



Lowell Sector Reports



Housing & Real Estate

Short Term Goals (1-5 years):

- **Attract the Catholic high school.** Open dialogue with the Northwest Arkansas Catholic High School Committee to promote and encourage the high school development to be completed. This will be the only Catholic high school in northwest Arkansas, and will give a much needed sense of community and identity to Lowell.
- **Live Lowell campaign.** Identify and market benefits of living in Lowell as central northwest Arkansas location to encourage people to live closer to employment.
- **Encourage city leaders to allow higher density residential developments that focus on higher design standards,** such as architectural siding versus vinyl siding, energy efficiency, sustainability, small lots, native landscaping that doesn't require irrigation, etc. Encourage and reward these developers by allowing higher density, more flexibility in street width/sidewalks, etc. Permit re-platting to allow for quicker absorption of the existing inventory or lots.
- **Make Lowell a clean and attractive place to live** by strictly enforcing code violations such as number of cars on residential streets, parking on grass, number of families living within single family areas, etc.
- **Attract medical and medical specialty clinics, retail and office to bring jobs to Lowell and draw in population.** Use a business permit credit and other incentives to entice businesses to locate in Lowell.
- **Continue expansion of sewer and road upgrades.**
 - Continue expansion of sewer west of I-540.
 - Focus on Master Street Plan.
- **Expand on bike lanes & trail system and parks.**
- **Attract a higher learning institution** such as NWACC, Webster University or a technical college. Consider partnering with local businesses to attract a training program to meet their needs.

Long Term Goals (5-15 years):

- **Prepare for long-term growth by expanding Hwy. 264 West into a five-lane highway.**
- **Maintain and grow Lowell's residential population by adding a middle school.**

Land Use & Planning

Goals:

- **Regionalism**
 - Look at the master street plans of other cities and compare to Lowell.
 - “Square up” boundaries between Lowell and neighboring cities.
 - Be proactive concerning the intersection of I-540 and Hwy. 412.
- **Communication**
 - Lowell Planning Commission should facilitate discussions with other planning commissions and work closely together. This is in accordance with the Consistency Law.
 - This is important because the boundaries between neighboring cities are getting closer and so many citizens move between them (i.e. they may live in Rogers but work in Lowell, etc.).
 - City should encourage shared training programs between planning commissions of neighboring cities.
- **Community Identification**
 - Evaluate the city’s need for a community development director.
 - Lowell needs a downtown area/gathering place/attraction for the community to come together.
 - Evaluate where “downtown” should be. Just because it was originally near the railroad tracks doesn’t mean it has to be there again.
 - Evaluate other places that would be suitable for mixed-use development such as Dixieland Road or in the Northwest Arkansas Business Park.
- **Infrastructure**
 - Improve Monroe to Old Wire. Evaluate need for further improvements from Old Wire to Beaver Lake.
 - I-540 overpass needs to be widened to support commercial/residential development west of I-540.

- Access roads tied to the I-540 exchange should be considered and developed where appropriate.

- **Annexation**
 - Investigate remedies to de-annexation of property along Concord Street.
 - Evaluate whether annexation should be pursued for land in the county that is between Lowell city limits and Beaver Lake.

- **Funding** (Grants and Public/Private Partnerships)
 - City should consider using grants (from private companies and foundations) to supplement tax dollars for city projects.
 - Federal grants can be difficult and time consuming with little return, so the city should consider pursuing private grant funds

- **Other Issues**
 - Promote recreational/family entertainment venues in Lowell.
 - Evaluate ways to become a “Green City.”
 - Encourage more state and county offices in Lowell.
 - Maintain character and feel of Lowell by protecting the aesthetic quality, promoting green spaces and enforcing the sign ordinance.

Parks & Recreation

The committee reviewed the goals and objectives of the Vision 2020 committee and discussed what had been accomplished. From there the committee identified the following short-term and long-term goals.

Short-term Goals:

- **Offer recreational activities and opportunities for all residents of Lowell.**
 - Offer summer programs for children; possibly expand the Boys and Girls' Club to Lowell.
 - Provide instruction and league play for soccer.
 - Offer after-school and before-school programs.
- **Continue improvements and additions to walking tracks and trails**, especially in Ward Nail Park.
- **Develop a master plan for landscaping** at Ward Nail Park and other public/green spaces throughout the city.
- **Establish a “Keep Lowell Beautiful” committee** that will be an affiliate of Keep Arkansas Beautiful and Keep America Beautiful.
- **Raise funds for short-term projects through local means.**

Long-term Goals:

- **Construct or renovate space for a community center** to be used by a variety of groups and activities.
- **Provide new recreational facilities for the citizens of Lowell to enjoy.**
 - Public swimming pool.
- **Implement additional recreational activities and apply for grants to support programs.**
- **Implement a city tax to provide for additional revenue for recreation.**

Public Safety & Municipal Services

The committee reviewed the Vision process and discussing the committee's goals as it pertains to the Vision 2025 plan. The committee also reviewed the goals and objectives of the Public Safety committee from the Vision 2020 plan.

