

# Memo



**To:** John Cooley, Future Fort Smith Committee Chair  
**From:** Jeff Dingman, Deputy City Administrator  
**cc:** Carl E. Geffken, City Administrator  
**Date:** 8/19/2019  
**Re:** Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan update – Administration

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The purpose of this memo is to provide updated information from the Administration Department that relates to specific goals and objectives noted in the Implementation Matrix of the Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan (FFSCP) and addressed in 2018 (and into 2019). The Administration Department continues to champion the effort among all departments to provide regular updates to the plan to ensure its overall success in the best interest of the residents and businesses of the city.

The FFSCP implementation matrix identifies the Administration department as one of the responsible parties for the following specifically identified goals.

**Future Land Use, FLU-1.1.4 & 1.5.1.** Achieve a successful and market-driven balance of future land uses consistent with the Preferred Future by 1) promoting 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; and 2) Provide opportunities for mixed-use development to occur Downtown and identified emerging centers to provide access to a variety of uses; promote walkable, pedestrian friendly development; and encourage physical activity. *Metrics: Increase in business diversity and the percent of new development in the target growth areas.*

City Administration supports commercial development/redevelopment and economic growth close to existing infrastructure. Mixed use development is encouraged when possible, including encouraging the redevelopment of downtown spaces accommodating both commercial and residential uses. We are seeing the redevelopment of existing buildings that have been vacant for years. A pedestrian-friendly and walkable environment continues to be supported. Making use of new provisions in state law for Entertainment Districts is planned to assist in attracting more restaurant and nightlife activity downtown and at Chaffee Crossing, emphasizing infill development in both areas.

The City adopted the “Propelling Downtown Forward” plan for the downtown district, as an extension of the FFS Comprehensive Plan. Part of the PDF plan involves implementation of a Form-Based zoning code, or rather, a zoning code that evaluates permitted uses and design standards based on what is in the vicinity of the specific property, instead of using the traditional zoning class designations to determine appropriate land use. This project has had several hurdles but is intended to be ready for the Board of Directors’ evaluation in the fall of 2019. The City supports increased activity within the Arkansas Downtown Network and the Arkansas Main Street program, where the city’s membership status was upgraded due to the willingness of 64/6 Downtown to step up as a downtown partner and assume some of the administrative functions that are required.

A short-term goal tasked to the Chamber and Administration is the creation of an inventory of existing businesses so that we may focus on increasing business diversity. The revitalized Downtown Business Association has an active working list of downtown businesses and a growing membership, and the city

continues to expand areas in which we can include these stakeholders in discussions related to downtown. Administration also has a support function in the mid-range goal of tracking the percentage of new development in targeted growth areas, identified in the FFS plan as downtown, along the riverfront, and at Chaffee Crossing.

**Economic Development, ED-1.1. & 1.3.** Encourage and support startup companies and small businesses by providing incentives & opportunity for small businesses, developing business “boot camps” for new entrepreneurs, or expanding/promoting a small business development center. Support business expansion and new business development in sectors identified as experiencing leakage by exploring the market feasibility of an outlet mall and expanding the shop local campaign. *Metrics: The number of new small businesses, number of businesses connected to SBA grants/programs, the completion of a market feasibility for an outlet mall, and the number of businesses participating in the shop local campaign.*

The development EnergGov in the Planning Department continues to evolve. This initiative supports the various mid-range goals of increasing the number of small businesses starting in the city. The city’s Business License administration is being more fully developed so that we maintain better records of businesses in Fort Smith. This program shifted to the Development Services department in 2019, and staff is building out comprehensive information about our businesses. One other element to assist new businesses is there is no Business License fee for the first year a business is in operation.

**Economic Development, ED-2.1, 2.3, 2.5, & 2.6.** Develop a world class workforce by making accessible opportunities for lifelong learning by leveraging research and brainpower of UAFS, focusing on increasing student performance, nurturing the next generation of leaders and focusing on retention of students in the area. *Metrics: Creation of a Career Connection Service, Improved Student Performance, Number of youth participating in a leadership program, and completion of a workforce and business tax credit analysis.*

City Administration supports youth leadership programs, including support and participation in the Chamber of Commerce’s Junior Leadership Academy, identified as a mid-range goal of the plan. The creation of a Career Connection Service in partnership with UAFS is a mid-range goal tasked to Administration, and conversations with UAFS are ongoing. Administration and UAFS are also charged with the mid-range goal of doing a Workforce and Business Tax Credit Analysis, designed to attract and retain recent college graduates. The long-range goal of improved student performance would be the desired result of these initiatives.

