002. The Chaffee Crossing Redevelopment Plan was adopted in 2009 by the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority (FCRA). The FCRA, formed as a state-chartered public trust through Legislation, was established to regulate and promote development of the 7000+ acres in Chaffee Crossing. The Authority was responsible for managing existing buildings and removing and disposing of obsolete structures. The FCRA's mission statement is to "Direct and implement the development of Chaffee Crossing in a manner that promotes economic growth and enhances the quality of place for the region."[8] The Authority's goal is to "maximize the value of Chaffee Crossing by creating an attractive, upscale development that includes sound infrastructure, quality housing, recreational and community facilities, retail establishments and businesses that provide above–average paying jobs."[9]

The FCRA's 2009 Strategic Plan set forth the following objectives for the Chaffee Crossing area:

- Optimize all available resources to attract quality developers to Chaffee Crossing.
- Develop and promote Chaffee Crossing's historic and recreational facilities.
- Promote public awareness of Chaffee Crossing as a mixed use community.
- Develop and implement a plan for building, demolition and infrastructure improvements.
- Create one stop shop regulatory process.

8 Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority (FCRA)
9 Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority (FCRA)

THE FORT CHAFFEE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

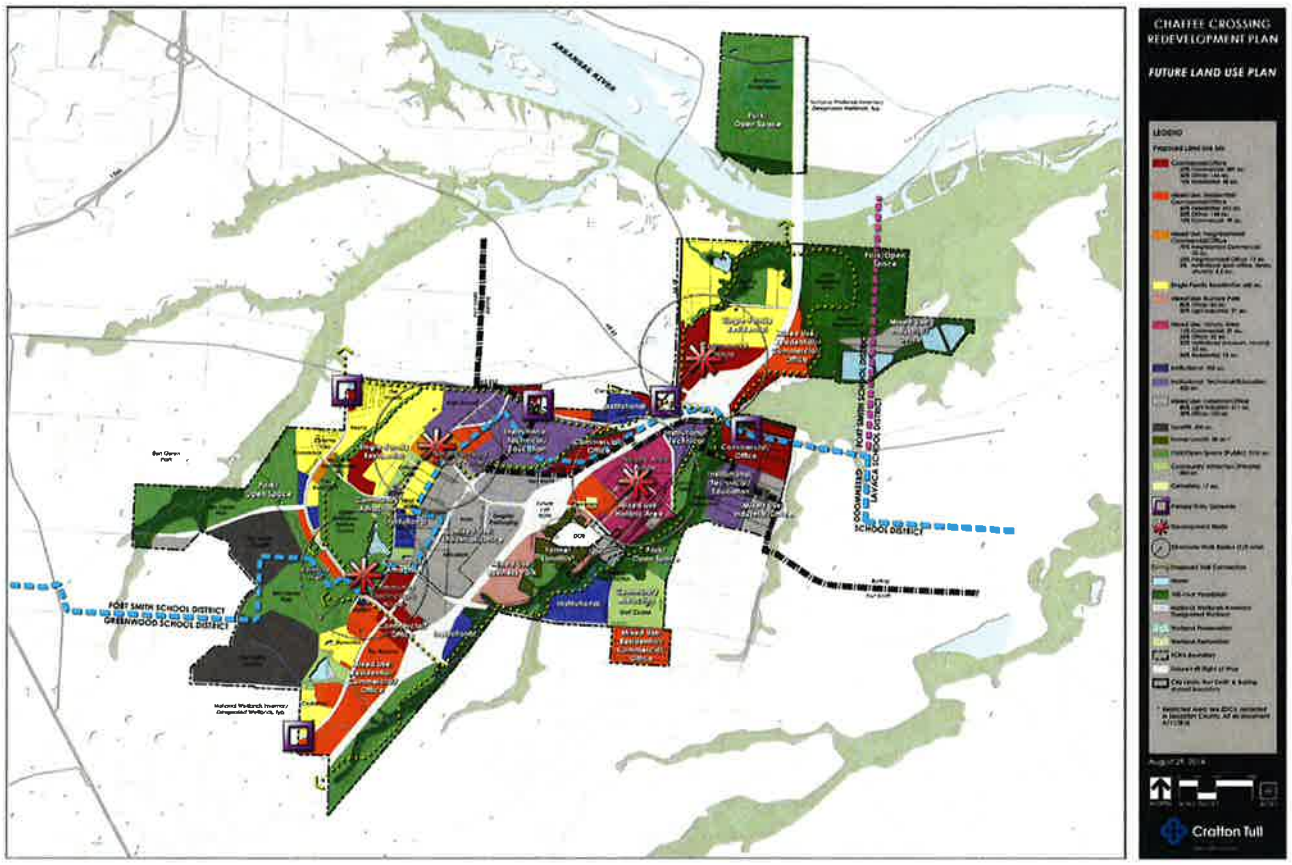
The FCRA has positioned Chaffee Crossing as a sustainable, smart-growth community that will honor Fort Chaffee's military history. According to the FCRA, the theme for Chaffee Crossing: Honoring the Past – Preserving for the Future (army green becomes sustainable green) is pervasive throughout the land use plan (Figure 2.13) and design guidelines. The master plan for the community incorporates sustainable solutions in all aspects of development. Sustainable planning is achieved through the use of "complete streets" and the establishment of "walkable" nodes with a more compact development pattern. The plan also accounts for green stormwater management through the use of bio-swales in parking areas and recycled rainwater for irrigation. Sustainable buildings and the use of locally sourced building material are encouraged. Mars Petcare, a LEED certified project, is a good example of a new sustainable facility in Chaffee Crossing.

In order to make Chaffee Crossing a model development for the region, a vision and a set of goals were created to provide direction and reinforce its identity. As the development process moves forward at Chaffee Crossing, a key ingredient for the success of the project is flexibility. One recurring theme that was heard throughout the planning process was the need to create a master plan that allows for development phases or "nodes" so growth can be flexible, based on the market trends in the area, available infrastructure, and needs of the community.

VISION STATEMENT

"Create a development that serves as a smart growth model for the region by utilizing growth trends that respond to the market, the context of the area and the community's varied needs."

FIGURE 2.13: CHAFFEE CROSSING FUTURE LAND USE PLAN



FCRA Future Land Use Plan (August 2014)

DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Environmentally sensitive to context
- Market-based development with implementation sequenced in nodal phases.
- Create a development that serves as a model for the county and builds consistency across city limit lines.
- Provide varied zoning uses within mixed use classifications to promote flexibility.
- Encourage mixed use development to create a draw for marketability.
- Provide various types of recreation amenities to complete a live/work/play environment.
- Link Chaffee Crossing's nodes to both cities via a trail system.
- Protect and enhance public/private investments.

Community Dynamics

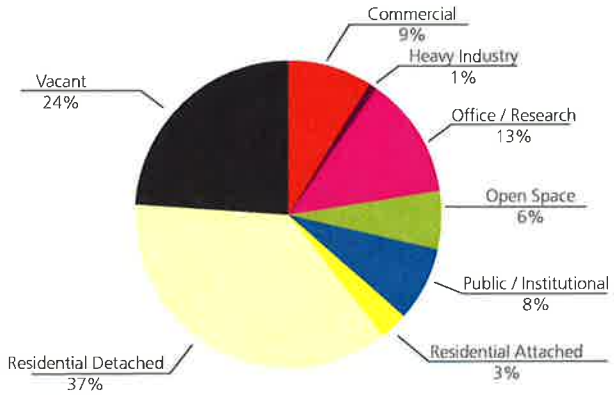
DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS—PHYSICAL GROWTH

As the city has grown, commercial and industrial uses have developed along major transportation corridors throughout the city, often leaving obsolete buildings underutilized or vacant as new centers emerge. In residential neighborhoods, zoning inconsistencies have resulted in incompatible adjacent uses, and multi-family developments in predominantly single family areas. Existing Land Uses are identified in Figure 2.14, and Figure 2.15: Existing Land Use Map.

Residential land use accounts for 40% (Attached-3%; Detached-37%) of existing land use in the city. A majority of the residential development within Fort Smith, over 17,000 acres, is detached single family housing. However, some of the older housing stock has been retrofitted as multi-family boarding houses and apartment buildings. Medium density housing is typically dispersed within low-density neighborhoods. These dwellings, either single family or multi-family, are often duplexes or townhouses. Most of the high-density housing is located in the city's northernmost neighborhoods. These neighborhoods also have the highest levels of vacancy and disinvestment. Multi-family development, other than conversions in single-family neighborhoods, typically consist of suburban-style apartment complexes.

Commercial land uses occupy 22% of land within Fort Smith. Of this, 9% is consumer-commercial and 13% is office research. Most of the commercial land is located within well-established corridors and centers such as downtown, Towson Avenue, Highway 71, and Rogers Avenue. The majority of the commercial uses take the form of suburban shopping centers and automobile-oriented strip retail with the exception of downtown retail in the CBID. Most of the Office/Research land use in the city is in the form of office parks, detached single-businesses, and light industrial

FIGURE 2.14: EXISTING LAND USE



Source: City of Fort Smith, 2012

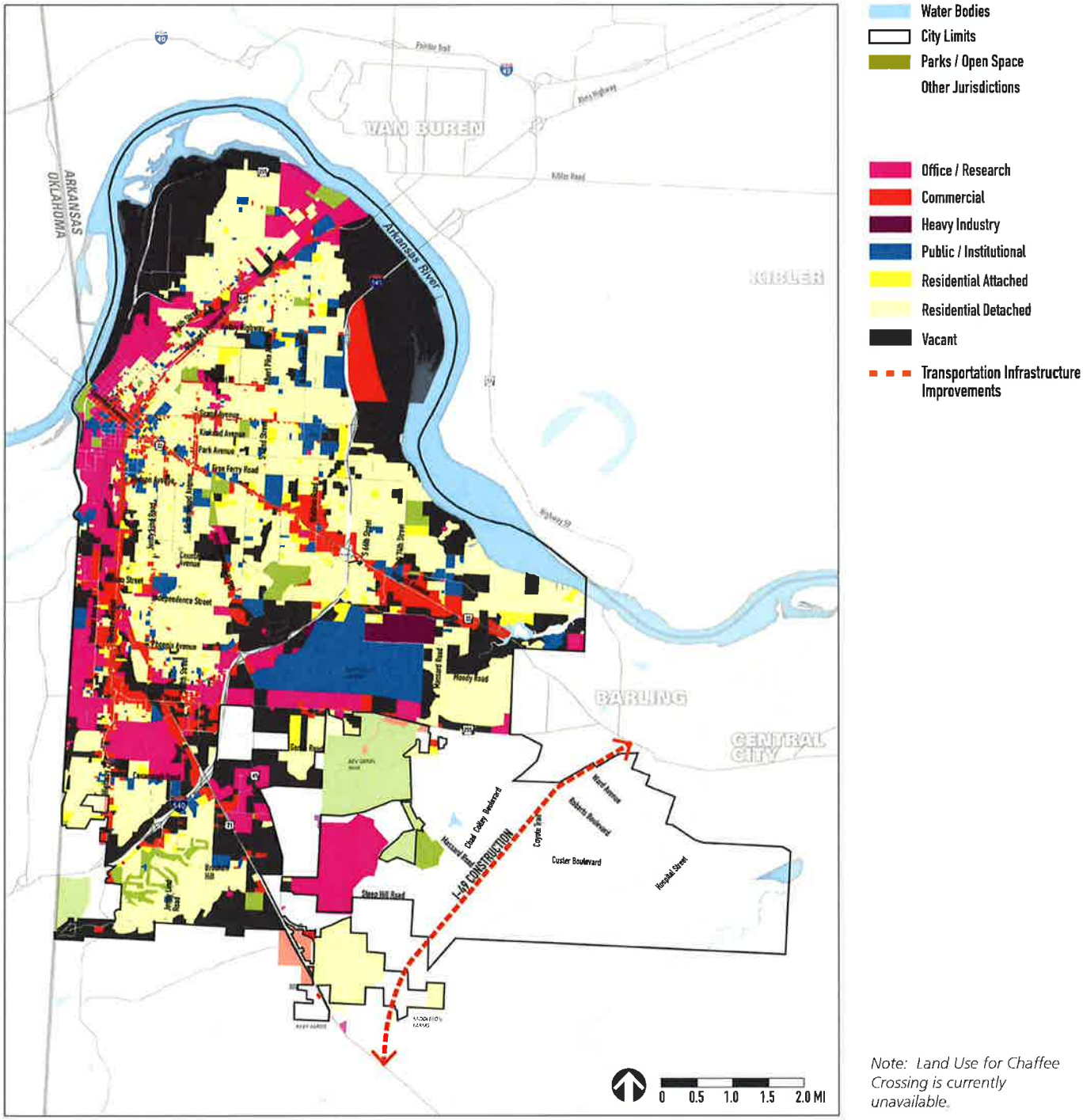
warehouses along major thoroughfares. The majority of this land use is concentrated in downtown and in the eastern portion of the city along Rogers Avenue and Old Greenwood Road.

Heavy Industrial land use comprises 1% of existing land use in the city . Much of the light industrial uses are incorporated in the Office/Research land use category. The city's location along major rail lines and the Arkansas River increases the efficiency of transporting goods throughout the region which has made and continues to make the city an ideal location for many manufacturing companies. Vacant land accounts for 24% of all land in Fort Smith. While a portion of this land falls within established floodplains, a majority of the land holds the potential for targeted and strategic future development within the city.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS—ZONING

Most properties identified as having a vacant land use are currently zoned as industrial or transitional. Only 1% of land is not currently zoned for any use. The majority of land is zoned as industrial (34%) or single family (30%). The city's decision to zone a large percentage of land as industrial speaks to both the city's history as an industrial center along

FIGURE 2.15: EXISTING LAND USE MAP



Note: Land Use for Chaffee Crossing is currently unavailable.

the Arkansas River and rail line and its continued commitment to expanding and improving intermodal transportation to increase manufacturing capacity. The Transitional zoning classification, 2% of all zoned land, refers to small scale areas with residential neighborhoods for limited office, professional service, and medial services that are designed in scale with surrounding uses. Additionally, the City of Fort Smith has Extraterritorial Jurisdiction zoning rights to areas that fall outside of the city limits. Since the inclusion of these areas, the City has exercised limited control and review over this area. The city's proportion of existing zoning classifications are identified in Figure 2.16, and identified in Figure 2.17: Zoning Map.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS—ANNEXATION

Since 2002, Fort Smith annexed the Chaffee Crossing area bringing the total land area for the city to 65 square miles and increasing its capacity for industrial and commercial development. The Fort Chaffee area has been transformed into a growing hub of commercial, industrial, and residential activity called Chaffee Crossing. Development within this area is subject to the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority's Future Land Use Plan, and must apply for zoning from the City of Fort Smith.

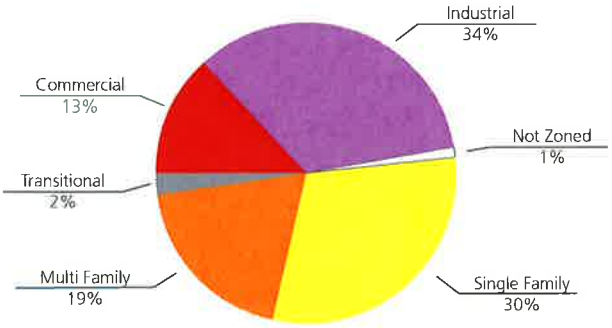
The city, in a joint partnership with the City of Fort Smith and Sebastian County, has annexed a portion of the county's Ben Geren Park for the construction of a new aquatic center to be opened in 2015. The new center will cover almost five acres and feature a lazy river, multiple water slides, and a children's play pool.[10]

INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL OBSOLESCENCE & RE-INVESTMENT

While employment rates and the number of jobs created in the city as a whole are expected to steadily increase through 2018, many industries are estimated to lose jobs during this time period, potentially impacting the city's future land use patterns. Natural resources and mining, construction, manufacturing, information, and other service industries are expected to, in some cases, lose over 19% of their market share in the city. The unemployment rate for the city, 8.7% in January of 2013, is more than the national average. This can be partially attributed to the closures and layoffs by major employers in the area. Whirlpool Corporation recently closed a plant that left 934 workers out of job. Similarly, Rheem Manufacturing Company recently laid-off 250 workers.

While some major businesses have closed, trade, transportation and utilities, financial activities, professional and business services, education and health services, leisure and hospitality and government sectors are all expected to add jobs which would result in an over 17% increase in market share for some industries, and additional demands for institutional, office, and commercial land uses throughout the city.

FIGURE 2.16: ZONING



Source: City of Fort Smith, 2012

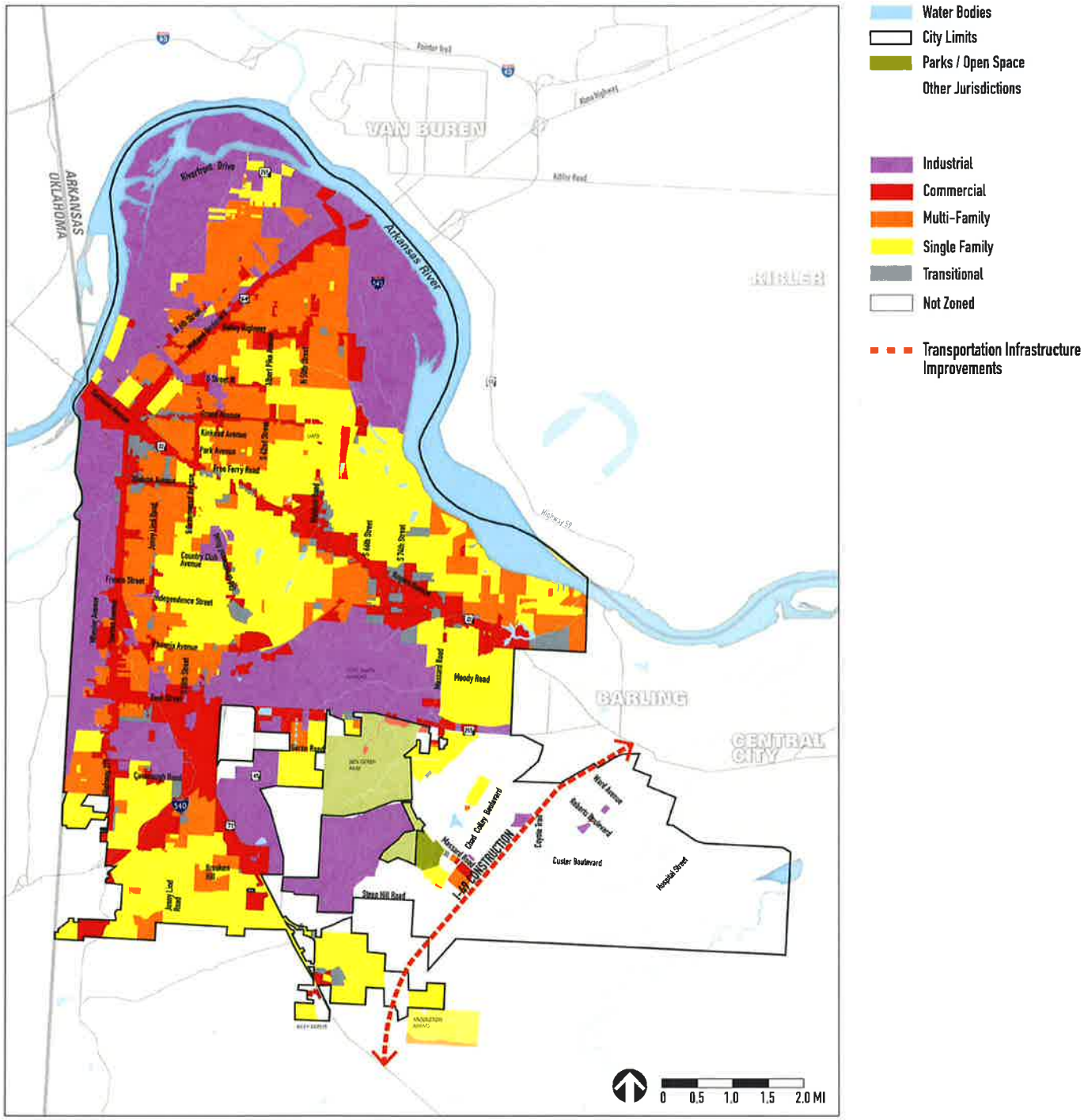
Transportation and Infrastructure

TRANSPORTATION

Fort Smith has access to all modes of transportation including air, road, rail, and water allowing for the movement of people and goods within the city and throughout the region. The continued functioning of this circulation system is essential

10 Times Record, Online Edition

FIGURE 2.17: ZONING MAP



to the long-term economic growth of Fort Smith. Each individual system has a specific role to play in the functioning of the city's economy and the daily life of its residents. Fort Smith's Regional Airport connects the city to the world, freight transportation along waterways, roadways, and railways is a key cog in the City's economic machine, and the over 580 miles of roadways connect people to jobs and centers of activity.

AIR

The Fort Smith Regional Airport provides regional passenger air transportation via American and Delta Airlines with service to Dallas/Fort Worth and Atlanta. The airport is crucial to both the transportation system and the economic future of the city by providing convenient regional and national travel for residents, business travelers, and tourists. In addition to passenger transportation, the airport houses more than 90 private and general aviation aircraft and the 188th Fighter Wing, Arkansas Air National Guard, the only fighter base in the state. To ensure the continued success of the airport, the Airport Master Plan Update highlighted the need for better signage, improved access along I-540, and the future use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) projects. A major renovation to the airport in 2002 included the construction of a new $12.8 million terminal complex and access road.[11]

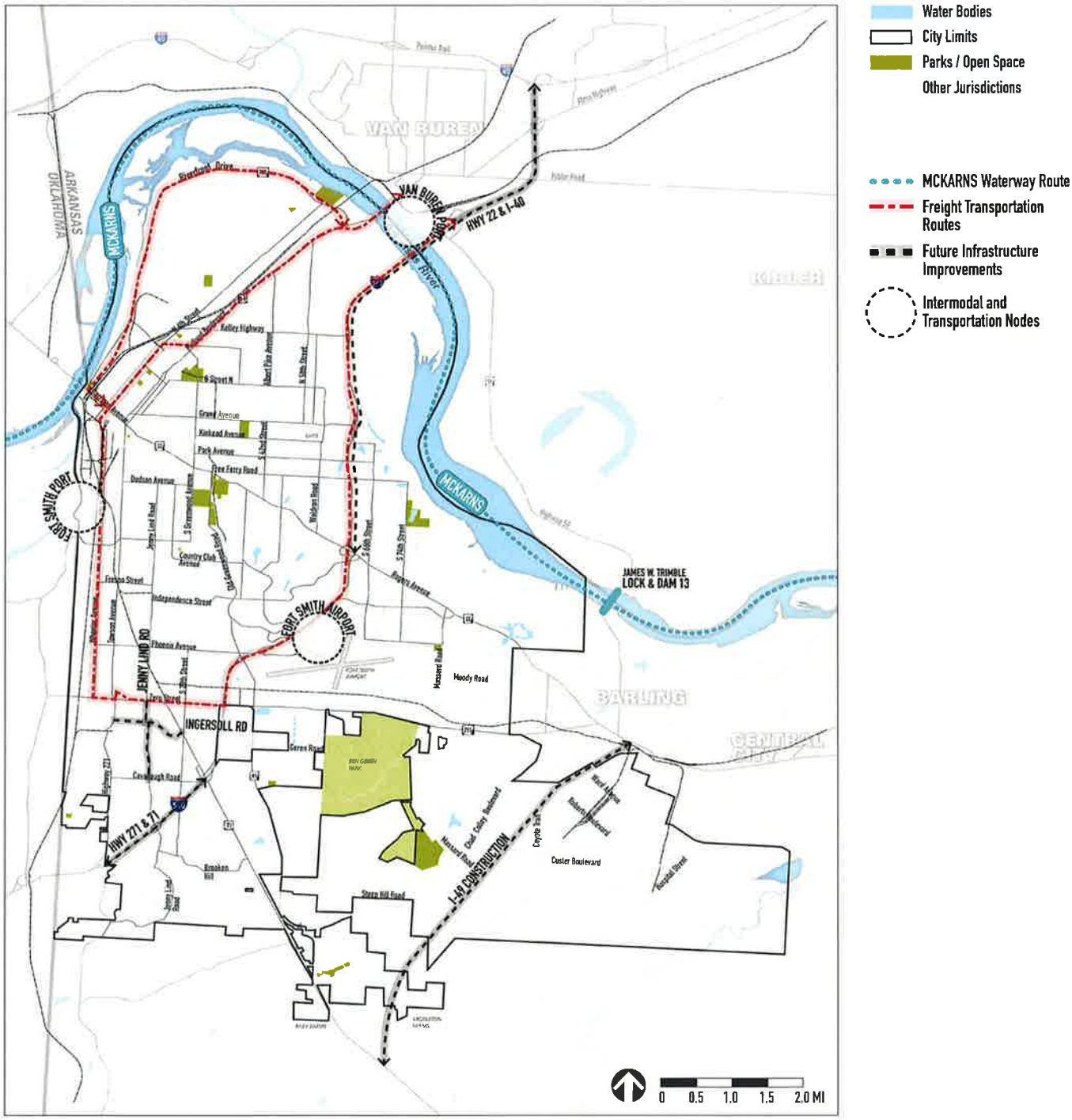
FREIGHT – RAIL, WATER & ROAD

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) recently published that freight movement along interstates, railways, and ports is projected to increase in the next 25 years. Fort Smith, situated at the crossroads of national freight routes along the Arkansas River, is particularly well suited for additional intermodal transportation investment. Intermodal transportation to support manufacturing capabilities continues to be a point of interest for Fort Smith, Sebastian County, and Crawford County, and recently led to the formation of the Western Arkansas Intermodal Authority, also known as the Regional Intermodal Transportation Authority (RITA). Freight transportation in Fort Smith is facilitated through railways, roadways, and waterways. Three Class 1 and two Class 3 rail lines serve the region. These five lines connect the region to all major East-West and North-South freight transportation routes and were responsible for the development of many of the city's industrial corridors. One of the most developed and highly trafficked industrial corridors lies along the city's border with Oklahoma. In addition to the city's five regional rail lines, Fort Smith's waterway transportation system is an essential key to the city's economic development as it provides an efficient and safe route for the regional transportation of freight. The Arkansas River system, known as the Kerr-McClellan Arkansas River Navigation System (MCKARNS), includes the White River in Arkansas and the Verdigris River in Oklahoma (Figure 2.18). The route opened in the 1970s and facilitates traffic from the Mississippi River in Desha County, Arkansas and the Port of Tulsa in Catoosa, Oklahoma year-round. Two commercial ports, one in Fort Smith on the Poteau River and the other in Van Buren on the Arkansas River near the I-540 Bridge, provide barge and shipment needs. A 1999 study selected a site adjacent to the Van Buren Port as the preferred location for a much needed truck-rail transloading facility to serve the region. Future enhancements to the water transportation system include increasing the channels current depth from nine feet to twelve feet to increase the freight capacity of the system by 43%.

In 2012, Fort Smith Mayor Sanders and Fayetteville Mayor Jordan forged a strategic partnership, which includes community members from both cities, to work on increasing the depth of the Arkansas River channel. Major roadway freight movements by a number of trucking lines, located within the city, are made along the numerous state and federal highways that cross through Fort Smith. East-West travel is facilitated through national highways I-40, I-540, US 64 and state highways 22, 10, and 255. North-South travel

11 Fort Smith Airport www.fortsmithairport.com/history

FIGURE 2.18: FREIGHT & TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS



is provided through national highways I-540, US 71, 271 and state highways 59, 255, 45, and 253. Primary truck routes include Wheeler Avenue and Zero Streets both of which provide access to US 71 and I-540 as seen in Figure 2.18. However, since a number of industries and trucking lines are located within downtown or to the north, the challenge of routing trucks out of smaller city streets onto major highways is still partially unresolved.

ROADS

Many of the existing roadways in the city radiate from historic Downtown Fort Smith. The city is connected to the region by three bridge crossings over the Arkansas River via US Highway 64 west to Oklahoma, and US Highway 64 and I-540 east to Van Buren. The completion of the I-49 corridor will mean an increase in traffic and development to the southeast near Chaffee Crossing. The introduction of interstate highways to Fort Smith opened up more land for development and altered the land use patterns along older state highways. These older state highways like Midland Boulevard, historically served regional through traffic but now cater mostly to local traffic. Some existing arterial roads from the late 1950s with heightened commercial activity corridors could be adapted to function as collectors in order to alleviate high traffic volume. Many of these roads are heavily trafficked by more than 62,000 daily commuters including over 40,000 non-Fort Smith residents. Highways running in and out of the city have all seen an increase in daily use over the last ten years. A number of regional road infrastructure projects will reduce congestion on major thoroughfares (Figure 2.18). Some of these projects include the relocation of Highway 71 and construction of I-49 and the widening of Jenny Lind Road and Ingersoll Avenue. As demand for trips along major roads increases, the road system will need to adapt to accommodate the needs of motorists and provide for alternative modes of transportation by improving travel via public transit, trails, and greenways.

TRANSIT

Fort Smith Transit provides public transportation through fixed route and curb-to-curb bus services (Figure 2.19). Buses along fixed routes travel on major thoroughfares—Rogers Avenue, Towson Avenue, Midland Boulevard, and Grand Avenue—to and from the downtown area. Fixed routes have timed stops between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. and run six days a week from Monday to Saturday. Curb-to-curb service is offered to passengers who need additional mobility assistance.

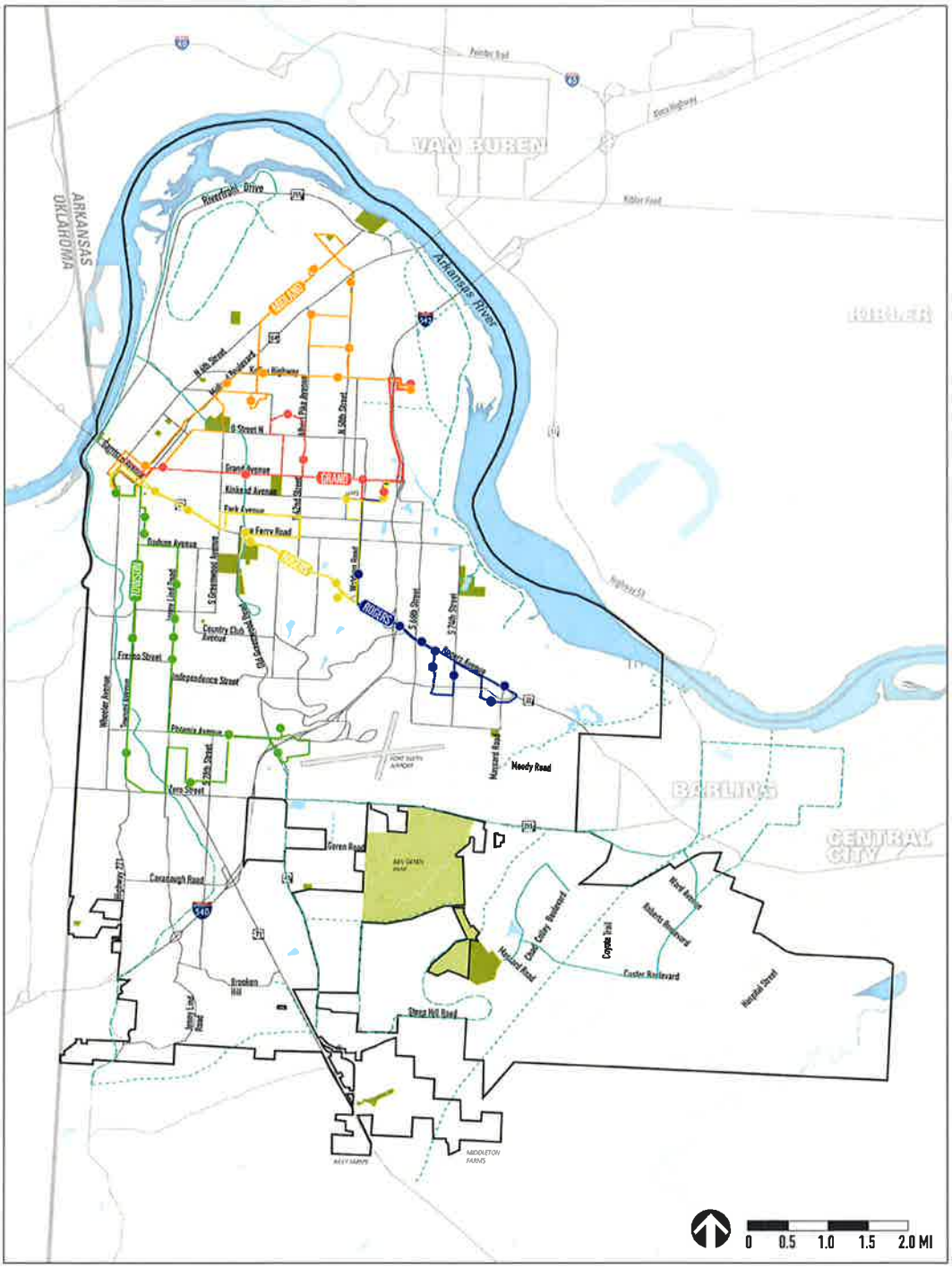
Future investments by Fort Smith Transit are set to focus on information packets for new riders, ADA access through elevators, and route modifications to ensure access to future park locations. Some of these improvements have already been completed, including the new Fort Smith Transportation Center, using $1.2 million in federal stimulus funds.[12] The system, including fixed and curb-to-curb service, recorded an average of 17,194 trips per month in 2012, up from 16,513 trips the previous year. In Crawford and Sebastian Counties, human service agencies like the Arkansas Department of Human Services and Medicaid programs, provide transportation for clients to a variety of locations throughout the River Valley.

BICYCLE / TRAILWAYS

Fort Smith has developed bikeway, trails and greenway systems as part of a complete transportation system and a healthy environment (Figure 2.19). When completed, the bikeway system will connect cyclists to key destinations in the city including parks, institutions, and timed bus stops. The current bikeway system consists primarily of sharrows, or Class III bikeways, that could easily be accommodated on the existing street network. However, newly planned bikeways will include separated lanes and bike paths apart from existing roadways. Over 80 miles of trails within the city have been identified by the trails and greenway system

12 City of Fort Smith "2013 Accomplishments"

FIGURE 2.19: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION & TRAILS MAP



Water Bodies
City Limits
Parks / Open Space
Other Jurisdictions

FIXED-ROUTE TRANSIT

- Midland Route & Timed Stops
- Grand Route & Timed Stops
- Rogers Route 1 & Timed Stops
- Rogers Route 2 & Timed Stops
- Towson Route & Timed Stops

PROPOSED BIKEWAYS & TRAILS

- 0-5 Years
- 5-10 Years
- 10+ Years

plan to be completed within three phases over the next 15 years. Once complete, this system will link to other regional trailway systems currently being developed by neighboring municipalities. The trails and greenways will be multi-purpose bike, pedestrian, and recreational pathways.

Infrastructure

Fort Smith is served by two water sources—the Frog Bayou Watershed and the Lee Creek Watershed. Frog Bayou, located within the Boston Mountains in Crawford County, is a 74-mile wide watershed. The water in Lake Fort Smith is treated by the Lake Fort Smith water treatment plant. The Lee Creek watershed encompasses 634 square miles within parts of Arkansas and Oklahoma. Water within the Lee Creek Reservoir is treated by the Lee Creek water treatment plant. The Lake Fort Smith water treatment plant, initially constructed in the 1930s, recently underwent a $35 million upgrade in 2012 that increased its treatment capacity to 40 million gallons per day. The treatment plants serve 160,000 customers in Fort Smith, portions of Crawford, Franklin, Washington, Sequoyah, Leflore, and Sebastian Counties. According to forecasted demand, average daily demand will increase two fold by 2060. However, a recent study concluded that the water supply, with the further expansion of the Lake Fort Smith water treatment plant, will still cover the needs of the city through 2060. While the water supply can meet the average daily demand and the treatment plants can meet the maximum daily demands, the city has instituted water conservation measures to curb the wasteful use of water on an on-going basis.

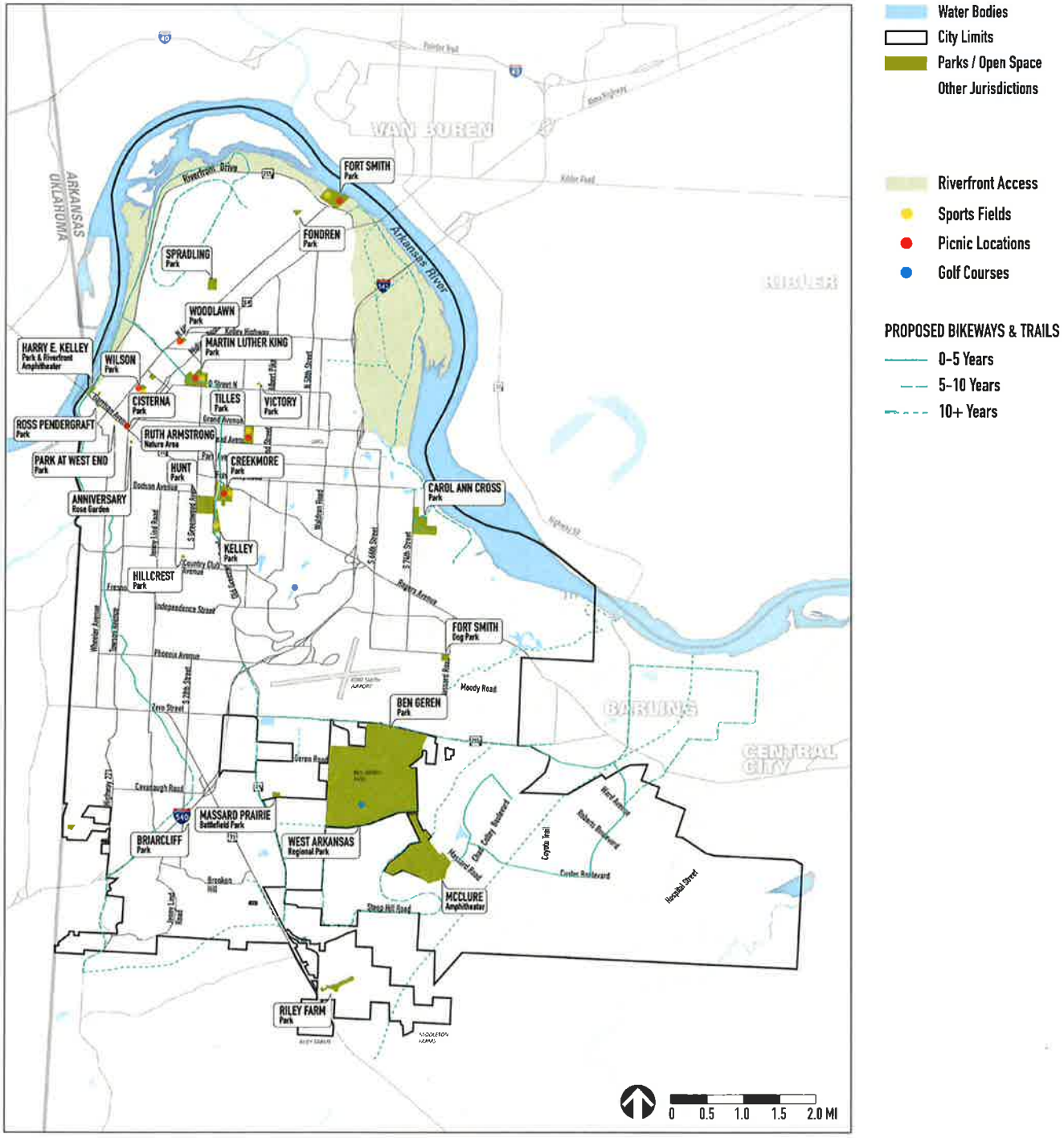
The P Street facility and the Massard facility provide for Fort Smith's wastewater treatment needs. The P Street facility has a higher peak flow capacity than the Massard facility, however, they both operate at a similar average daily flow of 8 MGD and 7 MGD, respectively. An increase in local sales taxes and sale of municipal bonds will fund some $71 million in improvements to the city's sewer system to increase conveyance capacity and rehabilitate the collection system. Improvements are expected to eliminate sewer backups, overflows, and untreated wastewater discharges during wet weather events. In addition to these improvements was the construction of a $2.1 million sewer and water infrastructure project along River Front Drive in 2013 along with $12 million in water transmission improvements in the southeastern portion of the city to support its southern growth area.

Parks, Recreation & River Access

Fort Smith residents have access a variety of recreational facilities including community parks, river front parks, downtown parks, specialty parks, and neighborhood parks (Figure 2.20). The city's parks add up to almost 273 acres, all maintained by the Fort Smith Parks and Recreation Department. Each of the city's parks contains a different set of amenities for residents to enjoy including multi-use trails, soccer fields, baseball and softball fields, picnic areas, and children's playgrounds.

The city's larger community parks—Carol Ann Cross Park, Creekmore Park, Martin Luther King Park, and Tilles Park—include spaces for active and passive recreation. Carol Ann Cross Park, located on 74th Street near the Arkansas River, is centered on Wildcat Mountain Lake with open lawns and a walking trail. In 2012, 10 additional acres were donated by a local family, resulting in a 20% expansion of the park. Creekmore Park, located on Rogers and South 31st Street, contains a public swimming pool, a sprayground area, walking trails, miniature golf, and is home to the Creekmore Express Train ride. Martin Luther King Park, located at the intersection of Greenwood Avenue and North O Street, is home to a skatepark and a sprayground as well as softball fields and walking trails. Tilles Park, located off of Grand Avenue at North 37th Street, provides visitors with access to a wading pool, a disc golf course, and basketball and tennis courts.

