




## **Fort Smith Police Department**

Danny Baker, Chief of Police (Interim)

### **INTERDEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Chief Danny Baker

**From:** Captain Wes Milam 

**Subject:** City of Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan – Annual Update

**Date:** July 31, 2019

This report will serve as the required annual update to the City of Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan on behalf of the Fort Smith Police Department. The City of Fort Smith prides itself on the ability to provide quality public services to the citizens of the City and our department is part of that process. Collaboration among city departments is key to the success of the Comprehensive Plan. The FSPD must also evaluate its processes against the goals of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure our department operates efficiently and with priorities to customer service.

The following report will address each aspect of the comprehensive plan that pertains to, or directly involves, the Fort Smith Police Department. Some of the sections do not directly relate to daily operations of the FSPD but are still part of ongoing collaboration between the PD and other city departments. For instance, transparency is of utmost priority at Fort Smith PD and we continually strive to provide information to the public. This is expected of all city departments and is outlined in the Public Facilities and Services sections for all departments.

#### **Future Land Use**

*FLU 1.2: Ensure that sufficient, well designed and convenient on street and off street parking is provided to serve land uses*

- *1.2.1: Conduct an assessment of existing parking supply and demand and forecast future needs.*
- *1.2.2: Based on the parking assessment, review the parking rations and related regulations in the UDO and create a parking management plan for on street and off street parking near major activity centers.*

- 2019 Update: As has been reported in previous years' reports, the data for parking in the downtown area is as follows:
  - The City of Fort Smith currently has 435 metered parking spaces in the downtown area.
  - The parking garage has a total of 328 parking spaces with 237 of those being designated for use by the general public.
  - There is a metered parking lot in the 800 block of Rogers Avenue that has 53 parking spaces.
  - There are two parking lots owned by the City of Fort Smith on N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street - one at N. 2<sup>nd</sup> and Garrison and the other at N. 2<sup>nd</sup> and N. B Street. These lots have unmetered parking for approximately 100 and 40 vehicles respectively.
  - The various parks in the downtown area provide approximately 50 parking spaces.
  - Beyond these assets, there are numerous private parking lots in the area.

The Fort Smith Police Department is involved only with the enforcement of parking regulations within the downtown area. Parking in the downtown area remains a small issue, however as the increasing popularity of events held in the downtown area (4<sup>th</sup> of July, Steel Horse Rally, etc.) contribute to increased need for parking, enforcement changes may also be required. Along with additional parking locations, a review of enforcement hardware (meters) was prudent. An assessment was conducted in 2018 to determine the need for replacement of the current parking meters in the downtown area. Vendors were interviewed in late 2018 for new hardware. As of this report, a review of the current meters to determine a baseline need for enforcement parking priority in order to implement installation phases in updated parking locations is being conducted. Accomplishment of this goal is ongoing and involves collaboration with multiple city departments.

*FLU 1.3: Coordinate and plan future development with neighboring jurisdictions and the City of Fort Smith*

- *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.*

2019 Update: An analysis of call-load and staffing was conducted in 2018 to determine the impact of annexation of land according to this section. Additional manpower costs were identified that involved updating Computer Aided Dispatch parameters for likely annexed lands, fuel costs and wear on patrol vehicles, and staffing for larger areas. The analysis revealed the impact would be minimal to the FSPD to restructure beat plans, however the majority of the impact will be for additional sworn staff to facilitate patrol of newly developed areas. As the measurement metric for this is compliance of subdivision development, FSPD is not directly involved but we maintain our duty to provide efficient public safety response to those areas.

*FLU 3.2: Improve the accessibility of downtown*

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

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

2019 Update: As previously reported, there are very few issues with pedestrian traffic in the downtown area. Sidewalks and intersections are clearly marked and facilitate the smooth flow of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Further, the parking situation is currently under review as stated above. The largest issue affecting pedestrian traffic in the downtown area is drivers running red lights. FSPD has initiated the deployment of numerous directed and extra patrols in the downtown area to deter and cite drivers running red lights. Also, implementation of a motorcycle unit has assisted in policing the downtown area, especially during special events, more effectively. Other challenges being faced and addressed are the number of homeless in this area causing a variety of problems. We have/are working with the Hope Campus, Next Step Day Room, United Way, Rescue Mission and Railroad Police to address identified concerns. The power shift has been assigned periodically when resources allow to provide "focused policing" downtown during peak call times. Planning is underway to launch a mental crisis/substance abuse/homeless intervention unit when PD staffing levels come back up. The CBID and 64/6 are discussing the funding and implementation of an ambassador program. Any additional work toward 3.2.3 is beyond the scope of FSPD.

### **Transportation and Infrastructure**

*TI 1.4: Protect residential neighborhoods from excessive through traffic*

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

*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.*

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

2019 Update: FSPD continues to monitor traffic issues within the city. Directed patrols of reported problems at particular areas are continually issued and enforcement action taken, when applicable. The remainder of the goals outlined in this section are unable to be facilitated by FSPD as they involve physical construction and manipulation of the roadway, therefore left to the applicable departments. Any issues with roadways, specifically that may be hazardous, are immediately reported to the Street Department or the Arkansas Highway Department.

*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.*

- *2.2.2: Reroute truck traffic from key streets targeted for streetscape and pedestrian improvements (Garrison, A Street, B Street, and Riverfront Drive) to I-540 and other highways to reduce truck traffic downtown and on the riverfront.*
- *2.2.3: Update the truck route street plan in accordance with the preferred future.*

2019 Update: While multiple efforts have been ongoing to determine methods in which to accomplish this goal, enforcement of the ordinance is the primary task of FSPD. As such, every effort to enforce truck routes has been the priority of the officers assigned to the downtown area, however in 2018 our department was made aware of federal laws regarding truck traffic on State and US highways that affected our enforcement efforts, specifically on Garrison Avenue. The truck route has been determined to be unenforceable in regard to State and US highways. The City cannot prohibit carriers (who pay taxes on diesel fuel to be able to operate on State and US highways) from operating on these highways. This has directly impacted our ability to reduce truck traffic in the downtown area. Also, the truck route was amended in 2017 or 2018 to allow Coca-Cola to deviate from the truck route to prevent them from having to turn left into their plant on Phoenix Avenue. This section will remain ongoing until suitable alternative routes can be found to reduce truck traffic in the downtown area. Success of this section will require collaboration between the City and other relevant stakeholders in the next few years.