Another element of developing the local workforce includes providing opportunities for hard-to-hire individuals, people who have had legal troubles in the past (including incarceration) and have difficulty presenting themselves to employers as an appealing employee. City Administration worked with GoYe Employment Service to create a temporary employment solution specifically geared at getting people in this situation back into the workforce. A city job is provided (and transportation if needed), for up to 90 days in order to provide a bit of work history and a routine of reporting for work every day. Success from this program is an individual that completes the temporary assignment, then is offered full time employment. The Sanitation Department always has a need for labor, and at least one individual working through that program has secured a full-time position with the department. For this program to expand, more employers need to be willing to work with GoYe to provide the temporary jobs or be willing to hire individuals who successfully complete those assignments. GoYe does the legwork on the background of the individuals and administers their payroll through its temporary employment service.

**Economic Development, ED-3.1.** retain Fort Smith’s traditional manufacturing base, while encouraging growth in technology and knowledge-based areas by working with regional agencies to boost higher paying jobs & increase the number of jobs, partnering with job skills training programs to ensure that the city’s workforce is trained, attracting new employees through incentives such tax abatements and public

infrastructure, implementation of a city-wide fiberoptic network, and creating 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. *Metrics: Number of high wage jobs, number of trained residents in the workforce, number of new employers attracted to Fort Smith, completion of a feasibility study, and creation of an Innovation District.*

These are identified as mid- to long-range goals. City Administration participates in economic development initiatives and facilitates Industrial Development Revenue Bonds and Tax-Back incentive participation through the city’s Board of Directors in support of new and expanding businesses providing jobs as a means to retain and expand Fort Smith’s traditional manufacturing base. Long-range goals of a feasibility study for a city-wide fiberoptic network and an “Innovation District” are not yet underway.

**Economic Development, ED-4.1 & 4.2.** Develop a partnership to coordinate City economic development policies with the Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce by ensuring that planning processes reflect how businesses plan for future expansion/growth and establishing a framework to keep the business community fully engaged in the city’s ongoing planning and budgeting efforts, maintaining an open and consistent dialogue to equip businesses with the information they need to plan for future growth and expansion. Support all economic efforts operating under a well-coordinated organizational structure led by the Chamber of Commerce by establishing 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 and supporting Chamber of Commerce and AEDC in their efforts to increase jobs in the area. *Metrics: Number of representatives of local businesses participating in the City’s planning and budgeting, the creation of a cost/benefit analysis, and the number of new jobs created in Fort Smith.*

City Administration has directed the contact and inclusion of local businesses so that they may be included in planning and budgeting discussions as a short-term goal. This was important in the development of the Propelling Downtown Forward plan and will continue to be important as staff works through the project to implement Form-Based Zoning Code. The establishment of economic development incentive policies measuring performance of the city’s investment in economic development through cost/benefit analysis of the long-term economic and quality of life benefits to the region is a short-term goal and is in its early stages of development through general discussion with the Chamber and local business owners. Identifying funding for such an initiative is a challenge.

**Economic Development, ED-5.1.** Diversify the local economic base and strengthen and stabilize the tax base to maintain viability during fluctuating economic cycles. Identify industries which are growing in the region (and nationally) for which Fort Smith might provide a good fit by conducting target industry analyses to determine existing and future industry concentrations and potential market segments for future retention and recruitment efforts. *Metric: Completion of a target industry analysis.*

A target industry analysis is a mid-range goal and has not been completed. The City has an abundant and reliable water supply, and is further investing in water transmission facilities. Industries that are heavy users of water could be targeted. Also, by virtue of the MKARNS system on the Arkansas River, the City recognizes that potential may exist for a sizable inland port and intermodal facility, and City Administration has been involved in advancing that discussion forward through participation in the Western Arkansas Intermodal Transportation Authority and its contract with Vickerman & Associates to assess the feasibility and gauge investor interests in such a facility. Vickerman received positive feedback from industry and will continue to guide the Authority in proceeding with proposals from the port industry regarding a dynamic intermodal facility in the Fort Smith region.