The committee identified the following short-term and long-term goals:

Short-term Goals:

- **Provide local ambulance service and local 911 dispatching throughout the city of Lowell.**
- **Purchase and install a storm warning system to reach all citizens of Lowell.**
- **Create and implement a disaster plan designed for the city** which includes indentifying disaster shelters for use by citizens. Maintain its effectiveness with regular simulation drills.
- **Create and provide educational opportunities for city staff in the areas of languages (ESL), community awareness, cultural differences, and other community needs.**
- **Add appropriate emergency services infrastructure.**
- **Investigate the needs for further annexation west of I-540 and towards Beaver Lake.** Plan appropriately and early for those needs.

Long-term Goals:

- **Add a fire station (may also include a police office) on the west side of I-540.** There would be ambulance service from this location.
- **Construct a new police facility.** If Lowell continues to grow, more police officers will be needed, therefore the police force will outgrow its current facility.
- **Create a central emergency center that houses police and fire in one central location.**

Retail Development

Retail Climate in Northwest Arkansas

The committee began discussing the retail landscape in northwest Arkansas. Members reported that the region currently has a vacancy rate of 10 percent and the consensus was that this number is accurate. Some committee members raised concerns that while the vacancy rate is lower than expected, there are concerns that lease prices are declining. There is also overall concern of the health of retailers, both national chains and locally-owned companies.

It was suggested that the northwest Arkansas retail market still had room to grow when considering niche markets and specialized retail. Although the committee was concerned that the market is not “deep enough” to support high-end retail considering that only a small number of northwest Arkansas residents can afford to shop at that level.

It was strongly encouraged that the Chamber begins capturing the economic impact of business travelers. The committee would be interested in knowing how many people are in northwest Arkansas on a daily basis, how long they stay, how much they spend, do they travel with families, and do they stay over the time required for business. Suggested ways to do this involves communication with hotels, airport/airlines and Wal-Mart.

Overall the committee feels the retail market in northwest Arkansas is relatively balanced and healthy. Over the next five to ten years, the committee feels the retail climate in northwest Arkansas may change as factors such as job growth decline. The committee suggested watching Wal-Mart’s job growth closely as this is a strong indicator of the entire northwest Arkansas market.

Retail Climate in Lowell

The most promising retail opportunities in Lowell at this time include neighborhood convenience and “mom and pop” shops.

Lowell’s key assets include its location at the center of the northwest Arkansas market, and the closeness between I-540 and Hwy. 71. Lowell should promote itself as a “regional headliner.”

Lowell is about five to ten years away from a “big box” or destination retailer. Obstacles to this type of development include low density in the immediate five-mile area. A “big box” or destination retailer should be a long-term goal for Lowell.

Opportunities exist in the hotel and restaurant industries.

For Lowell to continue moving in a direction that promotes and supports retail development, the city must concentrate on the following:

- Continue building infrastructure.
- Find niche markets Lowell can fill. (i.e. medical/health care sector).
- Improving quality of life in an effort to attract more residents.

- Look to hotels, restaurants, and convenience-type businesses.
- Actively pursue a Catholic high school.
- Promote the development of business parks in which businesses could combine several regional offices into one central location in Lowell.

It is important to remember that a series of small successes could lead to a major win.