FIGURE 2.20: PARKS & TRAILS MAP



Riverfront parks in Fort Smith including Fort Smith Park, Harry E. Kelley Park, and the Riverfront Amphitheater, have helped link the city back to the river by expanding access. Future investment would help to ensure that residents and visitors feel connected to the river. Fort Smith Park, located on Riverfront Drive just northwest of the Highway 64 Bridge, is a naturally landscaped park with picnic and performance areas. Harry E Kelley Park, located near the Highway 64 Bridge to Oklahoma near the Belle Grove Historic District, has a naturally landscaped riverfront walking trail. The Riverfront Amphitheater, part of Harry E Kelley Park, is a large outdoor performance and event space that can hold 1,200 people and a stage area that can accommodate 5,000 more.

Downtown parks include Cisterna Park, Park at West End, and the Ross Pendergraft Park. Cisterna Park, named after Fort Smith's sister city Cisterna, Italy, is a small triangular plaza with a fountain and benches at the intersection of North 10th Street and Garrison Avenue. The Park at West End, located at North 2nd Street and Garrison Avenue, contains a small seasonal amusement park with concessions and benches year-round. The amusement park includes an original working 1930s Ferris wheel used in the World's Fair, a hand-painted Italian carousel, and a double-decker London bus. The Ross Pendergraft Park, located across from The Park at West End

Wells Lake Trail

Fort Smith Dog Park

on Garrison Avenue adjacent to the Fort Smith Museum of History, has pavilion for performances, a seasonal Christmas Light display, and is home to the Bass Reeves Monument.

Specialty parks, ranging from gardens to historic and cultural sites, include the Anniversary Rose Garden, Fort Smith Dog Park, Kelly Park Ballfields, Massard Prairie Battlefield, McClure Amphitheater, and Ruth Armstrong Nature Area. The Anniversary Rose Garden, just east of downtown on South 12th Street, is home to a variety of rose bushes cultivated by the Fort Smith Rose Society. Fort Smith Dog Park, in the Massard neighborhood just east of the Airport, is a large, fenced, off-leash park with a pond. The Kelley Park Ballfields, at the intersection of Old Greenwood Road and O Street, have a total of eight regulation-sized baseball fields for both organized league play and recreation. The Massard Prairie Battlefield, at Red Pine Drive and Morgans Way, is a Civil War battlefield and campsite listed on the Arkansas Register of Historic Places. The site contains a plaque marking the locations of the camps. The McClure Amphitheater, located in the southeast portion of the city near Barling along Massard Road, is an outdoor performance site originally located within Fort Chaffee. Ruth Armstrong Nature Area, at the intersection of Rogers Avenue and Old Greenwood Road near the Fort Smith Public Library, is an area reserved for conservation and includes a walking trail to view birds and wildlife.

Neighborhood parks, located in predominately residential areas, include Harley A. Wilson Park, Hillcrest Park, Riley Farm Park, Spradling Park, Victory Park, and Woodlawn Park. Harley A. Wilson Park, at the intersection of North 8th and H Streets, has places for picnics, a playground, and basketball courts. Hillcrest Park, a circular green located near the intersection of Girard Street and Vista Boulevard, is a well-manicured park with a playground surrounded by single-family homes. Riley Farm Park, located just off Maple Park Drive, contains a children's playground and nature walk area. Spradling Park, at the intersection of North 29th Street and Spradling Avenue, contains a playground, pavilion, and a quarter-mile walking trail. Victory Park is a small triangular green located in a single-family residential neighborhood. Woodlawn Park, located at the intersection of North 6th and S Streets, has a variety of activities available for residents including a wading pool, playground, and basketball courts.

Fort Smith residents currently have access to eight multi-use trails—Ben Geren Trail, Chad Colley Trail, Fort Chaffee West Trail, Massard Road North Trail, Mill Creek Trail, Rice Carden Levee Trail, Chaffee Ridge Trail, and Sunnymede Trail. However, with the implementation of the city's trail and greenway plan, over 88 new miles of trails and bikeways will be added to the city opening up more recreational and linkage opportunities for city residents and visitors. Dedicated funding from the Sales and Use Tax will support implementation of the Trails and Greenways Plan starting in 2014. The River West Trail, the trail with the highest priority for funding, will connect River Park with the Rice Carden Levee Trail.

In addition to the parks and trails operated by the Fort Smith Parks and Recreation Department, residents and visitors have access to the Fort Smith National Historic Site, maintained by the National Park Foundation. The 75 acre park, established in 1961, contains the remains of two frontier forts and the Western District of Arkansas Federal Court.

Fort Smith Main Library

City Government & Facilities

The City of Fort Smith was incorporated in 1842 and was organized as a City Administrator form of government in 1967.[13] Governing of the City is the responsibility of seven elected members of the Board of Directors and the Mayor. There are additional volunteer boards and commissions that inform and advise the Board and the Mayor. Five service divisions—Police, Fire, Operation, Management, and Development—develop on-going plans and implementation programs for the city's long-range plan[14]. Some of the Fort Smith's City department offices are currently housed in the Steven's Building, a seven story structure on Garrison Avenue in Downtown Fort Smith.

Libraries

The Fort Smith Public Library has four branches throughout the city. The Main Library, opened in 2001 on Rogers Avenue, is the largest of all four branches with meeting rooms, a computer classroom and lab, expanded children's rooms, and a used book stand. The Dallas Street Library, The Miller Branch, and the Windsor Street Branch are neighborhood centers that provide books, research resources, and computer access to city residents. The number of

13 Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan 2002
14 Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan 2002

registered borrowers in the Fort Smith Public Library system increased by 30% between 2008 and 2012 while the number of library visits decreased by 27% during the same time period. However, circulation of books and media materials increased by 39% suggesting fewer and more high-volume users.

Public Safety

The mission of the Fort Smith Police Department is to serve the public in partnership with the community, to protect life and property, prevent crime, and resolve problems. The Fort Smith Police Department is a full-service agency which provides services in a variety of division: Patrol, Criminal Investigations, Narcotics, K-9, SWAT, Professional Standards, 911 Communications, Reserve Unit, and community services such as Beat Health Officers and School Resource Officers. The Fort Smith Police Department enjoys a great partnership with all facets of the community, including citizens, school districts, businesses, and visitors.

A total of 166 officers and 57 civilian staff are currently authorized for the police department. While the number of calls handled by the police department decreased between 2002 and 2012 from 79,042 to 74,883, calls are projected to increase to 81,000 by 2025. Arrests for drug-related offenses in the city increased by 53% between 2000 and 2011. However, the total number of violent and property crimes decreased by 23% between 2002 and 2012.

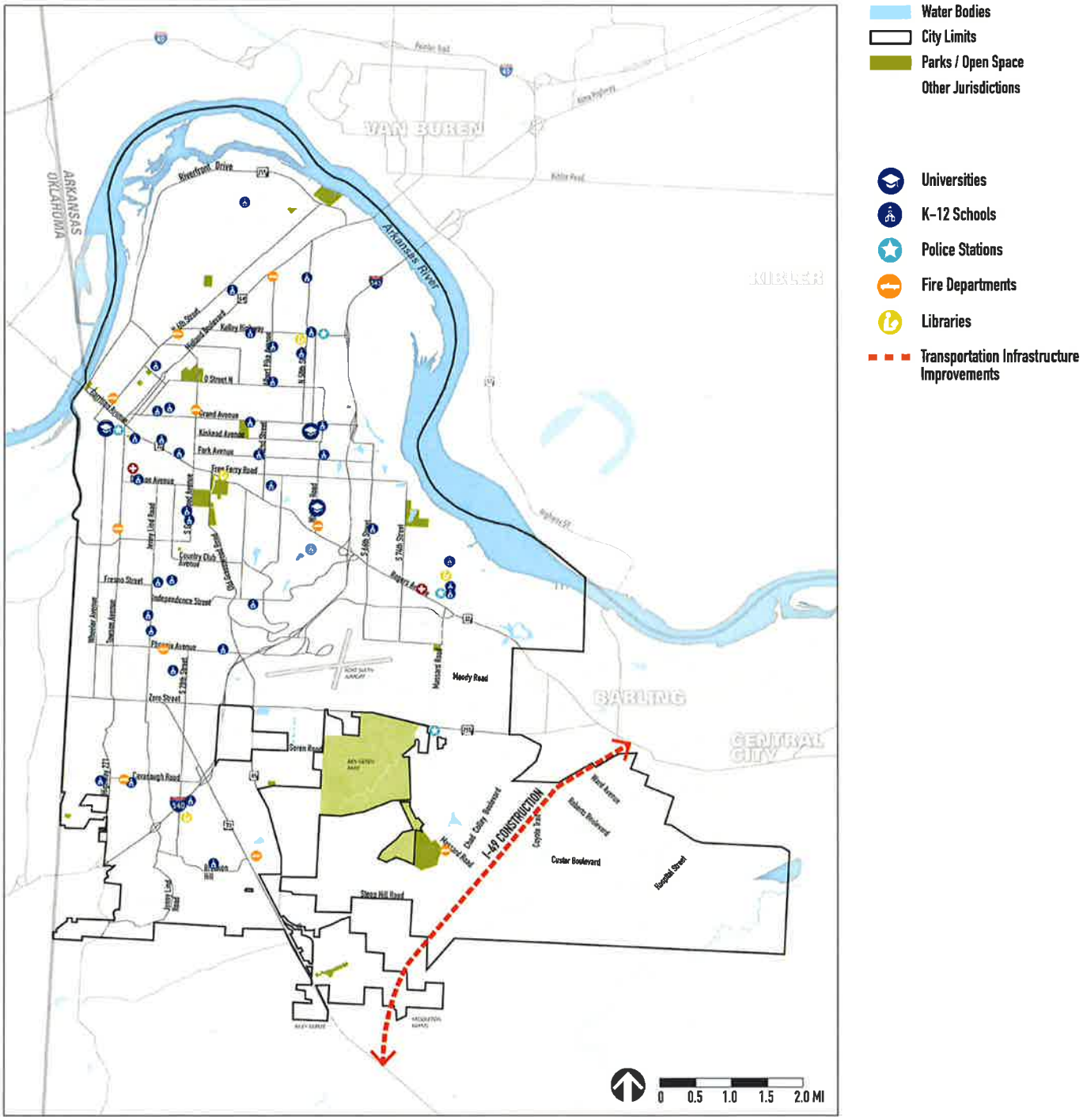
The Fort Smith Fire Department (FSFD) provides a number of services to the city including firefighting and emergency medical, natural disaster and other emergency response. 152 personnel are employed by the FSFD in eleven stations throughout the city including the Chaffee Crossing area station currently under construction that was completed and went into service in February of 2014. The city is currently also modernizing modernized ten fire stations in 2014 to improve service as most of the city's fire stations are approximately forty years old. The National Insurance Services Office (ISO) gave the FSFD a Class 2 fire ratin on a scale of 1-10, with 1 meaning highest response and protection, and 10 meaning no protection available. The department's average response time of 3 minutes 13 seconds and the accessibility of resources are contributing factors to the high rating by the ISO. However, given the shift in population and hazards, such as industrial manufacturing, a strategic realignment of fire station locations will need to be considered within the next ten years.

Education

The City of Fort Smith has a range of public and private educational options available for residents from Kindergarten to Post-Secondary Education. The city is home to a number of public schools including two high schools, four junior high schools, nineteen elementary schools, and one alternative school with a total enrollment of 14,049. The Fort Smith School District, one of the largest districts in the state, contains schools fully accredited by the Arkansas Department of Education and the North Central Association. A majority

UA Fort Smith

FIGURE 2.21: COMMUNITY FACILITIES MAP



of public schools within the district report high performance, with 77% of seniors exceeding the state average score on the ACT (American College Test). In addition to sixteen public schools, the city is served by eleven private schools including eight Kindergarten-6th grade, one junior high, one Montessori, and one combined middle / high school, with a total of 1,985 students. Public school enrollment is projected to rise slightly with an increase of just 0.4% between 2013 and 2023.

Fort Smith is home to three institutions of higher education– Webster University, John Brown University, and the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith (UAFS),. Webster University, located downtown near the Fort Smith Convention Center, has an enrollment of 50 students and offers Masters of Business Administration (MBA) and graduate degrees in Human Resource Management. The John Brown University offers an undergraduate course of study in organizational management and master's degrees in Business Administration, counseling, and therapy. The University of Arkansas at Fort Smith (UAFS), a campus within the larger University of Arkansas System, offers programs of study for bachelor's and associate's degrees as well as certificates and technical training for its 7,337 students. The UAFS campus started as a commuter technical school and has grown into a comprehensive university offering a number of student life facilities. In 2013, thirteen percent (940) of UAFS students lived on-campus, compared to zero percent just eight years before.[15] Enrollment for UAFS is expected to increase by 23 percent to 9,000 students by 2033.[16] However, as the University continues to increase enrollment, the campus will need to expand and the University will need to upgrade outdated facilities. In 2013, the University released a master plan to address future physical expansion and renovation needs. The master plan has a horizon date of 2028, when UAFS will celebrate its centennial. The vision for the campus focuses on transforming the former commuter campus into

15 UAFS Master Plan
16 UAFS Master Plan

Artist's Rendering of UAFS Campus Master Plan

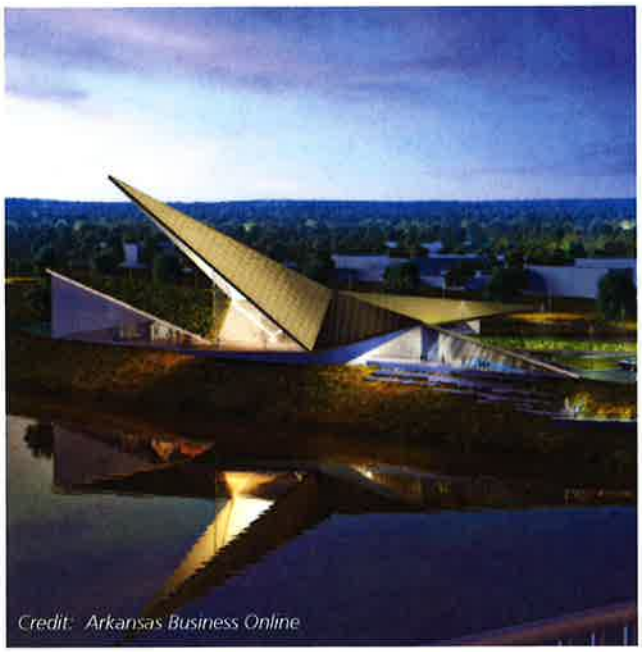
a "beautiful, functional, and vibrant space" where students can relax, play, and learn. Additionally, the master plan vision highlights the need to create a new face for the campus that represents UAFS's regional academic leadership. The plan strives to be mission-based, strategic, inclusive, flexible, immediate and long-range, environmentally sustainable, compact and integrated, distinctive and memorable, and community-focused guiding document. The plan lays out five major initiatives for the future of the campus: 1) a Grand Facade; 2) Extend the Campus Green; 3) a Campus on the Move; 4) Making Ourselves at Home; and 5) Pride of the Lions. A Grand Facade includes transforming the entrance to the campus by replacing aging academic buildings with modern facilities, similar in scale to the Pendergraft Health Sciences Center, and constructing a new Alumni Center. Extend the Campus Green is an effort to create a physical space where the academic and social heart of the campus meet. A Campus on the Move involves the continued transformation of the campus into a pedestrian-focused realm where vehicular traffic and surface parking are relegated to the edges. Making Ourselves at Home is an initiative to increase the amount of students living on campus by building new on-campus residential halls, off-campus affiliated housing, and a student center. Pride of the Lions is an initiative to expand athletic and recreational facilities including new locker rooms, playing fields, and parking lots. The master plan, and associated projects and initiatives, will guide UAFS in the expansion of its campus over the next two decades.

As the need for technical and job training increases with the rise of medical, education, and transportation sector jobs, the city's three universities could play a substantial role in preparing the next generation workforce. Additionally, there is a perception in the community that graduates from the three institutions of higher education leave the area after graduation leading to a "brain drain."

Cultural Resources

Fort Smith has rich history and cultural legacy. A number of monuments to the city's past remain as attractions for both tourists and residents. Many of these points of interest are located in Downtown Fort Smith, the historic and present-day center of commercial and government activity.

The Bass Reeves Monument, located within the Ross Pendergraft Park, is a tribute to Bass Reeves, a former slave who overcame adversity to become the first African-American U.S. Deputy Marshals. The monument honors not only Reeves' legacy, but also salutes the city's historic and continuing relationship with the U.S. Marshals Service. The Oak Cemetery, listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1995, is the final resting place of many deputy U.S. Marshals. The City is continuing to strengthen its commitment to honoring past and present members of the U.S. Marshals by moving forward with plans to construct a U.S. Marshals Museum on the banks of the Arkansas River near the amphitheater. Plans for the U.S. Marshals Museum



Artist's Rendering of the U.S. Marshals Museum

were the result of a multi-year campaign that lobbied for the United States Marshals Service (USMS) to select Fort Smith as the location for the museum as the City was historically the location where many U.S. Marshals were killed in the line of duty.[17] In the fall of 2013, the City will dedicate the cornerstone for the Hall of Honor, as a memorial to all USMS fallen officers since 1789. Adding to the city's military history is the 21-acre Fort Smith National Cemetery, which is one of two cemeteries in the country with both Union and Confederate soldiers.

Other historic structures and sites include Zachary Taylor's Chimney, a relic from the destroyed home of President Zachary Taylor when he was the commander of Fort Smith's military garrison before becoming president. The old Knoble Brewery is a three-story cobblestone building complete with an underground cellar constructed in 1848 by German-born immigrant Joseph Knoble. The Brewery, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, once supplied over 35 saloons in Fort Smith and is now home to Doe's Eat Place. The Fort Smith Visitors Center, formerly Miss Laura's Social Club, is the only former bordello listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building, located in Downtown Fort Smith, was constructed in 1896 and converted into a brothel by 1903 by Laura Ziegler. It was considered the premier brother on "The Row," Fort Smith's red light district, until 1910 when the business began to decline. Eventually, the building was abandoned and purchased by a local investor before demolition in 1963. In 1973, Miss Laura's was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and fully restored in 1983. By 1992, Miss Laura's was the home of the official Fort Smith Visitors Center.

In addition to the numerous monuments and historic structures, the City has a variety of museums with exhibits

Bass Reeves Monument

focusing on Fort Smith's rich civilian and military history. The Fort Smith Museum of History is located in the Atkinson-Williams Warehouse Building circa 1907, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The museum is home to relics from Fort Smith's past including an old-fashioned soda fountain, an exhibit on Black History in Fort Smith, and a variety of historic tools and local goods.

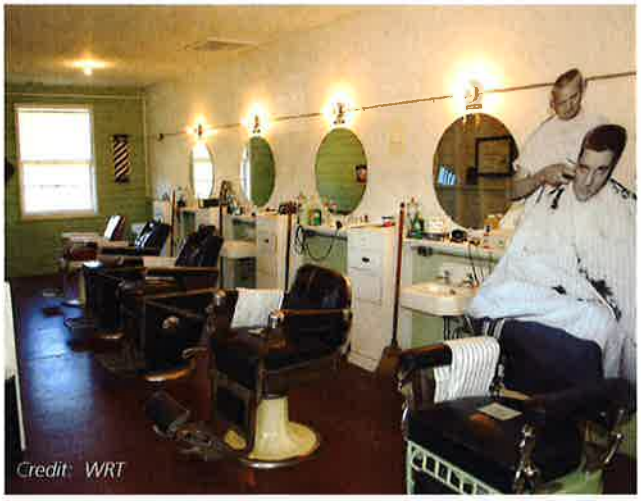
The Fort Smith Trolley Museum, curated by the Fort Smith Streetcar Restoration Association, operates four of the City's original 58 streetcars through downtown to raise public awareness about the loss of historic Downtown streetcars. The museum has plans to extend the trolley route by laying more tracks on Downtown streets for a total of 1.5 miles. At completion, the trolley route will make stops at the Fort Smith Convention Center and the Holiday Inn-City Center. In addition to the streetcar, the museum serves as a part-time station for the A&M Scenic Excursion train rides, operated by the Arkansas and Missouri Railroad. The train runs from Fort Smith to Winslow and gives visitors the opportunity to spend an afternoon riding on a fully restored 1920s-style passenger train. The Fort Smith Air Museum, located at the Fort Smith

17 Entertainment Fort Smith Magazine, Online, 2013

Regional Airport, features exhibits on the 188th Fighter Wing, Arkansas National Guard, the Fort Smith Civil Air Patrol, and the growth of general aviation.

Chaffee Crossing's museum district, a tourist destination, is home to the Chaffee Barbershop Museum, the Enchanted Chapel and Doll Museum, the Fort Chaffee Barracks Museum, the Maness School House, and the Vietnam Veterans Museum. The Chaffee Barbershop Museum, opened in 2008, is the barbershop where Elvis Presley had his first G.I. haircut. In addition to Elvis memorabilia, the barbershop contains historical artifacts from Fort Chaffee's 70-year history. The Enchanted Chapel is the historic Fort Chaffee military chapel while the Enchanted Doll Museum contains a large private collection of dolls. The Fort Chaffee Barracks Museum was home to Elvis during his time at Fort Chaffee and features a series of exhibits about the service members who lived at the barracks. The Maness School House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was constructed in 1937 and is the only surviving building from that era that was not moved or destroyed when the Department of Defense built Camp Chaffee. Finally, the Vietnam Veterans Museum was constructed by local veterans to serve as a tribute to all those who served.

In addition to historic attractions, residents and visitors have access to a number of arts and culture including the Fort Smith Symphony, the oldest orchestra in the state, the Second Street Live Theater, and the Fort Smith Little Theater, in operation since 1947. The Fort Smith Regional Art Museum (RAM) has been in operation since 1948. In January of 2013, RAM opened a newly renovated museum in Downtown on Rogers Avenue. The museum, designed by Polk, Stanley Wilcox, features exhibition space, a lecture hall, and space for artist-led workshops. UAFS conducts a yearly Season of Entertainment with shows, concerts, and other entertainment from local and national artists. As of 2013, UAFS renamed



Fort Chaffee Barbershop Museum

its downtown entertainment venue The Blue Lion at UAFS Downtown. The building, renovated at a cost of $2 million in 2009, was formerly known as Second Street Live. The venue has 20,000 square feet of space for concerts, exhibits, meetings, and workshops. Outside of Downtown, UAFS has plans to construct a $15.5 million visual arts building by the fall of 2015 that will include a 150-seat film theater. The new facility will be funded, in part, by a $2.5 million matching grant from the Windgate Charitable Foundation. UAFS aspires to have the building function as a "center for the arts" that will enhance the education of their students and contribute to the regional art community.[18]

The Fort Smith Convention Center, opened in 2001, features 40,000 gross square feet of flexible exhibit and event space, eight meeting rooms, and 1,300 seat theater with full production capabilities which serves as the home of the Fort Smith Symphony and the UAFS Season of Entertainment. The Convention Center was owned and operated by the City until the summer of 2011 when the City entered into a management agreement with the Advertising and Promotion

18 The City Wire, 2013

(A&P) Commission. In the first full year of operation by the A&P, the number of hosted events increased from 214 to 256, an increase of 19.6%. According to Destination Marketing Association International, events that generated out of town attendance brought an estimated $15,084,848 into the Fort Smith Economy in 2012.

Natural Resources

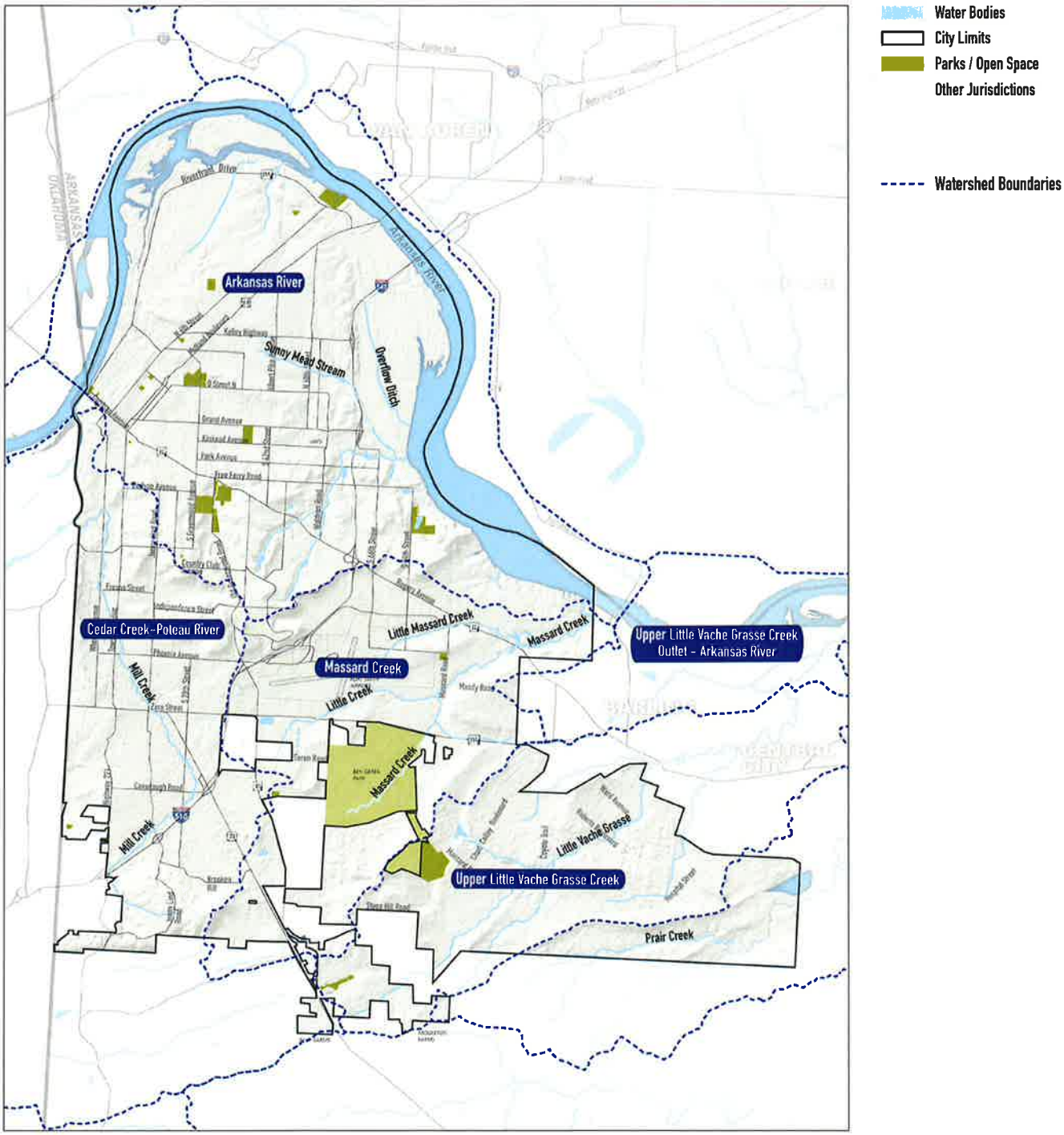
Fort Smith, located within the Arkansas Valley, is predominately flat and green. Residents and visitors enjoy almost 350 acres of parks and open spaces including the Fort Smith National Historic Site. One of the most significant environmental features that defines the city is its location next to the Arkansas River. In addition to the river, seven watershed sub-basins (Figure 2.22) run through the city including Little Massard, No Name, May Branch, Mill Creek, Sunnymede, Oak Park, Massard Creek, and the Spivey Creek. While the presence of waterways in the city provides enjoyment for residents and is an asset to the region, flooding and drainage issues continue to be an area of concern. Investments in stormwater management and control have helped mitigate some structure and street flooding, and more is being done to reduce the negative impact from stormwater events.

The river not only plays an important role in the movement of freight throughout the region, but also its biological diversity by providing a migration route for birds in their yearly southern migration. Ducks, Canada Geese, and Swallows are often seen moving along the river course during migration periods in the spring and the fall. The movement of a variety of bird species throughout the region has in part given the city its reputation as a bird-watching destination and sanctuary. Many bird-watchers flock to the 170-acre Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center, located on the former site of Fort Chaffee, to see not only a variety of migrating birds, but also a number of small mammals

Arkansas River

and turtles. The center includes an educational facility with exhibits, opportunities for canoeing and fishing, and access to a number of nature trails. Only four species, out of the 23 on the Arkansas Endangered or Threatened species list, are located within the county. The Least Tern and the Piping Plover, one threatened and one endangered bird species, are generally found near water resources. The endangered American Burying Beetle is located within grasslands and forested areas, while the endangered Gray Bat, the only mammal of the list, is found within caves.

FIGURE 2.22: NATURAL RESOURCES



CHAPTER 3

AREAS OF COMMUNITY CONSENSUS

DEFINING COMMON GROUND

Synthesizing Public Input

The quality of public engagement and the input received throughout the visioning efforts of Community Forum Series 1, developing alternative futures in Community Forum Series 2, and ultimately selecting the City of Fort Smith's a preferred growth scenario at the Preferred Future Open House has added value to the plan update process, and will ultimately result in a sense of citizen "ownership"of, and support for the updated Comprehensive Plan. From the onset, and throughout the update process, the community remained the primary source of direction and input that has shaped the content of the plan.

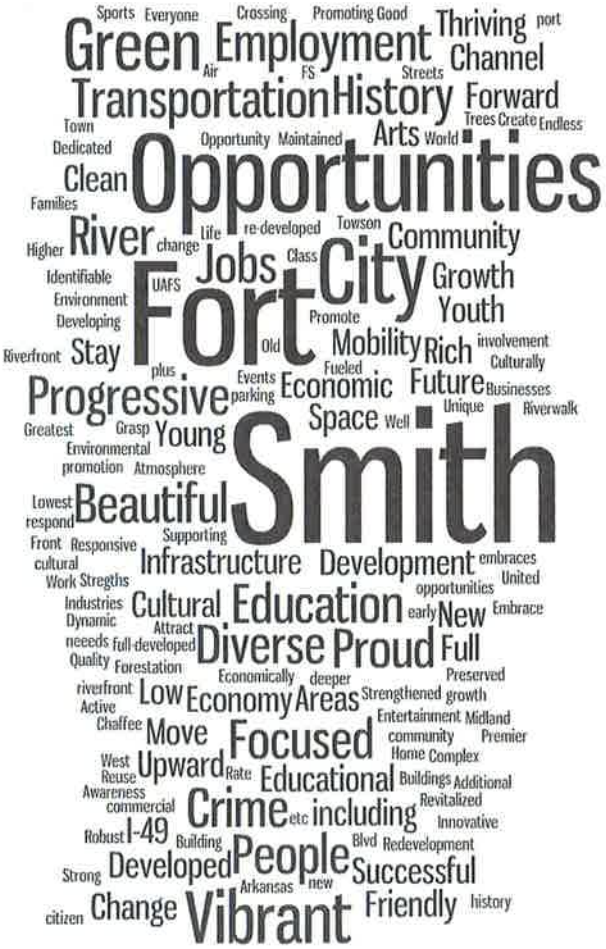
With a variety of input methods ranging from online discussions, to community forum events, and smaller focus group efforts, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC) maintained a consistent and direct connection between the citizens and the planning team. This group of residents met regularly with the consultant team. In addition, a Technical Resource Team (TRT) consisting of the City's department heads met with planning staff and the consultant team to review and discuss public input. One of the goals of the CPSC was to identify common priorities based on community input, and provide the consultant team with the direction necessary to put together a community-based Vision Statement, Preferred Future, and Plan Framework. These primary components represent the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan update and are based directly on the results of the public engagement strategy.

Community Visioning

Three public forum visioning events were organized at different locations within the City, and different times over a two-day period to make sure residents had a variety of options to accommodate on their personal schedules. The format of each Community Forum event included a welcome by Mayor Sandy Sanders, followed by a brief introduction to the planning process by the consultant team. Following the presentation, each participant from the public joined a group of eight to ten fellow residents to engage in a round-table discussion facilitated by representatives from the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC), City staff, or the consultant team. The goal of the engagement at these forums was to solicit issues and aspirations from residents around the topics of Fort Smith's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) with the goal of developing a community-based Vision Statement.

In a facilitated discussion lasting about 15 minutes for each topic, every participant had the opportunity to offer their individual ideas. All of the ideas were recorded on a board so the group could see each other's ideas, discuss consolidating similar ideas, and prioritize the ideas that were the most important to them as individuals. At the end of each 15 minute topic discussion session, the group voted on which priorities were most important to them as a group. This process not only resulted in identifying a range of issues and aspirations that are important to residents as a basis for developing a Vision Statement, it also provided an opportunity for participants to hear a diverse range of ideas from other community members with whom they may not ordinarily interact.

Following the idea recording and prioritization process, each group worked on developing a draft Vision Statement that collectively addressed their priorities. At the end of each meeting, a representative from each group had the opportunity to report how the discussions at their table went, and share their group's Vision Statement. All of the ideas and Vision Statements were recorded, along with the list of priorities for each group. Over 1,000 ideas were collected directly from residents about Fort Smith's, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Each idea was recorded and transcribed into a spreadsheet, and grouped by topics to organize ideas into common themes. The ideas that were voted on as priorities were grouped to identify areas of consensus and form the basis of a common ground for a draft Vision Statement. The draft Vision Statements that each



group prepared were also recorded and transcribed to inform the development of a Vision Statement for the City. The statements were analyzed for common language or themes and compared to identify any areas of potential divergence.

Once all of the ideas were collected and synthesized, the results were tabulated to identify common themes and priorities. Where several groups came to similar conclusions on priorities, common themes were identified in order to create a Vision Statement. Within each theme are several specific concepts that represent the variety of values held by the community members who participated. These tabulations are shown in the following figures and discussion.

Community Forum Visioning Events

STRENGTHS:

- **What present conditions of Fort Smith do we value? What are our most important assets? What community qualities and values do we share and cherish?**

The most frequent theme to emerge from the community input related to Strengths was the quality of life enjoyed by residents of Fort Smith (Figure 3.1). This category included priorities such as a low cost of living, and public safety, in addition to other general positive aspects of living in the area. Many groups came to the consensus that the education system in Fort Smith was also strong, including the K-12 public schools, as well as UAFS. Other common priorities are related to Fort Smith's unique location, with rich natural and historic resources. Noticeably at the bottom of the list, are many issues that were raised as weaknesses, or potential threats; a lack of mobility, limited diversity, and recent or future demographic changes.

Out of the priorities that fell under the theme of quality of life, 33% related to the affordable cost of living, followed by 26% related to the level of safety in the area, 22% related to the character of the community.

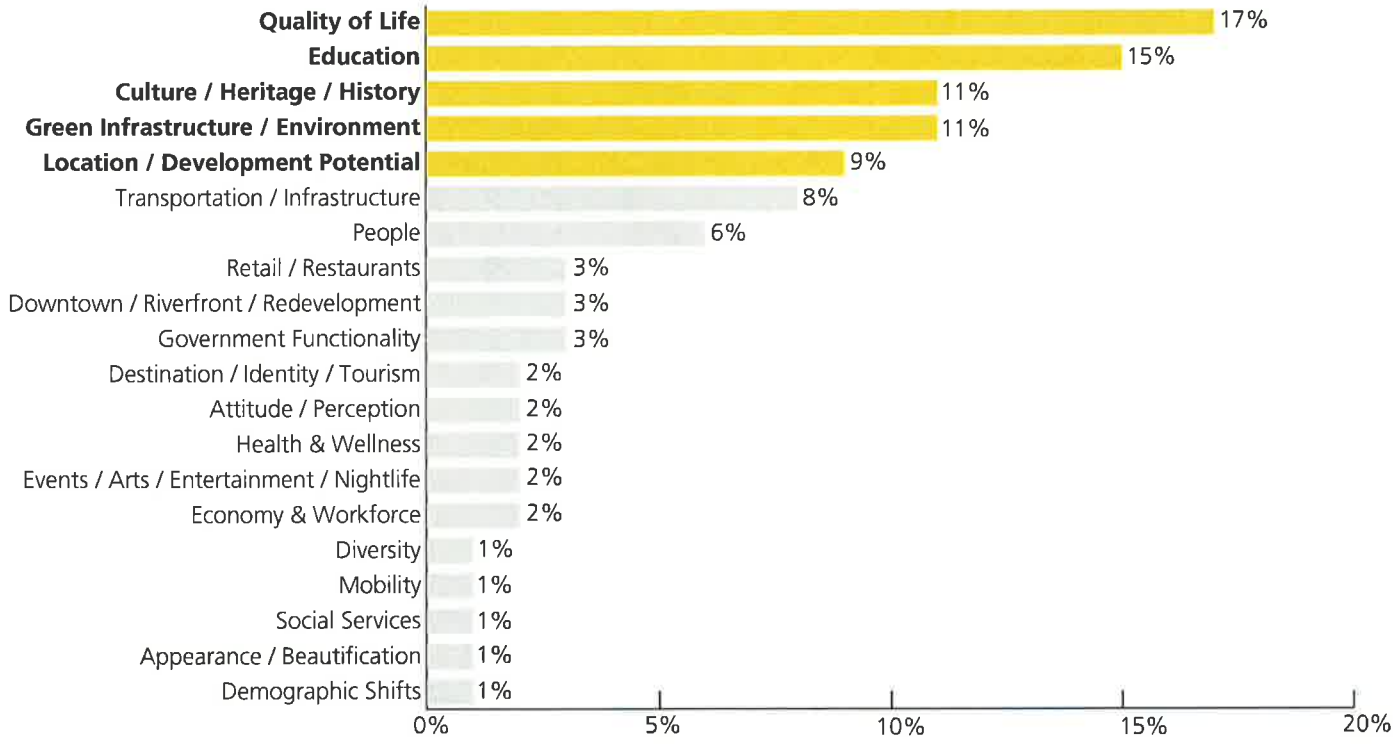
"GREAT QUALITY OF LIVING"

"A FRIENDLY TOWN WITH GREAT CHURCHES, AND BEAUTIFUL SCENERY"

"A STRONG COMMUNITY SPIRIT"

" A HOMETOWN ATMOSPHERE"

FIGURE 3.1: COMMON STRENGTH PRIORITIES:



WEAKNESSES:

- **What present conditions of our community do we characterize as problems requiring resolution? What negative aspects of our life here would we change?**

Most groups identified economic and workforce issues as significant weaknesses for the City of Fort Smith (Figure 3.2). These discussions included concerns raised by residents regarding a lack of employment opportunities, difficulty retaining a qualified workforce in Fort Smith, and making a transition from the former manufacturing based economy. There was also a consensus among groups that there may be functional problems, fiscal issues, or a failure of leadership within local government that could limit Fort Smith's future potential for growth. Another common priority that was seen as a weakness by the community was the absence of activities for young adults, particularly related to events and entertainment within the Downtown and riverfront areas. Residents see these lack of opportunities as contributing to a potential for future economic decline.

At the lower end of the list of weaknesses are aspects of Fort Smith that most groups found to either be strengths, or opportunities; including the people of Fort Smith, access to healthcare, and the City's unique historic and cultural heritage.

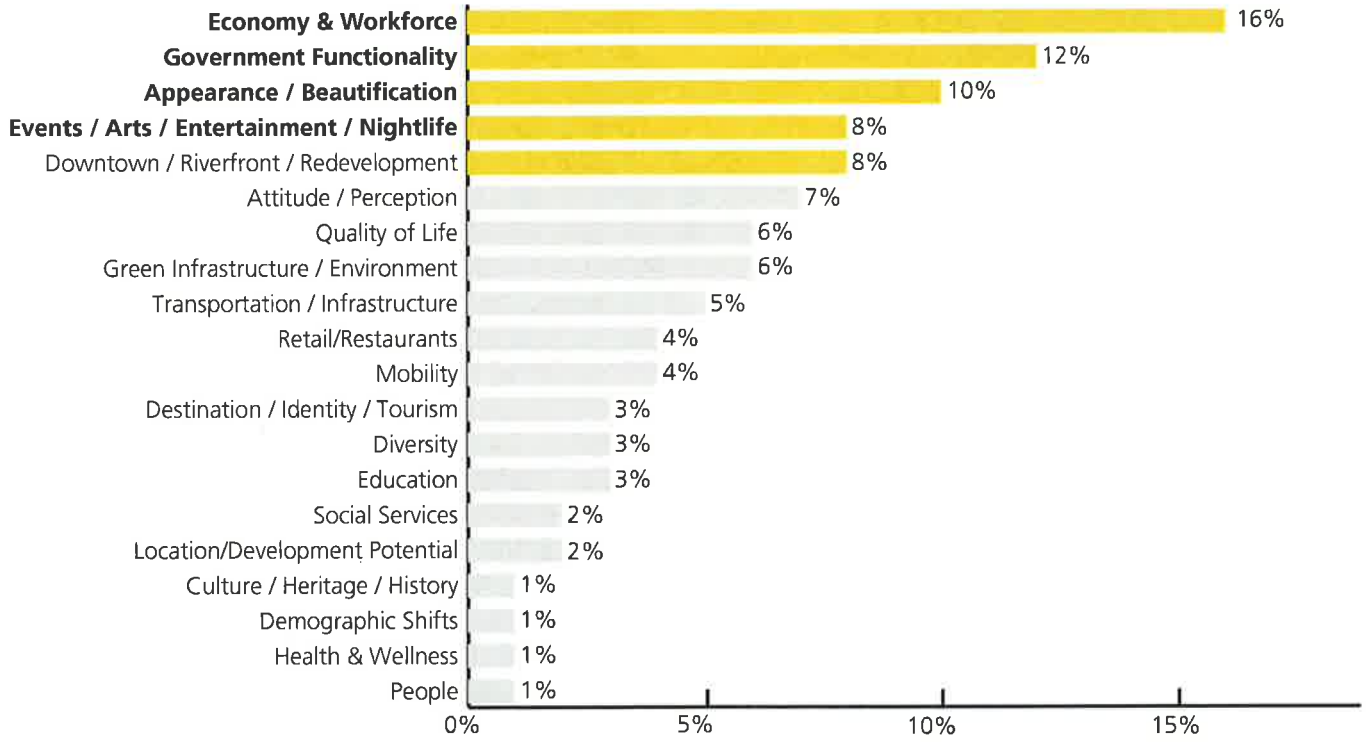
"NEGATIVE APPEARANCE AT CITY GATEWAYS"

"LACK OF QUALITY ENTERTAINMENT"

"DECLINING JOB OPPORTUNITIES"

"NOT ENOUGH WALKING, BIKING AND RUNNING PATHS"

FIGURE 3.2: COMMON WEAKNESS PRIORITIES:



OPPORTUNITIES

- **What circumstances, conditions or trends should we capitalize on to make our community better in the future? How do we leverage such opportunities?**

A significant majority of groups identified redevelopment and growth opportunities in Downtown Fort Smith and along the Riverfront as a common priority. Discussions within this theme included the opportunity for infill and re-use of vacant buildings, the potential to draw development along with the future U.S. Marshals Museum, and capitalize on the existing momentum already underway in the area. Residents suggested the rebuilding, refurbishing, revitalizing, and renewal of Downtown and the Riverfront, with denser living, and daily needs accessible within walking distance. On the other end of the discussion, both in respect to location and physical development type, many groups identified transportation investments, particularly Interstate I-49 as a major opportunity for development in the area around Chaffee Crossing.