**Economic Development, ED-6.1 & 6.2.** Create a quality work environment that fosters an attractive sense of place. Ensure that economic development objectives are included in the evaluation of all future City infrastructure projects, including parks and recreation facilities by investing in beautification of major transportation corridors, providing trails, open lands, and public gathering spaces utilizing innovative architectural and site design and alternative transportation choices to all business areas. Promote higher density of mixed-use development in order to create vibrant live-work-play activity centers in key commercial corridors. *Metrics: Percent increase in funding for beautification in the targeted growth areas and the number of vacant sites identified for mixed-use development along key corridors.*

City Administration continues to support the inclusion of funding for Keep Fort Smith Beautiful in the Street Department budget, as such funds are used to beautify and maintain the gateways into the city at the various highway exchanges and along Midland Avenue. In addition, City Administration continues to advance the development of amenities that enhance the quality of life in Fort Smith, specifically related to parks and recreation capital improvements. Further, City Administration remains in strong support of the city's own efforts to keep neighborhoods in good shape through its Neighborhood Services division. These are identified as mid-range goals because funding for such projects is hard to come by, but the city has long recognized the importance of improving the city's sense of place whenever possible. The future of the Fort Smith Convention Center also requires re-evaluation, as the facility continues to perform well, but still requires a subsidy from the city's General Fund in the absence of a dedicated funding source, such as a Prepared Food Tax. The operation and funding of the building will continue to be an important discussion until the funding question is answered definitively.

**Economic Development, ED-7.1 & 7.2.** Ensure that a broad range of housing alternatives are available for employers and employees. Promote a comprehensive incentive program that fosters investment and reinvestment in Fort Smith's housing stock and encourage the development of housing project types which help to diversify Fort Smith's existing housing stock. *Metrics: Completion of incentive program and an increase in the overall diversity of housing available in Fort Smith.*

An incentive program fostering investment and reinvestment in housing stock is identified as a mid-range goal has not been developed. The overall diversity of housing available in Fort Smith is improving, but considerable work on this long-range goal is still to be done. Any incentive program will require funding support.

**Economic Development, ED-8.1, 8.2, 8.3, & 8.4.** 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. Focus economic development efforts at strategic locations within the City's identified growth centers. Prepare detailed marketing materials which describe and quantify opportunities for new development/redevelopment within these areas. 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 by considering the use of a wide variety of financial incentives to encourage private investment and helping to offset the economic "gaps" for new projects. Create and implement an Economic Development Strategy that provides key stakeholders with a common action plan. *Metrics: Number of economic development initiatives that focus on targeted growth areas, completion and distribution of marketing materials, completion of gap analysis, and completion of the Economic Development Strategy.*

An Economic Development Strategy providing key stakeholders with common action plans is a mid-range goal. Documents such as the FCRA development plan and the Propelling Downtown Forward plan are specific examples of this type of planning, and will be vital to the continued success of these two specific growth centers. City Administration will encourage that type of thinking for other areas of the city, as well. City Administration and Planning continue to evaluate the potential annexation of

areas to the South of Fort Smith, including enclaves and the area around the proposed interchange of I-49 and Highway 71 South.

**Housing & Neighborhoods, HN-1.3, 1.4.** Preserve, protect, and revitalize Fort Smith's neighborhoods. Promote private investment in identified growth centers and seeking out investors for the North side of the city (Midland/Towson) to reduce blight and increase market potential. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings by encouraging revitalization of the Belle Grove Historic District and downtown historic buildings and promoting existing tax credits for restoration in historic areas. *Metrics: Number of new investors in targeted growth centers, number of restorations in historic areas.*

The number of investors in targeted growth centers, and the number of restorations in historic areas are ongoing. Administration supports the revitalization of the Belle Grove District, including the Future School's operation in a long-vacant building, and use of the under-utilized Darby Center. Administration also supports and promotes the use of tax credits for restoration of historic areas/buildings where applicable. Seeking out investors for the North side of the city should gain momentum as redevelopment north of downtown starts happening, and Administration will look to assist and encourage such improvement where possible. The recent designation of three census tracts in northern Fort Smith, including the one encompassing downtown Fort Smith, by Governor Hutchinson as "Economic Opportunity Zones" that defer or potentially reduce tax on capital gains from investment in those areas promises additional investment. Infrastructure projects along the May Branch to improve sewer facilities, and also trail facilities, represent public reinvestment in these areas and will hopefully have the desired effect of encouraging redevelopment in those neighborhoods along the way.