Priorities:

- **Developers must ensure a balanced and healthy retail market with a mix of national chains and local retailers.**
- **Niche categories, particularly “neighborhood convenience,” are the most viable targets for Lowell retail development (i.e. high-end, low-end, sporting, entertainment, health care and related services).**
- **Demand in Lowell must be proven with a strong mix of local and regional demographics.** Research is needed for developers to access this specific data, such as business traveler/Wal-Mart supplier data: length and frequency of stay, how many call on Wal-Mart daily vs. weekly, day trip vs. overnight; *value* of job growth and wages; true rate of job growth and number of Wal-Mart employees per city.
- **Marketing approach for Lowell must position the city as the center of the market and the very best access point for the majority of northwest Arkansas.**
- **Semi-regular meetings of suppliers/developers may be merited to discuss growth patterns, needs, and trends.**
- **Most importantly, Lowell must remain fixated on continued infrastructure development, advance planning for connections to water and sewer improvements, and remaining in touch rather than alienated from the overall NWA market.**

Retirement and Senior Services

In “Vision 2020,” this sector identified the need for a senior center in Lowell as a long-term goal. Today, it has become a short-term necessity. It is time to address the needs of elderly residents of Lowell with the creation of a senior center. Small communities in Benton County have found the development of a senior center to be beneficial in providing opportunities for nutrition, recreation, and socialization.

Goals:

- **Develop a Senior Center in Lowell to provide recreation, socialization and nutrition to seniors in the community.** Working with the Area Agency on Aging, the community can design a program to meet the needs of local seniors. A survey to identify services desired by seniors should be conducted as a first step, followed by securing a location, hiring a director and offering activities. Following best practices identified in other communities, the city should be encouraged to prioritize the development of a senior center building that can house regular activities, meals and services.
- **Offer flexible transportation for senior citizens.** A system that is flexible and affordable should be developed to provide access to services, shopping and activities. The purchase of a van through the Area Agency on Aging is a short-term solution to begin addressing the issue.
- **Provide opportunities for Lowell seniors to be involved in the community.** Organize recreational activities such as weekend and day trips, and encourage seniors to seek volunteer opportunities and part-time jobs to stay active and involved in the community.

Small Business

Lowell continues to emerge as an excellent destination for small businesses, particularly given the city's accessibility and affordability. A strong core network among small businesses has been lacking in the community, but with continued efforts by the Chamber, this issue is rapidly improving.

Recruitment of additional businesses to supplement the growing economy and address many of the community's needs (such as services and specific business niches) will continue to be critical for Lowell.

Support of economic development efforts, championing of Lowell as a small business destination by existing business owners and a willingness to assist the Chamber and the city in efforts to recruit and patronize new businesses will be key in the coming years.

Short-Term Goals:

- **Host an information gathering and networking event for all Lowell businesses.** Use a local business, such as Fast Lane Entertainment and Dining.
- **Begin branding Lowell, creating a well-defined image** that the city and Chamber can use to promote further residential and commercial development.

Long-Term Goals:

- **Focus on Lowell becoming a regional entertainment hub.**
- **Continue evolving Lowell's brand as the city continues to change and grow.**

Transportation & Infrastructure

The most important aspects of Lowell's future growth in transportation, and infrastructure are vision, cooperation, and planning. A spirit of consensus-building and cooperation within Lowell and with Lowell's neighbors will help facilitate an outstanding quality of life and a positive future for the city. Developing the basic tools and constantly reviewing those tools will facilitate communication, understanding, consensus, and most importantly, quality and responsible economic growth.

Assuming the future vision of Lowell is to develop and maintain an outstanding quality of life and promote responsible economic growth, the city of Lowell needs to put itself in a position to be proactive.

Transportation

- **Future street projects should follow the approved Lowell Five-Year Plans** which should be annually revised, updated and prioritized by the Mayor and City Council.
- **All street projects to be in accordance with the “Master Street Plan” and the “Minimum Standard Specifications for Construction of Streets” in the city of Lowell.**
- Current Five-Year Plan and longer-term projects are as follows:
 - **Complete Dixieland Road** from State Hwy. 264 to Robinson in Lowell, and work with the developer of the “Pleasant Crossing Center” to complete the section between Robinson and the “Fast Lane Entertainment Center.” Long-term, continue Dixieland to Apple Blossom.
 - **Complete Robinson Street** from U.S. 71B to Ash as a minor collector, and long-term, continue Robinson to Oakwood improving both the north-south leg and east-west leg of Oakwood to North Goad Springs Road.
 - **Construct Lincoln Street from Puppy Creek to Apple Blossom.**
 - **Upgrade McClure Street in segments**, and engage a consulting engineer firm to plan improvements.
 - Phase I – Oak Street to Old Wire Road.
 - Phase II – US71B to Summerset Street.
 - **Reconstruct the Monroe Street (State Hwy. 264) and U.S. 71B intersection** to include double left turn slots on the West and South legs.
 - **Continue upgrade of Monroe Street in segments.**