Although the current economic downturn was identified as a weakness, specifically related to unemployment, many groups agreed that this also represents an opportunity for job growth and business development.

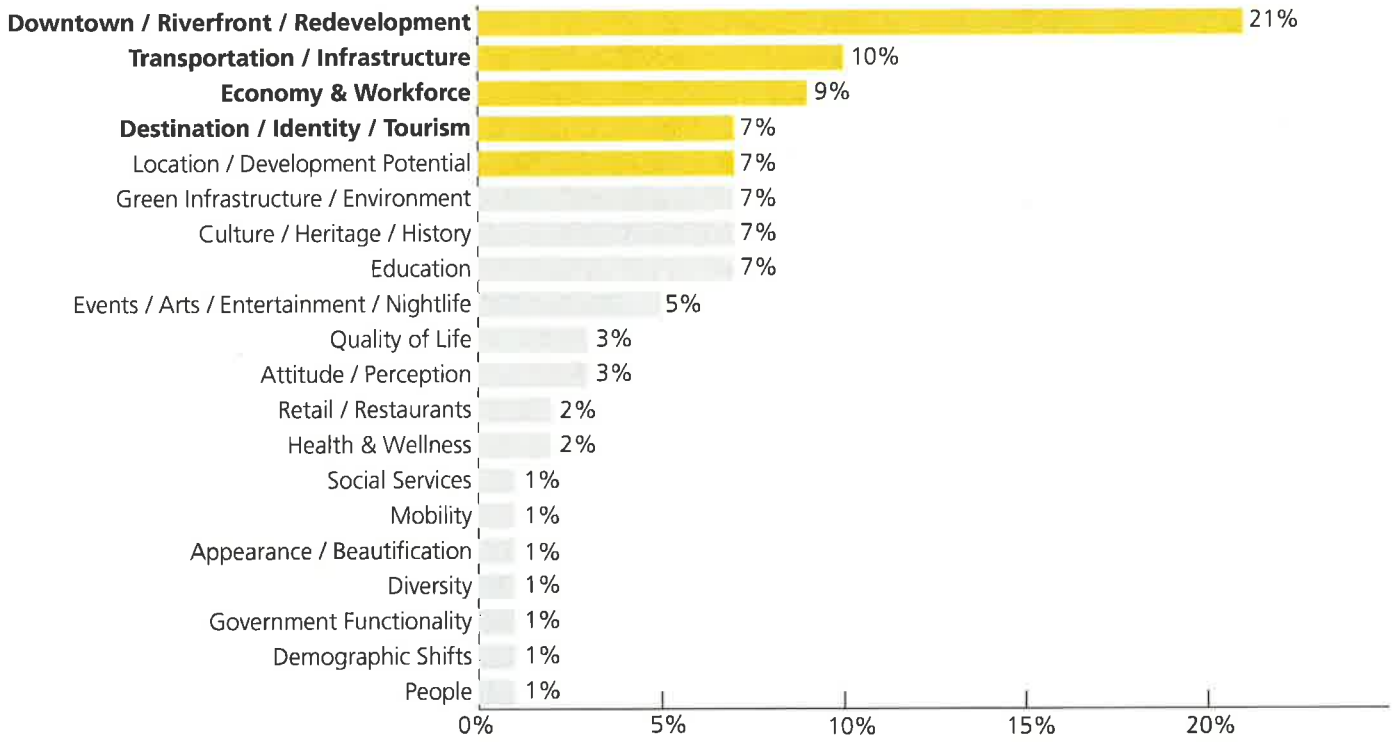
"CAPITALIZE ON THE CITY'S WATERFRONT"

"DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION"

"PROMOTE TOURISM AND ATTRACT PEOPLE"

"GREEN INDUSTRIES"

FIGURE 3.3: COMMON OPPORTUNITY PRIORITIES:



THREATS

- **What potential challenges do we face in realizing the future we want? How will they impact us? How do we prepare for them - or prevent them?**

The economy was the most frequent theme to come out of community discussions about potential threats facing Fort Smith. Many groups came to the consensus that there are not sufficient job opportunities, and that even more jobs may be leaving the area in the future. An inability to retain a skilled and educated workforce was also seen as a direct threat to the economy, with young people leaving Fort Smith. Many priorities expressed within this category are also directly related to current demographic shifts that many also saw as a potential threat; an aging population, loss of youth, and an increase in Hispanic population without an increase in jobs. Another common theme identified as a potential challenge to realizing a better future was the existing perceptions of Fort Smith, and negative attitudes of residents. Many groups agreed that complacency, apathy, and fear of change are current problems that will continue to pose a threat moving forward. The functionality of local government was also identified as a threat, particularly related to the financial constraints and funding challenges facing the City. Many groups agreed that there will be a lack of capacity to increase revenues in the future.

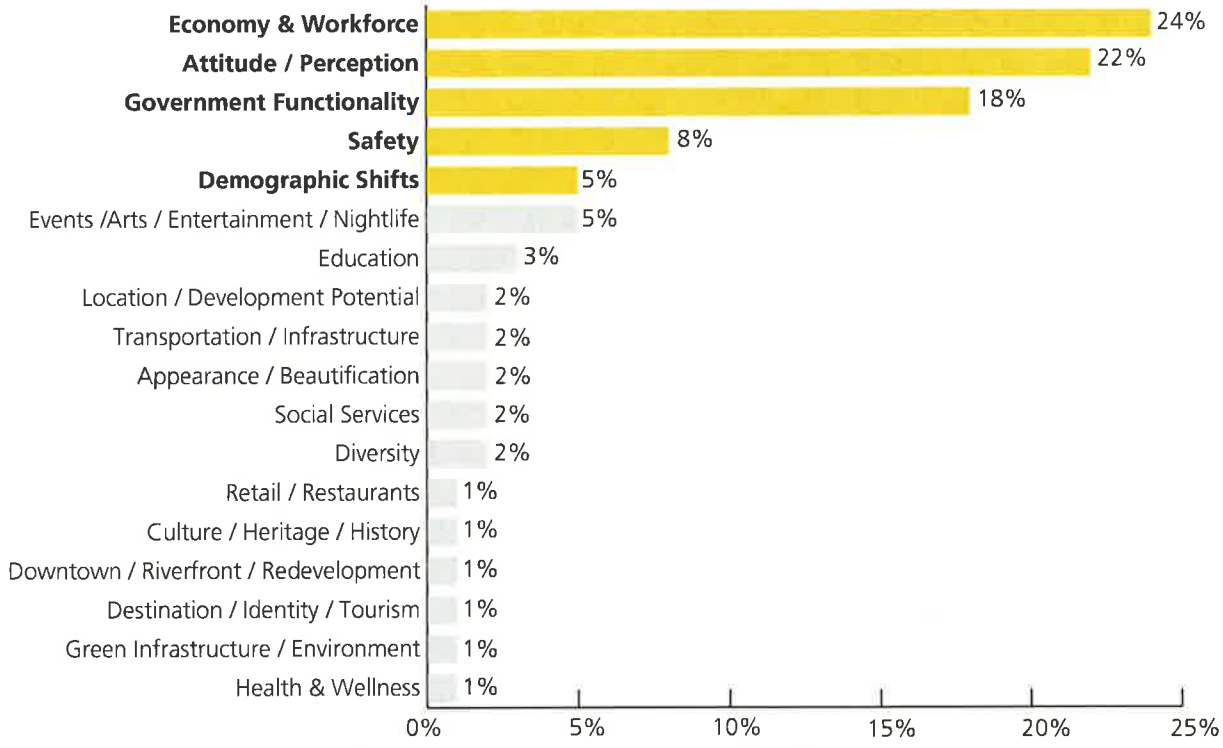
The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats led to the formation of the Vision Statement, illustrated in the following discussion.

"FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS AND LACK OF CAPITAL"

"LOSING YOUNG PEOPLE"

"CONTROLLING SPRAWL"

FIGURE 3.4: COMMON THREAT PRIORITIES:



FUTURE FORT SMITH VISION

What is a Vision Statement

The Vision Statement is an expression of the community's collective values and aspirations in the form of a description of what the community wants to become in the future. It answers the question "Where do we want to be?" Ultimately, it is the destination for the Comprehensive Plan; the Vision Statement sets the stage for defining "How we get there."

Vision Statement Framework

The common themes identified through the first Community Forum Series laid the foundation for the development of the Vision Statement, which was refined and ultimately approved by the CPSC.

The Vision Statement for Fort Smith expresses aspirations for the future of the community as citizens would like it to exist twenty years from now. It has been written from a perspective of what the City aims to accomplish through the influence of an update to the Comprehensive Plan.

BY 2035...

THE CITY OF FORT SMITH is recognized throughout the region and the nation as an exceptional community, characterized by its authenticity and proud frontier heritage, its outstanding quality of life, home town character, vibrant downtown and scenic riverfront. This outstanding livability, coupled with our strategic location, affordability and skilled workforce, has fueled growth, investment and the diversification of our economy. Our success is a result of purposeful and coordinated actions to leverage our assets and overcome our shortcomings, motivated by our vision and guided by our comprehensive plan. With "True Grit" perseverance, a united front of local government, citizens, businesses, institutions and civic groups acting in partnership, realized our vision by advancing progress on four fronts:

1. **RETAINING AND ENHANCING COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF LIFE**
2. **PROMOTING SOUND GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**
3. **GROWING AND DIVERSIFYING OUR ECONOMY**
4. **UNITING OUR PEOPLE, INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENT**

BY 2035...

Retaining and Enhancing Our Community Character and Quality of Life

- Fort Smith retains its authentic home-town atmosphere of safe, livable and well-maintained neighborhoods which provide a range of housing choices and convenient access to schools, parks, shopping and community facilities.
- We value the "green" in Fort Smith: our trees, river and streams and other irreplaceable natural scenic and recreational resources.
- Our network of parks, greenways and trails provide quality recreational opportunities, enhancing quality of life and property values, connecting neighborhoods and supporting healthy active lifestyles.
- We retain our proud frontier heritage and identity, protecting and promoting our historic districts, landmarks and cultural assets.
- Fort Smith enjoys enhanced community aesthetics achieved by raising the bar of expectations for appearance and upkeep; and through beautification efforts along our corridors and gateways, neighborhoods and activity centers.
- We promote our thriving cultural life – our museums, entertainment venues, festivals and special events, engage our youth, young adults and young at heart.

Promoting Sound Growth and Development

- Downtown Fort Smith and its scenic riverfront is activated with new housing, retail and entertainment attractions supporting day and nighttime activity and a vibrant urban lifestyle, one with a distinct flavor of historic Fort Smith.
- Fort Smith has responded to changing demographics and a diversifying population with a greater array of housing and lifestyle choices to serve our aging population and to attract and retain young adults and families.
- Our infrastructure systems: water, sewer, drainage and solid waste, are provided in a coordinated manner that ensures adequate capacity to meet long term needs, supports desired development patterns and conserves both natural and fiscal resources.
- We have reversed blight and obsolescence by promoting infill, redevelopment and adaptive re-use of buildings in downtown, and our older neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- Mobility has been enhanced with key linkages such as I-49, a deeper river channel, greater road network efficiency and connectivity and expanded mobility choices including transit, bicycle and pedestrian friendly streets and trails.
- The completion of I-49 has triggered and supported new investments, including development in Chaffee Crossing and new commercial, industrial, and residential development in strategic locations.

Growing and Diversifying Our Economy

- Our economy has grown and prospered by taking advantage of our strategic location within the region and our crossroads position with multiple modes of travel on our interstate highways, railroads, river and airport.
- We have improved our workforce skills, readiness and retention by linking curricula in our Fort Smith School District high schools and the technical and industrial training programs at the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith with the workforce needs of present and desired future employers.
- We have retained our traditional manufacturing base, while transitioning to a more diversified economy by promoting home grown entrepreneurs, leveraging the research and brainpower at the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith and by maintaining the trained and motivated work force and the technology infrastructure necessary to attract new employers.
- Our expanded array of challenging and well-paying employment opportunities allows Fort Smith to retain its best and brightest youth and attract new families to make Fort Smith their home.
- The addition of the U.S. Marshals Museum, along with a transformed riverfront and the many historic and cultural attractions, festivals and entertainment venues in downtown, has placed our city on the national map as a heritage tourism destination.

Uniting Our People, Institutions and Government

- We are a friendly, welcoming and caring community of citizens who embrace their diversity and who are actively engaged with their schools, houses of worship, civic organizations and their local government.
- We are a community with a shared identity, where pride and confidence in a bright future has overcome complacency.
- We have a business-friendly and citizen-friendly government, one with fair and transparent codes and regulations and with policies that align government priorities to reflect the needs and aspirations of the community.
- Fort Smith government prides itself on transparency and open communication, fiscally sound and resourceful funding of public facilities and services and its exercise of leadership to realize the vision of Fort Smith's future.

THE CURRENT TREND

Growth Projections

Planning for a Future Fort Smith that represents the resident's vision requires a discussion about the trend that the City is currently on, as well as potential alternatives to that trend. The first step in this process was determining what the implications of the City's existing policies and patterns of growth will be over the next twenty years. This Trend Growth Scenario represents a projection of how Fort Smith will grow over the next twenty years without any significant changes in current land use or strategic economic development. The result is a picture of what the City can expect to be by 2035, and an understanding of how that image compares to the Vision Statement developed by residents. This Trend Growth Scenario served as the baseline and context to evaluate potential alternative scenarios developed by residents through their "Chip Game" allocations. (See Chip Game under the public engagement strategy.)

Growth projections for the City include population and household estimates, as well as projected demand for nonresidential uses and future employment by the year 2035. Fort Smith is the largest city within its Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) growing at a 0.7% average annual rate over the period from 2000 to 2010; however baseline projections for the City's population prepared by the Frontier MPO estimate a 2035 population of 100,200 residents, representing an average annual growth rate of 0.6%, with an additional 13,991 in 41,000 new households by the year 2035. These population estimates correspond to a projected increase of 6,720 retail/office jobs and 1,680 industrial jobs by 2035, representing a 0.62% annual growth rate from current employment estimates.

Within the context of the Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan update, these baseline projections represent a future without a strategic approach to economic development or land use planning--essentially a result of "business as usual" moving forward. Taking into account the City's commitment to undertake and implement an update to the Comprehensive Plan as well as additional development potential within Chaffee Crossing, it is reasonable to assume a modest increase in annual population growth from 0.6% to 0.8%, and employment growth from 0.62% to 0.75%. These adjusted baseline projections are consistent with Fort Smith's slow and steady growth rates, as well as the residents' vision for economic development and revitalization.

Trend Scenario Development

A Trend Scenario was developed to represent the pattern of development that is likely to occur over the next 20 years if nothing changes in Fort Smith's current trends. The amount and location of development in the trend scenario was determined by using a susceptibility to change analysis (See Trend Memo) and current zoning (Figure 2.17). For each type of land use, areas zoned for that use with the highest susceptibility to change were the first projected to be developed—at the density allowed under current zoning. Following existing trends, 95% of growth was projected to be new development on currently vacant land and 5% of growth was projected to be redevelopment in already developed areas.

This process was completed independently for Chaffee Crossing and the remainder of Fort Smith using the population and employment projections for each because of the unique nature of their market conditions, and specific growth assumptions for these areas. Although some additional growth generation can be anticipated due to the unique development opportunities associated with Chaffee Crossing that do not exist elsewhere within Fort Smith, there is little evidence to indicate that all growth in this area would represent a net increase for the city above existing baseline growth projections. The future demand

FIGURE 3.5: FUTURE DEMAND BY TYPE

	FORT SMITH				CHAFFEE CROSSING		TOTAL	
	NEW DEVELOPMENT		REDEVELOPMENT		NEW DEVELOPMENT			
Single Family Residential	2,244 Units	663 Acres	118 Units	13.1 Acres	1,600 Units	427 Acres	3,962 Units	1,102 Acres
Multi-Family Residential	990 Units	44.1 Acres	52 Units	1.62 Acres	960 Units	77.6 Acres	2,002 Units	123 Acres
Retail and Office	585,474 Building SF	15.8 Acres	30,814 Building SF	0.595 Acres	515,856 Building SF	18.4 Acres	1,132,144 Building SF	34.8 Acres
Industrial	212,061 Building SF	5.28 Acres	11,161 Building SF	0.233 Acres	1,264,928 Building SF	41.2 Acres	1,488,150 Building SF	46.7 Acres

FIGURE 3.6: DEVELOPMENT PROPORTION ASSUMPTIONS

	TOTAL	FORT SMITH		CHAFFEE CROSSING		
	TOTAL	FORT SMITH (OUTSIDE CHAFFEE CROSSING)	% OF TOTAL	CHAFFEE CROSSING	% OF TOTAL	% INCREASE FROM CHAFFEE CROSSING
Single Family Residential	3,962 Units	2,362 Units	60%	1,600 Units	40%	9%
Multi-Family Residential	990 Units	1,042 Units	52%	960 Units	48%	11%
Retail	629,986 Building SF	314,993 Building SF	50%	314,993 Building SF	50%	25%
Office	502,158 Building SF	301,295 Building SF	60%	200,863 Building SF	40%	26%
Industrial	1,488,150 Building SF	223,222 Building SF	15%	1,264,928 Building SF	85%	30%

for growth by type is summarized in Figure 3.5, with a breakdown of assumptions related to the proportion of each development type for the City of Fort Smith, and Chaffee Crossing respectively, as well as the additional residential units and non-residential square footage attributed to Chaffee Crossing are summarized in Figure 3.6.

These figures represent educated assumptions, and form the baseline demand for growth within Fort Smith over the next 20 years. The total numbers used for the Trend remained consistent throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process and among the Alternative Futures, as well as the Preferred Scenario selected by the public.

Trend Scenario

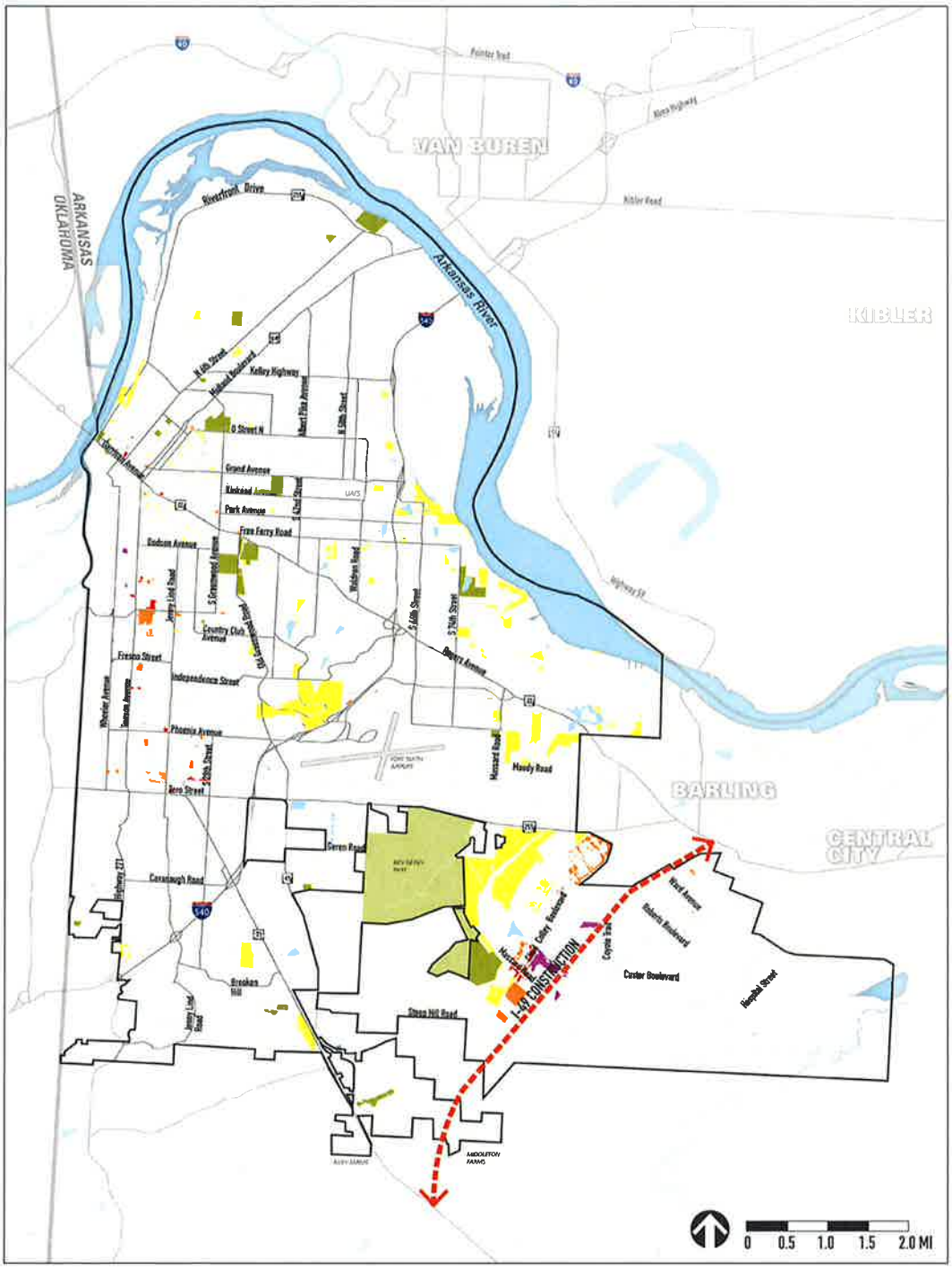
As depicted in Figure 3.7, the Trend Scenario shows growth dispersed throughout Fort Smith, with limited future development within the urban core or existing neighborhoods. The most significant concentrations of single family residential uses are projected to occur toward the eastern and southern portions of Fort Smith, particularly in Chaffee Crossing, along Massard Road, and just northwest of the Fort Smith Regional Airport. With relatively modest growth projected over the next 20 years, this pattern is both unbalanced in terms of it's location, but also limited in terms of its ability to impact the quality of its surrounding neighborhoods and commercial areas. This trend suggests that without action, the existing efforts to revitalize Downtown Fort Smith could be compromised, and other commercial corridors and neighborhoods with concentrations of disinvestment could continue to decline.

Recent Chaffee Crossing Residential Development

In relation to the Vision Statement, this trend fails to meet expectations across each category identified for the city to advance, particularly related to retaining and enhancing community character and quality of life. The trend represents a pattern of growth that is not deliberately focused on cultivating livable neighborhoods with safe and convenient access to jobs and recreation. Within this context, the existing limited diversity of housing choices within neighborhoods would remain, and access to schools, parks, and shopping would be dominated by driving in cars. This trend does not promote sound growth and development, representing a future where Downtown Fort Smith and its scenic waterfront are not activated with new housing, retail and attractions that would support day and nighttime activity or a vibrant urban lifestyle. This pattern of growth has the potential to contribute to the growing blight and obsolescence in existing neighborhoods with minimal infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse of buildings in older neighborhoods and commercial areas.

This Trend Scenario portrays a future where the city remains on its current path, and serves as an important backdrop to compare potential alternatives and an eventual preferred scenario that more closely represents the resident's vision. The households, people, and jobs represented in this Trend Scenario will remain consistent among the Alternative Futures that residents will have the opportunity to select from, as well as the final Preferred Scenario that the Comprehensive Plan will work towards in order to maintain the ability to objectively and accurately compare the impacts of each scenario, and how well they perform relative to the Vision Statement.

FIGURE 3.7: TREND SCENARIO WITH LAND USE



- Water Bodies
- City Limits
- Parks / Open Space
- Other Jurisdictions
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Retail and Office
- Industrial

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

Alternative futures, or potential scenarios, are developed by distributing a fixed amount of projected growth across a fixed area, but in varying configurations. This process was initiated in Fort Smith by presenting the Trend Scenario to the community and asking what alternative patterns of growth residents will want to see over the next twenty years that would help achieve the Vision Statement. Over one hundred residents participated the Community Forum Series 2 events where they used maps and growth "chips" to show where and how the city should grow by the year 2035. Each group had the opportunity to determine the future density and location of people and jobs throughout Fort Smith and discuss how that growth would move the city toward achieving its vision. The results of this effort were synthesized to produce a series of alternatives that represent the concepts developed by residents.

Community-Based Alternative Futures

Working in small groups, participants were asked to review the Trend Scenario, compare it to the Vision Statement, and illustrate on a map where and how they would prefer to see Fort Smith grow in the future. Each group of participants were given a set of stickers representing a variety of land use types (mixed-use corridors, neighborhood centers, high density residential, low density residential, retail/services, etc.) and densities and worked together to place their development in their preferred patterns.

Alternative Futures were developed by identifying common elements among the chip exercise maps prepared by residents throughout the Community Forum Series 2 events. Almost all of the participating groups came to the consensus to trade in their allotment of growth chips in order to move in a more compact overall direction than the city's existing trend. These groups allocated future growth in a variety of areas throughout the city, but tended to place people and jobs within close proximity to each other; either with mixed use centers, or several different single-use chips clustered together. These centers and clusters generally occurred within the Downtown area, at key intersections, and areas emerging with existing development such as Chaffee Crossing. Another common theme throughout most of the maps was the placement of commercial corridors and centers where existing corridors and centers are already located, indicating support for future growth of these established areas. This was also true for residential uses, evidenced by many groups who placed single family chips in existing residential neighborhoods.

In addition to the chips on the maps, the Alternative Futures took the comments and notes provided by residents into consideration. Many groups identified "balance" as a key theme or the title of their map, and referenced several important transportation components throughout the city.

These two themes served as the basis for creating distinct options for Fort Smith. Recognizing the public's input throughout this process, two Draft Alternative Futures were developed and presented to the Comprehensive Plan Technical Resource Team (TRT) and Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC) for their review. Minor revisions were made to the Alternatives in preparation for presentation to residents through the Alternative Futures Community Open House. The Alternative Futures presented included:

1. *Compact Alternative A: Focused on developing strong livable neighborhoods by directing the majority of future growth among 3 or 4 larger mixed-use centers, including Downtown and Chaffee Crossing, and 2 or 3 smaller mixed use clusters.*

2. *Compact Alternative B: Directed the majority of future growth Downtown, and supports 3 or 4 smaller mixed-use centers.*

FIGURE 3.8: ALTERNATIVE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

In addition to "balance" several other components remained fairly consistent across both Alternatives, including strategic infill and stabilization of existing neighborhoods, new single family development within the southern portions of the City, maintaining commercial/job centers along key corridors, and providing flexibility for the location of future industrial uses at Chaffee Crossing and repurposed industrial clusters throughout the city (Figure 3.8).

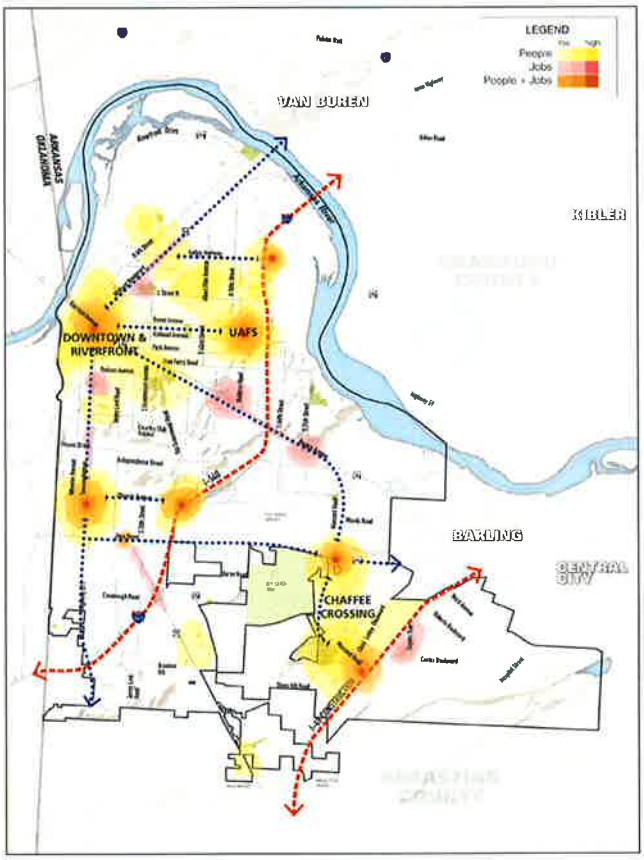
The public had the opportunity to review each of the Alternative Futures, including the Growth Trend, and vote on their Preferred Scenario during the Preferred Future Community Open House, online through FutureFortSmith.com, or at one of several local events. The results from community-wide voting were assessed and used to develop the Preferred Scenario and future land use framework. The Alternative Futures are described in detail in the following section.

Compact Alternative A:

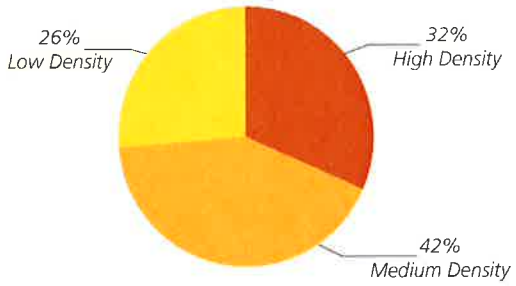
Focused on supporting the growth and development of several walkable neighborhood centers throughout Fort Smith, as well as strengthening existing neighborhoods by reinforcing their built and social fabric, as well as restoring historic significance where it exists. This scenario would result in a series of several connected mixed-use nodes with sufficient individual character and resources to support their surrounding residential communities. Future growth in this alternative would include redevelopment and infill of Downtown Fort Smith, but also significant development of new and emerging centers to encourage the development of more livable neighborhoods. This scenario serves to balance the current trend of auto-oriented and isolated-use growth with a more walkable community typology. Chaffee Crossing would develop into a more mixed-use center with a variety of commercial uses to support higher residential densities. Components of Compact Alternative A include:

- Counter-balances the trend of dispersed development
- Enhances the character and quality of several of Fort Smith's existing neighborhoods by creating more livable environments
- Recognizes the growth of several emerging areas and works to prevent them from forming into single-use auto-oriented clusters
- Identifies potential for significant density increases in neighborhood centers outside of the Downtown.
- Creates more opportunities for residents to live within close proximity of a variety of jobs
- Allows for infill and stabilization of existing residential areas as well as current commercial/job centers.
- Provides the flexibility to allow new single family residential uses in growing areas.

FIGURE 3.9: COMPACT ALTERNATIVE A



RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

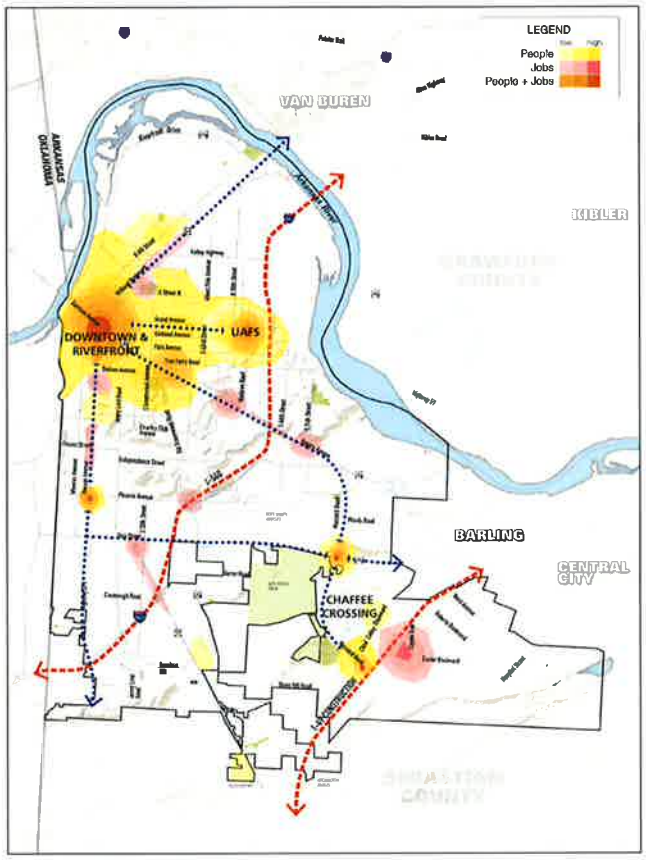


Compact Alternative B:

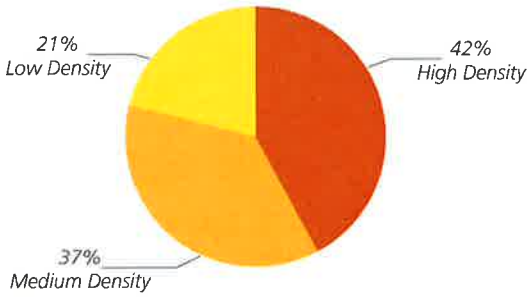
Focused on revitalization of Downtown Fort Smith and the Riverfront, with adaptive reuse of existing buildings, promoting infill and redevelopment in the urban core and surrounding neighborhoods. Although the majority of growth would be Downtown, additional centers would be promoted in strategic locations with sufficient densities and mixing of uses to support a livable and walkable neighborhood environment. This Alternative serves to balance the current trend of growth outside the Downtown area. Chaffee Crossing would remain primarily a job-center with development focused on industrial uses and the associated residential households and commercial services. Components of Compact Alternative B include:

- Counter-balances the trend of development outside the city's urban areas
- Includes a strong focus on Fort Smith's historic resources
- Supports the development of riverfront amenities and investment
- Catalyzes existing economic development, tourism investments, and redevelopment efforts in Downtown
- Recognizes the growth in other neighborhoods with strategic mixed-use centers at key locations (UAFS, Chaffee Crossing, etc.)
- Includes limited density increases in neighborhood centers outside of the Downtown
- Allows for infill and stabilization of existing residential areas as well as current commercial/job centers
- Provides the flexibility to allow new single family residential uses in growing areas

FIGURE 3.10: COMPACT ALTERNATIVE B



RESIDENTIAL DENSITY



THE PREFERRED FUTURE

The Preferred Future was developed based on the proposed densities and growth clusters identified in Compact Alternative A and Compact Alternative B. This synthesis was completed by overlaying both scenarios and identifying the common elements that can be incorporated into the plan goals and policies. In response to specific comments received throughout the public engagement process, some areas of growth from the Alternatives were shifted, but many areas remained the same. Overall, the breakdown of densities for the Preferred Future will match Alternative A, the scenario with the highest votes and strongest agreement comments.

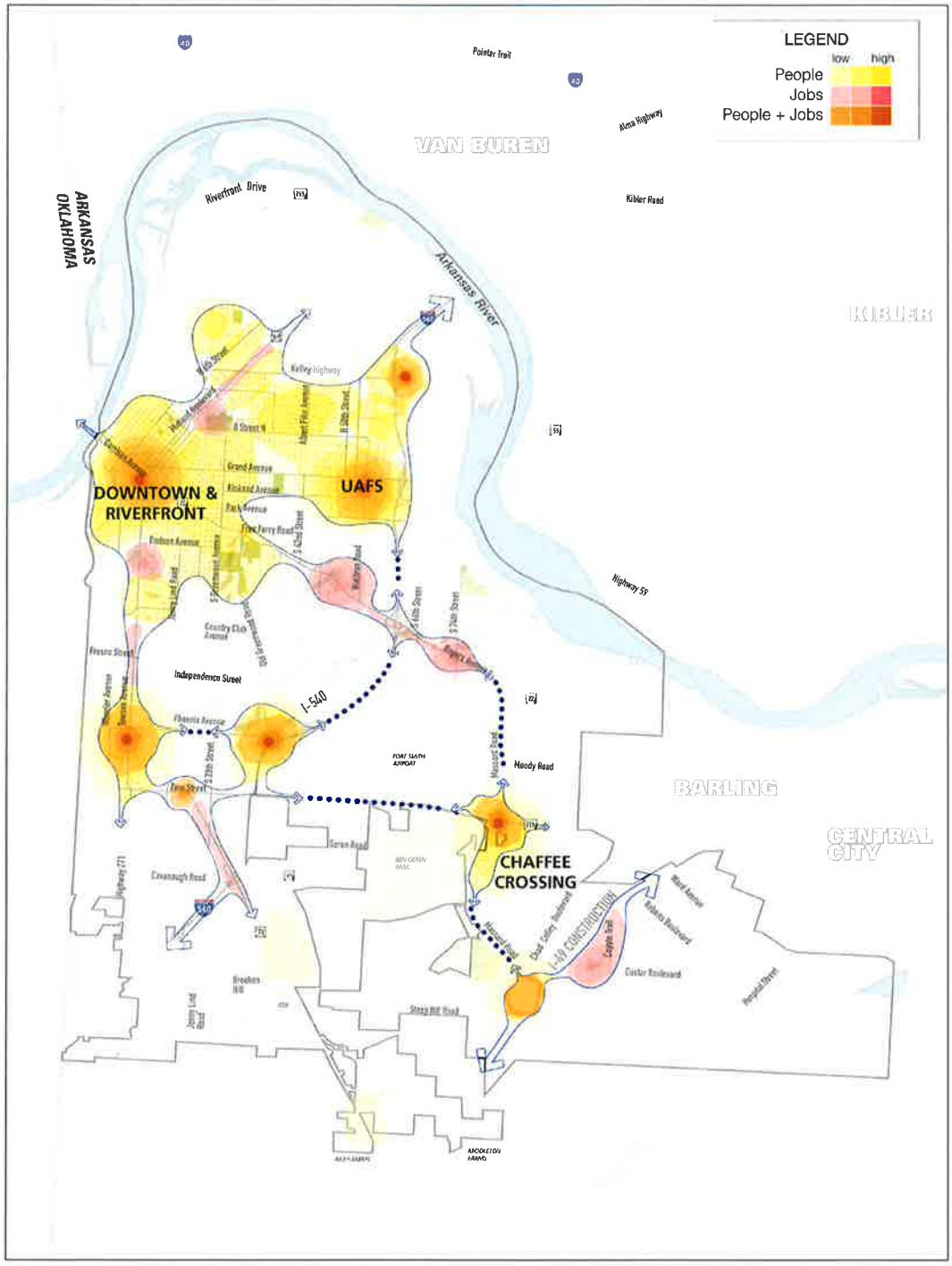
Additional adjustments to the scale and location of projected growth were made to accommodate some of the negative comments and community concerns associated with the Trend Scenario. Taking into consideration the strong support from the public for both of the compact alternatives, and lack of interest in the city's current trends, the Preferred Future Scenario is designed to represent a counter-balance to existing growth patterns by focusing primarily within the Downtown, along the Riverfront, and in Fort Smith's existing neighborhoods.

A Balanced Approach

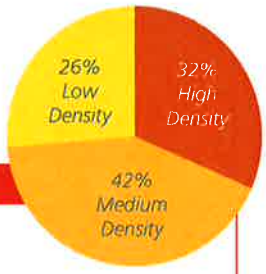
Focused on supporting the growth and development of Downtown Fort Smith, strengthening existing neighborhoods by reinforcing their built and social fabric, restoring historic significance where it exists, and promoting the development of several walkable neighborhood centers throughout the city. This scenario would result in a revitalized Downtown and Riverfront connected to a series of mixed-use nodes with sufficient individual character and resources to support their surrounding residential communities. Future growth in this Preferred Future would be focused on redevelopment and infill of Downtown Fort Smith, but also significant development of new and emerging centers to encourage the development of more livable neighborhoods. This Preferred Future will serve to balance the current trend of auto-oriented and single-use with a more walkable community typology. Components of the Preferred Future include:

- Supports the development of Downtown Fort Smith and Riverfront investment
- Counter-balances the trend of dispersed development by focusing on Fort Smith's historic resources and existing infrastructure
- Catalyzes existing economic development, tourism investments, and redevelopment efforts in Downtown, and along the Riverfront
- Recognizes the growth in other neighborhoods with strategic mixed-use centers at key locations (UAFS, Chaffee Crossing, etc.)
- Allows for infill and stabilization of existing residential areas as well as current commercial/job centers
- Enhances the character and quality of several of Fort Smith's existing neighborhoods by creating more livable environments
- Recognizes the growth of several emerging areas and works to prevent them from forming into single-use auto-oriented clusters
- Identifies potential for significant density increases in targeted neighborhood centers outside of the Downtown
- Creates more opportunities for residents to live within close proximity of a variety of jobs

FIGURE 3.11: FUTURE FORT SMITH PREFERRED FUTURE



How does the Preferred Future perform?



RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

FISCAL IMPACT

- Higher density residential, commercial and employment uses helps increase cost/value relationships
- Utilizing existing infrastructure and reducing service costs helps reduce the City's fiscal deficits
- Promoting balanced growth of residential and non-residential land uses seeks to pace new development with operating costs

MOBILITY

- Increases the proportion of households within direct proximity to retail, commercial uses, institutions, education, reducing the demand for future trips, vehicle miles traveled, and traffic congestion
- Utilizes existing transit infrastructure with potential for enhanced downtown service and additional service in other strategic locations with increases in density throughout Fort Smith
- Increases the opportunity to walk or bike as a primary alternative to the car (for work or school in the downtown core), or for short trips in neighborhood centers (movies, restaurants, local events)

ENVIRONMENT

- More infill and redevelopment in areas previously developed, or surrounded by development limits environmental impacts
- Adaptive re-use of existing buildings limits waste and increases sustainability of existing infrastructure
- Higher density development limits the amount of impervious surfaces; allowing for increased local stormwater infiltration
- Higher density development increases energy efficiency, lowering energy costs and reducing negative environmental impacts

LAND USE

- The variety of land uses in neighborhood centers provide a greater variety of employment opportunities to a range of residential development types; increasing economic opportunities. An estimated 55% of future land uses in this scenario are projected to include a mix of uses
- Existing commercial and retail uses will serve future residential growth and contribute to the re-investment of Fort Smith's existing centers

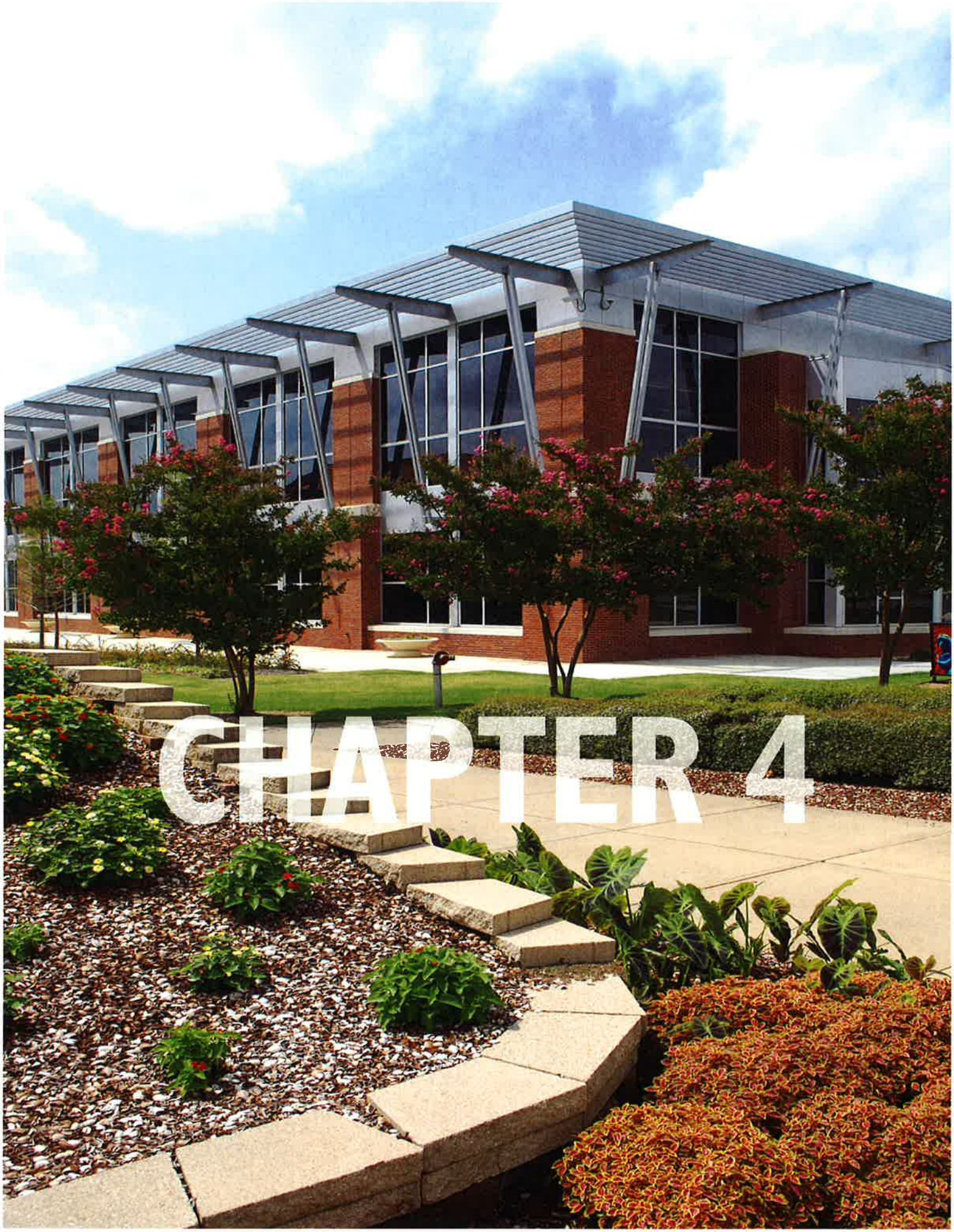
Infill development stabilizes existing neighborhoods

More opportunities to walk or bike to destinations

More families living and working downtown

Redevelopment and infill with increasing density

Activated Riverfront



CHAPTER 4

PLAN ELEMENTS

HOW TO USE THIS SECTION:

Plan Element Abbreviation
This 2 to 3 letter abbreviation references the title of each element and provides the prefix to each of the element's goals, policies and actions.

Connection to the Future Fort Smith Vision Statement

ABC

Retaining & Enhancing Community Character and Quality of Life
Promoting Sound Growth and Development
Growing and Diversifying Our Economy
Uniting Our People, Institutions and Government

Strategic Direction Symbol identifies the components of the Vision Statement that each policy supports.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- **These bullets focus on providing a snapshot of where Fort Smith stands related to the specific element.**
- **This information provides the context and baseline for the goals, policies and actions identified in each element**

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- **These bullets list the outcomes that the community identified as important to them.**
- **Excerpts from the Vision Statement and Strategic Directions are included to connect the content of each action back to the overall goal that the Vision represents.**

ELEMENT TITLE

The Current Landscape

The content of this section is intended to provide an overview of the topic areas associated with each of the plan's elements. The text here will summarize the existing conditions and key data that informed the development of the policy framework. This section precedes the more direct policy language and provides additional context and topic discussion.

GOAL ABC-I

The text of the specific goal will be here.

The explanatory text that outlines the rationale for the goal and identifies the policy implications will be here. This information will include what Fort Smith residents identified as important to them, and any relevant information to add context to the goal.

POLICY ABC-1.1

The text of the specific policy will be here.

» *ACTION ABC-1.1.1*
The text of the specific action will be here

GOAL ABC-2

The text of the specific goal will be here.

POLICY ABC-2.1

» *ACTION ABC-2.1.1*

FLU Future Land Use
ED Economic Development
HN Housing & Neighborhoods
CCD Community Character & Design
TI Transportation & Infrastructure
NCR Natural & Cultural Resources

ELEMENT TITLE

GOAL ABC-3

The text of the specific goal will be here.

POLICY ABC-3.1

POLICY ABC-3.2

POLICY ABC-3.3

» *ACTION ABC-3.1.1*

EXAMPLE TITLE

The information in these call-out sections is intended to provide an example from another location that relates to the specific content of the Policy Framework.

Outside Resources
Find out what other cities are doing successfully, and what tools may be available to reach Fort Smith's Goals.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

» This section is included on the first page of each of the plan elements to provide brief set of examples of how the content of the Comprehensive Plan relates to residents as individuals.

» The bullets are intended to bring some of the more abstract planning concepts more in line with the daily lives of Fort Smith residents

WHAT CAN I DO?

» This section is included on the final page of each of the plan elements to provide brief list of opportunities for residents to help implement the actions identified.

» The content of this section is intended to encourage residents to get involved and take action on their own.

Expand Your Involvement
Each element has information on how the content pertains to residents as individuals and how they can get involved.

#

FUTURE LAND USE

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- **Centers outside of the CBID are auto-oriented**
- **Commercial and industrial uses have developed along major transportation corridors throughout the city, often leaving obsolete buildings underutilized or vacant as new centers emerge.**
- **Most properties identified as having a vacant land use are currently zoned for industrial or transitional uses**

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- **A City with a greater variety of housing and lifestyle choices to serve the increasingly diverse Fort Smith community.**
- **A City with an activated Downtown and Riverfront**
- **A complete network of walkable neighborhoods**
- **A balance between new development and supporting existing neighborhoods**

The Current Landscape

The City of Fort Smith's configuration and current use of land has largely been driven by the development market, with slow and steady growth occurring in the form of new investment in emerging areas in southern portions of the City. Although recent investments in the Downtown have resulted in revitalization, new residential and commercial developments have largely occurred in areas outside of the historic core. This reactive approach and lack of a focused Future Land Use Strategy holds the potential to limit the positive impacts associated with the limited growth that the City is projected to experience over next decades, and may serve to impede the scale and speed of progress that has been made in revitalizing Downtown and the Riverfront.

As depicted in Figure 3.7 on page 65, the City's current trend shows that without action, future growth would likely be dispersed throughout Fort Smith, with limited future development within the urban core or existing neighborhoods. The most significant concentrations of single family residential uses are projected to occur toward the eastern and southern portions of Fort Smith, particularly in Chaffee Crossing, along Massard Road, and just northwest of the Fort Smith Regional Airport. With relatively modest growth projected over the next 20 years, this pattern is both unbalanced in terms of it's location, but also limited in terms of its ability to impact the quality of its surrounding neighborhoods and commercial areas This trend suggests that without action, existing commercial corridors and neighborhoods with concentrations of disinvestment could continue to decline.

Development Constraint Factors

Fort Smith is located within the Arkansas Valley, meaning the city is relatively flat and verdant with few environmentally-based development constraints. The most significant environmental constraints include floodplains, streams, and waterways. A large portion (41%) of the land within the city is currently undeveloped or vacant. Much of this land is adjacent to the river in the northwest corner of the city. This area, through which Riverfront Drive (Arkansas 255) passes, is largely undeveloped with only a few scattered farms and residences because a majority of the land falls within a flood hazard area. A majority of development has been within existing water and sewer service areas. Flood hazard areas, as seen in Figure 4.1, are scattered throughout the city along a number of creeks and waterways.

Credit: WRT

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

- Getting the right balance of future residential and commercial growth in the right places ensures that existing neighborhoods and businesses are not negatively impacted by new development.
- Having a realistic understanding of how much future land is needed to accommodate future growth helps your decision-makers prioritize where future investments should be made.
- The quality of future development in neighborhoods, along commercial corridors, and in the downtown depends on the provision of the appropriate amenities such as parks and recreation facilities, roadway capacity, and parking.

Existing and Potential Redevelopment Opportunities

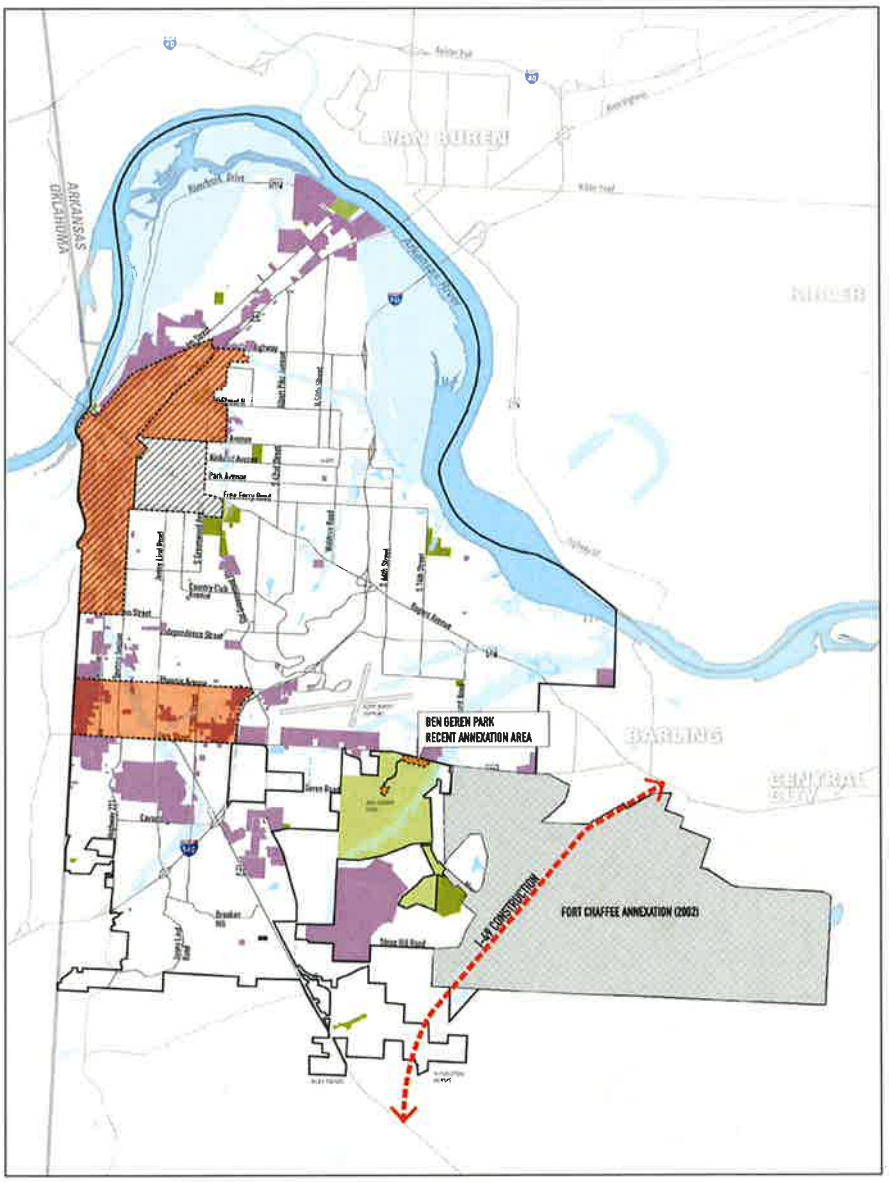
Potential revitalization opportunities exist in many of the older neighborhoods and vacant and underutilized industrial zoned areas. These areas have seen the largest amount of disinvestment and neglect in recent years while investment in suburban areas has remained steady. The presence of underutilized and underdeveloped land near the river presents an opportunity for both commercial and residential development as well as riverfront access through the development of park and open space amenities. The city, through the prior comprehensive plan and the Riverfront Master Plan, has established policies and strategies to link the city and its residents back to the river by creating attractions, including the expanded Harry E. Kelley Riverpark, and the adjacent planned U.S. Marshals Museum. Additionally, the CBID, Chamber of Commerce, and the city are continuing to market the riverfront adjacent to downtown as an opportunity for private development.

Investment along Garrison Avenue and Towson Avenue, the traditional commercial corridors, holds the potential to move the revitalization of the city's obsolescent commercial corridors forward. Currently, FSM Redevelopment Partners is investing in and rehabilitating the Phoenix Village Mall at the intersection of Towson Avenue and Phoenix Street. They have leased space in the mall property for Health Management Associates' new regional center and a call center for Sykes. At full occupancy, the newly renovated Phoenix Village Mall site is estimated to employ more than 1,200. FSM plans to continue developing the additional vacant spaces they own along the Towson corridor in years to come which could signal a resurgence in private commercial investment.

Intermodal infrastructure improvements may be a key catalyst for development in Fort Smith. The completion of the five and a half mile portion of Interstate 49 (I-49) between Highway 71 South and Highway 22, primarily funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, is expected to open the door for more industrial, commercial, and residential development and investment in the Chaffee Crossing area. At completion, I-49 will extend from New Orleans, Louisiana to Kansas City, Missouri and serve as a major trade route for moving people and manufactured goods from the US border with Canada to the Gulf Coast. The segment of the highway between Highway 22 and Highway 71 is expected to be opened to traffic within the next year.[1]

1 City of Fort Smith, "2013 Accomplishments"

FIGURE 4.1: REINVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES



TOOL BEST PRACTICE

RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

The city can build on the strong participation of the community throughout the Future Fort Smith process by hosting on-going Town Hall events to update the community about the city's progress.

RESIDENTS SAID...

Mixed-Use, Pedestrian Friendly, and Less Sprawl

- Water Bodies
- City Limits
- Parks / Open Space
- Other Jurisdictions
- Floodplains (100 Year)
- Areas with Low Median Household Income
- Areas with Older Housing Stock
- Ben Geren Annexed Areas
- Industrial
- Chaffee Crossing Annexed Area
- Transportation Infrastructure Improvements

A Focus on Impact

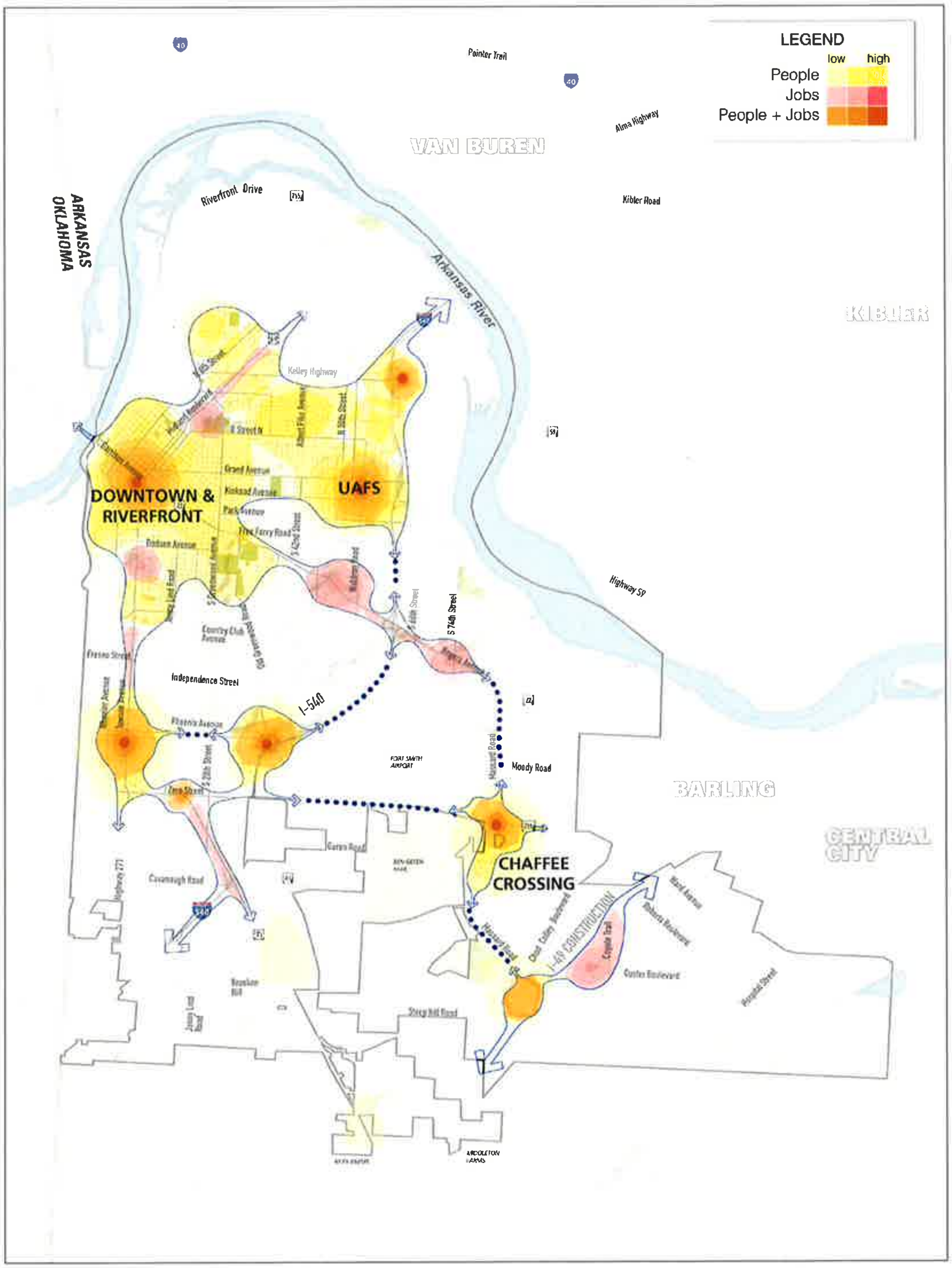
A strategic approach to facilitating future development that has measurable economic impact and enhances the quality of life for all residents must include not only a regulatory framework to identify future land uses, but also an approach to enhance the sense of place that makes Fort Smith unique and welcoming place to call home. With modest growth projections, it will be important for the City to maintain a commitment to focus high quality development in strategic locations that will result in meaningful and noticeable impacts.

Throughout the public engagement process of the Comprehensive Plan Update, redevelopment and growth opportunities in Downtown Fort Smith and along the Riverfront were identified as a common priority. Residents cited the opportunity for infill and re-use of vacant buildings as well as the potential for additional new development along with the future U.S. Marshals Museum. Community input suggested rebuilding and renovating structures Downtown and a strong desire to increase the vitality of the Riverfront with new housing, businesses and amenities. Additional recommendations referenced the need for neighborhood stabilization in other existing neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown.

Establish Balance

Within the context of the city's current land use trends, future residential development and its associated commercial uses are projected to continue to occur in the form of new housing dispersed in previously undeveloped areas, primarily in southern portions of the City. In order for Fort Smith to realize its vision for sound growth, a counter-balance must be established with the appropriate policies and incentives to draw investment to the City's historic core. This need to establish a more balanced Future Land use framework has been evidenced by residents and stakeholders who identified transportation investments, particularly 1-49 as a major opportunity for development in the area around Chaffee Crossing and acknowledging the inherent advantage that these emerging and new developments have. Although the focus of this plan, and its Land Use element is to encourage new growth in the areas identified in the Preferred Future and Future Land Use Framework, it is inevitable that new residential development and its associated commercial uses will likely continue to occur according to the identified trend. The areas not identified on the Future Land Use Framework will maintain their current zoning and development capacity, regardless of the Future Fort Smith focus on the identified growth clusters in other parts of the City.

FIGURE 4.2: FUTURE FORT SMITH PREFERRED FUTURE



TOOL-BEST PRACTICE

RETAIL RECRUITMENT

City of Denver, CO

Denver's Office of Economic Development (OED) has developed a new retail recruitment and marketing website, and it launched a new incentive program for prospective retailers. The website showcases Denver's increasingly vibrant mix of retail and chef-driven restaurants, provides a summary of shopping districts and areas, highlights news as well as appealing opportunities in the industry, personalizes the potential for success through entrepreneurs' stories, and provides access to a GIS-based mapping and data tool. Targeted to retailers and retail real estate professionals, the site is updated monthly to include additional retail areas throughout the city.

The OED also launched a Retail Attraction Program. The program provides an incentive pool for the OED to attract prospective retailers to Denver. The program supports small, to mid-sized retailers and is focused on 'first in market' retailers, locally unique stores, and those that fill a particular gap where customers' needs are not being met. The program is aimed at new retailers to the market or existing, successful retailers seeking to add additional stores to better serve their Denver customers.

Links: http://www.bizjournals.com/denver/news/2014/07/09/denver-economic-development-office-launches-retail.html?page=all

GOAL FLU-I

Achieve a successful and market-driven balance of future land uses consistent with the Preferred Future

Fort Smith residents identified a Preferred Future growth scenario where new residential and commercial development is more balanced in its location throughout the City, as well as more diverse in order to accommodate the growing variety of family and household types that are calling Fort Smith home. Within this Preferred Future, several policies and actions have been identified that focus economic development efforts, infrastructure investments, and programmatic elements in these areas. This place-based strategy aims to maximize the impact of the City's modest projected population and employment growth.

POLICY FLU-1.1

Promote commercial development and future economic growth in centers and corridors designated in the Preferred Future in close proximity to existing infrastructure, schools, parks, and jobs.

» *ACTION FLU-1.1.1*
Attract anchors in all Preferred Future centers to encourage complementary development, particularly for the Downtown Riverfront.

» *ACTION FLU-1.1.2*
Update and implement the UDO (Unified Development Ordinance) and Master Land Use Map based on the Preferred Future.

» *ACTION FLU-1.1.3*
Review and adjust zoning classifications for consistency with the Preferred Future.

» *ACTION FLU-1.1.4*
Create an inventory of existing businesses and develop a plan to attract a wider variety of businesses currently not available to the community.

» *ACTION FLU-1.1.5*
Create incentive programs, such as a Small Businesses Development Program.

POLICY FLU-1.2

Ensure that sufficient, well designed and convenient on street and off street parking is provided to serve land uses.

» *ACTION FLU-1.2.1*
Conduct an assessment of existing parking supply and demand and forecast future needs.

» *ACTION FLU-1.2.2*
Based on the parking assessment, review the parking ratios and related regulations in the UDO and create a parking management plan for on street and off street parking near major activity centers.

POLICY FLU-1.3

Coordinate and plan future development with neighboring jurisdictions and the City of Fort Smith.

» *ACTION FLU-1.3.1*
Exercise the City's extra-territorial jurisdiction over land in Sebastian County.

» *ACTION FLU-1.3.2*
Ensure that the subdivision of land within the allowable Planning Area will comply with City subdivision and infrastructure requirements, as amended, to address rural and estate development.

POLICY FLU-1.4

Ensure adequate, well-maintained infrastructure, public safety, and public facilities for all development and prevent development ahead of infrastructure and service provision.

» *ACTION FLU-1.4.1*
Conduct an assessment of current service boundaries and create regulations to guide the expansion of services.

» *ACTION FLU-1.4.2*
Encourage development near community facilities and services (e.g., schools, recreation centers, health facilities) to fully utilize existing services and limit duplication.

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

PLANNING FOR PARKING

Park Smart Strategic Parking Plan
Denver, CO

The Strategic Parking Plan is a comprehensive, city-wide framework for coordinating parking related issues. A one-size-fits-all approach cannot effectively manage parking for Denver's diverse neighborhoods and business areas. The plan explores innovative strategies and recommends new ways to manage parking. Although the plan does not provide recommendations for specific neighborhoods and locations, it does recommend new tools, policies and a process for involving community stakeholders in parking management at the local level. The Strategic Parking Plan helps articulate and clarify the vision and approach to parking management in the City and County of Denver.

The first steps toward the development of the Strategic Parking Plan, which was to collect parking data in some of the more popular neighborhoods throughout the city. City staff identified 11 urban neighborhoods and collected parking supply and parking occupancy data during the time periods when those neighborhoods experienced the highest parking demand. The City and County then compiled information from the assessor's office on the exact mix of businesses and residences in each of the areas studied, which was used to develop relationships between parking demand and land uses in each area.

Links: http://www.denvergov.org/Portals/681/documents/The_Strategic_Parking_Plan_Final.pdf

POLICY FLU-1.5

Provide opportunities for mixed-use development to occur in Downtown Fort Smith and identified emerging centers in order to provide access to a variety of uses; promote walkable, pedestrian friendly development; and encourage physical activity.

» *ACTION FLU-1.5.1*
Locate mixed-use and commercial development near employment centers and higher density residential centers to provide options for convenience retail and restaurants close to where people live and work.

POLICY FLU-1.6

Create opportunities for the mixing of land uses to occur within single buildings and within emerging centers identified in the Preferred Future.

» *ACTION FLU-1.6.1*
Develop corridor and area plans that address access management, land use, design, internal parking, and circulation.

» *ACTION FLU-1.6.2*
Publicize new mixed use areas within the development and real estate community.

GOAL FLU-2

Activate Fort Smith's scenic riverfront

The city's riverfront was consistently cited as a primary area of focus for residents throughout the comprehensive plan update process. The community's vision for this asset includes a variety of uses, and day and nighttime activities that succeed in attracting people of all ages to Downtown Fort Smith. The policies identified to achieve this goal aim to elevate the city's current approach to revitalizing the waterfront area beyond its current limitations by focusing on collaboration and forging partnerships to share limited resources.

POLICY FLU-2.1

Encourage a mix of housing, retail, and entertainment attractions along the City's waterfront that support day and nighttime activity and a vibrant urban lifestyle.

» *ACTION FLU-2.1.1*
Improve access in an effort to incentivize development in areas along the riverfront.

» *ACTION FLU-2.1.2*
Ensure that land development within the river district reflects uses appropriate to the 100-year flood plain and adjacency to the downtown and residential neighborhoods.

» *ACTION FLU-2.1.3*
Incorporate a variety of venues that accommodate the interests of diverse demographic groups to develop an appropriate balance of day and nighttime businesses and activities.

» *ACTION FLU-2.1.4*
Leverage special events to reinvigorate the riverfront district.

» *ACTION FLU-2.1.5*
Collaborate with the Fort Smith Convention and Visitors Bureau, tourism agencies and event organizers to promote the Downtown Riverfront district amenities in a coordinated branding and marketing campaign.

» *ACTION FLU-2.1.6*
Integrate unified design and construction standards that complement Downtown and city design elements, yet provide a symbolic language distinct to the riverfront.

POLICY FLU-2.2

Comprehensively plan access and development along Riverfront Drive to reflect passive and active recreation, pedestrian, bicycle, and tourist activities.

POLICY FLU-2.3

Provide recreation activities and access to the Arkansas River while preserving and protecting the natural environment, watershed, and critical wildlife habitats.

» *ACTION FLU-2.3.1*
Consider an adventure park on the riverfront (UAFS Leadership Class concept).

» *ACTION FLU-2.3.2*
Complete planned splash pad area.

TOOL BEST PRACTICE

RECONNECTING THE WATERFRONT

As Chattanooga's manufacturing market declined and the industry along the river was shut down, the design of Riverfront became obsolete. By the 1980s, public discussion focused on how to best utilize the valuable space, and by 2000 a plan was finally accepted to replace a four-lane, obsolete highway with a more pedestrian-friendly and easily accessible boulevard.

Within the footprint of the previous highway, a new riverfront boulevard was built in 2004, allowing pedestrians easy access to riverfront amenities, and providing greater connectivity to downtown Chattanooga by adding four new access points. The at-grade access points introduced four new intersections that evened the distribution of trips along downtown streets, alleviating congestion in bottle-neck areas. The design included attractive sidewalks, gutters, plants, and trees as well as pedestrian crossings, making the boulevard both an aesthetically pleasing and safe transportation route.

A variety of positive economic benefits have come from the revitalization of the riverfront, including a growing population, attracting millions of dollars of investment in the area, as the riverfront is becoming one of the city's premier addresses. A new park has been created on the riverfront that complements the design of the boulevard, and a variety of new developments have been constructed, all concentrated around the redeveloped boulevard. The residents and businesses are now connected to the riverfront, allowing for improved recreational access and increased business opportunities.

Links: http://www.cnu.org/highways/chattanooga

GOAL FLU-3

Revitalize downtown into a multipurpose activity center

The revitalization of Downtown Fort Smith remains the driving element behind the city's comprehensive plan, and central to the future land use framework. Focusing on the city's historic core and downtown neighborhoods strengthens the city's economic base, and supports the utilization of existing investments in infrastructure and resources. Members of the Fort Smith community and local stakeholders continue to support efforts to bring new residential and commercial opportunities to the downtown area, and the promotion of future development through increased accessibility and unique downtown attractions.

POLICY FLU-3.1

Increase the number and type of residential opportunities in and around downtown.

» *ACTION FLU-3.1.1*
Support rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of buildings for housing and promote infill development of vacant land downtown.

POLICY FLU-3.2

Improve the accessibility of downtown.

» *ACTION FLU-3.2.1*
Increase public transit access and frequency between Downtown and key destinations and throughout the city.

» *ACTION FLU-3.2.2*
Implement an efficient parking plan that accommodates visitors while not detracting from the character of downtown.

» *ACTION FLU-3.2.3*
Create safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle connections within downtown and riverfront, and between adjacent neighborhoods (bike lanes, trails, and complete sidewalks).

» *ACTION FLU-3.2.4*
Reduce the impact of "dead zones" caused by vacant properties by installing pedestrian-level lighting, filling empty storefronts, improving empty facades and strategically positioning kiosks and vendors to guide pedestrian flow, increasing "eyes on the street."

POLICY FLU-3.3

Concentrate available resources to retain existing jobs and encourage job creation and population growth in the downtown and riverfront.

» *ACTION FLU-3.3.1*
Developing strategies that support existing businesses, and direct economic development actions to Downtown.

» *ACTION FLU-3.3.2*
Encourage existing downtown businesses to improve the look of their buildings to be more in line with current code requirements and embrace a more "original" look.

POLICY FLU-3.4

Develop and promote niche markets that distinguish the downtown from other retail and entertainment options, and reinforces downtown's position as a destination.

» *ACTION FLU-3.4.1*
Promote the Farmer's Market and encourage more participation by providing shade.

» *ACTION FLU-3.4.2*
Build Maybranch bike trail for connectivity.

POLICY FLU-3.5

Locate future cultural activities, entertainment options, service-oriented businesses, and public, private, or institutional programs in downtown.

» *ACTION FLU-3.5.1*
Identify potential key locations for cultural and institutional programs and uses downtown and the riverfront.

WHAT CAN I DO?

» Make an effort to support local businesses downtown; visit a museum, see a show, take a walk in a park. Activating the downtown is vital to maintaining the city's current revitalization momentum.

» Participate and support local neighborhood groups, the Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations that promote the business community downtown.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- **Recent market sector changes indicate Fort Smith market's transition to a primarily service economy.**
- **Long-term employment growth driven by jobs in Healthcare and Education, Professional and Business Services, Financial Activities, Leisure and Hospitality, and Government.**
- **Based on population growth by age group, there could be a future shortage of workers for the industries showing most promise for Fort Smith.**

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- **Improved workforce skills, readiness and retention, linking educational curricula to workforce needs.**
- **Expanded array of challenging and well-paying employment opportunities.**
- **Diversified economy that promotes home grown entrepreneurs and leverages the presence of UAFS.**
- **Fort Smith on the map as a heritage tourism destination**

The Current Landscape

The City of Fort Smith is at a critical point in growing and improving its economic development "infrastructure." Fort Smith has long benefited from its geographic location along the Interstate 40 corridor, maintaining a slow, but steady rate of growth within the Western Arkansas-Eastern Oklahoma region and emerging as a regional hub for commerce and industry. However, its recent decline in manufacturing jobs, coupled with increased competition from Northwest Arkansas, is being more strategic in its approach to economic development. In an effort to counter the effects of this changing employment base and increased competition, and to support the City's resident population, Fort Smith has begun to seek out resources to attract new, and enhance existing, businesses, as well as leverage additional public and private relationships to diversify and strengthen the local economy for a sustainable future.

Vision for the Future

Throughout the planning process residents were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of their community. During these sessions, residents identified economic and workforce issues as significant weaknesses for the City of Fort Smith. These included a lack of diverse employment opportunities and making a transition from the former manufacturing based economy. An inability to retain a skilled and educated workforce was also seen as a direct threat to the economy, with young people leaving Fort Smith.

Although the economic downturn was identified as a weakness, many residents agreed that it also represents an opportunity for job growth and business development. The following goals and policies have been identified to guide the execution of the community's overall vision:

1. Broaden employment sectors that will drive the City's economy
2. Develop a world class workforce, with opportunities for life-long learning
3. Grow the employment base and retain existing employment anchors
4. Partner with the Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce to coordinate City economic development policies
5. Diversify the local economic base and strengthen and stabilize the tax base to maintain viability during fluctuating economic cycles
6. Create a quality working environment that fosters an attractive sense of place
7. Ensure that a broad range of housing alternatives are available for employers and employees
8. Aggressively encourage new development and redevelopment in targeted growth centers and make strategic public investments to leverage private investment and reinvestment

Credit: WRT

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

- Economic diversification with higher wages and increased spending leading to higher tax revenue for the community, less volatility in the municipal revenue stream, and support for a wider range of housing products.
- An economic development infrastructure that supports industry growth and helps prevent existing businesses from closing or relocating outside of the area.
- A wider variety of retail product types and formats and retail centers that offer more modern convenience and amenities located within the City.
- Benefits to the fiscal health of the City, and me as a taxpayer, resulting from greater "leverage" ratios between private and public investment.

GOAL ED-I

Broaden employment sectors that will drive the City's economy

After relatively robust growth in the 1990s, Fort Smith and the surrounding region experienced job losses in the Manufacturing, Information and Professional and Business Services sectors in the 2000s. In particular, the region lost over a third of its manufacturing workforce. The fastest growing industries over the last 13 years have included the Other Services, Educational and Health Services and Mining and Construction sectors. Growth in these sectors is primarily attributable to the region's growing healthcare industry and expanding local school districts. Anticipated employment growth over the next 10 to 20 years will be primarily driven by service sectors such as Educational and Health Services, Professional and Business Services, Financial Activities, Leisure and Hospitality and Government.

Fort Smith is in a unique position to further diversify its local economy and enhance its economic development infrastructure, particularly in light of its growth in healthcare and education,

POLICY ED-1.1

Encourage and support start up companies and small businesses.

» *ACTION ED-1.1.1*
Provide regulatory and financial incentives for small businesses (including food trucks, etc).

» *ACTION ED-1.1.2*
Work with successful local businesses to develop business 'boot camps' for new entrepreneurs.

» *ACTION ED-1.1.3*
Expand and promote the small business development center that would connect businesses to SBA grants and programs, like the Microloan Program, facilitate a mentoring program for young entrepreneurs, and provide other business counseling services.

» *ACTION ED-1.1.4*
Support development of a "small business web portal" to streamline the City's permitting and licensing processes.

» *ACTION ED-1.1.5*
Promote green building practices to help small businesses save on energy and operating costs.

Ann Arbor, MI

The Virtual Business Advisor (VBA) program was created through a partnership among Ann Arbor SPARK (Ann Arbor's economic development arm), the A2Y Chamber, Washtenaw County's Community and Economic Development Department, and QLBS. The VBA aims to assist entrepreneurs and early-stage businesses as they work towards their next stage of growth. Through a series of simple assessments, the VBA identifies personal and company strengths and weaknesses, benchmarks against other companies in the region, and connects users to suggestions and available resources to address their unique needs. After the applicant completes each assessment, a report is emailed with feedback, advice, and specific suggestions and links to low and no-cost resources. The VBA offers potential entrepreneurs an early, easy way to quickly assess their business readiness and fitness, as well as recommendations toward their next step.

Links: http://www.virtualbusinessadvisor.com

POLICY ED-1.2

Support programs and efforts that increase opportunities for growth in medical and higher education sectors.

» *ACTION ED-1.2.1*
Identify strategies to retain talent in the medical profession with a focus on underserved areas.

POLICY ED-1.3

Support business expansion and new business development in sectors identified as experiencing leakage.

» *ACTION ED-1.3.1*
Explore market feasibility of an outlet mall.

» *ACTION ED-1.3.2*
Expand shop local campaign and shop local campaign online.

POLICY ED-1.4

Capitalize on Fort Smith's strategic position at the crossroads of multiple modes of transportation to increase the city's employment base and regional economic impact.

» *ACTION ED-1.4.1*
Attract employers to Fort Smith by advertising the city's proximity to key transportation infrastructure (rail, MCKARNS water way, I-49).

» *ACTION ED-1.4.2*
Partner with trade schools and colleges to prepare the city's workforce for transportation and logistics related jobs.

POLICY ED-1.5

Identify and develop collaborations to fill gaps in the capital market that fund business start-up, retention and expansion.

» *ACTION ED-1.5.2*
Evaluate private and public financing entities' ability to provide seed capital for new business ventures.

» *ACTION ED-1.5.2*
Explore the feasibility of creating "lending pools" for new business investment.

TOOLKIT PRACTICE

CENTRAL MARKETING WEBSITE

A separate dedicated retail website with links to the city's main website can help crystallize and communicate a city's brand to attract and support businesses. Several cities have dedicated websites featuring comprehensive profiles of all neighborhood business districts, including highlights of local businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as various programs and financial tools. Philadelphia (*Be In On It*, http://philadelphiaretail.com/), Seattle (*Only In Seattle*, http://www.seattle.gov/economicdevelopment/OISI/), and Portland (*Venture Portland*, http://ventureportland.org/) all have stand-alone websites communicating a brand for the city retail destinations.

In Philadelphia's example, Be In On It is sponsored by the Philadelphia Regional Marketing Alliance, whose mission is to enhance the quality and quantity of Center City's retail offering and to tell the "New Philadelphia story." The goal of the program is to build a strong, public-private retail attraction program that enhances the quality and mix of retail and entertainment offerings in Center City Philadelphia by: 1.Identifying specific types of retail stores most likely to be favored by Center City residents, visitors and office workers; and 2.identifying retailers currently looking to expand who will help Philadelphia achieve its development objectives and who have the greatest likelihood of success.