**Housing & Neighborhoods, HN-2.2, 2.3, 2.4.** Encourage a diverse range of housing options. Maintain housing opportunities in urban areas by supporting the renovation of existing housing and promoting infill development of vacant land within the corporate limits. Foster regional housing strategies to benefit Fort Smith and surrounding communities. Promote the development of a mix of housing types, including single family detached, single family attached, accessory apartments, and multi-family units by reviewing and revising regulations that create unintended impediments to new or innovative types of desirable housing. Preserve and increase the supply of safe, stable, and affordable supportive housing opportunities for homeless individuals and families. *Metric: Decrease in the amount of vacant and abandoned property in the targeted growth areas, review potential options to make recommendations, and open the Hope campus.*

City Administration has been supportive of the Hope Campus, which is now in full operation. There is still a significant amount of vacant and abandoned property to address, and Administration is committed to the mid-range to long-range goals of improving regional housing strategies.

**Housing & Neighborhoods, HN-3.1, 3.2.** Provide leadership in addressing housing as a regional issue by working closely with appropriate agencies or entities involved in regional housing initiatives and working with communities in the region who have targeted housing programs to develop common program guidelines and program requirements to create administrative efficiency. Utilize the city's zoning and subdivision regulations to promote the construction of a variety of housing sizes and types. *Metrics: Number of partnerships on regional housing initiatives, creation of a set of common program guidelines, number of new housing types developed in the targeted growth areas.*

City Administration will be an active participant in the mid-range goals of solidifying partnerships with housing agencies or entities. Administration will also participate with regional partners to develop common housing program guidelines. Administration typically represents the city in such discussions, and will continue to do so.

**Housing & Neighborhoods, HN-4.1, 4.2.** Identify potential redevelopment areas/sites that could provide a mix of housing and other uses. Evaluate potential areas with the city for redevelopment by establishing criteria

for redevelopment potential. Explore potential partnerships with non-profit and private sector developers to redevelop sites for mixed-use. *Metrics: Creation of criteria (such as property value, availability of infrastructure, utilization, tax base, etc.), number of new developer partnerships.*

City Administration participates in evaluation of potential development areas every day. Administration will be a participant, as needed, in the creation of criteria to quantify general redevelopment potential of a property, but that process has not formally started.

**Community Character & Design, CCD-1.1.** Support beautification efforts along key corridors, at gateways, and in growth centers identified in the Preferred Future. Develop a plan to move, relocate, consolidate, or bury utility lines on major roads. Encourage the State to improve upkeep and mowing grass areas on I-540. Standardize and improve sign ordinance to reduce visual clutter. Consider extending Grand Avenue from 10<sup>th</sup> Street to the riverfront to create a Grand Entrance to the Riverfront and Downtown. *Metrics: Utility line strategy adopted, maintenance quality improvement, updated sign ordinance, and Grand Avenue Extension feasibility study conducted.*

Items associated with these mid- to long-range goals involve working with other agencies and utility partners as needed to support an evolution of beautification efforts. Policymaking is a vital element of these discussions, and Administration must continue to take the lead in those discussions with the city's community partners. Although these are identified as mid-range and long-range goals, Administration is mindful that everyday discussions set the foundations for those policies. The city works with several partners to enhance interchanges along the interstate highway, and to maintain and convert the streetlights along the highway to LED fixtures.

