

City of Sarcoxie's Comprehensive Plan Action Plans 2012-2014

Approved by the Sarcoxie City Council on July 3, 2012

Overview

The city's first comprehensive plan was approved in 2008 by the City Council, Chamber of Commerce, and a number of interested citizens who all worked together to create it. The plan identified two primary goals:

- Expansion of city boundaries and services to entice economic and residential development
- Enhance the quality of life in the community

To achieve these two goals, a number of short and long term actions were agreed upon including:

- Annexation
- Revitalize the square and restore the downtown / take advantage of historic preservation
- Provide enhanced fire and police protection
- Upgrade sewer and water systems
- Expand park system and create more recreational opportunities
- Upgrade stormwater management system
- Improve the transportation system
- Adopt property maintenance and management tools
- Encourage new residential, retail, and commercial development
- Increase tax revenue
- Retain and grow the population
- Neighborhood revitalization

The goals and actions laid out in the plan were big in scope, far reaching, and potentially overwhelming. All agreed on where we would like to end up but the path(s) to take were not crystal clear. In order to just get moving, it was decided to set up smaller but very definite steps to make continuous progress towards the desired end results.

2012 marks the third 2-year cycle of establishing these detailed action plans. Once reviewed and approved by the City Council, Chamber of Commerce, and other actively involved parties, these action plans help ensure that everyone is "on the same page" and that progress is being made.

The action plans and what we accomplish in this 2-year cycle are perhaps the most important to date. Enough progress has been made to make the next steps almost intuitive and, in many areas, simply finishing what we have started will ensure significant steps forward.

On a final note, the city government may be primarily responsible for meeting the goals of the plan but individuals and non-governmental group involvement is vital to ensure success. The more people and groups involved in these efforts the better and faster gains can be made.

Economic Development

The last two years have seen dramatic progress in creating structure and direction for economic development. In addition to creating an Enhanced Enterprise Zone, leaders in our community have stepped up and are working together to sort the naturally occurring initial chaos into a cohesive direction. Success can be measured in securing retail and commercial development in and around the city. The impact will be more local jobs and services to the residents of our city as well as an increase in tax revenue that can be used to enhance government services.

1. **TOP PRIORITY Expand Water and Sewer Service east of the City to the “top of the hill”.**
This is one of the most important actions that the city can pursue to directly impact economic development. Establishing water and sewer on the hill will eliminate a barrier for retail development that attracts both highway and local traffic – an important and proven success factor. To fund this project:
 - a. **Pursue a Capital Improvement Sales Tax** with the active support of the Chamber of Commerce, EEZ board, and the public. The revenue from this sales tax would be used as the primary funding source for the east expansion of water and sewer. Beyond this expansion, the revenue would be used to finance projects detailed in the infrastructure portion of this plan (i.e. 20 year water plan).
 - b. **Pursue a Water and Sewer Bond** of between 2 and 4 million dollars. A portion of this bond would be initially drawn upon to finance the east expansion of water and sewer with the balance serving as an available emergency reserve. Beyond the expansion, the revenue would be used to finance projects detailed in the infrastructure portion of this plan.
2. **TOP PRIORITY Website** – While already approved by the Council and Chamber, work on this has been too slow and needs to be a top priority. The website should be a window front that people can look through to see how great our city is as well as a resource to new and current residents and businesses to find common info that will assist them in their lives in our city.
3. **Establish a strong relationship with USDA Rural Development** to assist with planning and gaining resources. This entity is designed to help rural communities like ours.
4. **Codify the appointed position of Economic Development Director (EDD)** to affirm the importance of the position and ensure the office has resources available to drive growth in our city. The EDD will be a primary liaison for the city government and the Chamber of Commerce, the Enhanced Enterprise Zone (EEZ), the Harry S Truman Coordinating Council, and other relevant organizations. All of these groups potentially contribute to economic development in the city.
5. **Review the EEZ Mission and Goals document with the EEZ board** to ensure they are realistic and provide a reasonable course of action for the short and long term. We have to also ensure they have the resources available to be successful. The top priority of the EEZ board is to be a resource and driver for all Economic Development.
6. **Hi-speed wireless internet.** Complete negotiations for hi-speed wireless internet. This will serve as a resource for potential new businesses in and around the city and as an alternative internet resource to residents in the area.

Future Land Use & Downtown Revitalization

This is general category of features on what to do with land inside the city limits and how to expand those same boundaries.