GOAL ED-2

Develop a world class workforce by making accessible opportunities for life-long learning

An effective measure of workforce compatibility in the Fort Smith market is the degree to which new job growth complements existing labor force characteristics. While job growth is certainly a measure of economic development success, and correspondingly, a decline in unemployment, the degree to which those jobs correspond to resident skills will determine the success of Fort Smith as a diverse employment center.

While the Fort Smith market's population grew at a rate comparable to job growth over the past 13 years, it is important to consider how the population is growing by age group. The fastest-growing age groups in the City over the past 13 years were the 55 to 64 and 65 to 74 age groups. An aging population creates demand for medical and personal care services, sectors which are anticipated to experience strong growth over the next 10 to 20 years. In contrast, the age groups which will likely comprise the next generation of workers in Fort Smith (ages 0 to 17, 18 to 24, and 25 to 34) are among the slower-growing age cohorts. While this corresponds to national trends, there could be a future shortage of workers for the industries which show the most promise for Fort Smith.

In light of these demographic realities, Fort Smith must not only diversify its job base, but also its workforce base. Economic development infrastructure components most relevant to growing a diverse workforce are people and quality of life.

POLICY ED-2.1

Leverage research and brainpower of UAFS

» ***ACTION ED-2.1.1***
Partner with UAFS to set up a career connection service, internships, and community partnerships that helps all recent graduates (regardless of schooling location) find jobs or internships at local employers.

POLICY ED-2.2

Promote trade schools as an option for job skills training.

» ***ACTION ED-2.2.1***
Partner with local high schools to promote job skills training programs.

» ***ACTION ED-2.2.2***
Work with city employers to set up mentoring/apprenticeship programs for high school students.

» *ACTION ED-2.2.3*
Promote the development of job training programs at area colleges.

» *ACTION ED-2.2.4*
Expand and promote the linking of local high school curricula with technical and industrial training programs at UAFS.

POLICY ED-2.3

Focus on increasing student performance.

» *ACTION ED-2.3.1*
Support programs in existing public and private schools to increase student performance and consider all opportunities to improve educational outcomes for all students.

» *ACTION ED-2.3.2*
Capitalize on the existing dual enrollment program for high school students to prepare students for college and/or careers.

POLICY ED-2.4

Help prepare children to perform at higher levels by ensuring access to high-quality early childhood education.

» *ACTION ED-2.4.1*
Link local businesses, employers, and institutions to provide early childhood education, child care, and after school programs.

POLICY ED-2.5

Nurture the next generation of leaders.

» *ACTION ED-2.5.1*
Create a youth leadership training program.

» *ACTION ED-2.5.2*
Encourage local businesses to create a fund to expand teacher training for STEM.

POLICY ED-2.6

Focus on retention of students in the area.

» *ACTION ED-2.6.1*
Focus on building stronger ties between UAFS and local employers to help graduates, particularly non-natives, learn about local job opportunities and form networks in the city and region.

TOOL BEST PRACTICE

LEARN2EARN

Jacksonville, FL

Learn2Earn is a program launched in 2012 by Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Browns as a hands-on approach to boost the quality of education, which hosts rising sophomores and juniors in an immersion of student life for one week on a residential college campus. The focus is on students who receive free or reduced lunch and would be the first in their family to achieve a college diploma. Students take part in classes, live in dormitories and work on-campus jobs under the supervision of Teach For America and, more recently, City Year Corps staffers.

Links: http://gradnation.org/blog/jacksonville-learn2earn-inspires-hope-and-confidence

TOOL/BEST PRACTICE

GRADUATE RETENTION PROGRAM

Greater Fort Wayne, Inc., IN

The Northeast Indiana Graduate Retention Program (GRP) works to connect education and industry in Northeast Indiana to create a skilled, successful economy and workforce. GRP fulfills its mission by promoting student internships and by developing community partnerships to bridge the gap between industry professionals and education professionals. Educational relationships include nine post-secondary institutions and four public school districts in Allen County, as well as select districts within the 10-county region, as the program reach grows.

The program is boosted by Indiana INTERNnet, a FREE internship-matching program linking employers, students, high schools, colleges and universities. It is a dynamic, searchable database, matching and reporting system coupled with personal assistance—including a toll-free hotline to answer questions and provide internship guidance and resource materials. The goal is to help create or expand high-quality experiential opportunities within Indiana.

Links: http://www.greaterfortwayneinc.com/business-services/graduate-retention

» *ACTION ED-2.6.2*
Encourage UAFS and employers to expand the use of internship and cooperative learning opportunities.

» *ACTION ED-2.6.3*
Research the potential of workforce or business tax credits, which are designed to attract and retain recent college graduates (from any degree or from specific ones).

» *ACTION ED-2.6.4*
Consider creating a "Stay Work Play" promotional program in collaboration with UAFS and other institutions, to market to graduating students the city's job opportunities, affordable cost of living, unique neighborhoods and lifestyle options.

GOAL ED-3

Grow the employment base and retain existing employment anchors

It is a long-held "truth" in economic development that 80 percent of a community's (large or small) job growth will come from existing businesses. These "investors" in the community not only support its social and economic fabric, but are "ambassadors" in attracting new businesses.

Unlike the approach to attract industry, the focus to the expansion and retention of existing businesses is "internal." That is, efforts are concentrated on working within the community or region, and creating an economic development infrastructure or support system that encourages business development.

In addition to supporting industry growth, a supportive economic development infrastructure helps prevent existing businesses from closing or relocating outside of the area. Plants close for a number of reasons, including: inadequate capital; heavy foreign and domestic competition, rising costs such as energy, labor and taxes; consolidations of company operations; discontinuance of a product line, declining market demand; mismanagement; poor long-term planning; relocation of facilities; and labor-management conflict. An economic development support system or infrastructure should address the reasons companies are closing-down, or no longer expanding, that the community can influence. Four primary areas of support include: technical assistance and information (to improve productivity, reduce costs, or promote coordination among other companies in the community or region); financial resources (for capital plan expansion or improvements); educational resources (for worker training and qualification); and, reducing barriers (to growth through physical infrastructure and government restrictions where appropriate).

POLICY ED-3.1

Retain Fort Smith's traditional manufacturing base, while encouraging growth in technology and knowledge based areas.

» *ACTION ED-3.1.1*
Work with regional agencies to boost higher paying jobs and increase number of jobs.

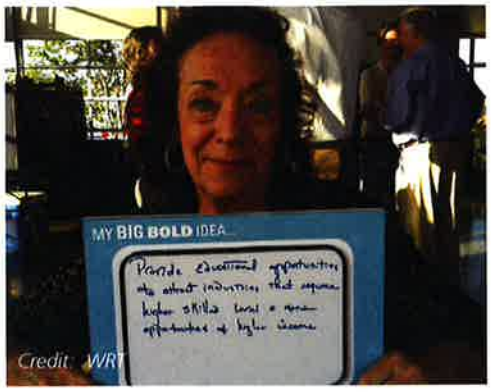
» *ACTION ED-3.1.2*
Partner with job skills training programs to ensure that the city's workforce is trained.

» *ACTION ED-3.1.3*
Attract new employers through incentives (tax abatements and public infrastructure, etc).

» *ACTION ED-3.1.4*
Consider implementing a city-wide fiber optic network.

» *ACTION ED-3.1.5*
Promote the development of technology centers for youth to build technology knowledge/skills (particularly in underserved neighborhoods).

» *ACTION ED-3.1.6*
Create an "Innovation District," by forging partnerships, identifying potential locations such as underutilized industrial land, considering necessary infrastructure improvements (particularly transit access and wire-readiness), and reviewing potential regulatory amendments to facilitate.



RESIDENTS SAID...

Achieving high quality economic growth with good paying jobs is a priority for the future

GOAL ED-4

Develop a partnership to coordinate City economic development policies with the Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce

Economic development "protocol" within a multi-jurisdictional environment is critical to the success of business expansion and retention for each partner organization. Industries or businesses targeted for recruitment and/or expansion will require consistency and compatibility in the "message" they are receiving from economic development entities at the regional and local level. Therefore, a standard "protocol" should be established for long-term strategic planning, disseminating information, and coordinating community/site visits.

While local, regional and state officials have promoted cities, counties and more specifically sites in the vicinity of Fort Smith for decades, these efforts were finely tuned, or targeted, after 2010, when a regional infrastructure was created with establishment of the Fort Smith Regional Alliance, a marketing and promotion entity within the Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce. The Alliance, the Chamber and the City of Fort Smith, are the region's primary advocates for economic development. The Alliance and the Chamber, by their nature, have more regional perspectives. The City must target their marketing efforts locally.

This existing economic development structure represents a "top down"/"bottom up" approach to business expansion and retention. From a "top down" perspective, the Alliance and the Chamber can market the overall region, providing resources and support to all of its partner communities, including the City of Fort Smith. In this role, the Alliance and the Chamber can "match" and direct potential prospects to the local community which represents the highest prospect of business success. The Alliance and the Chamber, therefore, will be responsible for marketing the region externally. From a "bottom up" perspective, the City will be responsible for marketing Fort Smith internally, that is, ensuring that the Alliance and the Chamber are well-versed in the City's locational attributes and economic development infrastructure. Fort Smith's size and relative impact on the region allows for the City to significantly influence regional economic development. Close contact and cooperation between City economic development staff and the Alliance and Chamber will be critical to the success of this structure.

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

ED PARTNERSHIP

Garland, TX

The Economic Development Partnership is a consortium of the Garland Chamber of Commerce, the City of Garland, and the Garland Independent School District. The Partnership's focus is on the "start-up, growth, and attraction of strategic businesses" and it provides services to both small and large companies. The Partnership is the primary community contact for Garland's economic development efforts. All activities are overseen by 12 Steering Committee members -- four representatives from each partner.

Staff from the partner organizations work closely together to implement a unified strategic plan for the Garland area. While the Partnership has the advantage of focusing on a single geographic area (the City of Garland; population-230,000), it faces stiff competition from immediately adjacent communities in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex.

Links: http://www.garlandedp.com/

POLICY ED-4.1

Ensure that planning processes reflect how businesses plan for future expansion/growth.

» ***ACTION ED-4.1.1***
Establish a framework to keep the business community fully engaged in the city's ongoing planning and budgeting efforts, maintain an open and consistent dialogue to equip businesses with the information they need to plan for future growth and expansion.

POLICY ED-4.2

Support all economic efforts operating under a well-coordinated organizational structure led by the Chamber of Commerce.

» *ACTION ED-4.2.1*
Establish economic development incentive policies that measure the performance of City investments with a cost/benefit analysis of the long-term economic and quality-of-life benefits to the region

» *ACTION ED-4.2.2*
Support Chamber and AEDC in their efforts to increase jobs in the area.

GOAL ED-5

Diversify the local economic base and strengthen and stabilize the tax base to maintain viability during fluctuating economic cycles

Retail development supports the consumer needs of both residents and businesses within a full-service economy, and, throughout the Southwestern U.S., contributes disproportionately to municipal budgets. Potential patrons will go to out of the community to buy goods and services if not available locally or not available in centers that offer more modern and desirable amenities. Fort Smith maintains a disproportionate share of the overall region's retail base, due to its position as a regional hub for commerce. Still, there is a considerable amount of retail "leakage" present in both the City of Fort Smith and the Fort Smith region as a whole, i.e., people are leaving the city and region to purchase certain goods elsewhere.

Like most Southwestern U.S. communities, a sizable portion of Fort Smith's retail real estate is pre-1990 vintage. Given the well-tested adage that "retail changes its face every seven years", Fort Smith's retail market is likely underserved by new formats and product mixes. Today, Fort Smith represents a relatively homogenous retail market. In association with the increased diversity of housing products and targeted demographic groups, it could, and should accommodate a wider variety of retail product types and formats.

POLICY ED-5.1

Identify industries which are growing in the region (and nationally) for which Fort Smith might provide a good fit.

» *ACTION ED-5.1.1*
Conduct target industry analyses to determine existing and future industry concentrations and potential market segments for future retention and recruitment efforts.

POLICY ED-5.2

Encourage a full-service array of retail and service opportunities, thus limiting the necessity by residents and employees to leave the community to purchase goods and services (i.e. leakage).

» *ACTION ED-5.2.1*
Periodically monitor the retail expenditures from Fort Smith and identify categories for which leakage can be reversed.

» *ACTION ED-5.2.2*
Work with the Chamber of Commerce to tailor retail economic development efforts to attract retailers who can complement, rather than compete with, Fort Smith's existing retail base.

GOAL ED-6

Create a quality working environment that fosters an attractive sense of place

A key component of a community's economic development infrastructure is the physical environment (parks, open space, public improvements) within which people work. Experience has proven that strategically-integrated public improvements, amenities and open space reflect a community's identity and enhance property values. Because local government has the largest and longest-term interest and responsibility in a community's economic sustainability, the public entity's role is often in defining the physical realm. When done strategically, and when packaged with the appropriate incentives, this physical realm can effectively leverage private investment, thereby "readying the environment for investment."

"Place-making" elements in the form of quality public spaces, building design, transportation amenities, and generally higher standards for development and redevelopment, will enhance not only the City's aesthetic appeal, but its economic sustainability.

POLICY ED-6.1

Ensure that economic development objectives are included in the evaluation of all future City infrastructure projects, including parks and recreation facilities.

» *ACTION ED-6.1.1*
Invest in beautification of major transportation corridors; the provision of trails, open lands, and public gathering spaces; innovative architectural and site design; and alternative transportation choices to all business areas.

POLICY ED-6.2

Promote higher density mixed-use development in order to create vibrant live-work-play activity centers in key commercial corridors

» *ACTION ED-6.2.1*
Identify strategic locations (vacant land, publicly owned, etc) for mixed-use development along key corridors.

RESIDENTS SAID...

The absence of activities for young adults, especially events and entertainment in downtown and riverfront areas could contribute to a potential future economic decline

GOAL ED-7

Ensure that a broad range of housing alternatives are available for employers and employees

Fort Smith's current housing inventory indicates that the City's population growth complemented and supported the growth of its industries. Nearly three-quarters of Fort Smith's housing stock was built before 1980; therefore, opportunity exists to revitalize and rehabilitate older neighborhoods to meet current and anticipated preferences and technology.

Changing demographics and consumer tastes will ultimately determine how City neighborhoods develop/redevelop and what types of housing products will be desired. Fort Smith's residential growth has continued to be dominated by single family detached units, but a growing trend throughout the Southwestern U.S. in recent years has been the shift to more higher-density housing products (townhomes, condominiums, and apartments) – a trend in response to the desires of Generations X and Y.

Fort Smith has an opportunity to be a regional target for urban housing, particularly given the presence of a university and an attractive downtown. The "close-in" nature of existing neighborhoods in combination with the introduction of higher density housing products will enable Fort Smith to attract demographic groups it now lacks that would support industry: young adults seeking job opportunities who want to live in an affordable, "walkable" urban environment.

Other factors that should be considered in efforts to diversify the housing base to attract a wide range of employers and employees include:

- *Downtowns and infill neighborhoods provide the ideal setting for flexible spaces which appeal to lifestyles seeking environment over product.*
- *Approximately 25% of single-person households are made up of people under 35 who have never been married – financially independent, postponing marriage and focusing on health.*

- *Living alone drives a desire for "community" (communication, connectivity), therefore gathering spaces are important.*
- *Product types that respond to these lifestyle choices include mixed-use environments (vertical and horizontal), close-in, walkable neighborhoods, etc.*
- *The average age for first-time home buyers was 26 among Generation "Yers", and 29 among both Generation X and Baby Boomers.*

POLICY ED-7.1

Promote a comprehensive incentive program that fosters investment and reinvestment in Fort Smith's housing stock.

POLICY ED-7.2

Encourage the development of housing product types which help to diversify Fort Smith's existing housing stock.

GOAL ED-8

Aggressively encourage new development and redevelopment in targeted growth centers and make strategic public investments to leverage private investment and reinvestment in residential, commercial and mixed-use developments

Encouraging strategic investment in targeted areas of the City (growth centers) is a central goal for Fort Smith's future economic development efforts. The premise behind targeting investment in priority areas assumes concentrating limited public resources in select locations that will have a positive economic "ripple effect" in surrounding neighborhoods, corridors and influence areas. In this way, the City of Fort Smith (as a public partner) can effectively "leverage" quality private investment efforts to overcome barriers and achieve desired outcomes. Successful "leverage" efforts in other communities indicate that a community should expect at least a 5-to-1 ratio between private and public investment. In other words, every $1 in public investment should "leverage" $5 in private investment.

The City's growth path will also have important fiscal implications. Generally, the more dense the development pattern, the greater the positive fiscal impact to the City over the long term. Higher-density residential development patterns tend to attract a broader array of retail, or revenue-producing opportunities, given that retail centers can avail themselves of a deeper pool of disposable income. A more efficient use of existing infrastructure under a higher-density development pattern produces another positive fiscal impact.

POLICY ED-8.1

Focus economic development efforts at strategic locations within the City's identified growth centers.

POLICY ED-8.2

Prepare detailed marketing materials which describe and quantify opportunities for new development/redevelopment within these areas.

POLICY ED-8.3

Identify sources of financial gaps for financing new projects and renovations (both debt and equity) and then fill those gaps with a variety of financial incentives.

» *ACTION ED-8.3.1*
Consider the use of a wide variety of financial incentives to encourage private investment and help to offset the economic "gaps" for new projects.

POLICY ED-8.4

Create and implement an Economic Development Strategy that provides key stakeholders with a common action plan.

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT FEE (PIF)

City of Lakewood, CO

A public improvement fee (PIF) is a fee imposed by developers on retail/service tenants used to fund public improvements. Examples of these improvements include curbs and sidewalks, parking facilities, storm management system, sanitary sewer systems, road development (within a project site) and outdoor public plazas.

The PIF should not be confused with a tax. The fee is generally imposed as a percent of a retail transaction, is part of the bill of sale, and is thus subject to sales tax. The City of Lakewood has four locations that impose a PIF.

PIFs are used for major regional retail projects with no immediately adjacent competition. PIFs can be combined with TIF and/or special district revenue to support revenue bonds to front the upfront cost of public infrastructure at the project.

Links: http://www.lakewood.org/PIF/

WHAT CAN I DO?

» Support local businesses by buying locally, and promote your favorite local businesses to visitors.

» Host a one-day 'shadow study' for one or a small group of students about your career in business or some other organization to help prepare students for a career.

» Help set up an internship or apprenticeship at your business, organization, or agency to help retain recent graduates in the community.

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- **There will be demand for 1,810 additional multi-family units and 3,642 additional single family housing units by 2035.**
- **46.7% of renters in the city paid 30% or more of their household income in rent each month, which is considered unsustainable.**
- **57% increase in homeless population between 2007 and 2012.**

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- **The riverfront activated with new housing, retail, and entertainment attractions.**
- **A greater array of housing and lifestyle choices to serve our diversifying and aging population.**
- **Infill, redevelopment, and adaptive re-use of existing buildings in older neighborhoods.**

The Current Landscape

Fort Smith has a low cost of living and the potential for growth. The housing stock in the city is generally older with 34.8% of housing stock built before 1940, and only 12.25% constructed since 1990. However, an increase in the number of residential lot development in 2012 points to trend in housing investment. The median value of homes in Fort Smith is higher than the state average, but varies greatly between neighborhoods. As Fort Smith grows, the city will have to contend with increasing rent burden, a growing homeless population, and demand for over 5,000 additional housing units by 2035. Additionally, development pressure from the construction of I-49 and the annexation of Chaffee Crossing will impact how resources are allocated in the coming decades.

Vision for the Future

Throughout the Future Fort Smith Community Forums, residents stressed the importance of building on the city's strengths including a great quality of living and hometown atmosphere to attract new residents and investment. Demographic shifts, including a population that is aging and becoming more diverse, and an increase in housing demand, will require the city to adopt new policies to ensure that housing needs are met. By revitalizing existing neighborhoods, providing housing for a diversifying population, and employing targeted redevelopment strategies, Fort Smith can ensure that the city's neighborhoods continue to thrive. The following goals and policies have been identified to guide the execution of the community's overall vision:

1. Preserve, protect, and revitalize Fort Smith's neighborhoods
2. Encourage a diverse range of housing options
3. Foster regional housing strategies to benefit Fort Smith and surrounding communities
4. Identify potential redevelopment areas/sites that could provide a mix of housing and other uses

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

» Targeted revitalization strategies could mean greater access to homeowner improvement funding through grants and low-interest loan programs.

» Less vacancy within neighborhoods and in commercial areas means neighborhoods are vibrant and active.

» More opportunities to participate in the neighborhood planning process means residents have a greater say in what happens in their neighborhood.

» Greater diversity in housing options means that residents can stay in the same neighborhood through all stages of life.

RESIDENTS SAID...

The plan needs to promote and preserve Fort Smith's great quality of life and hometown atmosphere.

GOAL HN-I

Preserve, protect, and revitalize Fort Smith's neighborhoods

Residents stressed the need to build on the city's character as a "friendly town with great churches, and beautiful scenery." Using a variety of policies including incentives, educational programs, and strategies, the city can help attract new homeowners, improve the appearance of existing neighborhoods, promote private investment, rehabilitate historic structures, and reduce blight and vacancy.

POLICY HN-1.1

Improve and encourage maintenance of structures, prevent vagrancy, structural damage, theft, and fire hazards.

» *ACTION HN-1.1.1*
Provide education,and programs for structural maintenance, particularly in identified growth centers.

POLICY HN-1.2

Limit high costs associated with building new infrastructure .

» *ACTION HN-1.2.1*
Use a cost/benefit analysis to guide decisions when conducting development approvals.

» *ACTION HN-1.2.2*
Encourage redevelopment and infill development in identified growth centers.

POLICY HN-1.3

Promote private investment in identified growth centers.

» *ACTION HN-1.3.1*
Seek out investors for the North side of the City (Midland/Towson) to reduce blight and increase market potential.

POLICY HN-1.4

Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

» *ACTION HN-1.4.1*
Encourage revitalization of the Belle Grove Historic District and downtown historic buildings.

» *ACTION HN-1.4.2*
Promote existing tax credits for restorations in historic areas.

TOOL/BEST PRACTICE

HOME REHABILITATION

St. Lucie County Solar and Energy Loan Fund
St. Lucie County, FL

St. Lucie County created the Solar and Energy Loan Fund (SELF) program with seed money from state and federal grants. SELF is a nonprofit lending institution with a social mission, to provide low-cost financing so that residents can complete energy-efficiency improvements. The program is now transitioning from a revolving loan fund to a Community Development Financial Institution.

As of 2012, SELF has given more than $1.2 million to over 150 property owners. Options for energy efficiency improvements range from weatherization to solar thermal and solar PV systems. Because the upfront costs are minimal and the loan terms are favorable, SELF has been successful in eliminating financing as one of the biggest barriers confronting property owners interested in making energy improvements. In addition, the program has created jobs for local contractors specializing in renewable energy and other related fields.

Links:
http://www.stlucieco.gov/ed/empower.htm
http://www.dsireusa.org/incentives/incentive.cfm?Incentive_Code=FL124F&re=1&ee=1

POLICY HN-1.5

Prevent long-term vacancy by ensuring continuous use of buildings and quick transitions between uses.

» *ACTION HN-1.5.1*
Develop a "greyfield" plan that would provide guidance on replacing businesses that vacate a building.

» *ACTION HN-1.5.2*
Promote redevelopment of underutilized and/or abandoned land and facilities through public/private underwriting

» *ACTION HN-1.5.3*
Evaluate rezoning requests based on other available land within that zoning classification

POLICY HN-1.6

Improve public participation in the revitalization process of Fort Smith neighborhoods.

» *ACTION HN-1.6.1*
Encourage neighborhood associations and other organizations that will work in conjunction with schools, churches, and other organizations.

POLICY HN-1.7

Provide convenient, safe connections between neighborhoods and important destinations, such as downtown, employment centers, schools, parks, shopping areas, and neighborhood services.

» *ACTION HN-1.7.1*
As appropriate based on long term growth forecasts, require new subdivisions to develop through public streets and tie in with existing or proposed bikeways and sidewalks to promote connectivity.

POLICY HN-1.8

Reduce non-compatible land uses by mitigating any negative impacts and revising zoning language and map designations as necessary.

» *ACTION HN-1.8.1*
Continue to rezone existing, predominantly, single-family residential neighborhoods where the historic zoning pattern does not reflect the predominant built pattern with a priority to focus on targeted growth areas and areas where stability and character are threatened.

TOOL-BEST PRACTICE

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Globe Mill Housing Rehabilitation Project
Woonsocket, RI
"Rebuilding Community: A Best Practices Toolkit for Historic Preservation"

The Department of Planning and Development in Woonsocket, Rhode Island used over $640,000 in HOME grant funds to revitalize an affordable housing project in an abandoned mill. The project rehabilitated 11 former mill worker houses, built in 1865, to provide 22 units of affordable housing for first-time homebuyers. The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission worked with the city to ensure that the rehabilitation of the buildings maintained their historical character. After completion, the units were offered under a subsidy program through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which provided qualified buyers with $5,000 to help with closing costs and down payments. This adaptive reuse project was successful in restoring a blighted area of the city, providing homeownership opportunities to low-income first-time buyers, and preserving an important and historic part of the city's history.

Links:
http://goo.gl/5TAHJQ

RESIDENTS SAID...

It is important to provide housing options for people through all stages of life - from recent college graduates to seniors.

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

DOWNTOWN HOUSING

Employer Assisted Housing Program,
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY

The University of Kentucky, in partnership with the Samaritan Hospital and the Downtown Development Authority, kicked off the "Live Where You Work" employer-assisted housing program in 2003. The effort is intended to increase homeownership opportunities for Lexington's workforce through access to up to $15,000 for eligible employees, housing information and education through counseling agencies, and options for financing. The program is targeted to downtown and university areas to reduce commuting time and encourage urban infill / reinvestment.

The program has been in place for over a decade and still offers forgivable loans of up to $15,000 to eligible employees for down payment, closing costs, rehab, and renovation assistance in designated neighborhood revitalization areas. The program got off to a slow start, in part due to a limited geographic area, however many employees are now taking advantage of the loans and free housing counseling services and investing in downtown housing, located near their employers.

Links:
http://www.uky.edu/PR/News/Archives/2003/Oct2003/03-10_employer_assisted.htm
http://bizlex.com/2012/03/housing-affordability-lexington-looks-for-solutions/

GOAL HN-2

Encourage a diverse range of housing options

A variety of housing typologies will be required to meet the needs of an aging and diversifying population. Policies and strategies to improve the mix of housing in Fort Smith include planning housing for diverse populations, improving housing in urban areas through infill, and ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of single-family and multi-family units.

POLICY HN-2.1

Plan for and accommodate senior housing and other special needs populations as well as housing choices for young adults and families.

» *ACTION HN-2.1.1*
Locate diverse housing opportunities accessible to shopping, parks, recreation centers, schools, medical care, and public transit.

POLICY HN-2.2

Maintain housing opportunities in urban areas.

» *ACTION HN-2.2.1*
Support the renovation and revitalization of existing housing and promote infill development of vacant land within the corporate limits.

POLICY HN-2.3

Promote the development of a mix of housing types, including single family detached, single family attached, accessory apartments, and multi-family units.

» *ACTION HN-2.3.1*
Review and revise regulations that create unintended impediments to new or innovative types of desirable housing.

POLICY HN-2.4

Preserve and increase the supply of safe, stable, and affordable supportive housing opportunities for homeless individuals and families.

» *ACTION HN-2.4.1*
Continue to support, in accordance with the recommendations made by the Homelessness Task Force and adopted by the City Board, the creation and implementation of the campus concept to consolidate existing homeless and social services south of Garrison Avenue.

GOAL HN-3

Foster regional housing strategies to benefit Fort Smith and surrounding communities

Housing is a regional issue that impacts not only Fort Smith, but also the surrounding communities of Barling, Van Buren, and Chaffee Crossing. By promoting policies to revise zoning and subdivision regulations and provide housing in downtown and emerging centers, the city can assert its leadership on the regional housing issue.

POLICY HN-3.1

Provide leadership in addressing housing as a regional issue.

» *ACTION HN-3.1.1*
Work closely with appropriate agencies or entities involved in regional housing initiatives.

» *ACTION HN-3.1.2*
Work with communities in the region who have targeted housing programs to develop common program guidelines and program requirements to create administrative efficiency.

POLICY HN-3.2

Utilize the City's zoning and subdivision regulations to promote the construction of a variety of housing sizes and types.

POLICY HN-3.3

Encourage a variety of housing close to downtown and emerging centers.

» *ACTION HN-3.3.1*
Explore public/private partnerships and financial incentives that could be made available to support the efforts of housing developers.

TOOL BEST PRACTICE

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Housing Needs Assessment and Market Study
City of Asheville and Asheville Regional Housing Consortium

The Housing Needs Assessment determines the needs or "gaps" between current conditions and desired housing conditions within four North Carolina Counties: Buncome, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania. The housing assessment found that population and economic growth throughout the region has been stable. Over an eight-year period, homeownership rates fell, vacancy and rental burden rates increased, while subsidized housing vouchers became harder to obtain. The assessment projected that rental needs will continue to be unmet, the population will continue to age, and homeownership rates will continue to decrease.

By examining the current housing market, both homeownership and rental, as well as subsidized housing, public housing, and special needs housing and identifying gaps, the Asheville Regional Housing Consortium can work with local partners (e.g., developers, economic development authorities) to develop strategies to close these gaps and apply for planning or implementation funding. Potential strategies to address the mismatch of housing and demographic trends, included zoning density bonuses for affordable housing, using HOPE VI or Choice Neighborhoods funding to revitalize distressed public housing, and creating Local Housing Trust Funds (HTFs) to provide low-interest loans for affordable housing development.

Links:
http://www.ashevillenc.gov/Departments/CommunityDevelopment/PlansReports.aspx

GOAL HN-4

Identify potential redevelopment areas/sites that could provide a mix of housing and other uses

Residents suggested that targeted revitalization and renewal strategies for the downtown and riverfront, including denser living, represented an opportunity to foster investment and population growth. Redevelopment within the city can be facilitated by targeting specific redevelopment areas, forging partnerships with developers, and identifying financial incentives.

POLICY HN-4.1

Evaluate potential areas within the City for redevelopment.

» *ACTION HN-4.1.1*
Establish criteria for redevelopment potential (e.g., property value, availability of infrastructure, utilization, tax base, etc.).

POLICY HN-4.2

Explore potential partnerships with non-profit and private sector developers to redevelop sites for mixed-use.

POLICY HN-4.3

Identify incentives that would be appropriate to encourage the redevelopment of key sites.

LOOK: BEST PRACTICE

REDEVELOPMENT

Vacant and underutilized land, including strip malls, parking lots, and blighted properties, have the potential to be future redevelopment sites can add value and provide amenities for residents.

TOOL/BEST PRACTICE

DOWNTOWN REVIVAL - MIDDLETOWN, CT

About the Program:

» Middletown, a small city in Connecticut, began to see decline in their traditional Main Street and downtown in the late 1950s. The city began eying the transformation of the historic downtown core by revising the zoning regulations to require that retail businesses occupy the ground floor of Main Street buildings, creating pedestrian bridges that link major destinations, and attracting private developers.

Credit: Inn at Middletown

Why it works:

» The city's activities were successful in attracting a private developer to revitalize a large department store downtown into a collection of thirty shops known as the Main Street Market. This initial investment spurred greater interest in the downtown leading to a number of new restaurants and a 12-screen movie theater. In keeping with encouraging development downtown, the city moved it's police headquarters into the upper floors of the former Sears Department Store building and found a restaurant tenant to occupy the ground floor. Recently, the city initiated a tax foreclosure on an apartment building along Main Street. Middletown forgave the outstanding tax debt and found a developer to convert the building into an Artists' Cooperative with gallery space on the ground floor and housing for artists above. Moving forward, the city is working on a development plan for the riverfront that will create a linkage between the scenic riverfront and Main Street through a series of greenways and infill development.

Links: http://www.middletownplanning.com/documents/DowntownRevitalization_in_small_cities_2007.pdf

WHAT CAN I DO?

» Participate in neighborhood planning meetings

» Talk to community leaders and local officials about your housing needs

» If looking to purchase a home, consider purchasing an historic property eligible for tax credits or other financial incentives

» Support legislation that promotes affordable housing for seniors and other special needs populations

COMMUNITY CHARACTER & DESIGN

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- **Absence of streetscaping and unsafe pedestrian environment along key "gateway" corridors that provide access to the city. (Rogers Avenue, Zero Street, Highway 71, etc.)**
- **Perception that the city is close-minded, resistant to change, and residents lack community pride.**
- **Appearance of areas within the city is unattractive (litter, derelict buildings, signage, etc)**

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- **Shared community pride and civic identity.**
- **Livable, well-maintained neighborhoods.**
- **Frontier heritage and identity are protected and promoted.**
- **Beautification efforts along corridors, gateways, neighborhoods, and activity centers contributes to enhanced community appearance and upkeep.**

The Current Landscape

Given the geographic location of Fort Smith with natural barriers like the Arkansas River and Rye Hill, the gateways in and out of the city are along major highway corridors. Rogers Avenue (Highway 22) and Zero Street (Highway 255) provide access to the city from the East. Rogers Avenue and Zero Street have both developed as commercial corridors with predominately automobile-oriented uses. The absence of streetscaping and the unsafe pedestrian environment along these corridors detracts from their standing as major gateways to the city. Highway 71 and State Highways 253, 45, and I-540 provide additional points of access to the city from the south. The character of these gateways ranges from major arterial streets like Highway 45 (Old Greenwood Road) to large four-lane limited access highways like I-540. Highway 64/71 provides access to Fort Smith from the north while Highway 64 provides another point of access from the west.

Vision for the Future

Throughout the planning process residents were asked the comment on the strengths and weaknesses of their community. During these sessions, there was agreement that while the city has low cost of living and a rich history, the appearance of city gateways and negative perceptions among residents could hinder future investment and success. Residents felt that the lack of landscaping, unsafe pedestrian zones, cluttered signage, litter, and blight at city gateways and centers contributed to negative perceptions of the city. Additionally, they felt that the overall attitude of complacency, apathy, and fear of change will prove to be detrimental moving forward.

By working to beautify gateways and centers, encouraging greater civic pride and engagement, and supporting a positive attitude among residents, Fort Smith can improve the way residents and visitors perceive their city. The following goals and policies have been identified to guide the execution of the community's overall vision:

1. Improve the function and aesthetics of key corridors and centers in Fort Smith
2. Increase local community identity within the City
3. Project a positive image for the City of Fort Smith

Credit: Fort Smith Trolley Museum

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

- When residents take pride in their city, the city's streets, neighborhoods, and commercial centers are attractive and well-maintained; and become centers of activity.
- Reduction in visual clutter and improved signage means that finding local businesses along commercial corridors becomes easier.
- Creating identity among neighborhoods throughout the city means residents have a greater sense of pride in and take ownership of their local community.
- Working with local non-profits to increase opportunities to volunteer means residents have more opportunities to get involved and serve!
- Marketing the city in a positive, uplifting manner means more tourism revenue, which could translate to greater amenities for taxpayers.

RESIDENTS SAID...

Keeping properties clean by reducing litter and overgrowth could improve the appearance of the city.

TOOL/BEST PRACTICE

BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT

City of Charlotte, NC

The City of Charlotte, the Greater Mount Moriah Primitive Baptist Church, and other non-profit partners, worked together to plan and implement a streetscape and neighborhood beautification project in the Third Ward neighborhood of Uptown Charlotte. A local landscape architect donated services and with help from volunteers from the neighborhood, plants and trees were planted throughout the church site. Funding was provided by a Neighborhood Matching Grant from the City's Neighborhood and Business Services Department with additional matching funds provided by the Third Ward Neighborhood Association and other partners. This small beautification and streetscape project will contribute to the overall appearance of the Third Ward community.

Links: http://www.charlottecentercity.org/third-ward-neighborhood-beautification-project-a-success/

GOAL CCD-I

Improve the function and aesthetics of key corridors and centers in Fort Smith

Residents highlighted the negative appearance of corridors and centers in Fort Smith as a main obstacle the city must overcome to affect real change. Working to beautify areas of the city and creating guidelines for neighborhood development are ways to ensure that existing neighborhoods and centers as well as emerging centers are well-kept and project a positive image for Fort Smith.

POLICY CCD-1.1

Support beautification efforts along key corridors, at gateways, and in growth centers identified in the Preferred Future.

» *ACTION CCD-1.1.1*
Ensure "Beautify Fort Smith" is moving forward and gaining momentum.

» *ACTION CCD-1.1.2*
Develop a plan to move, relocate, consolidate, or bury utility lines on major roads.

» *ACTION CCD-1.1.3*
Develop new focal points and reinforce the character of gateways into Fort Smith by making them more attractive with new signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.

» *ACTION CCD-1.1.4*
Update and improve the look and lighting of the Garrison Avenue bridge (and other key gateways) including LED lights, improved fixtures, etc.

» *ACTION CCD-1.1.5*
Encourage the State to improve upkeep and mowing grass areas on I-540.

» *ACTION CCD-1.1.6*
Standardize and improve sign ordinance to reduce visual clutter.

» *ACTION CCD-1.1.7*
Consider extending Grand Avenue from 10th Street to the riverfront to create a Grand Entrance to the Riverfront and Downtown.

» *ACTION CCD-1.1.8*
Analyze the impact of decreasing the threshold that requires property owners to incorporate landscape and design improvements.

POLICY CCD-1.2

Integrate existing commercial activities within residential neighborhoods.

» *ACTION CCD-1.2.1*
Enforce quality urban design, and prohibit further industrial uses in neighborhoods.

GOAL CCD-2

Increase local community identity within the City

Fort Smith is a friendly town, with a strong community spirit rooted in its history as a frontier settlement. In an effort to overcome negative perceptions among residents, the city can promote greater civic identity and participation by increasing awareness of the city's unique history, providing a gathering place for community-wide events, and providing more volunteer opportunities.

POLICY CCD-2.1

Support efforts within the city to increase citywide awareness of local neighborhood character, culture and history.

» *ACTION CCD-2.1.1*
Work with neighborhood groups to develop brands for areas/neighborhoods of the City to increase community identity.

» *ACTION CCD-2.1.2*
Develop a "Downtown Square" as a park/open space where the city could hold a farmer's market, festivals, art walks, shops, and food trucks.

POLICY CCD-2.2

Encourage volunteerism to boost a sense of community in Fort Smith.

» *ACTION CCD-2.2.1*
Create a clearinghouse of volunteer opportunities linking faith-based organizations and local social service institutions and charitable organizations.

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Consider the use of design guidelines to prevent incompatible industrial or commercial uses in existing residential neighborhoods.

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

NEIGHBORHOOD BRANDING

Center for Community Progress

Branding or marketing neighborhoods is a tool to build a positive image for a community. When successful, it can promote neighborhood revitalization by attracting economic development and community support. This is a basic guide to creating a neighborhood brand:

1. Create a Goal - what is the purpose of marketing the neighborhood? Is it economic development or resident engagement.
2. Identify the Target Audience - the message needed to attract residents may be different from a message to attract investors.
3. Develop Elements of the Brand - work with community members to find words or images that resonate with the area's character.
4. Create a Logo - turn the brand idea into a graphic that speaks to the community.
5. Develop Strategies & Communicate - get the message out the community, host workshops and other events.
6. Brand the Neighborhood! - Place the neighborhood logo on decals, t-shirts, communications, street light banners, etc.

Links: http://www.communityprogress.net/tool-3--marketing-the-neighborhood-pages-278.php

TOOL & BEST PRACTICE

DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Urban Design Center
Association for Community Design

Design Centers are small agencies or organizations that focus on the physical aesthetics, typically of a downtown area, and provide a variety of design-focused services for a city. The services provided by these centers varies, but most operate with limited budgets and work on reviewing building plans, enforcing design guidelines, proposing streetscapes and parks, and identifying redevelopment opportunities.

Some Design Centers are part of a city government, typically as a unit of a planning department involved in zoning policies and building standards (San Francisco's City Design Group). Other centers are part of a university's architecture school, using students to work on community design (Kansas City Design Center in Missouri—affiliated with the University of Kansas and Kansas State University) Another design group format includes independent nonprofits that offer ideas and guidance to public officials (Dallas' CityDesign Studio and Memphis' Regional Design Center)

The Association of Community Design, a nonprofit network of architectural design centers, reports that these design agencies are operating in over 35 major U.S. metropolitan areas, with several centers launching recently in cities like Columbus, Ohio, and Memphis, Tennessee; and even suburbs like Arlington, Texas, outside Dallas.

Links: www.communitydesign.org

Creating a Sense of Place

Enhancing the character of the areas targeted for future growth will transform how residents and visitors experience the City and bring many of Fort Smith's existing neighborhoods up to the level of quality found in newer developments. In order to develop a genuine sense of place, these areas must relate to their surrounding context and strive to meet a higher design standard than their current conditions. Many of the city's traditional commercial corridors, retail centers, and existing neighborhoods hold the potential to maintain their functionality while adapting to a more human-scale and comfortable environment as new growth is targeted to these areas.