**Community Character & Design, CCD-2.1, 2.2.** Increase local community identity within the city by developing a "Downtown Square" as a park/open space, where the city could hold a farmer's market, festivals, art walks, shops and food trucks. Encourage volunteerism to boost a sense of community in Fort Smith by creating a clearinghouse of volunteer opportunities linking faith-based organizations and local social service institutions and charitable organizations. *Metrics: Development of a Downtown Square, creation of a volunteer clearinghouse.*

The Propelling Downtown Forward plan identified such plans for the downtown district, although the implementation and affordability of such most definitely puts it in the long-range goal category. As the plan has been adopted by the city's Board of Directors, Administration and all affected city departments are mindful of it as they plan future projects. Further development of the Form-Based zoning is intended to improve the sense of community in the downtown district. The mid-range goal of creating a clearinghouse for volunteer opportunities has not started in a formal way, but Administration does recognize the strong sense of volunteerism in the community.

**Community Character & Design, CCD-3.1.** Project a positive image for the City of Fort Smith. Promote the identity of the city throughout the region, and nationally, by improving the City's approach to public relations and promoting what there is to do in Fort Smith and considering the creation of a publicly generated slogan to improve how citizens think about their city. *Metrics: Number of tourist visits, percent increase in event attendance, citizen feedback, percent growth in population, completion of a rebranding campaign.*

The mid-range goals of improving the city's approach to public relations and promotion were addressed by Administration's addition of a Public Relations specialist in 2018. Such specialist handles media contacts, public information output, social media accounts, and advancing the ideas of a publicly generated slogan to identify the community, otherwise references as "branding" for the future, which is also identified as a mid-range goal.

**Transportation & Infrastructure, TI-1.1.** Improve access and connectivity through enhancements to all modes of transportation. Promote better connections between downtown, the riverfront, historic sites, and the

Belle Grove Historic District, particularly from I-40 to I-540. Improve the availability of parking in downtown Fort Smith. *Metric: Improved parking availability downtown.*

Administration is coordinating with other agencies and departments on the mid-range goal of improving parking downtown. Although parking is available, it has only been managed passively. An actively managed parking program could more reasonably sustain parking operations and encourage the parking turnover that the retail businesses need without negatively impacting commercial and retail activity. Modification of parking policies, adjusting the parking rate and fine structures, and modernizing parking enforcement equipment are important elements of this discussion. The Board of Directors has approved adjustments to the parking meter rates, a meter vendor has been identified, and staff is finalizing the contract for purchase/installation of new meters to modernize the city's parking management. Such modernization will include the ability to pay with credit/debit cards or through a mobile application. The city-owned parking garage requires both structural maintenance (which will occur in Fall, 2019) and operational maintenance to keep the facility attractive to patrons and guests.

**Transportation & Infrastructure, TI-2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7.** Capitalize on Fort Smith's geographic location. Ensure that business and industry have sufficient transportation infrastructure to support freight operations and business communications, including rail, air, highways, telecommunications, and pipelines by speeding up work plan/completion of I-49 from Highway 22 to I-40 in collaboration with other communities and regions, focusing efforts on increasing the river channel's depth from nine feet to twelve feet to increase the capacity of the MKARNS and relocating the train switch station from downtown. 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 airport. Fully support the railroad industry and encourage growth through the City and the region. Fully support the continued improvements to the Port of Fort Smith. Support the development of the Regional Intermodal Transportation Authority's facility contemplated in Van Buren/Crawford County, and continue to balance water and port activities with environmental improvements in full cooperation with the US Army Corps of Engineers. *Metrics: Completion of I-49, percent increase in freight capacity of the MKARNS, and relocation of the train switch/maintenance yard.*

These long-range plans require Administration's continued representation of the City of Fort Smith's commitment to the improvement of regional transportation facilities. Fort Smith must continue to be an active advocate for these large projects, which will require the cooperation and commitment of many agencies in the region. The improvements to I-49, the MKARNS system, intermodal freight facilities, and port facilities are vital to the economic prosperity of the region, and Fort Smith is committed to participation in the efforts that will see them through to completion. The last year has seen the continued advancement in the design of the I-49 section from Barling to Alma, and the positive receipt from the port industry about the regional intermodal facility. The Port of Fort Smith added a 30,000 square foot bulk storage building for increased ability to house bulk materials at the port and increase its customer base, however, the 2019 flood destroyed the two larger buildings on the property. The plan is to use property insurance proceeds to rebuild the bulk storage capacity at the Port of Fort Smith. The railroad maintenance yard relocation project is not currently active.