- Build U.S. 71B to Arkansas Missouri Railroad for truck traffic with State Highway Department funding participation.
 - Arkansas Missouri Railroad to Brandon Avenue.
 - Oak Street to Old Wire Road.
- **Complete Lowell's section of North Goad Springs Road** from State Hwy. 264 to Oakwood, with Rogers completing it to Pleasant Grove Road.
- **Construct Spring Creek/Bellview Road as an arterial street** from Ladelle to Lowell's north city limits to tie into Rogers' construction of Bellview Road.
- **Contract with the state to provide traffic signals on State Hwy. 264 at Goad Springs Road and at Bellview Road.** The state also should widen State Hwy. 264 to three lanes from Bellview to the west ramps on I-540, providing left turn slots at Bellview and Goad Springs Road.
- **Rebuild Honeysuckle Street in segments** from McClure to Pleasant Grove Road.
- **Rebuild Concord Street in segments** from Robinson to Pleasant Grove Road.
- Long-term, **construct as needed new streets in area west of I-540** on South Zion, North Zion, Zion Church, Ladelle, Mt. Hebron, Brown Road and South Goad Springs Road.
- **Realign Old Wire Road to tie into First Street in Rogers.**
- Long-term, **construct as needed new streets in area east of I-540** on Frisco Crossing, Frisco Cemetery Road and Frisco Church Road.

Sanitary Sewer:

- **Plan for orderly development of the area west of I-540 by having the necessary sanitary sewers constructed that can be connected to the new Puppy Creek Trunk Line.** Doing all work in accordance with Lowell's agreement with the city of Springdale.
- **Limit the construction of STEP systems and other decentralized treatment facilities to the presently approved four systems.** For near-term future developments in the Cross Creek drainage area, have an ordinance allowing STEG systems approved following the requirements established by the city of Springdale.
- Current Five-Year Plan and longer-term projects are as follows:
 - **A new sanitary sewer from Puppy Creek on the west side of I-540** following the west right of way of the highway, crossing State Hwy. 264 and following North Goad Springs Road North.

- **A new short sanitary sewer from Puppy Creek** starting approximately 1,500 feet west of South Goad Springs Road to serve the Commerce Park development, other business parks, and possibly the Arvest Bank Center, all south of State Hwy. 264, to be funded by developers.
- **A longer sanitary sewer from Puppy Creek** starting approximately 1,000 feet east of Spring Creek Road to serve the new Catholic high school and most of the remainder of the Puppy Creek basin in Lowell.
- **The construction of an interim sewer collection system in the upper Christy Creek drainage area** to serve an area north of Apple Blossom and east of Hwy. 71B to the Arkansas Missouri Railroad. The project includes sewer lines, lift stations and a force main.
- **The correction of the most capacity-deficient section of Lowell's existing sewer system.** Rebuild or supplement the existing North Lateral from the northeast corner of the Links of Lowell property to a point 250 feet east of U.S. 71B, a total length of approximately 1,800 feet.
- **Correction of another capacity-deficient section of Lowell's existing sewer system on the South Lateral.** Rebuild or supplement the existing 15-inch line between the lift station and the manhole on south side of State Hwy. 264, as a new 24-inch line or equivalent supplement a total length of approximately 495 feet.
- **Lowell, Rogers and the residents of the Sabre Heights and Daisy Circle Subdivisions currently on septic systems that are not functioning properly should continue the study of this problem.** The desired end being to find a way of funding a solution to the problem.

Waterlines

- **New waterline expansion projects constructed by developers with lines larger than 6 inches should have some participation by Springdale, since no revenue is received by Lowell from those projects.**
- **Waterline projects in Lowell designed to provide water service to existing homes on wells should have some participation by Springdale, since no revenue is received by Lowell from these projects.** Possible projects include additional lines on Ladelle Road and South Zion Road in the area west of I-540.

Drainage

- **Complete the detention pond located in the Christy Creek drainage basin east of U.S. 71B.** This is a joint project with Lowell and Bethel Heights.

Fire Station and Police Sub Station

- **A new fire station will be required in the area west of I-540 once development of the area begins. A police substation will also be required, possibly included in the new fire station.**

Museum and Library

- **The upgrade of the city museum and additional museum facilities should be carried out following the Museum Master Plan and within established budgets.**
- **A library should be constructed in Lowell, possibly affiliated with the Rogers Library. The possible start of a library in Lowell could be a Bookmobile library service.**

West Side Public Works Yard

- **The need for certain equipment used to maintain streets and control weeds in street right of way may require a small equipment yard on the west side of Lowell.**