Future Character Conditions

Within the areas targeted for future growth, several typical character conditions exist. These centers, corridors, and neighborhoods are grouped according to their current conditions and similarities in potential future design considerations. As the City implements the Comprehensive Plan and new development is drawn to these areas, several character and design considerations must be addressed along with the policies outlined in this element;

CENTER TYPOLOGIES:

- Large Scale Retail Center
- Mixed Use Neighborhood Center
- Institutional Center
- Industrial/Manufacturing Center
- Downtown/Riverfront Center

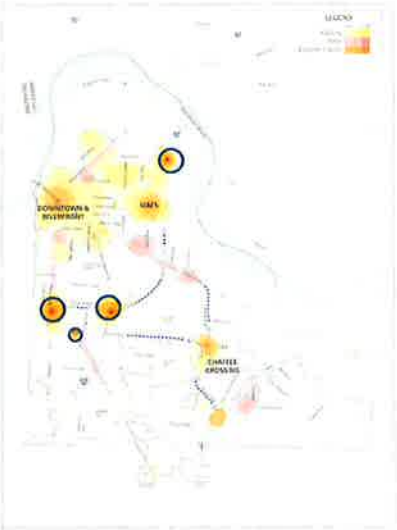
NEIGHBORHOOD TYPOLOGIES

- Established Neighborhood
- Stabilizing Neighborhood

CORRIDOR TYPOLOGIES:

- Core Retail/Commercial Corridor
- Connecting Gateway Corridor
- Transitional Corridor

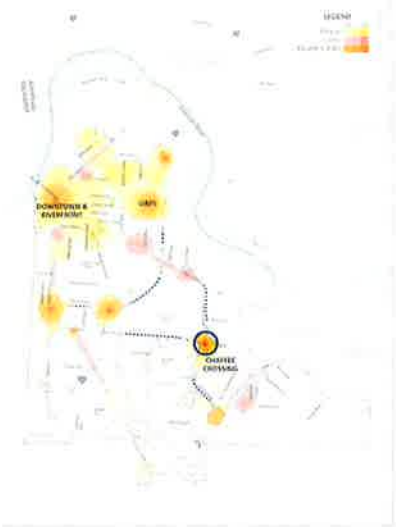
FIGURE 4.3: LARGE RETAIL CENTER



LARGE SCALE RETAIL CENTERS:

These areas are currently defined by auto-oriented "big box" style commercial and retail businesses, with some adjacent industrial, manufacturing and residential neighborhoods. Most of these places lack any distinguishing aesthetic quality or recognizable sense of place. The abundance of parking, lack of human-scale amenities such as screetscaping, walking paths and lighting, as well as their structural configuration are not consistent with the community's vision for a city with more livable and sustainable places to work and shop. As these centers emerge, their function as larger scale retail businesses can remain consistent, but their character must evolve to meet a higher standard of design and adjust their accessibility to accommodate multiple modes of transportation. Although new commercial and retail uses will be encouraged in the downtown area, these large scale retail centers already exist and will continue to serve their primary function of meeting the daily needs of residents throughout Fort Smith.

FIGURE 4.4: MIXED USE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER



MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS:

This area at the intersection of Zero Street and Massard Road has been identified through the community's "Preferred Future" as a center for both new employment and residential development. Unlike the larger scale retail centers, this center has a greater variety of development potential and an opportunity for a smaller scale mixing of uses. In its' current condition, this intersection is fairly indistinguishable from many other multi-lane major crossroads, but its' unique location holds the potential to tie Fort Smith's existing neighborhoods to the new residential and commercial areas emerging in Chaffee Crossing.

Future character considerations in this center should incorporate urban design themes associated with master planned communities; including a variety of housing types, on-street parking, a central open space, and a connected, walkable-scale street network. Only one center of this type has been identified in response to the community's vision of activating the Downtown and Riverfront with comparable uses. As the city grows, if increased demand expands beyond the capacity of Downtown Fort Smith, existing obsolete Large Scale Retail Centers can move toward transforming into these more integrated neighborhood centers.

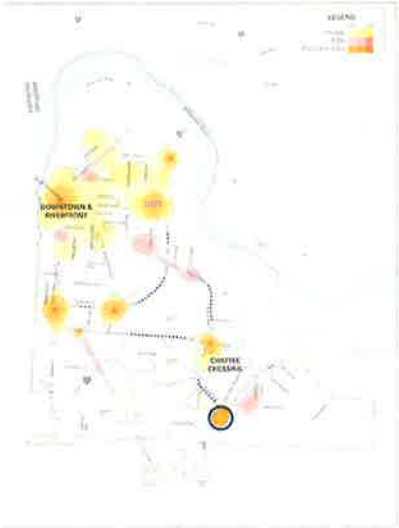
FIGURE 4.5: INSTITUTIONAL CENTER

INSTITUTIONAL CENTER:

The University of Arkansas Fort Smith campus, and its surrounding neighborhoods were identified by residents as an area of the city that holds the capacity to accept future residential, commercial, and university-related institutional uses. As an area with existing development, future growth in this center will likely be in the form of infill development and potential increases in density at targeted locations along Grand Avenue, Kinkead Avenue, and North Waldron Road. With a high student population, the character of this center should focus on growing into a compact and walkable center that balances the academic focus of the university's campus with the more traditional residential neighborhoods that surround it.

Utilizing the campus as the anchor to the neighborhood, several opportunities exist to extend the character and design quality of the university setting beyond the boundaries of UAFS and into its surrounding community. Conversely, the tree-lined character of the adjacent residential streets offer a design aesthetic that translates well to the UAFS verdant grounds. As an institutional center, future plans for this area should complement the university's master plan, and foster positive relationships between the city and this important partner.

FIGURE 4.6: INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING CENTER



INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING CENTERS:

Through the development of "Alternative Futures" and eventual selection of a Future Fort Smith "Preferred Future", residents supported continued growth of the manufacturing and industrial cluster developing along I-49 in Chaffee Crossing. This center will be unique in character due to its' proximity to one of the nation's most important trucking routes, so it will focus on serving highway-dependent economies with a more auto-dominated character than other parts of the city. Because this center is located in a largely undeveloped area however, significant design opportunities exist to incorporate additional amenities that will encourage workers in the area to experience their surroundings and get out into the Chaffee Crossing landscape. Best practices of corporate and manufacturing centers should be followed as this center grows, including sufficient pedestrian and bicycle access to the adjacent right-of-ways, sharing entry drives and clustering building groups to minimize impervious surfaces, and providing distinct outdoor spaces for workers. To the greatest extent possible, new buildings within this center should not be designed or sited without consideration of their surroundings, and higher design standards should be set for more highly visible buildings.

FIGURE 4.7: CORE RETAIL/COMMERCIAL CENTER

CORE RETAIL / COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Rogers Avenue represents the spine of Fort Smith; connecting the city's historic downtown, Garrison Avenue and the riverfront with existing neighborhoods, new commercial centers, and recent development in the southeastern areas of the city. The core retail and commercial center of this corridor benefits from several major employment anchors, local-serving retail, and a wide variety of commercial uses, while also serving as the primary method of transportation for residents of many of the city's neighborhoods to get around every day. Throughout the public engagement process, residents identified this section of the corridor as a primary asset that should continue to be the focus of future city investments including streetscape improvements, potential gateway elements, and overall beautification.

Although the future land uses identified for this corridor will continue to focus on serving the retail and commercial needs of the city, there are opportunities to improve the public realm by adding more human-scale design elements, particularly in areas more frequently traveled by residents outside of their cars, such as bus stops, sidewalks and shopping center internal circulation areas. This corridor should be a primary focus of a street tree planting program and beautification efforts that bury electric lines, minimize the negative visual impacts of too much signage and examine opportunities to relocate parking to the behind buildings that face the Corridor.

FIGURE 4.8: INSTITUTIONAL CENTER

CONNECTING GATEWAY CORRIDORS

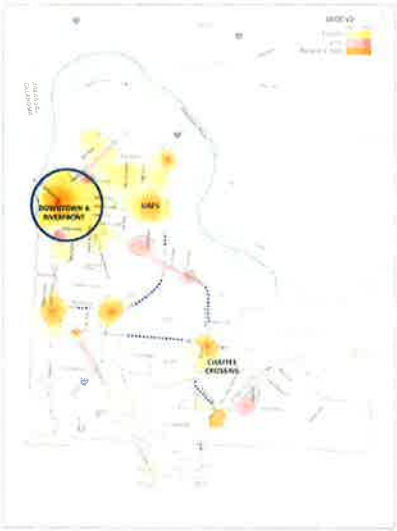
The city's gateway corridors, Towson Ave and Midland Blvd., are the entrances to Fort Smith and its' historic downtown. Public input through the comprehensive plan update suggested that these stretches of roadway should more accurately reflect the quality of development and commercial opportunity that exist within the city. In their current condition, large areas of under-utilized land along these corridors are experiencing varying levels of deterioration, having a negative impact on the businesses that continue to operate in the area. As growth is directed to these thoroughfares, it will be important that a cohesive design strategy is developed that mitigates the negative impacts of temporary vacancy, identifies opportunities for greenspace infill, and supports the existing business community. Design considerations along these roadways should include developing an aesthetic consistency, improving access for pedestrians from the surrounding neighborhoods to access businesses along the corridor, and consolidating vehicular access to provide opportunities for people to park once and visit multiple businesses.

FIGURE 4.9: TRANSITIONAL CENTER

TRANSITIONAL CORRIDOR

The stretch of US-71 between Zero Street and the I-540 interchange was identified as an area with future growth potential, as an emerging corridor with opportunities to draw new employers to a part of the city with industrial and manufacturing infrastructure and convenient highway access. As a four-lane divided highway, the corridor itself serves the primary function of connecting the adjacent industrial and commercial uses to the interstate and other parts of the region. Outside of potential adjustments to land use or zoning that may be necessary to attract and accommodate a variety of future businesses to the area, the corridor itself would benefit from the investment in streetscape amenities including new landscaping and lighting.

FIGURE 4.10: DOWNTOWN/RIVERFRONT CENTER



DOWNTOWN / RIVERFRONT CENTER:

The Downtown and Riverfront area was identified by residents as the central activity center for future parks and open space investments, new commercial, office, residential, and entertainment uses, and the continued preservation of the historic character of the city. The community envisions this area as supporting day and nighttime activity and a growing the city's "urban lifestyle with a distinct flavor of historic Fort Smith." In terms of character considerations, a priority for this center will be to continue to maintain the existing buildings and properties, and continue to enhance the quality of the public realm throughout the entire downtown and adjacent riverfront area. Although several important investments have been made at targeted locations in this center that have succeeded in transforming once abandoned areas into thriving sections of the downtown, some areas within the downtown remain isolated due to lack of vehicle or pedestrian access.

The Design Guidelines in place for rehabilitation and new construction in the city's Central Business Improvement District outline many character and design considerations, but no Downtown Master Plan has been developed for this area to address the issues of access, open space, redevelopment, and infrastructure comprehensively together with the Riverfront. In order to implement many of the policies and actions identified through the Future Fort Smith plan update, a more focused planning effort for the Downtown and Riverfront should be initiated and build on the existing momentum of the comprehensive planning process.

FIGURE 4.11: ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOOD

ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOOD

Some residential areas adjacent to downtown Fort Smith have remained occupied and thriving, even as the city's historic downtown experienced significant disinvestment and new development shifted to the South. These more traditional neighborhoods have a distinct character that sets them apart from other parts of the city, and they benefit from their central location with convenient access to downtown, the riverfront, Garrison Avenue, and Rogers Avenue. Their tree-lined streets with sidewalks and well-maintained homes will offer an important complement to the new higher density housing, and mixed use developments envisioned for the downtown. In terms of the character of these communities, it will be critical to preserve the existing neighborhood fabric and sense of place by working with residents to develop and design guidelines for new construction. Although these areas have traditionally remained as single family residential neighborhoods, most of the property within these ares is zoned for a higher-density of multi-family residential uses. Preserving the character and quality of these neighborhoods will require any new development in this area to meet the existing standard of design, and maintain compatibility with the surrounding residential are, regardless of the housing type.

FIGURE 4.12: STABILIZING NEIGHBORHOOD

STABILIZING NEIGHBORHOOD

Other residential areas adjacent to downtown Fort Smith have not remained fully occupied, and have experienced many of the negative impacts associated with disinvestment. These areas have the same great "bones" as their adjacent neighborhoods; with a fully connected street network, mature trees, and convenient access to downtown, but the large vacant areas and abandoned properties detract from their appeal as a viable housing option for many potential residents. Another issue that impacts the character of these neighborhoods is the incompatibility of uses between the smaller scale commercial and light industrial operations in the area and the adjacent single family residential areas. Similar to the established neighborhoods in other areas near downtown, this area is also largely zoned to allow for residential uses at a higher density than is currently on the ground. Incorporating design guidelines that aim to eliminate the conflicts between the existing housing, commercial businesses in operation, and new multi-family construction may provide more opportunities for a variety of new development to be attracted to this area.

GOAL CCD-3

Project a positive image for the City of Fort Smith

Promoting tourism and emphasizing the rich history of the city were key opportunities highlighted throughout the planning process. Creating marking materials that convey the positive aspects of the city can bolster tourism and support Forth Smith's businesses.

POLICY CCD-3.1

Promote the identity of the City throughout the region, and nationally.

» *ACTION CCD-3.1.1*
Improve the City's approach to public relations to promote what there is to do in Fort Smith.

» *ACTION CCD-3.1.2*
Consider creation of a publicly generated slogan to improve how citizens think of their city.

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

EMPHASIZE HISTORY

The city will strengthen its commitment to honoring past and present members of the U.S. Marshals by moving forward with plans to construct a U.S. Marshals Museum on the banks of the Arkansas River near the amphitheater. Plans for the U.S. Marshals Museum were the result of a multi-year campaign that lobbied for the USMS to select Fort Smith as the location for the museum as the city was historically the location where many U.S. Marshals were killed in the line of duty. In the fall of 2013, the city dedicated the cornerstone for the Hall of Honor, as a memorial to all USMS fallen officers since 1789.

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

TOURISM MARKETING CAMPAIGN - XOXO PHILADELPHIA

About the Program:

» VisitPhiladelphia, the City of Philadephia's tourism marketing organization, has been actively working to promote a positive image for the City since 1996. Over the years, VisitPhiladelphia's advertisement campaigns have helped increase hospitality revenues throughout the City. Following the economic downturn in 2009, the "With Love, Philadelphia XOXO" campaign was launched to reinvigorate the City's image. The campaign focuses on social media platforms and print ads that often use cheeky messages to entice visitors to the area. Some billboards included the slogans, "Dear hot date, wanna sleep over? P.S. Get a Room at VisitPhilly.com" and "Leave no cobblestone unturned, plan your historical weekend at VisitPhilly.com."

Why it works:

» VisitPhiladelphia's XOXO campaign has been successful in increasing tourism revenue throughout the city. According to Longwoods International and Tourism Economics, the campaign draws in an estimated $100 in tourist spending for every $1 spent on advertising costs. The campaign has helped draw in more than half-a-million fans on a variety of social media platforms and has helped shape a positive image for the City. The campaign has proved to be successfully adaptable, conveying a number of positive messages focusing on night life, historical attractions, and food and entertainment culture. Furthermore, the success of the campaign has been furthered by VisitPhiladelphia's many partnerships that help convey Philadelphia's message in print and on the web, both nationally and internationally.

Links: http://articles.philly.com/2014-03-10/business/48054961_1_new-slogan-meryl-levitz-greater-philadelphia-tourism; http://stage.visitphilly.com/articles/philadelphia/phillyosophy-advertisements/

WHAT CAN I DO?

» Participate in your neighborhood planning process.

» Organize or participate in a neighborhood clean-up or beautification project.

» Look for ways to give back. Explore volunteer opportunities in your neighborhood. You could become a mentor for a child at a local school, help out at a local food bank, or work with stray animals at your local animal shelter.

» Participate in local festivals and events that celebrate Fort Smith's unique history and culture.

» Work with the city and fellow residents to develop a community-based slogan or branding campaign for the city.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- **Fort Smith's highways carry 62,000 daily commuters, as population increases we will need to plan for further congestion.**
- **Ridership on Fort Smith's bus system increased 4% between 2011 and 2012, however ridership is still low.**
- **Residents feel there are not enough trail connections to parks and key destinations, making it harder to bike or walk.**

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- **Parks, greenways, and trails connect neighborhoods and activity centers.**
- **Infrastructure systems are provided in a coordinated manner that conserves natural and fiscal resources.**
- **Mobility is enhanced through the construction of I-49, a deeper river channel, greater road connectivity, and expanded mobility choices (transit, bicycle, and pedestrian).**

The Current Landscape

Fort Smith has access to all modes of transportation including air, road, rail, and water allowing for the movement of people and goods within the city and throughout the region. The continued functioning of this circulation system is essential to the long-term economic growth of Fort Smith. Each individual system has a specific role to play in the functioning of the city's economy and the daily life of its residents. Fort Smith's Regional Airport connects the city to the world, freight transportation along waterways, roadways, and railways is a key cog in the city's economic machine, and the over 580 miles of roadways connect people to jobs and centers of activity. Recent investments in the current transportation system include a new $12.8 million terminal complex and completing the I-49 corridor. Future investments include increasing the river channel's current depth to increase freight capacity by 43% and constructing over 80 miles of multi-use trails.

The city of Fort Smith maintains a comprehensive water and wastewater infrastructure system. The City's water supply reservoir has the capacity to meet future growth through 2060, while incremental water treatment plant expansions are anticipated to meet projected growth demands through 2025. Additional plant expansion increments will be made to meet projected water treatment demands beyond 2025. A combination of local sales taxes and the sale of municipal bonds has funded some $184 million in improvements to the city's sanitary sewer system to increase conveyance capacity and rehabilitate the collection system. Continued improvements are expected to eliminate sewer backups, overflows, and untreated wastewater discharges during wet weather events.

Vision for the Future

Residents identified transportation investments, particularly I-49 and airport expansion, as a major opportunity for development in Chaffee Crossing. By improving connectivity throughout the city and making informed decisions about the expansion of infrastructure, Fort Smith can increase the quality of life for residents, visitors, and business owners. The following goals and policies have been identified to guide the execution of the community's overall vision:

1. Improve access and connectivity through enhancements to all modes of transportation
2. Capitalize on Fort Smith's Location
3. Provide and enhance non-vehicular access for residents
4. Improve public transportation
5. Incorporate the Future Land Use Map in the strategic planning of future utility and infrastructure expansions

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Credit: Southwest Times

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

- The completion of the I-49 corridor could bring more jobs and economic development to Fort Smith and the region.
- Improving bicycle and pedestrian access and safety along key corridors means that choosing to walk or bike to major destinations is easier and safer.
- Protecting existing neighborhoods from excessive through traffic means that residential streets are safe for kids to walk, bike, and play.
- Increasing access to the riverfront (vehicle, pedestrian, and bike) opens up the scenic riverfront for all Fort Smith residents to enjoy.
- Working to improve the efficiency of water and wastewater systems in the city ensures that residents continue to receive high quality public services and reduces the likelihood of system backups during wet weather events.

Improving the availability of parking by managing existing facilities in a more efficient manner, developing park and ride centers, and shared use agreements, downtown Fort Smith

GOAL TI-I

Improve access and connectivity through enhancements to all modes of transportation

During the Future Fort Smith Town Community Forums, many residents voiced their desire for a more connected transportation system that would allow for the efficient and safe movement of people and goods and services. Policies and actions to improve mobility include enhanced connections to key destinations, improvements to the city's existing circulation system, protecting residential neighborhoods from unnecessary vehicular traffic, and safely accommodating all modes of transportation.

POLICY TI-1.1

Promote better connections between downtown, the riverfront, historic sites, and the Belle Grove Historic District, particularly from I-40 to 540.

» *ACTION TI-1.1.1*
Improve the availability of parking in downtown Fort Smith.

» *ACTION TI-1.1.2*
Create an I-540 Downtown/Riverfront Loop that would offer direct access to the riverfront and downtown area from Kelley Highway and Grand Avenue.

POLICY TI-1.2

Make major destinations highly accessible by all modes of transportation.

» *ACTION TI-1.2.1*
Design and adopt an all-mode circulation plan for major centers identified in the Preferred Future.

POLICY TI-1.3

Address improvements to the existing street network by first optimizing access and circulation through better design and utilization of existing rights-of-way, in cooperation with property owners.

» *ACTION TI-1.3.1*
Evaluate ways to improve access to the Riverfront.

POLICY TI-1.4

Protect residential neighborhoods from excessive through traffic.

» *ACTION TI-1.4.1*
Consider traffic calming techniques (roadway narrowing, chicanes, bump-out curbs, raised intersections, etc) in residential neighborhoods impacted by through-traffic.

» *ACTION TI-1.4.2*
Improve connectivity throughout the City's roadway network to increase access and eliminate high volumes of traffic in residential thoroughfares.

- Identify the major destination areas in town
- Evaluate how cars travel from major roads to the destination areas
- Improve these access routes to minimize travel through neighborhoods

POLICY TI-1.5

Improve traffic flow and integrate safe pedestrian and bicycle travel into the transportation network, particularly at key intersections of high commercial and employment activity.

» *ACTION TI-1.5.1*
Identify problematic roadways that create a hazardous environment for pedestrians and infill sidewalks where gaps exist in the network.

RESIDENTS SAID...

There is a lack of walking, biking, and running paths throughout the city.

POLICY TI-1.6

Improve physical connections between and within neighborhoods through road extensions or improvements, bicycle lanes and trails, and a connected sidewalk network.

» *ACTION TI-1.6.1*
Identify and designate key pedestrian and bicycle routes for improvements to neighborhood connectivity and walkability, including access to service areas.

POLICY TI-1.7

Reduce traffic congestion and improve emergency circulation by redesigning major corridors to include safe walking, biking, transit, and driving options and incorporating those elements into initial design concepts through final design documents.

» *ACTION TI-1.7.1*
Utilize a "Complete Streets" approach to ensure that all new projects are planned and designed to meet the needs of every community member, regardless of their age, ability, or how they travel.

GOAL TI-2

Capitalize on Fort Smith's Location

Residents suggested that the city is not fully taking advantage of its location and potential growth opportunities in downtown and along the riverfront as it relates to growth of industry and businesses in the area. By supporting the creation of new businesses with transportation infrastructure and continuing improvements to rail, air, and freight transportation, the city can benefit from its location at the intersection of major road and waterway routes.

POLICY TI-2.1

Ensure that business and industry have sufficient transportation infrastructure to support freight operations and business communications, including rail, air, highways, telecommunications, and pipelines.

» *ACTION TI-2.1.1*
Speed up work plan / completion of I-49 from Highway 22 to I-40 in collaboration with other communities and regions.

» *ACTION TI-2.1.2*
Focus efforts on increasing the river channel's depth from nine feet to twelve feet to increase the capacity of the Kerr-McClellan Arkansas River Navigation System (MCKARNS) Waterway Route.

» *ACTION TI-2.1.3*
Relocate the train switch station from downtown.

» *ACTION TI-2.1.4*
Improve vehicular access to the riverfront.

POLICY TI-2.2

Provide convenient, reliable connections between industrial zones and regional highways to facilitate truck traffic that also minimize noise and traffic conflicts with other uses.

» *ACTION TI-2.2.1*
Plan for development along the I-49 corridor to accommodate freight transportation and growth.

» *ACTION TI-2.2.2*
Reroute truck traffic from key streets targeted for streetscape and pedestrian improvements (Garrison Avenue, A Street, B Street, and Riverfront Drive) to I-540 and other highways to reduce truck traffic downtown and on the riverfront.

TOD BEST PRACTICE

TRUCK RE-ROUTING

Maspeth, NY
VREF Center of Excellence for Sustainable Urban Freight Systems (coe-sufs.org)

Maspeth, a community in Queens, has a mix of commercial areas, residential neighborhoods, and industrial facilities. Following, concerns about the negative impact of truck traffic, including auto accidents, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) began a study to determine the feasibility if re-routing truck traffic. The study supporting altering the current truck route to enhance safety for pedestrians and improve conditions for residents and businesses. The new truck route allows trucks to travel at similar speeds along newly converted one-way streets to allow for loading and access to businesses. To ensure the success of the re-routing plan, NYCDOT worked with the New York City Police Department to issue citations to truck drivers not utilizing the new truck route.

Links: https://coe-sufs.org/wordpress/ncfrp38/case-studies/nyc/3mtrd/

» *ACTION TI-2.2.3*
Update the Truck Route street plan in accordance with the Preferred Future.

POLICY TI-2.3

Remain committed to supporting the air travel industry so that passenger service continues for the foreseeable future by enhancing the air transportation system at the Fort Smith Regional Airport, while protecting the public from airport related noise and safety hazards.

RESIDENTS SAID...

The airport is an important piece of the city's transportation system that links Fort Smith to the rest of the country.

POLICY TI-2.4

Fully support the railroad industry and encourage growth through the City and the region.

POLICY TI-2.5

Fully support the continued improvements to the Port of Fort Smith.

POLICY TI-2.6

Support the development of the Van Buren Regional Intermodal Facility.

POLICY TI-2.7

Continue to balance water and port activities with environmental improvements in full cooperation with the Corps of Engineers.

GOAL TI-3

Provide and enhance non-vehicular access for residents

Many residents focused on the need to accommodate alternatives modes of transportation including walking, biking, and taking public transit. Policies and actions to ensure that residents have access to a variety of transportation modes include implementing the city's trails and greenway plan, creating pedestrian connections with complete sidewalks, and connecting new development to existing centers with bike, pedestrian and transit routes.

POLICY TI-3.1

Review and encourage implementation of existing bike and greenway plan that will interconnect neighborhoods and provide access to both neighborhood and city-wide destinations.

POLICY TI-3.2

Support pedestrian access throughout the city, with a focus on attractive, safe, and contiguous sidewalk connections between destinations.

TOOL/BEST PRACTICE

BIKE & GREENWAY PLAN

Implementing the city's trails and greenway plan will add over 80 miles of bike and pedestrian trails to Fort Smith's existing trail infrastructure further linking key destinations and neighborhoods.

» *ACTION TI-3.2.1*
Continue infill sidewalk program to safely connect schools, residential areas, and commercial district.

POLICY TI-3.3

Connect new development through bike and pedestrian paths to provide a variety of options for traveling, including walking, biking, transit, and vehicle travel.

» *ACTION TI-3.3.1*
Develop a local Complete Streets policy that prioritizes improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists on key corridors (i.e. Garrison Avenue).

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

COMPLETE STREETS

North Little Rock, AR
Bicycle Advocacy of Central Arkansas

Adopted in 2009, North Little Rock's Complete Streets Policy focuses on providing the best achievable street design to accommodate pedestrians and all types of vehicular and bicycle movement. The policy works in conjunction with the City's Master Street Plan, which proposes a network of streets and highways designed to accommodate all modes, a set of proposed trails, and bike routes.

Since adopting the policy, North Little Rock has created bike routes and bike lanes on streets throughout the City. In addition to providing bike lanes, the City has worked with groups like the Bicycle Advocacy of Central Arkansas, to in stall 90 bike racks and 3 "Fix-it" stations for bike repair. As part of the City's commitment to complete streets, a coordinator was hired to oversee the use of a Safe Routes to School grant who will work to promote safe bicycling in North Little Rock.

Links:
http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/changing-policy
http://www.bicycleadvocacy.com/north-little-rock

GOAL TI-4

Improve public transportation

A well-functioning and convenient public transportation system ensures that all residents have access to major activity and job centers. Increasing ridership through marketing campaigns and other measures can support the expansion and growth of the system.

POLICY TI-4.1

Market public transportation in Fort Smith.

POLICY TI-4.2

Promote and maintain a public transit system that is safe, efficient, cost-effective and responsive to the needs of residents.

» *ACTION TI-4.2.1*
Expand fixed-route system to ensure access to a majority of shopping/service areas.

GOAL TI-5

Incorporate the Future Land Use Map in the strategic planning of future utility and infrastructure expansions

Fiscal responsibility was a key concern for residents at community meetings. The city can improve efficiency and reduce waste by enacting a number of policies and actions focused on ensuring utility expansion is coordinated with land use and the city's long-term needs.

POLICY TI-5.1

Continue to ensure that customers within Fort Smith have access to reliable water, sewer, drainage, solid waste services by reducing or eliminating deficiencies and gaps in infrastructure systems.

» *ACTION TI-5.1.1*
Implement an infrastructure Asset Management Program as a tool for management of the utility department's water and sewer systems and to track, manage, and schedule necessary facility upgrades and improvements.

RESIDENTS SAID...

Lack of capacity within the city's government to increase revenues may threaten future growth.

POLICY TI-5.2

Ensure that utility and infrastructure systems can meet the city's long-term needs.

» *ACTION TI-5.2.1*
Coordinate land use planning and capital programming to ensure infrastructure improvements and extensions are phased to support the future land use pattern.

» *ACTION TI-5.2.2*
Maintain updated infrastructure master plans..

» *ACTION TI-5.2.3*
Regularly review Level or Service (LOS) standards for infrastructure systems.

» *ACTION TI-5.2.4*
Adopt criteria for prioritizing funding to infrastructure-related capital improvement projects.

» *ACTION TI-5.2.5*
Use the future land use framework to identify opportunities to expand the city's green infrastructure and open space network to increase the city's ability to manage stormwater and limit the need for additional grey infrastructure.

WHAT CAN I DO?

» Utilize existing bike and pedestrian paths and advocate for the expansion of trails throughout the city.

» Consider walking or biking to work or to destinations within the city.

» Conserve water by limiting lawn watering, turning off the faucet when brushing your teeth, or using a rain barrel to recycle rainwater.

» Talk to local officials, advocate for pedestrian improvements including complete sidewalks, clear crosswalks, or street trees.

» Use public transportation when possible.

PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- **Fort Smith maintains 273 acres of open space and recreation areas.**
- **The Fort Smith Fire Department carries a Class 2 Rating (on a scale from 1-10; with 1 being the highest)**
- **Arrests for drug-related offenses increased by 53% between 2000 and 2011.**
- **The University of Arkansas Fort Smith (UAFS) is expected to increase enrollment by 23% by 2023.**

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- **A friendly, welcoming and caring community of citizens who are actively engaged.**
- **Shared community pride and civic identity.**
- **Business- and citizen-friendly government.**
- **A transparent government focused on providing fiscally sound and resourceful funding for public facilities and services.**

The Current Landscape

Fort Smith residents have access to a variety of facilities and services provided by the city of Fort Smith, including parks, libraries, fire and police services, public schools, and higher education institutions. The city is undertaking a number of investments in public facilities, including the execution of a trail and greenway plan with over 88 new miles of trails and bikeways and the modernization of ten fire stations to improve service. In addition to improvements to public facilities, the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith (UAFS), the largest university in Fort Smith, released a master plan in 2013 to address future physical expansion and renovation needs to accommodate a growing student population. As Fort Smith's population grows and becomes more diverse with a larger number of college-aged and working residents, public facilities and services, including universities and park and trail amenities could play a substantial role in preparing the next generation workforce and attracting new residents.

Vision for the Future

Throughout the planning process residents were asked to share their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of their community. While residents generally view Fort Smith's quality of life (including the quality of services) as a strength of the community, concerns were expressed that perceived fiscal and leadership limitations could hold back the city's future potential for growth. Most concerns relate to financial constraints and funding challenges the city currently faces and a functional lack of capacity to increase revenues in the future. Another source of unease is that a low sense of "community self-esteem" (i.e., how we perceive ourselves as a community) could hamper Fort Smith's ability to realize a better future and to change how others view the city.

Nevertheless, residents have confidence that there are substantial opportunities to change course. By fostering the efficient and equitable allocation of public resources, promoting greater transparency of government, and encouraging greater civic pride and engagement, Fort Smith can ensure that the way residents, businesses interact with and perceive their city continues to improve. The following goals and policies have been identified to guide the execution of the community's overall vision:

1. Promote a business-friendly and citizen-friendly government
2. Build consistency and trust with the public
3. Promote civic identity and pride
4. Prevent wasteful use of public resources and services
5. Improve the health and well-being of Fort Smith residents

PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

- A Fort Smith government that works to make regulations and policies clear and transparent for businesses and residents means that opening a business, applying for a zoning variance, or obtaining building permits will be a straight-forward and streamlined process.
- When residents take pride in their city, the city's streets, neighborhoods, and commercial centers are attractive and well-maintained; and become centers of activity.
- Avoiding unnecessary city expenditures on facilities and services by utilizing updated data to make informed decision means that taxpayer dollars are used to fund vital improvements.
- Having access to multi-use trails that link parks and major destinations means that there are more opportunities to walk, bike and play, which could improve the overall health of Fort Smith residents.

GOAL PFS-1

Promote a business-friendly and citizen-friendly government

Throughout the visioning process, Fort Smith residents voiced their desire to have a transparent government with clear regulations and codes. Policies and actions to help the city realize this goal include modernizing operations to streamline the development and permitting process and coordinate with business groups throughout the city to ensure that city policies align to the needs of local businesses.

TOOL, BEST PRACTICE

INTERACTIVE ON-LINE CODE

City of Oakland, CA

The City of Oakland developed an on-line interactive code that details parcel-based information about zoning and general plan designations, historic resources, and environmental status. Detailed parcel information links the user to other pages with in-depth explanations about current development codes and regulations.

Links: OaklandNet.com

POLICY PFS-1.1

Maintain fair and transparent codes and regulations.

» *ACTION PFS-1.1.1*
Work with groups in authority (Chamber, City Board, CBID, Chaffee Crossing, County, etc) to improve communication and coordination.

» *ACTION PFS-1.1.2*
Revise development regulations to improve user friendliness (e.g., create an interactive on-line code).

POLICY PFS-1.2

Monitor the City's return on investment by measuring municipal expenditures against property and sales tax revenues.

» *ACTION PFS-1.1.1*
Identify opportunities to reduce the City's cost burden by establishing public/private partnerships on significant revitalization projects.

GOAL PFS-2

Build consistency and trust with the public

Many residents felt that lack of transparency in the function of city government could hinder Fort Smith's potential for future growth. Several policies and actions were identified to ensure that residents stay informed and involved in the planning process and increase communication between the city, residents, and the business community.

POLICY PFS-2.1

Ensure that the City's planning and implementation process is transparent.

POLICY PFS-2.2

Maintain a clear line of communication between the City, the business community, and residents that establishes expectations and allows the progress of the City's commitments to be measured and evaluated.

» *ACTION PFS-2.2.1*
Set up ongoing communication with other groups in the City (CBID, School Board, Chaffee Crossing, Planning Commission, CEO Group, Chamber, etc) to ensure that all organizations maintain consistent goals and objectives with each group focusing on the responsibilities best suited for them.

POLICY PFS-2.3

Promote public awareness and participation by holding open Town Hall events modeled after the Future Fort Smith Community Forums.

GOAL PFS-3

Promote civic identity and pride

Negative perceptions and attitudes of Fort Smith, including complacency, apathy, and fear of change were cited as threats moving forward. The city and residents can work together to support building a stronger downtown identity and encourage a positive culture of change and community service.

POLICY PFS-3.1

Capitalize on the City's municipal presence Downtown.

» *ACTION PFS-3.1.1*
Build support for a City Hall building.

POLICY PFS-3.2

Develop community pride by promoting a culture of inclusion and consideration of positive change.

» *ACTION PFS-3.2.1*
Promote existing community service efforts and identify partnership opportunities to expand regularly scheduled community service days.

» *ACTION PFS-3.2.2*
Identify Comprehensive Plan elements (goals, policies, and actions) that will require citizen support to accomplish, and continue to communicate the importance of resident input and participation in monitoring the progress and ongoing updates to the plan.

TOOLBOX BEST PRACTICE

COMMUNITY FORUMS

Credit: WRT

The city can build on the strong participation of the community throughout the Future Fort Smith process by hosting on-going Town Hall events to update the community about the city's progress.

RESIDENTS SAID...

Building a City Hall downtown will increase civic pride and solidify the city's presence in the downtown.

RESIDENTS SAID...

Financial constraints and lack of capital may hinder the future growth of Fort Smith.

TOOL THAT PRACTICE

GIS COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

City of Fullerton, CA
Contact: Diana McCarthy; DianaM@ci.fullerton.ca.us

Fullerton, California has been utilizing GIS software to map and track a number of community indicators and assist with the function of other city departments including fire and police services. The city has also used GIS analysis to determine where new parks are needed in areas with low access to parks and apply for grant funding utilizing the demographic and geographic analysis of the area. Utilizing regularly updated GIS data allows the city to quickly access detailed information about specific geographic areas making it easy to make better, more informed decisions. Having access to updated data including detailed demographic information, transportation infrastructure, and the locations of existing community services and businesses, allows the city to quickly access information to inform prospective business owners and determine the need for additional city investments.

Links: http://www.esri.com/news/arcnews/fall11articles/the-city-of-fullerton-looks-inward.html

GOAL PFS-4

Prevent wasteful use of public resources and services

Fiscal responsibility was a key concern for residents at community meetings. The city can improve efficiency and reduce waste by enacting a number of policies and actions focused on sharing community facilities and making informed decisions about where to extend new services.

POLICY PFS-4.1

Seek opportunities to co-locate future community facilities to maximize efficiencies in service provision and reduce capital and operating costs.

POLICY PFS-4.2

Provide new facilities in a manner that protects investments in existing facilities and promotes orderly growth.

» *ACTION PFS-4.2.1*
Evaluate existing water conservation policies and goals for residential, commercial, and industrial uses to identify opportunities for additional reductions.

GOAL PFS-5

Improve the health and well-being of Fort Smith residents

Ensuring that residents have access to parks, recreation, and other health-related public services can have a positive impact on the overall health of the community.

POLICY PFS-5.1

Increase access to healthcare, reduce preventable disease, and educate the community about leading a healthy lifestyle.

» *ACTION PFS-5.1.1*
Encourage local employers to adopt wellness programs (e.g., sponsor health cooking demonstrations, complementary gym memberships, etc).

» *ACTION PFS-5.1.2*
Develop a healthy living campaign and create marketing materials that communicate the benefits of active living, recreation, and healthy foods.

» *ACTION PFS-5.1.3*
Promote use of existing and future trail systems for exercise as part of a healthy living campaign.

TOOL/BEST PRACTICE

ACTIVE LIVING - GO! CHAPEL HILL

About the Program:

» GO! Chapel Hill, one of 25 community partnerships under the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Active Living by Design program, encourages leaving your car at home and using public transportation, bicycling, and walking as a way to a healthier and more environmentally friendly lifestyle. Active Living by Design places emphasis on influencing individual behavior through larger, community-wide strategies to create an environment that promotes physical activity and health. GO! Organizes events with partners in the community that raise public awareness and bring the community together to get fit including free bike inspections, bike-in movie nights, and CycleFests.

Why it works:

» GO! has been successful in building capacity and capitalizing on strengths within the community by forging partnerships with local businesses and engaged residents through the GO! Chapel Hill Partnership Advisory Committee. One such partnership with Diana Straughan, a parent concerned with lack of activity among school children, led to six schools in Chapel Hill adopting Active Routes to School strategies. These strategies include improved sidewalks, painted crosswalks, and removal of visual barriers. In addition to physical improvements, Straughan and other parents organized "Walking Wednesdays" to promote walking to school. Students who participate by walking to school on that day receive a prize or a sticker. This effort has not only led to an increase in the number of students who walk to school, but also the number of parents who walk with their children, expanding the social and physical benefits of the campaign.

Links: http://www.rwjf.org/en/about-rwjf/newsroom/newsroom-content/2010/02/chapel-hill-mother-helps-create-active-routes-to-school.html

WHAT CAN I DO?

» Participate in public town hall meetings, make sure your voice is heard and keep local officials accountable!

» Actively work to promote a positive outlook in your community. Join a community organization, organize a block party or a neighborhood clean up day, and participate in city-wide festivals and events.

» Ask your employer about supporting health and wellness programs at your office.

» Utilize existing parks and trails as part of a healthy lifestyle

» Buy local! Explore locally produced, healthy foods at farmers' markets and grocery stores.

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- **The Marshals Museum being developed along the Arkansas Riverfront will connect the City's most significant natural resource with an important historic cultural resource.**
- **Chaffee Crossing's Museum District, with five museums, is becoming the city's secondary cultural district behind Downtown Fort Smith.**
- **The City's large amount of open spaces, vacant land, and tree cover present a significant opportunity for a comprehensive approach to green infrastructure.**

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- **Protecting and promoting important Fort Smith's cultural and natural resources.**
- **Engaging our youth, young adults and young at heart in our museums, through entertainment venues, festivals and special events.**
- **Fully utilizing parks, greenways and trails to enhance quality of life, connect neighborhoods and support healthy lifestyles.**

The Current Landscape

Fort Smith's natural and cultural resources are among its' most important assets, adding value to residential neighborhoods and attracting visitors from around the world to the City. The Arkansas River, bordering the City on three sides and providing nearly 17 miles of riverfront, remains Fort Smith's most defining environmental resource , with historic ties to the region's Native American and Western Heritage, freight transportation, and recreation and tourism. Although the majority of the land along the river is within its floodplain and not feasible for development, the primary connection to the water is well established in Downtown Fort Smith. Recent investments in riverfront park land and a renewed focus on Downtown revitalization has put the City on a path consistent with the Future Fort Smith Vision.

In addition to the Downtown and riverfront area, Fort Smith has a number of local and regional parks, as well as cultural resources that host residents and visitors throughout the year. The challenge facing the City is linking these places to residents, promoting their value as resources, and realizing their inherent economic potential.