**Transportation & Infrastructure, TI-4.1, 4.2.** Improve public transportation. Market public transportation in Fort Smith. Promote and maintain a public transit system that is safe, efficient, cost-effective and responsive to the needs of residents by expanding the fixed-route system to ensure access to shopping/service areas. *Metric: Increase in ridership for Fort Smith Public Transit.*

Administration continues to support the marketing efforts of the Transit Department for achieving the short-term goal of increasing ridership. Administration also supports the long-term Transit goal of expanding fixed route service to shopping/service areas when such expansion makes sense. The Transit Department continues conversion to CNG-fueled vehicles, and it is currently in the construction phase of adding a CNG fueling station to its facility. This will reduce the operating cost of the

department, as well as help with expanding the range of the buses. Buses have also been outfitted with signal priority emitters to allow for Transit vehicles to navigate their routes along busy city streets more efficiently. The Transit Department is currently evaluating the step to larger buses for fixed route service. Ridership has grown so that the small buses used throughout the department are crowded, particularly on fixe routes. Converting the fleet to larger buses will be a significant boost for the public transit program.

**Transportation & Infrastructure, TI-5.1, 5.2.** Incorporate the Future Land Use Map in the strategic planning of future utility and infrastructure expansions. Continue to ensure that customers within Fort Smith have access to reliable water, sewer, drainage, and solid waste services by reducing or eliminating deficiencies and gaps in infrastructure systems by implementing 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. Ensure that utility and infrastructure systems can meet the city's long-term needs by coordinating land use planning and capital programming to ensure infrastructure improvements and extensions are phased to support the future land use pattern. *Metrics: Completion of the infrastructure asset management program and capital programming that references the Comprehensive Plan.*

Administration and Utilities Department staff have developed and implemented capital improvement programming and asset management in the Utilities Department. This will improve infrastructure reliability in an affordable fashion in response to the stated mid-range goals and bring the City of Fort Smith into the modern age of best practices for administering and managing a complex and diverse utilities infrastructure program. Incorporation of asset management and work order tracking into the city's new ERP system will increase accountabilities associated with infrastructure and asset management. New investment and upgrade of our work order management system for both Streets and Utilities has been approved by the Board of Directors in the summer of 2019 for implementation in the fall.

**Public Facilities & Services, PFS-1.1, 1.2.** Promote a business-friendly and citizen-friendly government. Maintain fair and transparent codes and regulations by working with groups in authority (Chamber, City Board, CBID, FCRA, Sebastian County, etc.) to improve communication with the public and interagency coordination. Monitor the city's return on investment by measuring municipal expenditures against property and sales tax revenues by identifying opportunities to reduce the city's cost burden by establishing public-private partnerships on significant revitalization projects. *Metrics: Number of leaders participating in city forums, number of public-private partnerships.*

Administration advocates the short-term goal of improving all aspects of communication and coordination with the community's various leadership entities. This is an ongoing effort to increase participation in and effectiveness of public forums. Likewise, Administration is mindful of the city's investment in infrastructure projects and the potential to leverage public dollars with the private investment of community partners to improve infrastructure and achieve the community's quality of place objectives. The most current example is the public-private partnership in the development of the bicycle/skate park on Riverfront Drive, completed in 2018, which has proven to be a destination attraction for both residents and non-residents, and exemplifying Fort Smith's commitment to quality of life amenities. The amenity is so popular that the private sector has committed to expanding the facility upon adjacent property acquired by the City in 2019 for such expansion.

**Public Facilities & Services, PFS-2.3.** Build consistency and trust with the public. Promote public awareness and participation by holding open Town Hall events modeled after the Future Fort Smith Community Forums. *Metric: Number of Community Forum Series events held.*

This short-term goal of improving public relations, public information, and increasing the number of Community Forums for keeping the public informed on city initiatives will be key in the application of

the Public Relations function of the Administrator's office. Recognizing the importance of building trust with the community, Administration added a Communications Manager in 2018, who works with local media outlets to navigate and direct information published about the city. In addition, recognizing the critical relationships the Police Department and Utilities Department are currently having with the general public, dedicated communications staff in those departments have also been added. The Police Department has hired a non-commissioned public information specialist, and the Utilities Department has expanded the role and function of its Communications team to include a full-fledged customer service call center to handle Utilities issues and questions. This call center effort is naturally growing to include even more general questions about city services and continues to evolve.

**Public Facilities & Services, PFS-3.1, 3.2.** Promote civic identity and pride. Capitalize on the city's municipal presence downtown by building support for a City Hall building located downtown. Develop community pride by promoting a culture of inclusion and consideration of positive change. Promote existing community service efforts and identify partnership opportunities to expand regularly scheduled community service days. 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. *Metrics: Increase in support for City Hall, increase in the number of community service days, "What can I do" identified for each plan element and residents identified as responsible party.*

Thorough investigation of different options for a potential City Hall project may advance this idea from a long-term goal to a more mid-range goal, Administration recognizes that there is strong community support for City Hall functions to locate in the downtown district, although continued presence in the current location or anywhere directly on Garrison Avenue is not necessarily required. Recent redevelopment efforts downtown may spur community leaders to actively pursue opportunities that could lead to a viable City Hall project. Since this report last year, there is increased interest and discussion, but a firm City Hall project has not yet materialized. Administration will continue to play its appropriate role in that process. Administration also has roles in the short-term goals of improving community pride and a culture of inclusion by advocating participation in community service days and garnering citizen support for projects associated with the Future Fort Smith plan.

**Public Facilities & Services, PFS-4.1.** Prevent wasteful use of public resources and services. Seek opportunities to co-locate future community facilities to maximize efficiencies in service provision and reduce capital and operating costs. *Metric: Number of future facilities co-located.*

Administration considers this long-range goal when considering future community facilities. A current example is the master planning of landfill property in order to determine the best way to accommodate use of property by other city departments in need of space for various reasons. Another example is the long-range capital planning efforts, specifically in the Utilities Department, to ensure that long-range projects are both efficiently planned and funded.

**Public Facilities & Services, PFS-5.1.** Improve the health and well-being of Fort Smith residents. Increase access to healthcare, reduce preventable disease, and educate the community about leading a healthy lifestyle. Encourage local employers to adopt wellness programs. Develop a healthy living campaign and create marketing materials that communicate the benefits of active living, recreation, and healthy foods. *Metrics: Number of wellness programs adopted, Healthy Living campaign launched.*

Administration advocates for the development of wellness programs in the local community, in addition to supporting the evolution of the city's own employee wellness program into a meaningful resource for employees to improve their well-being. Coupled with the development of the mid-range goal to create a Healthy Living Campaign, the city will be a community leader in terms of promoting the community's overall health. Changes in the city's Human Resources Department and Safety/Risk

Management leadership have already begun to effect such change for city employees and their work environment.

**Natural & Cultural Resources, NCR-2.3.** Protect natural resources and reduce their waste and overuse. Improve air quality by minimizing growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the city grows through a variety of locational and programmatic measures. *Metric: Identify a baseline for the city's existing VMT and establish a goal consistent with projected growth that results in a reduction of per capital VMT.*

All city departments with vehicles are responsible for this short-term objective. City departments are mindful of combining crews in vehicles where possible, and in reducing the amount of time spent on the road between projects. One example is that of the Parks Department invested in storage facilities along the Riverfront in order to reduce travel time of maintenance equipment. The Police Department is evaluating the possibility of a precinct or substation in the south part of the city. The concept of energy efficient performance contracting for facility improvements is being considered for applicable city buildings. All departments are encouraged to self-evaluate where such improvements can be made.

**Natural & Cultural Resources, NCR-4.1.** Expand the role of parks and open space in the promotion of healthy communities. Increase the use of parks, open space, and recreational programming to improve the health of Fort Smith residents by development a marketing campaign to communicate the value of active recreation in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. *Metric: Marketing campaign complete.*

Administration lends support as needed to the Parks & Recreation department to publicize and market recreational programming in support of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Parks & Recreation is charged with developing, organizing, and promoting department-sponsored activities aimed at getting people outside and into the parks. This mid-range goal is already underway.