Vision for the Future

Residents and stakeholders consistently identified the City's abundance of historic, natural, and cultural resources as a unique opportunity to bring together several goals that have the potential to positively impact the quality of life for residents across generations. This potential spans each element of the Comprehensive Plan, including economic development, community character, and housing through increased tourism, retaining young talent with quality amenities, increasing property values associated with access to parks and open space, in addition to the value of a citywide approach to green infrastructure. Within the context of the Natural and Cultural Resources Element, the community has stressed the importance of continued and enhanced promotion of the City's existing resources. Participants stressed throughout the planning process the importance of protecting, promoting, enhancing, and increasing access to the City's tremendous resources. This cannot be achieved solely through the implementation of policies identified through the Future Fort Smith plan, and will require residents to take on a sense of ownership and pride in their City's unique assets, and remain consistent users and visitors of these places.

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Credit: WRT

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

» Taking pride in your local parks, natural areas and cultural resources engenders a sense of ownership that will not only support their protection for future generations, but also enhance their potential for measurable economic impact.

» Maintaining quality parks, open spaces, greenways and trails has a positive impact on property values in surrounding residential neighborhoods and commercial areas.

» Utilizing the City's natural resources as "green infrastructure" reduces the potential for property damage due to flooding and stormwater runoff.

» Promoting cultural resources adds to the diversity of the local economy and ensures a greater variety of job opportunities for local residents in key sectors such as the arts and entertainment, tourism, cultural and historic heritage, and preservation.

TOOL & BEST PRACTICE

BENCHMARKING PARKS

National Recreation and Park Association
www.NRPA.org

The National Recreation and Park Association provides resources and data to local park and recreation agencies to assist them with communicating the benefits and impact of investments in open space and recreational programming. The NRPA developed and maintains a database tool called PROGARIS (Park and Recreation Operating Ratio and Geographic Information System) to quantify the broader benefits of parks and recreation and provide a resource for local governments to benchmark their facilities and systems.

Links: www.nrpa.org/PRORAGIS/Reports/

GOAL NCR-I

Expand city parkland and recreational programming to reflect or exceed national standards

Although residents and visitors have access to almost 1500 acres of parks and open space, nearly 1,000 acres are located outside the City in Ben Geren Park or ETJ areas. The City maintains about 275 acres of park land, with only about 170 acres currently within the Future Fort Smith targeted growth areas. By national standards, this falls well below comparable sized cities with similar densities[1], but there are opportunities to increase the amount of open space and develop new recreational amenities throughout the City. Partnerships and innovative programs will be necessary to meet the growing demand for quality parks and recreational opportunities that are consistent with the community's vision for the future.

POLICY NCR-1.1

Increase the amount of open space and opportunities for recreation throughout the City by supporting the dedication of land and resources for the creation of parks and open space.

» *ACTION NCR-1.1.1*
Establish green space requirements for new development.

» *ACTION NCR-1.1.2*
Incorporate regional park planning in ETJ plan.

POLICY NCR-1.2

Promote and establish regional support for Fort Smith Parks and Recreation through agreements, user fees, programs, and grant applications with counties and neighboring towns.

» *ACTION NCR-1.2.1*
Form regional and corporate partnerships for regional sports facilities.

POLICY NCR-1.3

Develop neighborhood parks amenities within walking distance to residents.

1 The Trust for Public Land 2014 City Park Facts

POLICY NCR-1.4

Develop greenways and trails that serve to connect the City.

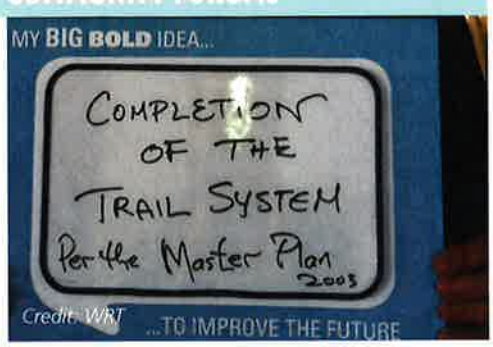
» *ACTION NCR-1.4.1*
Focus on completing the river trail development to enhance the City's downtown and riverfront economic development efforts.

» *ACTION NCR-1.4.2*
Implement the City's greenway plan.

POLICY NCR-1.5

Plan recreation facility land, space, and programming needs with other service providers in order to meet community needs and national standards.

COMMUNITY FORUMS

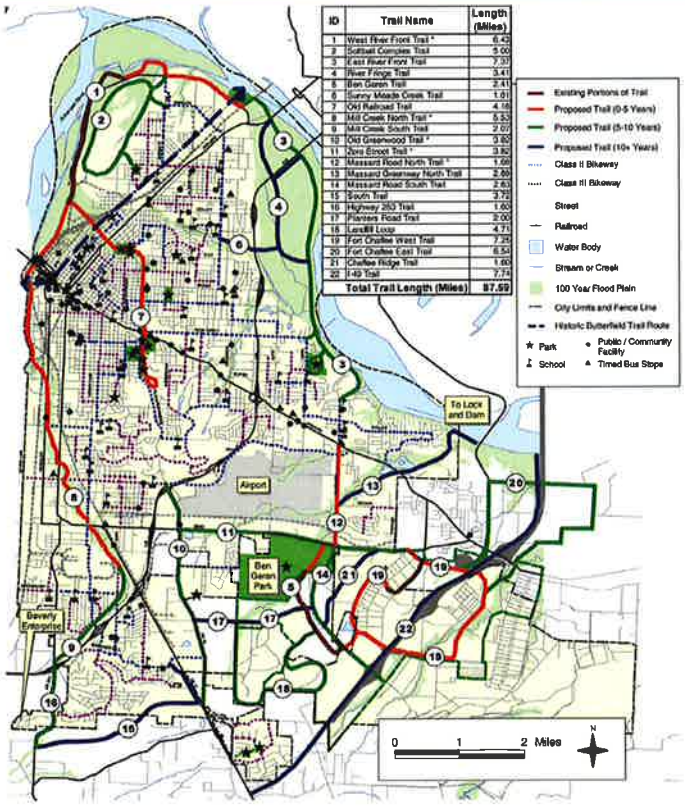


RESIDENTS SAID...

Complete the citywide trail system.

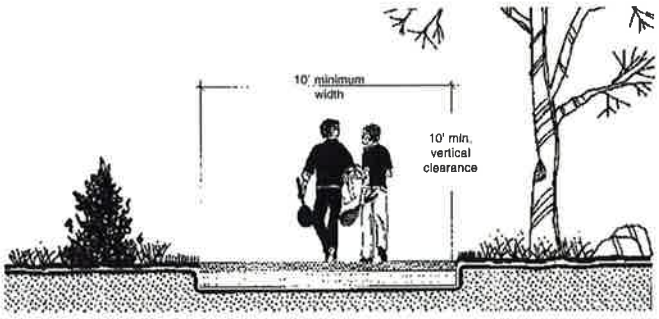
TOOL BEST PRACTICE

FORT SMITH TRAILS AND GREENWAYS MASTER PLAN



Fort Smith Trails and Greenways Master Plan; AR, 2004

The City of Fort Smith adopted a comprehensive Trails and Greenways Master Plan in 2004, calling for the implementation of a 87.59 mile network of off-road multipurpose trails throughout the City. The plan includes recommendations for near-term, mid-term, and long-term trail and greenway development goals, and outlines potential funding sources and partnerships to make the plan a reality. Throughout the update to the City's comprehensive plan in 2013-2014, residents referenced the Trails and Greenways Master Plan and called for its continued implementation as a priority. Although the Trails and Greenways Master Plan was an early outcome of the 2002 Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan, implementing key recommendations of the plan still holds the potential to result in early physical outcomes from the Future Fort Smith update.



City of Fort Smith Trails and Greenways Master Plan

POLICY NCR-1.6

Encourage multi-use public spaces that can function in a variety of ways to serve the recreation needs of the surrounding neighborhoods (e.g., park space, community events, etc).

» *ACTION NCR-1.6.1*
Partner with local schools and athletic associations for joint use of recreational fields and facilities.

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

PARTNERSHIPS

SPARK, Houston, Texas

Former Houston city council member Eleanor Tinsley created the Houston School Park program (SPARK) in 1983 in an effort to increase the amount of neighborhood park space accessible to city residents. The program included an agreement between the city, the Parks Board, and the school district which formally established a nonprofit organization. Resources were combined from the city's Department of Housing and Community Development, several local school districts, the county, private donations, neighborhood groups, and parent-teacher organizations. Since the programs' initiation, over 180 SPARK parks have been opened throughout the city.

Links: www.SPARKpark.org

GOAL NCR-2

Protect natural resources and reduce their waste and overuse

Fort Smith's ecosystem and natural resources offer several important environmental processes that mitigate the impact of extreme weather events and help to reduce pollution levels. Throughout the comprehensive plan update process, residents expressed their concern for the quality of the natural environment, both locally as well as an overall global concern for the preservation of natural resources.

The City's traditional development patterns and existing approach to stormwater management does not enhance the protection of natural resources as much as it has the potential to. Increases to the flow and concentration of water movement caused by traditional suburban development leads to increased erosion and the deterioration of natural habitats. Additionally, air pollutants caused by chemical evaporation, fossil fuel burning and other mechanical means can have negative health impacts such as increasing the number of asthma attacks and causing other respiratory issues.

POLICY NCR-2.1

Develop and manage watershed programs to minimize pollution from stormwater runoff and other sources.

» *ACTION NCR-2.1.1*
Utilize "Green Infrastructure," a network of open space and natural areas that connect the natural and built environments and provide multiple benefits for people and ecosystems, wherever possible to increase the City's ability to manage stormwater.

POLICY NCR-2.2

Preserve wildlife habitats.

POLICY NCR-2.3

Improve air quality.

» *ACTION NCR-2.3.1*
Encourage responsible industry practices and reduce other mobile sources of air pollution.

» *ACTION NCR-2.3.2*
Minimize growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the City grows through a variety of locational and programmatic measures.

POLICY NCR-2.4

Enhance and promote Fort Smith's recycling and reuse programs.

» *ACTION NCR-2.4.1*
Establish and publicize city recycling goals for household hazardous waste, and business, industry, government, and residential regular programs.

POLICY NCR-2.5

Implement programs to enhance landscaping and tree conservation.

POLICY NCR-2.6

Reduce stormwater runoff and flooding.

» *ACTION NCR-2.6.1*
Support green infrastructure improvements and enhanced green space.

POLICY NCR-2.7

Avoid development in flood-prone areas to increase resiliency to storms and maintain sensitive environmental features.

» *ACTION NCR-2.7.1*
Establish a comprehensive development and building permit review checklist that addresses environmental concerns.

TOOL: BEST PRACTICE

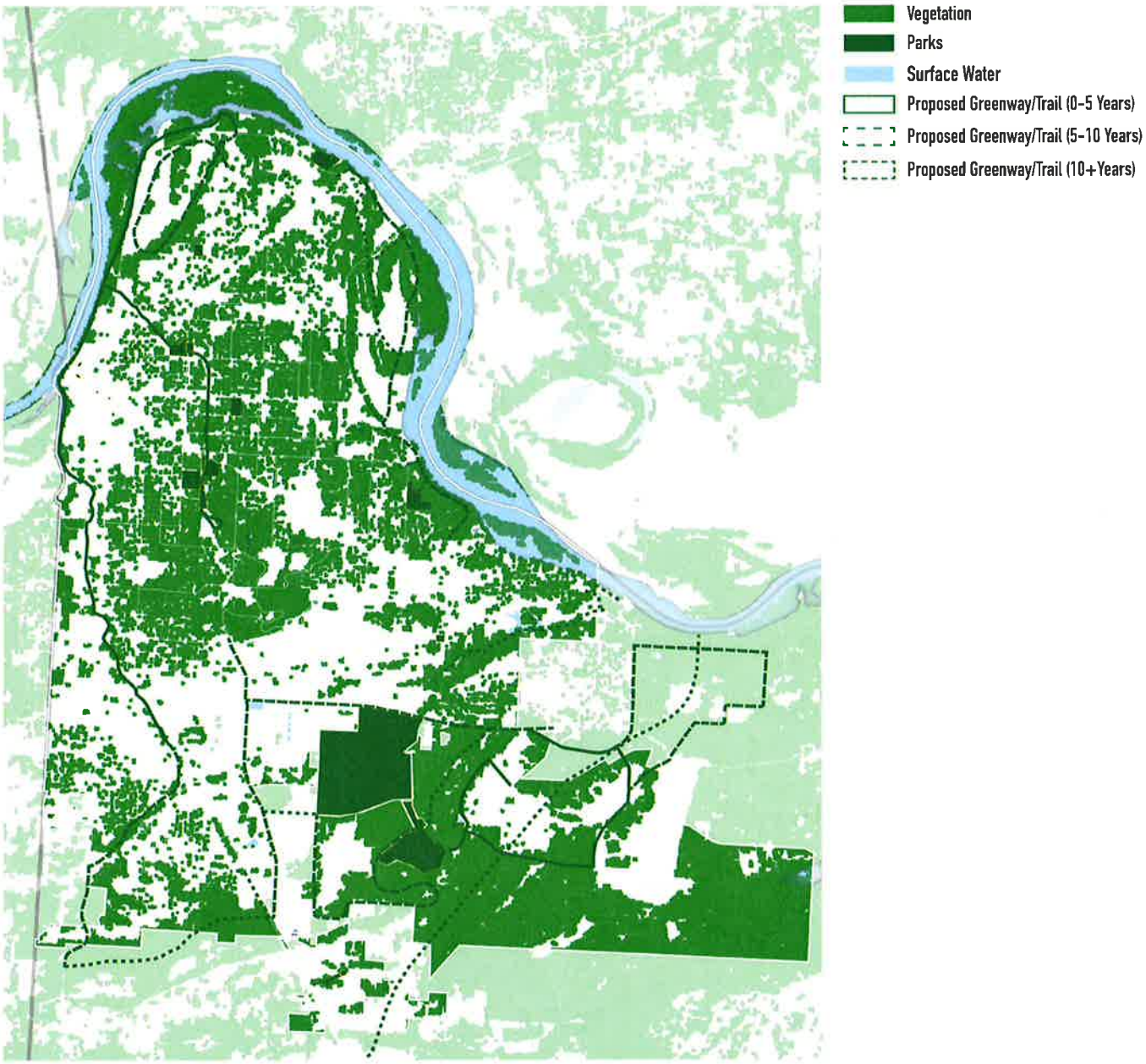
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

City of Portland, OR

In 2005, Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services initiated a "Green Streets" program that incorporates ecological elements such as vegetated areas, grassy swales, curb extensions, rain gardens and planted filter boxes, into all public and private development within the city's right-of-way. As part of the program, any development that is subject to stormwater management must meet the green street standards. Projects within the public right-of-way that utilize public funding must meet green street standards, or contribute 1% of their construction cost to a Green Street Fund. The program also includes an educational-outreach component to help city staff, developers, and the public understand the value of green streets and the program's requirements.

Links: PortlandOnline.com/bes

FIGURE 4.13: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITY MAP



Fort Smith has a significant amount of vegetated land cover, with many tree-lined residential neighborhoods and undeveloped areas along the Arkansas River and in Chaffee Crossing. Because the majority of this land lies outside of the city's existing park and recreation system, a comprehensive approach to green infrastructure is needed to benefit from the value of this resource and fully realize the city's natural resource potential to promote environmental, social and economic benefits.

GOAL NCR-3

Retain the historic heritage and cultural identity of Fort Smith

Residents identified the value of the city's historic assets and cultural heritage as both an existing strength as well as a significant opportunity for the future of Fort Smith. A variety of policies under this goal were developed to continue the city's current efforts to retain, protect, preserve and promote the unique identity of Fort Smith. In an effort to bring many of these assets to the forefront, additional policies propose to increase local and national awareness of the City's historic heritage and cultural identity through public art, education and events that celebrate Fort Smith.

POLICY NCR-3.1

Protect neighborhoods that are culturally or historically significant.

» *ACTION NCR-3.1.1*
Ensure that regulations preserve existing historic districts.

POLICY NCR-3.2

Promote historically significant landmarks and cultural assets.

» *ACTION NCR-3.2.1*
Develop partnerships with local museums (U.S. Marshals Museum, the Fort Smith Museum of History, etc).

POLICY NCR-3.3

Support festivals and special events that highlight what makes Fort Smith unique.

POLICY NCR-3.4

Increase public awareness, education, and knowledge of the historic district and historic architecture throughout the City.

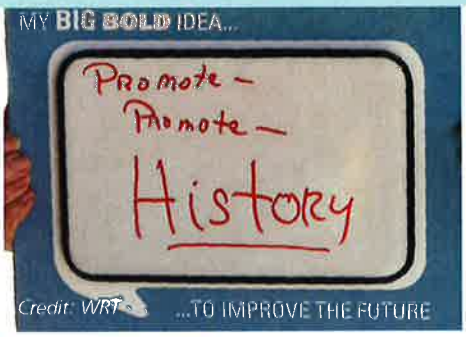
POLICY NCR-3.5

Preserve and protect Fort Smith's historic and architectural resources.

POLICY NCR-3.6

Encourage the inclusion of public art and plazas with new public facilities and major private development.

COMMUNITY FORUMS



RESIDENTS SAID...

Promote the city's historic heritage.

POLICY NCR-3.7

Enlist the vision and support of the arts community and seek partnerships with UAFS, the convention center, and other interest groups to advance opportunities for museums and visual and performing arts within the region.

» *ACTION NCR-3.7.1*
Identify partnerships and potential locations to establish an interactive children's museum.

TOOL BEST PRACTICE

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

INK, Gainesville, GA

Gainesville Georgia's Interactive Neighborhood for Kids, or "INK", is a museum focused on encouraging children to imagine, create, and explore. INK strives through interactive exhibits to create a unique environment through which children of all ages, abilities and experiences can learn. The museum was created by educators and designed to coincide with Georgia's public school curriculum. The museum's leadership focuses on education through interaction and has a goal of instilling in each child that they can do anything they put their mind to. The museum stimulates curiosity and motivates learning by using play as a catalyst for developing creative thinking and problem solving.

Links: www.inkfun.org

GOAL NCR-4

Expand the role of parks and open space in the promotion of healthy communities

Strengthening the connection between the city's parks and open space and the health and wellness of Fort Smith families was identified as a priority through the Future Fort Smith Community Forums. The city's parks and recreation facilities were referenced as an opportunity to more actively engage residents of all ages in physical activity.

POLICY NCR-4.1

Increase the use of parks, open space, and recreational programming to improve the health of Fort Smith residents.

» *ACTION NCR-4.1.1*
Partner with the Fort Smith School District and independent schools to increase educational programming and recreation in parks and open spaces throughout the City.

» *ACTION NCR-4.1.2*
Develop a marketing campaign to communicate the value of active recreation in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

TOOL/BEST PRACTICE

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS - "PICTURING HEALTH"

About the Program:

» The historic Gari Melchers Home and Studio in Virginia developed a broad-based partnership to expand a recent exhibit of Norman Rockwell artwork beyond the museum's traditional boundaries. Entitled "Picturing Health", the museum hosted a "Family Health and Art Day", with members of the community invited to view the exhibit and participate in a variety of community events focused on art and promoting individual health and wellness. The program demonstrates how organizations can work together to find common ground and build unique partnerships in circumstances with limited resources.

Why it works:

» The program was successful because of the range of partners involved in the process; in addition to the museum's exhibit, historic property, gardens, and trails, the event included a Lions Club Mobile Sight and Hearing Van for screenings, MediCorp volunteers who checked blood pressure, body mass index, and discussed wellness-related issues with participants. Local artists were also invited to provide art demonstrations with live models, and a caricature artist was provided through a partnership with Kaiser Permanente insurance. The "Picturing Health" exhibit and coinciding Family Health and Art Day brought together otherwise disparate organizations to leverage limited resources across the sectors of Historic Preservation, Health and Wellness, Arts and Culture, and Tourism.

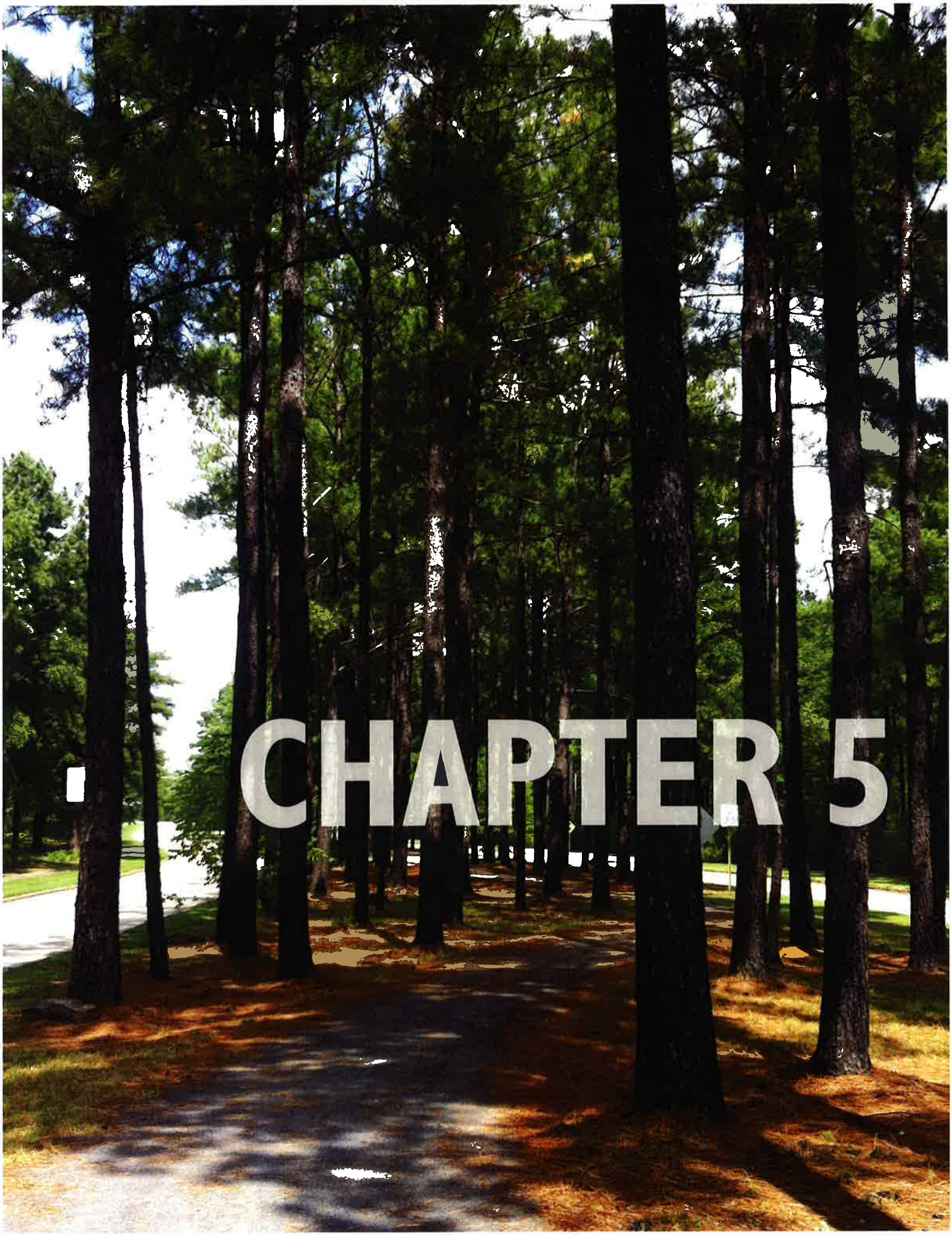
Links: Virginia Association of Museums, from VAM Voice newsmagazine, Winter 2009

WHAT CAN I DO?

» Visit a local park for recreation, historic interpretation or physical exercise. The city's parks and open spaces are resources that require continued maintenance, and utilization of these spaces demonstrates their value to other residents and visitors to Fort Smith.

» Turn your property into green infrastructure! Making small landscape improvements such as rain gardens, bioswales, or even collecting water in a rain barrel, each have positive impacts on the city's stormwater infrastructure.

» Volunteer! Many of the city's arts and cultural organizations, as well as recreational programs rely on individuals who donate their time.



CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Monitoring and Plan Update Protocol

If a comprehensive plan is to have value and remain useful over time, it is important to develop ways of monitoring progress on its many initiatives, to evaluate its effectiveness, and to keep it current as new information becomes available and as circumstances change.

Comprehensive planning should be thought of as an ongoing process, not as a one-time event. The Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan is not an end in itself, but rather the foundation that will guide ongoing, more detailed planning. The Plan Update is designed to respond to changing needs and conditions.

Without evaluation and feedback, the comprehensive plan can soon become irrelevant. To avoid this, the City of Fort Smith will conduct an initial review one year after adoption and will thereafter monitor plan implementation progress on 2-year cycles. The City will also conduct a more thorough review, revision, and update of the Plan every five years.

Ongoing monitoring will inform the Board of Directors, Planning Commission, City administration and departments, partner organizations, and the public about the plan's effectiveness; identify those aspects of implementation that are working well and those needing improvement; and keep the plan current as circumstances change and new information becomes available. The monitoring process provides a way to measure progress and get feedback from policy makers and the public to determine if the implementation program is working.

Following is a description of the two types of reporting procedures recommended for comprehensive plan monitoring and updating.

1. BIENNIAL MONITORING

Every two years, at the end of the fiscal year, the Planning and Zoning Department, in collaboration with all City departments involved in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, shall submit to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Directors a report indicating actions taken and progress implementing the plan during the previous two years. The report will include, at a minimum, the following items:

- Projects and policies (including capital improvements) implemented and the alignment of those projects and policies with the goals of the plan
- An annotated matrix indicating the implementation status and benchmarks of each priority program
- A work program for the following two years
- Suggestions for updates to the comprehensive plan needed to respond to new issues and changing conditions, for consideration by the Planning Commission and Board of Directors

2. UPDATING / PLAN REVISION

Once every five years, the Planning and Zoning Department, working with all city departments involved in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, will prepare a more comprehensive evaluation report to provide an assessment of the overall progress of the plan, including a description of what significant changes have occurred since plan adoption (or previous update) and use of benchmarks and indicators to measure whether or not the outcomes desired by the community are being met. Depending on progress made and new issues that emerged over the previous five years, the quinquennial Evaluation Report will allow for minor amendments and modifications based on

changing local, regional, state, and national dynamics and trends, as well as the completion of highlighted programs. Major updates may also be required to re-assess the plan's goals, policies, and priorities, and should occur at least every 10 years. If the Evaluation Report finds that a major update is warranted, a new public participation plan should be prepared to ensure the plan update takes direction from the community, including the creation of a new Citizens Steering Committee. If an update to the plan is needed, proposed changes will be submitted to the Planning Commission and Board of Directors within 18 months after the evaluation is approved.

ROLE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC) was formed in 2013 to provide guidance, feedback, support, and review of the planning process and in-progress work products. The creation of a comparable Citizens Advisory Implementation Task Force (CAITF) is recommended to help support the City of Fort Smith in implementation of the plan, work with neighborhood and other community groups, and provide feedback on the plan's progress and necessary updates.

The CAITF may or may not include all members of the original CPSC. The task force should include subject matter experts (e.g., environmental resources, housing) to serve on and help lead subcommittees or directed task force groups to drive implementation.

The main responsibilities for the CAITF will involve periodic progress review meetings and review of the biennial and quinquennial reports to provide feedback to staff before the reports are finalized and submitted to the Planning Commission and Board of Directors. The CAITF can also assist with the preparation and distribution of a Future Fort Smith Score Card to show the community at large how well the plan is being implemented.

Additional means in which CAITF members may be directly involved in implementing the plan include:

- Volunteer or sign up for interest groups dedicated to implementing a particular action or project.
- Share stories of local results and progress with the City and the community at large.
- Encourage friends and neighbors to get involved in Future Fort Smith implementation projects.

COORDINATION WITH MUNICIPAL BUDGET AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMMING

The City's Budget and corresponding Capital Improvements Program are two of the primary tools that the City of Fort Smith has to carry out the actions identified in this plan and achieve the resident's vision of an exceptional community, characterized by its outstanding quality of life. Consistency with the Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan should be maintained as the City updates these documents and makes important decisions about resource allocation and investments. Although there are additional partners identified as responsible for implementing various actions, the City's administration and leadership will be held accountable for the success of the Future Fort Smith plan.

In addition to serving as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide, and communications tool; the City of Fort Smith Budget represents the administration's commitment to implementing the Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan. Preparing for Fort Smith's future by implementing the comprehensive plan update and vision statement is specifically identified as one of the City's 2015 Budget Goals, along with other references to this plan's key elements including increasing recreational activities, supporting economic growth and focusing on downtown and riverfront development. As the City continues with its implementation efforts, it will be important for the budget goals and priorities to remain consistent with the comprehensive plan, and measurable progress is made to achieve the plans actions.

Coordination of a city's capital improvements planning process with an adopted comprehensive plan can range in scope from simply referencing consistent goals and policies to establishing a new comprehensive plan-based ranking and budgeting process. As the comprehensive plan is implemented, demand for public facilities and services will continue to increase, but the limitations of available resources will require the city to prioritize capital investments and spending. A coordinated approach to capital improvements planning will allow the City to maintain the current levels of service and quality of life that residents enjoy while strategically developing the infrastructure needed to accommodate and even promote future growth in a way that is consistent with the adopted comprehensive plan. Within this context, the City can establish guidelines of comparative benefits that will allow the administration and leadership to identify, quantify, and compare the relative benefits of various projects competing for limited funding. Similar to analyzing a proposed project's return on investment, establishing a comparative benefits ranking process as part of the City's capital improvements programming provides results-oriented information that ties outcomes directly to the adopted comprehensive plan.

Guidelines for comparative benefits can include criteria to rank potential capital improvements for both tangible and more qualitative outcomes. Within Fort Smith for example, potential capital improvements projects may rank higher for review if it meets the following criteria;

- Physically located within the targeted growth areas
- Directly implements an identified action
- Leverages additional funding or partnerships
- Includes community-based support
- Achieves multiple benefits; (co-locating facilities, beatification and green infrastructure, etc...)

These guidelines can be used informally to provide context, or in a more formally adopted policy.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

In order for the Goals and Policies identified in the Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plane to be achieved, specific entities must be identified as responsible for implementation and a general expectation of a time frame for completion must be established. Many of the Actions identified in the plan will require continuous implementation, and often rely on partnerships between several groups rather than one individual to be successful.

The following Implementation Matrix includes the Goals, Policies, and Actions identified in each of this plan's Elements. The table also includes additional columns that identify a metric, timeframe and responsible party for each of the plan's actions. Although this document is consistent with the content of the adopted plan, it is intended to be used as an implementation tool that must be maintained regularly to remain relevant and useful. As specific actions are completed, or projects initiated to move toward achieving a goal, this table can serve as a running progress report.

- Element: Identifies each of the seven comprehensive plan elements.
- Goal: Identifies the primary goal that each policy and action is intended to help achieve. Each goal has a three-letter element abbreviation followed by a number starting with 1 for each goal.
- Policy: References the policy, identified by a number extension from its respective goal, starting with 1 for each policy of a different goal.
- Action: References the action identified to achieve a given policy or goal. Actions are identified by additional number extension from its respective Policy and Goal.
- Metric: Identifies a potential method of measuring success of a given Policy or Action. These metrics can be directly tied to implementing an action, or an indirect measure of success for more qualitative outcomes.
- Timeframe: References the amount of time anticipated for the Policy or Action to be implemented. Short term generally refers to Actions or Policies with a 2-5 year completion date, although progress should be measurable within the first Comprehensive Plan review. Mid-term ranges from 5-10 years, and Long-term refers to Actions and Policies that are either ongoing or expected to take more than 10 years to implement.
- Responsible Parties: Includes a preliminary list of who will be primarily responsible for carrying out each Policy or Action. Coordination among each responsible party will be needed for successful implementation.

Element	Goal	Policy #	Policy	Action #	Action	Metric	Timeframe	Responsible Party
Future Land Use	FLU-1	FLU-1.1	What	FLU1.1.1	How	Measure of successes	When	Who

Future Land Use

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
FLU-1	Achieve a successful and market-driven balance of future land uses consistent with the Preferred Future	FLU-1.1	Promote commercial development and future economic growth in centers and corridors designated in the Preferred Future in close proximity to existing infrastructure, schools, parks, and jobs.	FLU-1.1.1	Attract anchors in all Preferred Future centers to encourage complementary development, particularly for the Downtown Riverfront.	Number of new businesses opening in neighborhoods	Long	Fort Smith CBID; Chamber; Fort Smith Board of Realtors
				FLU-1.1.2	Update and implement the UDO (Unified Development Ordinance) and Master Land Use Map based on the Preferred Future.	Updated UDO and Master Land Use Map	Short	Planning & Zoning
				FLU-1.1.3	Review and adjust zoning classifications for consistency with the Preferred Future.	Zoning changes made, or finding of consistency reached	Short	Planning & Zoning
				FLU-1.1.4	Create an inventory of existing businesses and develop a plan to attract a wider variety of businesses currently not available to the community.	Increase in business diversity	Short	Chamber; Administration; Fort Smith Board of Realtors
				FLU-1.1.5	Create incentive programs, such as a Small Businesses Development Program.	Number of new businesses connected to development programs	Mid	Chamber; UAFS
		FLU-1.2	Ensure that sufficient, well designed and convenient on street and off street parking is provided to serve land uses.	FLU-1.2.1	Conduct an assessment of existing parking supply and demand and forecast future needs.	Assessment completion	Mid	Planning and Zoning; Engineering; Police; Parking Authority; Operations
				FLU-1.2.2	Based on the parking assessment, review the parking ratios and related regulations in the UDO and create a parking management plan for on street and off street parking near major activity centers.	The number of requested variances received by the Planning Dept.	Mid	Planning and Zoning; Engineering; Police; Operations
		FLU-1.3	Coordinate and plan future development with neighboring jurisdictions and the City of Fort Smith.	FLU-1.3.1	Exercise the City's extra-territorial jurisdiction over land in Sebastian County.		Mid	Planning & Zoning; Engineering; Utility Department
				FLU-1.3.2	Ensure that the subdivision of land within the allowable Planning Area will comply with City subdivision and infrastructure requirements, as amended, to address rural and estate development.	Subdivision compliance met	Long	Planning & Zoning; Engineering; Utility Dept; Fire Dept; Police

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		FLU-1.4	Ensure adequate, well-maintained infrastructure, public safety, and public facilities for all development and prevent development ahead of infrastructure and service provision.	FLU-1.4.1	Conduct an assessment of current service boundaries and create regulations to guide the expansion of services.	Needs assessment and regulations created	Mid	Planning & Zoning; Utility Department; Fire Department; Engineering; Police Department; Operations
				FLU-1.4.2	Encourage development near community facilities and services (e.g., schools, recreation centers, health facilities) to fully utilize existing services and limit duplication.	Percent of new development within 1/4 mile of existing community facilities	Mid	Planning & Zoning; Utility Department; Engineering, Chamber, Fort Smith Homebuilders Association
		FLU-1.5	Provide opportunities for mixed-use development to occur in Downtown Fort Smith and identified emerging centers in order to provide access to a variety of uses; promote walkable, pedestrian friendly development; and encourage physical activity.	FLU-1.5.1	Locate mixed-use and commercial development near employment centers and higher density residential centers to provide options for convenience retail and restaurants close to where people live and work.	Percent of new development in targeted growth areas	Mid	Planning & Zoning; Fort Smith CBID; Chamber; Administration
		FLU-1.6	Create opportunities for the mixing of land uses to occur within single buildings and within emerging centers identified in the Preferred Future.	FLU-1.6.1	Develop corridor and area plans that address access management, land use, design, internal parking, and circulation.	Number of plans completed (3 Corridor Typologies Identified in CSS Element)	Long	Planning & Zoning; Engineering; AHTD
				FLU-1.6.2	Publicize new mixed use areas within the development and real estate community.	Percent of new development that incorporates mixing of uses	Long	Planning & Zoning, Fort Smith Homebuilder Association, Fort Smith Board of Realtors; Chamber
FLU-2	Activate Fort Smith's scenic riverfront	FLU-2.1	Encourage a mix of housing, retail, and entertainment attractions along the City's waterfront that support day and nighttime activity and a vibrant urban lifestyle.	FLU-2.1.1	Improve access in an effort to incentivize development in areas along the riverfront.	Increase in number of access points and type of access (bike, ped, transit)	Mid	Fort Smith Residents, Planning & Zoning; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Fort Smith CBID; Engineering
				FLU-2.1.2	Ensure that land development within the river district reflects uses appropriate to the 100-year flood plain and adjacency to the downtown and residential neighborhoods.	Amount of compatible new development	Long	Planning & Zoning; Fort Smith CBID; Engineering; Land Owners

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
				FLU-2.1.3	Incorporate a variety of venues that accommodate the interests of diverse demographic groups to develop an appropriate balance of day and nighttime businesses and activities.	Number of venue types	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Fort Smith CBID; Parks Department
				FLU-2.1.4	Leverage special events to reinvigorate the riverfront district.	Number of special events held in the riverfront district, and the number of residents in attendance	Short	Fort Smith Residents, Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Fort Smith CBID; Parks Department; Advertising and Promotions Commission
				FLU-2.1.5	Collaborate with the Fort Smith Convention and Visitors Bureau, tourism agencies and event organizers to promote the Downtown Riverfront district amenities in a coordinated branding and marketing campaign.	Completion of a coordinated branding and marketing campaign	Short	Fort Smith CBID; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Tourism; Convention Center; Advertising & Promotions Commission
				FLU-2.1.6	Integrate unified design and construction standards that complement Downtown and city design elements, yet provide a symbolic language distinct to the riverfront.	Completion of unified standards	Mid	Planning & Zoning; Fort Smith CBID
		FLU-2.2	Comprehensively plan access and development along Riverfront Drive to reflect passive and active recreation, pedestrian, bicycle, and tourist activities.			Completion of a comprehensive access management plan for Riverfront Drive	Long	Fort Smith CBID; Engineering; Parks
		FLU-2.3	Provide recreation activities and access to the Arkansas River while preserving and protecting the natural environment, watershed, and critical wildlife habitats.	FLU-2.3.1	Consider an adventure park on the riverfront (UAFS Leadership Class concept).	Riverfront activity center feasibility study	Long	Parks & Recreation; UAFS Leadership Class; Fort Smith CBID; Advertising and Promotions Commission
				FLU-2.3.2	Complete planned splash pad area.	Opening of the splash pad	Short	Parks & Recreation; Fort Smith CBID

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
FLU-3	Revitalize downtown into a multi-purpose activity center	FLU-3.1	Increase the number and type of residential opportunities in and around downtown.	FLU-3.1.1	Support rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of buildings for housing and promote infill development of vacant land downtown.	Number of rehabilitated and buildings adaptively reused	Mid	Local Property Owners, Planning & Zoning; Historic District Commission; Fort Smith CBID; Fort Smith Board of Realtors
		FLU-3.2	Improve the accessibility of Downtown.	FLU-3.2.1	Increase public transit access and frequency between Downtown and key destinations and throughout the city.	Decrease in headways	Long	Transit
				FLU-3-2.2	Implement an efficient parking plan that accommodates visitors while not detracting from the character of downtown.	Completion of a parking plan	Mid	Fort Smith CBID; Engineering; Police; Planning and Zoning; Operations
				FLU-3.2.3	Create safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle connections within downtown and riverfront, and between adjacent neighborhoods (bike lanes, trails, and complete sidewalks).	Completion of the Trails and Greenways Masterplan in the Downtown	Mid	Fort Smith CBID; Engineering; Parks; Police; Operations
				FLU-3.2.4	Reduce the impact of "dead zones" caused by vacant properties by installing pedestrian-level lighting, filling empty storefronts, improving empty facades and strategically positioning kiosks and vendors to guide pedestrian flow, increasing "eyes on the street."	Number of dead zones eliminated Downtown	Mid	Local Business Owners; Planning & Zoning; Engineering; Advertising and Promotions Commission; Fort Smith CBID; Parks; Franchise Utilities
		FLU-3.3	Concentrate available resources to retain existing jobs and encourage job creation and population growth in the downtown and riverfront.	FLU-3.3.1	Developing strategies that support existing businesses, and direct economic development actions to Downtown.	Percent of Chamber of Commerce economic development actions focused on the Downtown	Long	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Fort Smith CBID
				FLU-3.3.2	Encourage existing downtown businesses to improve the look of their buildings to be more in line with current code requirements and embrace a more "original" look.	Number of existing buildings that have improved their storefronts	Mid	Planning & Zoning, Local Business Owners, Fort Smith CBID

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		FLU-3.4	Develop and promote niche markets that distinguish the downtown from other retail and entertainment options, and reinforces downtown's position as a destination.	FLU-3.4.1	Promote the Farmer's Market and encourage more participation by providing shade.	Number of visitors to the Farmer's Market	Short	Fort Smith Residents, Local Business Owners, Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Fort Smith CBID; Advertising and Promotion Commission; Parks Department
				FLU-3.4.2	Build Maybranch bike trail for connectivity.	The completion of the Maybranch bike trail	Long	Parks & Recreation; Engineering
		FLU-3.5	Locate future cultural activities, entertainment options, service-oriented businesses, and public, private, or institutional programs in downtown.	FLU-3.5.1	Identify potential key locations for cultural and institutional programs and uses downtown and the riverfront.	Number of new cultural and institutional programs Downtown and in the Riverfront area.	Mid	Fort Smith CBID; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Tourism; Convention Center; Parks; Advertising and Promotion Commission
Economic Development								
ED-1	Broaden employment sectors that will drive the City's economy	ED-1.1	Encourage and support start up companies and small businesses.	ED-1.1.1	Provide regulatory and financial incentives for small businesses (including food trucks, etc).	Number of new small businesses	Mid	Local Business Owners, Local Entrepreneurs, Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Planning and Zoning; Building Safety
				ED-1.1.2	Work with successful local businesses to develop business 'boot camps' for new entrepreneurs.	Successful boot camp program complete	Mid	Local Business Owners, Local Entrepreneurs, Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration
				ED-1.1.3	Expand and promote the small business development center that would connect businesses to SBA grants and programs, like the Microloan Program, facilitate a mentoring program for young entrepreneurs, and provide other business counseling services.	Number of businesses connected to SBA grants and programs	Mid	Local Business Owners, Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; UAFS; ATU
				ED-1.1.4	Support development of a "small business web portal" to streamline the City's permitting and licensing processes.	The completion of the web portal	Mid	Information & Technology; Finance; Planning and Zoning

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
				ED-1.1.5	Promote green building practices to help small businesses save on energy and operating costs.	Number of small businesses participating in energy conservation	Mid	Local Business Owners, Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; UAFS Sustainable Conservation House; Building Safety; Franchise Utilities
		ED-1.2	Support programs and efforts that increase opportunities for growth in medical and higher education sectors.	ED-1.2.1	Identify strategies to retain talent in the medical profession with a focus on underserved areas.	Increase in the number of people employed in the medical sector	Long	College Students, Fort Smith Residents, Medical Industry Partners, Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce;
		ED-1.3	Support business expansion and new business development in sectors identified as experiencing leakage.	ED-1.3.1	Explore market feasibility of an outlet mall.	Completion of a market feasibility study for an Outlet Mall	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration
				ED-1.3.2	Expand shop local campaign and shop local campaign online.	Number of businesses participating in the shop local campaign	Short	Local Business Owners; Fort Smith Residents; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Information & Technology; Administration
		ED-1.4	Capitalize on Fort Smith's strategic position at the crossroads of multiple modes of transportation to increase the city's employment base and regional economic impact.	ED-1.4.1	Attract employers to Fort Smith by advertising the city's proximity to key transportation infrastructure (rail, MCKARNS water way, I-49).	Number of new employers attracted to Fort Smith	Long	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority; RITA; WAPDD; Port Authority
				ED-1.4.2	Partner with trade schools and colleges to prepare the city's workforce for transportation and logistics related jobs.	Number of local graduates from the transportation and logistics sector	Long	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; UAFS; ATU; Fort Smith School District
		ED-1.5	Identify and develop collaborations to fill gaps in the capital market that fund business start-up, retention and expansion.	ED-1.5.1	Evaluate private and public financing entities' ability to provide seed capital for new business ventures.	Evaluation complete	Long	Local Business Owners; Capital Market Representatives; Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
				ED-1.5.2	Explore the feasibility of creating "lending pools" for new business investment.	Completion of a feasibility study	Long	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Local Banks

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
ED-2	Develop a world class workforce by making accessible opportunities for life-long learning	ED-2.1	Leverage research and brainpower of UAFS.	ED-2.1.1	Partner with UAFS to set up a career connection service, internships, and community partnerships that helps all recent graduates (regardless of schooling location) find jobs or internships at local employers.	Creation of a Career Connection Service	Mid	Administration; Fort Smith School District; UAFS; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce;
		ED-2.2	Promote trade schools as an option for job skills training.	ED-2.2.1	Partner with local high schools to promote job skills training programs.	Number of participants in job skills training programs	Mid	Fort Smith School District; Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; UAFS; WATTC
				ED-2.2.2	Work with city employers to set up mentoring/apprenticeship programs for high school students.	Number of students participating in mentorship programs	Mid	Fort Smith School District; Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Local Business Owners; High School Students; UAFS
				ED-2.2.3	Promote the development of job training programs at area colleges.	Number of job training programs at area colleges	Mid	UAFS; College Students; Local Business Owners; Fort Smith Residents
				ED-2.2.4	Expand and promote the linking of local high school curricula with technical and industrial training programs at UAFS.	Curricula link complete	Mid	UAFS; Fort Smith School District; High School Students; College Students
		ED-2.3	Focus on increasing student performance.	ED-2.3.1	Support programs in existing public and private schools to increase student performance and consider all opportunities to improve educational outcomes for all students.	Improved student performance	Long	Fort Smith Students; Fort Smith School District; Fort Smith Residents; Administration
				ED-2.3.2	Capitalize on the existing dual enrollment program for high school students to prepare students for college and/or careers.	Number of students participating in dual enrollment programs	Mid	Fort Smith Students; Fort Smith School District; Local Business Owners; UAFS; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
		ED-2.4	Help prepare children to perform at higher levels by ensuring access to high-quality early childhood education.	ED-2.4.1	Link local businesses, employers, and institutions to provide early childhood education, child care, and after school programs.	Number of children enrolled in early childhood education	Short	Western Arkansas Technical Center (UAFS Early Childhood Education Program); Local Business Owners; Fort Smith Residents; Early Education Providers

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		ED-2.5	Nurture the next generation of leaders.	ED-2.5.1	Create a youth leadership training program.	Number of youth participating in a leadership program	Mid	Fort Smith Youth; Fort Smith Residents; Local Business Leaders; Administration; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Local Teachers
				ED-2.5.2	Encourage local businesses to create a fund to expand teacher training for STEM.	Amount STEM training funds provided to teachers	Long	Local Business Owners; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Fort Smith Residents; Fort Smith School District; Local Teachers
		ED-2.6	Focus on retention of students in the area.	ED-2.6.1	Focus on building stronger ties between UAFS and local employers to help graduates, particularly non-natives, learn about local job opportunities and form networks in the city and region.	Number of UAFS graduates who stay to work in Fort Smith	Long	UAFS; College Students; Local Business Owners; Fort Smith Residents
				ED-2.6.2	Encourage UAFS and employers to expand the use of internship and cooperative learning opportunities.	Number of students participating in internship and cooperative learning	Long	UAFS; College Students; Local Business Owners; Fort Smith Residents
				ED-2.6.3	Research the potential of workforce or business tax credits, which are designed to attract and retain recent college graduates (from any degree or from specific ones).	Completion of a Workforce and Business Tax Credit Analysis	Mid	Administration; UAFS; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Local Business Owners
				ED-2.6.4	Consider creating a "Stay Work Play" promotional program in collaboration with UAFS and other institutions, to market to graduating students the city's job opportunities, affordable cost of living, unique neighborhoods and lifestyle options.	Implementation of a retention program	Mid	Administration; UAFS; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Local Business Owners
ED-3	Grow the employment base and retain existing employment anchors	ED-3.1	Retain Fort Smith's traditional manufacturing base, while encouraging growth in technology and knowledge based areas.	ED-3.1.1	Work with regional agencies to boost higher paying jobs and increase number of jobs.	Number of new high wage jobs	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Local Business Owners

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
				ED-3.1.2	Partner with job skills training programs to ensure that the city's workforce is trained.	Number of trained residents in the workforce	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Local Business Owners; Job Skills Training Providers
				ED-3.1.3	Attract new employers through incentives (tax abatements and public infrastructure, etc).	Number of new employers attracted to Fort Smith	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; State of Arkansas Economic Development Commission
				ED-3.1.4	Consider implementing a city-wide fiber optic network.	Completion of a feasibility study	Long	Administration; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Local Residents; Information and Technology
				ED-3.1.5	Promote the development of technology centers for youth to build technology knowledge/ skills (particularly in underserved neighborhoods).	Opening of technology centers in underserved neighborhoods	Long	Local Business Owners; UAFS; Fort Smith School District
				ED-3.1.6	Create an "Innovation District," by forging partnerships, identifying potential locations such as underutilized industrial land, considering necessary infrastructure improvements (particularly transit access and wire-readiness), and reviewing potential regulatory amendments to facilitate.	Creation of an Innovation District	Long	Administration; Planning and Zoning Department; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Local Residents; Transit; UAFS; Engineering; Utility Department
ED-4	Develop a partnership to coordinate City economic development policies with the Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce	ED-4.1	Ensure that planning processes reflect how businesses plan for future expansion/ growth	ED-4.1.1	Establish a framework to keep the business community fully engaged in the city's ongoing planning and budgeting efforts, maintain an open and consistent dialogue to equip businesses with the information they need to plan for future growth and expansion.	Number of representatives of local businesses participating in the City's planning and budgeting	Short	Administration; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Local Business Owners; Finance; All departments;

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		ED-4.2	Support all economic efforts operating under a well-coordinated organizational structure led by the Chamber of Commerce.	ED-4.2.1	Establish economic development incentive policies that measure the performance of City investments with a cost/benefit analysis of the long-term economic and quality-of-life benefits to the region.	Creation of a cost/benefit analysis	Short	Administration; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Local Business Owners; Finance; Internal Auditor
				ED-4.2.2	Support Chamber and AEDC in their efforts to increase jobs in the area.	Number of new jobs created in Fort Smith	Long	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Arkansas Economic Development Commission; Administration; Local Business Owners
ED-5	Diversify the local economic base and strengthen and stabilize the tax base to maintain viability during fluctuating economic cycles	ED-5.1	Identify industries which are growing in the region (and nationally) for which Fort Smith might provide a good fit.	ED-5.1.1	Conduct target industry analyses to determine existing and future industry concentrations and potential market segments for future retention and recruitment efforts.	Completion of a target industry analysis	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Local Business Owners
		ED-5.2	Encourage a full-service array of retail and service opportunities, thus limiting the necessity by residents and employees to leave the community to purchase goods and services (i.e. leakage).	ED-5.2.1	Periodically monitor the retail expenditures from Fort Smith and identify categories for which leakage can be reversed.	Leakage analysis updated	Short	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Local Business Owners; Finance
				ED-5.2.2	Work with the Chamber of Commerce to tailor retail economic development efforts to attract retailers who can complement, rather than compete with, Fort Smith's existing retail base.	Number of new retailers providing new goods or services	Short	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Local Business Owners
ED-6	Create a quality working environment that fosters an attractive sense of place	ED-6.1	Ensure that economic development objectives are included in the evaluation of all future City infrastructure projects, including parks and recreation facilities.	ED-6.1.1	Invest in beautification of major transportation corridors; the provision of trails, open lands, and public gathering spaces; innovative architectural and site design; and alternative transportation choices to all business areas.	Percent increase in funding for beautification in the targeted growth areas	Mid	Administration; Planning and Zoning Department; Parks & Recreation; Engineering; Transit; Sanitation; Beautify Fort Smith

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		ED-6.2	Promote higher density mixed-use development in order to create vibrant live-work-play activity centers in key commercial corridors.	ED-6.2.1	Identify strategic locations (vacant land, publicly owned, etc) for mixed-use development along key corridors.	Number of vacant sites identified for mixed-use development along key corridors	Mid	Planning and Zoning Department; Administration; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
ED-7	Ensure that a broad range of housing alternatives are available for employers and employees	ED-7.1	Promote a comprehensive incentive program that fosters investment and reinvestment in Fort Smith's housing stock.			Completion of incentive program	Mid	Planning & Zoning; Administration; Fort Smith Homebuilder Association; Fort Smith Board of Realtors
		ED-7.2	Encourage the development of housing product types which help to diversify Fort Smith's existing housing stock.			Increase in the overall diversity of housing available in Fort Smith	Long	Planning & Zoning; Administration; Fort Smith Homebuilder Association; Fort Smith Board of Realtors
ED-8	Aggressively encourage new development and redevelopment in targeted growth centers and make strategic public investments to leverage private investment and reinvestment in residential, commercial and mixed-use developments	ED-8.1	Focus economic development efforts at strategic locations within the City's identified growth centers.			Number of economic development initiatives that focus on targeted growth areas	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Local Business Owners
		ED-8.2	Prepare detailed marketing materials which describe and quantify opportunities for new development/ redevelopment within these areas.			Completion and distribution of marketing materials	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Local Property Owners
		ED-8.3	Identify sources of financial gaps for financing new projects and renovations (both debt and equity) and then fill those gaps with a variety of financial incentives.	ED-8.3.1	Consider the use of a wide variety of financial incentives to encourage private investment and help to offset the economic "gaps" for new projects.	Completion of gap analysis	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Local Property Owners

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		ED-8.4	Create and implement an Economic Development Strategy that provides key stakeholders with a common action plan.			Completion of the Economic Development Strategy	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Local Business Owners
Housing & Neighborhoods								
HN-1	Preserve, protect, and revitalize Fort Smith's neighborhoods	HN-1.1	Improve and encourage maintenance of structures, prevent vagrancy, structural damage, theft, and fire hazards.	HN-1.1.1	Provide education,and programs for structural maintenance, particularly in identified growth centers.	Decreases in maintenance-related code violations in targeted growth centers	Short	Neighborhood Services, Volunteers, CDBG
		HN-1.2	Limit high costs associated with building new infrastructure.	HN-1.2.1	Use a cost/benefit analysis to guide decisions when conducting development approvals.	Number of development approvals that include a cost benefit analysis related to infrastructure	Mid	All departments
				HN-1.2.2	Encourage redevelopment and infill development in identified growth centers.	Percent new building permits in identified growth centers	Mid	Planning & Zoning; Fort Smith CBID; Engineering; Utility Department; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Fort Smith Board of Realtors; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association
		HN-1.3	Promote private investment in identified growth centers.	HN-1.3.1	Seek out investors for the North side of the City (Midland/Towson) to reduce blight and increase market potential.	Number of new investors in targeted growth centers	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Local Business Owners; Fort Smith Board of Realtors; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association
		HN-1.4	Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings.	HN-1.4.1	Encourage revitalization of the Belle Grove Historic District and downtown historic buildings.		Short	Belle Grove Historic District; Administration; Planning & Zoning; Fort Smith CBID
				HN-1.4.2	Promote existing tax credits for restorations in historic areas.	Number of restorations in historic areas	Long	Planning & Zoning; Administration; Historic District Commission; Fort Smith CBID; Fort Smith Board of Realtors
		HN-1.5	Prevent long-term vacancy by ensuring continuous use of buildings and quick transitions between uses.	HN-1.5.1	Develop a "greyfield" plan that would provide guidance on replacing businesses that vacate a building.	Decrease in the number of empty buildings	Short	Planning & Zoning

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
				HN-1.5.2	Promote redevelopment of underutilized and/or abandoned land and facilities through public/private underwriting.	Decrease in the number of vacant/abandoned lots in the targeted growth area	Long	Planning & Zoning; Fort Smith Board of Realtors; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
				HN-1.5.3	Evaluate rezoning requests based on other available land within that zoning classification.	Number of rezoning requests that determined availability of land within the zoning category	Long	Planning & Zoning; ITS; GIS
		HN-1.6	Improve public participation in the revitalization process of Fort Smith neighborhoods.	HN-1.6.1	Encourage neighborhood associations and other organizations that will work in conjunction with schools, churches, and other organizations.	Number of residents participating in revitalization efforts	Short	Fort Smith Residents; Neighborhood Associations; Planning & Zoning
		HN-1.7	Provide convenient, safe connections between neighborhoods and important destinations, such as downtown, employment centers, schools, parks, shopping areas, and neighborhood services.	HN-1.7.1	As appropriate based on long term growth forecasts, require new subdivisions to develop through public streets and tie in with existing or proposed bikeways and sidewalks to promote connectivity.	Percent of through-streets in new development within the targeted growth areas	Long	Planning & Zoning; Engineering; Parks and Recreation
		HN1-8	Reduce non-compatible land uses by mitigating any negative impacts and revising zoning language and map designations as necessary.	HN-1.8.1	Continue to rezone existing, predominantly, single-family residential neighborhoods where the historic zoning pattern does not reflect the predominant built pattern with a priority to focus on targeted growth areas and areas where stability and character are threatened.	Increase (percent or acreage) in the amount of land zoned consistently with the predominant land use.	Mid	Planning & Zoning
HN-2	Encourage a diverse range of housing options	HN-2.1	Plan for and accommodate senior housing and other special needs populations as well as housing choices for young adults and families.	HN-2.1.1	Locate diverse housing opportunities accessible to shopping, parks, recreation centers, schools, medical care, and public transit.	Number of new housing units developed in the targeted growth areas	Long	Planning & Zoning; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association; Fort Smith Board of Realtors; Transit

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		HN-2.2	Maintain housing opportunities in urban areas.	HN-2.2.1	Support the renovation and revitalization of existing housing and promote infill development of vacant land within the corporate limits.	Decrease in the amount of vacant and abandoned property in the targeted growth areas	Long	All departments; Housing Authority; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association; Fort Smith Board of Realtors
		HN-2.3	Promote the development of a mix of housing types, including single family detached, single family attached, accessory apartments, and multi-family units.	HN-2.3.1	Review and revise regulations that create unintended impediments to new or innovative types of desirable housing.	Review potential options and make recommendation	Mid	All departments
		HN-2.4	Preserve and increase the supply of safe, stable, and affordable supportive housing opportunities for homeless individuals and families.	HN-2.4.1	Continue to support, in accordance with the recommendations made by the Homelessness Task Force and adopted by the City Board, the creation and implementation of the campus concept to consolidate existing homeless and social services south of Garrison Avenue.	Opening of the campus	Short	Administration; Housing Authority; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association; Old Fort Homeless Coalition; CDBG
HN-3	Foster regional housing strategies to benefit Fort Smith and surrounding communities	HN-3.1	Provide leadership in addressing housing as a regional issue.	HN-3.1.1	Work closely with appropriate agencies or entities involved in regional housing initiatives.	Number of partnerships on regional housing initiatives	Mid	Administration; Housing Authority; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association; Fort Smith Board of Realtors; CDBG
				HN-3.1.2	Work with communities in the region who have targeted housing programs to develop common program guidelines and program requirements to create administrative efficiency.	Creation of a set of common program guidelines	Mid	Administration; Housing Authority; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association; CDBG; CSCDC; Fort Smith Board of Realtors; Regional Communities
		HN-3.2	Utilize the City's zoning and subdivision regulations to promote the construction of a variety of housing sizes and types.			Number of new housing types developed in the targeted growth areas	Long	All departments; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association; Fort Smith Board of Realtors
		HN-3.3	Encourage a variety of housing close to downtown and emerging centers.	HN-3.3.1	Explore public/private partnerships and financial incentives that could be made available to support the efforts of housing developers.	Number of new partnerships or financial incentives	Mid	Planning & Zoning; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association; CDBG; Fort Smith Board of Realtors; Fort Smith CBID

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
HN-4	Identify potential redevelopment areas/ sites that could provide a mix of housing and other uses	HN-4.1	Evaluate potential areas within the City for redevelopment.	HN-4.1.1	Establish criteria for redevelopment potential (e.g., property value, availability of infrastructure, utilization, tax base, etc.).	Creation of the criteria	Short	All departments; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
		HN-4.2	Explore potential partnerships with non-profit and private sector developers to redevelop sites for mixed-use.			Number of new partnerships	Mid	All departments; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Fort Smith Board of Realtors
		HN-4.3	Identify incentives that would be appropriate to encourage the redevelopment of key sites.			Incentives identified	Mid	All departments; Fort Smith Homebuilders Association; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Fort Smith Board of Realtors
Community Character & Design								
CCD-1	Improve the function and aesthetics of key corridors and centers in Fort Smith	CCD-1.1	Support beautification efforts along key corridors, at gateways, and in growth centers identified in the Preferred Future.	CCD-1.1.1	Ensure "Beautify Fort Smith" is moving forward and gaining momentum.	Number of landscaping projects and percent increase in tree canopy	Short	Sanitation; Parks & Recreation
				CCD-1.1.2	Develop a plan to move, relocate, consolidate, or bury utility lines on major roads.	Utility line strategy adopted	Long	Engineering; Administration; Franchise Utilities
				CCD-1.1.3	Develop new focal points and reinforce the character of gateways into Fort Smith by making them more attractive with new signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.	Projects completed at focal points and key gateways in the targeted growth areas	Long	Planning & Zoning; Engineering; Parks and Recreation; Beautify Fort Smith; Sanitation
				CCD-1.1.4	Update and improve the look and lighting of the Garrison Avenue bridge (and other key gateways) including LED lights, improved fixtures, etc.	Lighting improvements completed	Mid	Fort Smith CBID; AHTD; Operations; Army Corp of Engineers;
				CCD-1.1.5	Encourage the State to improve upkeep and mowing grass areas on I-540.	Maintenance quality improvements	Mid	Administration; AHTD;
				CCD-1.1.6	Standardize and improve sign ordinance to reduce visual clutter.	Updated sign ordinance	Mid	Planning & Zoning

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
				CCD-1.1.7	Consider extending Grand Avenue from 10th Street to the riverfront to create a Grand Entrance to the Riverfront and Downtown.	Grand Avenue Extension feasibility study completed	Long	Engineering; Fort Smith CBID; Administration
				CCD-1.1.8	Analyze the impact of decreasing the threshold that requires property owners to incorporate landscape and design improvements.	Threshold decrease impact analysis complete	Short	Planning & Zoning
		CCD-1.2	Integrate existing commercial activities within residential neighborhoods.	CCD-1.2.1	Enforce quality urban design, and prohibit further industrial uses in neighborhoods.	Number of new developments in the targeted growth area that meet compatibility thresholds	Long	Planning & Zoning
CCD-2	Increase local community identity within the City	CCD-2.1	Support efforts within the city to increase citywide awareness of local neighborhood character, culture and history.	CCD-2.1.1	Work with neighborhood groups to develop brands for areas/neighborhoods of the City to increase community identity.	Number of new neighborhood identities created	Mid	Fort Smith Residents, Local Neighborhood Associations; Planning & Zoning
				CCD-2.1.2	Develop a "Downtown Square" as a park/open space where the city could hold a farmer's market, festivals, art walks, shops, and food trucks.	Development of a Downtown Square	Long	Administration; Parks and Recreation; Fort Smith CBID
		CCD-2.2	Encourage volunteerism to boost a sense of community in Fort Smith.	CCD-2.2.1	Create a clearinghouse of volunteer opportunities linking faith-based organizations and local social service institutions and charitable organizations.	Clearinghouse created	Mid	Administration; Community Foundation
CCD-3	Project a positive image for the City of Fort Smith	CCD-3.1	Promote the identity of the City throughout the region, and nationally.	CCD-3.1.1	Improve the City's approach to public relations to promote what there is to do in Fort Smith.	Number of tourists Percent increase in event attendance Citizen feedback Percent growth in population	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Administration; Advertising and Promotions Commission
				CCD-3.1.2	Consider creation of a publicly generated slogan to improve how citizens think of their city.	Completion of a rebranding campaign	Mid	Administration

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Transportation & Infrastructure								
TI-1	Improve access and connectivity through enhancements to all modes of transportation	TI-1.1	Promote better connections between downtown, the riverfront, historic sites, and the Belle Grove Historic District, particularly from I-40 to 540.	TI-1.1.1	Improve the availability of parking in downtown Fort Smith.	Improved parking availability	Mid	Planning & Zoning; Fort Smith CBID; Administration; Engineering
				TI-1.1.2	Create an I-540 Downtown/Riverfront Loop that would offer direct access to the riverfront and downtown area from Kelley Highway and Grand Avenue.	Increased access to the riverfront from Kelley Highway and Grand Avenue	Mid	Fort Smith CBID; Engineering; Operations
		TI-1.2	Make major destinations highly accessible by all modes of transportation.	TI-1.2.1	Design and adopt an all-mode circulation plan for major centers identified in the Preferred Future.	All mode circulation plans completed for all centers	Long	Fort Smith CBID; Operations; Engineering; Transit; Parks and Recreation
		TI-1.3	Address improvements to the existing street network by first optimizing access and circulation through better design and utilization of existing rights-of-way, in cooperation with property owners.	TI-1.3.1	Evaluate ways to improve access to the Riverfront.	Increase in the number of and type of access points to the Riverfront	Mid	Engineering; Parks and Recreation
		TI-1.4	Protect residential neighborhoods from excessive through traffic.	TI-1.4.1	Consider traffic calming techniques (roadway narrowing, chicanes, bump-out curbs, raised intersections, etc) in residential neighborhoods impacted by through-traffic.	Number of traffic calming efforts implemented in residential neighborhoods	Short	Engineering; Operations; EMS; Fire; Police
				TI-1.4.2	Improve connectivity throughout the City's roadway network to increase access and eliminate high volumes of traffic in residential thoroughfares. - Identify the major destination areas in town - Evaluate how cars travel from major roads to the destination areas - Improve these access routes to minimize travel through neighborhoods.	Number of intersections per acre	Long	Engineering; Operations

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		TI-1.5	Improve traffic flow and integrate safe pedestrian and bicycle travel into the transportation network, particularly at key intersections of high commercial and employment activity.	TI-1.5.1	Identify problematic roadways that create a hazardous environment for pedestrians and infill sidewalks where gaps exist in the network.	Reduction in the number of pedestrian-related accidents on roadways	Mid	Engineering; Police; Operations; Parks
		TI-1.6	Improve physical connections between and within neighborhoods through road extensions or improvements, bicycle lanes and trails, and a connected sidewalk network.	TI-1.6.1	Identify and designate key pedestrian and bicycle routes for improvements to neighborhood connectivity and walkability, including access to service areas.	Identification and designation of key routes	Mid	Parks & Recreation; Engineering; Operations
		TI-1.7	Reduce traffic congestion and improve emergency circulation by redesigning major corridors to include safe walking, biking, transit, and driving options and incorporating those elements into initial design concepts through final design documents.	TI-1.7.1	Utilize a "Complete Streets" approach to ensure that all new projects are planned and designed to meet the needs of every community member, regardless of their age, ability, or how they travel.	Adoption of a Complete Streets Policy	Mid	Planning & Zoning; Parks & Recreation; Engineering; Operations; Transit
TI-2	Capitalize on Fort Smith's Location	TI-2.1	Ensure that business and industry have sufficient transportation infrastructure to support freight operations and business communications, including rail, air, highways, telecommunications, and pipelines.	TI-2.1.1	Speed up work plan / completion of I-49 from Highway 22 to I-40 in collaboration with other communities and regions.	Completion of I-49	Long	Administration; Regional Council; MPO
				TI-2.1.2	Focus efforts on increasing the river channel's depth from nine feet to twelve feet to increase the capacity of the Kerr-McClellan Arkansas River Navigation System (MCKARNS) Waterway Route.	Percent increase in freight capacity	Long	Administration; RITA
				TI-2.1.3	Relocate the train switch station from downtown.	Relocation of the Train Switch	Long	Administration; Fort Smith CBID
				TI-2.1.4	Improve vehicular access to the riverfront.	Increased number of access points to the riverfront	Mid	Fort Smith CBID; Engineering; Operations

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		TI-2.2	Provide convenient, reliable connections between industrial zones and regional highways to facilitate truck traffic that also minimize noise and traffic conflicts with other uses.	TI-2.2.1	Plan for development along the I-49 corridor to accommodate freight transportation and growth.	Growth in freight transportation industry jobs	Long	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Engineering; Planning & Zoning;
				TI-2.2.2	Reroute truck traffic from key streets targeted for streetscape and pedestrian improvements (Garrison Avenue, A Street, B Street, and Riverfront Drive) to I-540 and other highways to reduce truck traffic downtown and on the riverfront.	Reduction in the number of trucks on key streets targeted for pedestrian improvements	Long	Engineering; Police; Fort Smith CBID
				TI-2.2.3	Update the Truck Route street plan in accordance with the Preferred Future.	Completion of the truck route street plan update	Long	Engineering; Police; Fort Smith CBID
		TI-2.3	Remain committed to supporting the air travel industry so that passenger service continues for the foreseeable future by enhancing the air transportation system at the Fort Smith Regional Airport, while protecting the public from airport related noise and safety hazards.				Long	Administration; Fort Smith Regional Airport;
		TI-2.4	Fully support the railroad industry and encourage growth through the City and the region.				Long	Administration; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
		TI-2.5	Fully support the continued improvements to the Port of Fort Smith.					
		TI-2.6	Support the development of the Van Buren Regional Intermodal Facility.				Long	Administration; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Port Authority; RITA
		TI-2.7	Continue to balance water and port activities with environmental improvements in full cooperation with the Corps of Engineers.				Long	Administration; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Port Authority; Army Corps of Engineers; RITA

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
TI-3	Provide and enhance non-vehicular access for residents	TI-3.1	Review and encourage implementation of existing bike and greenway plan that will interconnect neighborhoods and provide access to both neighborhood and city-wide destinations.				Mid	Parks & Recreation; Engineering
		TI-3.2	Support pedestrian access throughout the city, with a focus on attractive, safe, and contiguous sidewalk connections between destinations.	TI-3.2.1	Continue infill sidewalk program to safely connect schools, residential areas, and commercial district.	Number of new sidewalks in the targeted growth areas	Long	Engineering; Operations
		TI-3.3	Connect new development through bike and pedestrian paths to provide a variety of options for traveling, including walking, biking, transit, and vehicle travel.	TI-3.3.1	Develop a local Complete Streets policy that prioritizes improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists on key corridors (i.e. Garrison Avenue).	Adoption of a Complete Streets Policy	Mid	Engineering; Parks & Recreation; Operations
TI-4	Improve public transportation	TI-4.1	Market public transportation in Fort Smith.			Increase in ridership	Short	Transit Department; Transit Advisory Commission; Administration
		TI-4.2	Promote and maintain a public transit system that is safe, efficient, cost-effective and responsive to the needs of residents.	TI-4.2.1	Expand fixed-route system to ensure access to a majority of shopping/service areas.	Increase in ridership	Mid	Transit Department; Transit Advisory Commission; Administration
TI-5	Incorporate the Future Land Use Map in the strategic planning of future utility and infrastructure expansions	TI-5.1	Continue to ensure that customers within Fort Smith have access to reliable water, sewer, drainage, solid waste services by reducing or eliminating deficiencies and gaps in infrastructure systems.	TI-5.1.1	Implement an infrastructure Asset Management Program as a tool for management of the utility department's water and sewer systems and to track, manage, and schedule necessary facility upgrades and improvements.	Completion of the infrastructure asset management program	Mid	Administration; Utility Department; Engineering; Operations; Sanitation; Parks and Recreation; Finance
		TI-5.2	Ensure that utility and infrastructure systems can meet the city's long-term needs.	TI-5.2.1	Coordinate land use planning and capital programming to ensure infrastructure improvements and extensions are phased to support the future land use pattern.	Capital programming that references the Comprehensive Plan	Mid	Administration; Department Heads
				TI-5.2.2	Maintain updated infrastructure master plans.	Infrastructure Master Plan maintained	Mid	Engineering; Operations; Utility Department; Parks & Recreation

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
				TI-5.2.3	Regularly review Level or Service (LOS) standards for infrastructure systems.	LOS standards reviewed and updated	Mid	Engineering; Parks & Recreation; Operations
				TI-5.2.4	Adopt criteria for prioritizing funding to infrastructure-related capital improvement projects.	Criteria adopted	Mid	Parks & Recreation; Utility Department; Engineering; Operations
				TI-5.2.5	Use the future land use framework to identify opportunities to expand the city's green infrastructure and open space network to increase the city's ability to manage stormwater and limit the need for additional grey infrastructure.	Number of green infrastructure-related improvements in the targeted growth areas	Mid	Parks & Recreation; Utility Department; Engineering
Public Facilities & Services								
PFS-1	Promote a business-friendly and citizen-friendly government	PFS-1.1	Maintain fair and transparent codes and regulations.	PFS-1.1.1	Work with groups in authority (Chamber, City Board, CBID, Chaffee Crossing, County, etc) to improve communication and coordination.	Number of leaders participating in city forums	Short	Fort Smith Residents; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; Chaffee Crossing Redevelopment Authority; Administration; Department Heads
				PFS-1.1.2	Revise development regulations to improve user friendliness (e.g., create an interactive on-line code).	Revised code	Mid	Planning & Zoning; ITS; All departments
		PFS-1.2	Monitor the City's return on investment by measuring municipal expenditures against property and sales tax revenues.	PFS-1.2.1	Identify opportunities to reduce the City's cost burden by establishing public/private partnerships on significant revitalization projects.	Number of public private partnerships	Mid	Administration
PFS-2	Build consistency and trust with the public	PFS-2.1	Ensure that the City's planning and implementation process is transparent.			Transparency maintained	Short	All departments

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		PFS-2.2	Maintain a clear line of communication between the City, the business community, and residents that establishes expectations and allows the progress of the City's commitments to be measured and evaluated.	PFS-2.2.1	Set up ongoing communication with other groups in the City (CBID, School Board, Chaffee Crossing, Planning Commission, CEO Group, Chamber, etc) to ensure that all organizations maintain consistent goals and objectives with each group focusing on the responsibilities best suited for them.	Communication framework established	Short	All departments; All Boards and Commissions
		PFS-2.3	Promote public awareness and participation by holding open Town Hall events modeled after the Future Fort Smith Community Forums.			Number of Community Forum Series events	Short	Fort Smith Residents; Local Business Owners; Administration;
PFS-3	Promote civic identity and pride	PFS-3.1	Capitalize on the City's municipal presence Downtown.	PFS-3.1.1	Build support for a City Hall building.	Increase in support	Long	Fort Smith Residents; Local Business Owners; Administration; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
		PFS-3.2	Develop community pride by promoting a culture of inclusion and consideration of positive change.	PFS-3.2.1	Promote existing community service efforts and identify partnership opportunities to expand regularly scheduled community service days.	Increase in the number of community service days	Short	Fort Smith Residents; Local Business Owners; Administration
				PFS-3.2.2	Identify Comprehensive Plan elements (goals, policies, and actions) that will require citizen support to accomplish, and continue to communicate the importance of resident input and participation in monitoring the progress and ongoing updates to the plan.	"What can I do" identified for each plan element and residents identified as responsible party	Short	Administration; Planning & Zoning; All Boards and Commissions
PFS-4	Prevent wasteful use of public resources and services	PFS-4.1	Seek opportunities to co-locate future community facilities to maximize efficiencies in service provision and reduce capital and operating costs.			Number of future facilities co-located	Long	All departments; Administration; Board of Directors

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		PFS-4.2	Provide new facilities in a manner that protects investments in existing facilities and promotes orderly growth.	PFS-4.2.1	Evaluate existing water conservation policies and goals for residential, commercial, and industrial uses to identify opportunities for additional reductions.	Evaluation complete	Mid	Parks & Recreation; Utility Department; UAFS
PFS-5	Improve the health and well-being of Fort Smith residents	PFS-5.1	Increase access to healthcare, reduce preventable disease, and educate the community about leading a healthy lifestyle.	PFS-5.1.1	Encourage local employers to adopt wellness programs (e.g., sponsor health cooking demonstrations, complementary gym memberships, etc).	Number of wellness programs adopted	Mid	Local Employers; Administration; Healthcare Providers; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
				PFS-5.1.2	Develop a healthy living campaign and create marketing materials that communicate the benefits of active living, recreation, and healthy foods.	Healthy Living Campaign launched	Mid	Local Employers; Administration; Healthcare Providers; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
				PFS-5.1.3	Promote use of existing and future trail systems for exercise as part of a healthy living campaign.	Increase in number of users of the trail system	Mid	Parks & Recreation; Fort Smith Residents
Natural & Cultural Resources								
NCR-1	Expand city parkland and recreational programming to reflect or exceed national standards	NCR-1.1	Increase the amount of open space and opportunities for recreation throughout the City by supporting the dedication of land and resources for the creation of parks and open space.	NCR-1.1.1	Establish green space requirements for new development.	New requirements established	Mid	Parks & Recreation, Planning & Zoning
				NCR-1.1.2	Incorporate regional park planning in ETJ plan.	Park planning completed	Long	Parks & Recreation; Planning & Zoning
		NCR-1.2	Promote and establish regional support for Fort Smith Parks and Recreation through agreements, user fees, programs, and grant applications with counties and neighboring towns.	NCR-1.2.1	Form regional and corporate partnerships for regional sports facilities.	Regional partnership formed	Mid	Parks & Recreation
		NCR-1.3	Develop neighborhood parks amenities within walking distance to residents.			Residents within 10-minute walk of a park	Long	Parks & Recreation; Planning & Zoning

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		NCR-1.4	Develop greenways and trails that serve to connect the City.	NCR-1.4.1	Focus on completing the river trail development to enhance the City's downtown and riverfront economic development efforts.	River Trail completed	Long	Parks & Recreation; Engineering; Fort Smith CBID
				NCR-1.4.2	Implement the City's greenway plan.	Greenway Plan completed	Long	Parks & Recreation; Planning & Zoning
		NCR-1.5	Plan recreation facility land, space, and programming needs with other service providers in order to meet community needs and national standards.			National standards met	Long	Parks & Recreation
		NCR-1.6	Encourage multi-use public spaces that can function in a variety of ways to serve the recreation needs of the surrounding neighborhoods (e.g., park space, community events, etc).	NCR-1.6.1	Partner with local schools and athletic associations for joint use of recreational fields and facilities.	Number of multi-use public spaces	Long	Parks & Recreation; Fort Smith School District; UAFS; Sebastian County
NCR-2	Protect natural resources and reduce their waste and overuse	NCR-2.1	Develop and manage watershed programs to minimize pollution from stormwater runoff and other sources.	NCR-2.1.1	Utilize "Green Infrastructure," a network of open space and natural areas that connect the natural and built environments and provide multiple benefits for people and ecosystems, wherever possible to increase the City's ability to manage stormwater.	Number of green infrastructure-related improvements in the targeted growth areas	Mid	Engineering; Operations; Parks & Recreation; Utility Department
		NCR-2.2	Preserve wildlife habitats.			Amount of wildlife habitat preserved	Long	Parks & Recreation; Army Corps of Engineers
		NCR-2.3	Improve air quality.	NCR-2.3.1	Encourage responsible industry practices and reduce other mobile sources of air pollution.	Reduction in air pollution	Long	Sanitation; Planning & Zoning; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
				NCR-2.3.2	Minimize growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the City grows through a variety of locational and programmatic measures.	Identify a baseline for the City's existing VMT and establish a goal consistent with projected growth that results in a reduction of per capita VMT	Short	All departments with vehicles

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		NCR-2.4	Enhance and promote Fort Smith's recycling and reuse programs.	NCR-2.4.1	Establish and publicize city recycling goals for household hazardous waste, and business, industry, government, and residential regular programs.	Recycling goals established and met by residents	Mid	Fort Smith Residents; Local Business Owners; Sanitation;
		NCR-2.5	Implement programs to enhance landscaping and tree conservation.			Initiation of a landscape conservation program	Mid	Fort Smith Residents; Local Business Owners; Parks & Recreation; Planning & Zoning; Beautify Fort Smith
		NCR-2.6	Reduce stormwater runoff and flooding.	NCR-2.6.1	Support green infrastructure improvements and enhanced green space.	Number of green infrastructure-related improvements in the targeted growth areas	Mid	Planning & Zoning; Parks & Recreation; Utility Department; Engineering; Operations
		NCR-2.7	Avoid development in flood-prone areas to increase resiliency to storms and maintain sensitive environmental features.	NCR-2.7.1	Establish a comprehensive development and building permit review checklist that addresses environmental concerns.	Checklist created	Short	Planning & Zoning; Engineering
NCR-3	Retain the historic heritage and cultural identity of Fort Smith	NCR-3.1	Protect neighborhoods that are culturally or historically significant.	NCR-3.1.1	Ensure that regulations preserve existing historic districts.	Review potential conflicts and make recommendation	Short	Planning & Zoning, Belle Grove Historic District; Fort Smith CBID; Neighborhoods
		NCR-3.2	Promote historically significant landmarks and cultural assets	NCR-3.2.1	Develop partnerships with local museums (U.S. Marshals Museum, the Fort Smith Museum of History, etc).	Partnerships created	Mid	Planning & Zoning, Belle Grove Historic District; Museum Representatives
		NCR-3.3	Support festivals and special events that highlight what makes Fort Smith unique.			Number of festivals and special events unique to Fort Smith	Short	Fort Smith Residents; Community Leaders; Local Businesses; Convention Center; Tourism; Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce
		NCR-3.4	Increase public awareness, education, and knowledge of the historic district and historic architecture throughout the City.			Number of visitors to the city's historic sites	Mid	Fort Smith Residents; Advertising and Promotions Commission; Tourism; Planning & Zoning; Fort Smith CBID; Belle Grove Historic District
		NCR-3.5	Preserve and protect Fort Smith's historic and architectural resources.			Number of visitors to the city's historic sites	Mid	Fort Smith Residents; Planning & Zoning, Belle Grove Historic District; Fort Smith CBID;

GOAL		POLICY		ACTION		METRIC	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
		NCR-3.6	Encourage the inclusion of public art and plazas with new public facilities and major private development.			Number of new public art installations	Long	Local Artists; RAM; Administration; Parks and Recreation
		NCR-3.7	Enlist the vision and support of the arts community and seek partnerships with UAFS, the convention center, and other interest groups to advance opportunities for museums and visual and performing arts within the region.	NCR-3.7.1	Identify partnerships and potential locations to establish an interactive children's museum.	Feasibility study for museum completed	Mid	Greater Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce; UAFS; Convention Center; Advertising and Promotions Commission
NCR-4	Expand the role of parks and open space in the promotion of healthy communities	NCR-4.1	Increase the use of parks, open space, and recreational programming to improve the health of Fort Smith residents.	NCR-4.1.1	Partner with the Fort Smith School District and independent schools to increase educational programming and recreation in parks and open spaces throughout the City.	Number of new educational and recreation programs in parks and open spaces	Mid	Fort Smith School District; Local Schools; Parks & Recreation; Fort Smith Youth; UAFS
				NCR-4.1.2	Develop a marketing campaign to communicate the value of active recreation in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.	Marketing campaign complete	Mid	Parks & Recreation; Administration