1. **TOP PRIORITY Appoint a Historic District Committee for the square.** The State Historic Preservation Office conducted an audit of the city in late 2011 and advised that the area had the potential to be a designated district. We now need to fill out the application and do the work to turn it into a reality.
2. **Establish a revitalization and redevelopment plan for the square** that is consistent with its historic status. In addition to grant opportunities, the Park Board is also committed to assisting with this effort.
3. **Increase our accurate knowledge of flood risks within the City.** An accurate determination of flood risks on the square is important for the long term survival of the square. The 2010 HEC-RAS modeling of Swifty Creek yielded significant changes with roughly 40% of the square being taken out of the flood zone. The same quality information is needed for Center Creek. To pursue this we need to send annual letters to SEMA requesting a detailed study of Center Creek be completed ASAP.
4. **Continue a policy of growth through voluntary annexation.**
 - a. Complete Phase 2. Includes all of Bridgeview St, 17th St from High St to Bridgeview, the Sarcoxie Cemetery, the River of Life Church, ball complex and waste water treatment property.
 - b. Phase 3. Seek voluntary annexation of Autumn Acres Mobile Home Park. This would provide a significant increase in population to assist with increasing motor fuel tax revenue, assist in law enforcement efforts, etc.
 - c. Phase 4. Road rights of way on Apple Rd to CR 60 and CR 60 to Business Loop 44.
5. **Continue a policy of annexation versus “out of town” fees** for new water service outside of city limits. This would require new services to sign an agreement to annex in to the city if and when the city limits reach that property as part of the consideration for receiving water and / or sewer service from the city.
6. **Determine a consensus on pursuing limited zoning and/or deed restrictions.** Per public input, the council is not going to aggressively pursue planning and zoning at this time. The council will remain open to considering such efforts if public demand calls for it.

Neighborhood Stabilization (NS)

To date, aspects of neighborhood stabilization are frequently talked about but not enough progress has been made. This lack of progress can be traced to lack of a clear direction and limited resources including grant programs, local funds, manpower, and civic group participation. To increase improvements in this area, the city has developed the following understandings, policies and action plans:

NS can be visualized by comparing a specific property to the neighborhood, or a neighborhood to the city in general. Properties or neighborhoods that fall below the standard should be considered distressed. Efforts and resources should be focused first at individual properties then at neighborhoods to bring improvements. Indicators of distress include:

- High turnover of residency
- Lengthy time periods that properties are for sale either while vacant or occupied
- General condition and upkeep of the properties such as yard, nuisances, structure condition, types of activity occurring (i.e. frequent criminal activity, disturbances, dog and animal issues, etc.)

There are two distinct groups of owners or tenants of distressed properties. It is important to factor in these distinctions when addressing the issues of each group accordingly:

- Owners or tenants with a desire to improve properties but lack resources.
 - Owners or tenants that lack the desire to maintain properties to a standard consistent with the neighborhood they reside in.
1. **TOP PRIORITY Establish a committee to review neighborhood stabilization** and provide recommendations to the Council for consideration that addresses both groups. How aggressive should dangerous building enforcement be, should there be some kind of safety inspection prior to turning on water and sewer, how involved should the city government be – all are valid questions that should be considered.
 2. **Conduct a housing survey** to establish general condition of the housing inventory (good, fair, poor, deteriorating) and to prioritize efforts.
 3. Pursue getting empty lots, including empty CDBG demo **lots, into constructive ownership or usage.**
 4. **Support the Helping Hands Outreach.**
 5. **Pursue resources available through the HSTCC and HUD.**
 6. **Revise the weed ordinance** and be more vigorous about enforcement.
 7. Begin **enforcement of registration of abandoned dangerous buildings.**
 8. **Budget \$2,000 per year for nuisance abatement.** This fund assists with cleaning up nuisance properties, violations of the weed ordinance, etc.

Parks & Recreation

The Park Board is one of the most successful and productive volunteer organizations in our city. In addition to assisting with events in the park and the newly undertaken city ball leagues, they have a number of physical projects and areas of responsibility as well:

1. **TOP PRIORITY** Baseball complex. This is a major project that has an estimated cost (cash, equivalents, and work in kind) in excess of \$300,000. Steady progress will continue to be made until completed.
2. The Square. The park board has fully bought in to beautifying the square to compliment community events, encourage economic development, and pursue a historic district:
 - a. The board is committed to taking a lead role in streetlight replacement.
 - b. Install a watering system on the square.
 - c. Repair the support columns on the gazebo
 - d. Upgrade electrical to 200 amp on the gazebo
 - e. Long term tree plan
 - f. Continue to invest and build the Christmas on the Square light and music show.
3. Community Building. The board has made steady upgrades to the community building to make it a great resource for special events, meetings, etc. Upgrades need to be continued:
 - a. Experiment with low-cost acoustics improvements
 - b. Update the kitchen cabinetry
 - c. Finish restoring the stove and get it back into operation
 - d. Replace 150 chairs
 - e. Resurface the floor
4. Pool Complex
 - a. Upgrade the pool house plumbing for hot, cold, and warm water.
 - b. Increase shaded area
 - c. Resurface the volley pool
 - d. Increase seating
5. Stebbins Memorial Park
 - a. Convert the tennis court to a basketball court
 - b. Upgrade the electrical at the main pavilion
 - c. Restore the sand volleyball court
 - d. Waiting for public initiative on a potential skate park
6. Soft Park in cooperation with the Ozark Regional Land Trust. The board supports the vision and is relying on the council to negotiate an agreement with the ORLT.

Library – The library offers recreational and educational services to the community and has the potential to be a resource to pursue the goals of the plan.

1. **Continue applying for at least one grant per year** to improve technology and services.
2. **Continue the major building renovations** began in 2009 and including applying for a rural development grant to cover up to 55% of the renovation costs.
3. **Follow the Library Improvement Plan and state mandated Technology Plan.**

Infrastructure

Streets – The city is responsible for maintaining approximately 11 miles of paved streets. Even with 2012 taxpayer support to continuing the transportation tax, funding remains a core restrictor. Recent asphalt projects have been measured in just a few short blocks. Continuing this pattern will only ensure a general decline in the quality of our streets. Compounding the problem, short funding has forced the city to ignore sidewalks and curbing which are arguably as important for improving the quality and appearance of a neighborhood as the street itself.

1. **Pursue a new strategy on road maintenance.** Sealing or chip and seal of streets, even if they are not in perfect condition, will allow the city to cover much more of the street inventory quicker. It will also allow funds to go towards sidewalk and curbing repairs which will make the entire system safer and more attractive. Funds can be reserved over time for targeted street repairs.
2. **Pursue “Safe routes to school” grants** to improve sidewalks on collector streets. The new School Superintendent has had success with these grants in the past and can likely help coach the City in pursuing these.
3. **Replace Center St Bridge in 2012** – Primarily driven by Jasper County with federal grants. This includes efforts to correct the road grade on either side of the bridge as well as removal of the RR tracks. The Cross Street Bridge is slated for replacement by 2020.

Water – In 2011, the City received the results of a detailed grant funded water study. This study included very accurate electronic modeling of the city’s water system which will be very helpful for trouble shooting the system and determining the most effective use of city funds for repairs and upgrades. It also detailed a long term vision of the water system in 20 years, including a 10-inch water loop around the city and upgrade of all other lines to a minimum of 6 inches. Between the study recommendations and actions already committed to, steady improvements will continue to be realized in the water system.

1. **Achieve a minimum of 75% accountability of water pumped.** Water accountability includes that billed to accounts, supplied to government operations (i.e. parks, public buildings, etc.), used for emergency services, etc. Prior to 2008 it was roughly 40%. In 2009 it was at 56%. In 2011 the average was _____. Improvements in tracking water pumped will be made through:
 - a. Metering all city owned water meters (i.e. pool, city hall, community building, etc.)
 - b. The Fire Department will provide estimates of all water used for training and calls.
 - c. Continue replacing obsolete commercial meters with more accurate meters.
 - d. Verify the accuracy of the master meter at each well and establish annual calibrations
 - e. Continue annual leak detection efforts
2. **Pursue an annual water tower maintenance agreement.** We have allocated up to \$15,000 per year for tower maintenance and need to use it accordingly.
3. **Continue to reserve funds each year for water line expansion and repair.**

Sewer – The City operates a 150,000 GPD 3-cell lagoon system for wastewater treatment. Lagoon systems appear to be very unpopular with DNR and as such, the City expects to face continued pressure to ultimately change to a treatment plant. The City's stated intent is to postpone any planning for such an expensive upgrade until at least 2018. In the meantime, the intent is to improve the distribution system and consolidate resources. To that end:

1. **Continue Inflow & Infiltration abatement efforts.** Preventing stormwater from entering the wastewater system reduces the workload on the entire system, unintentional releases of untreated sewage, and is a DNR requirement. Reduced I&I issues also indicates successful improvements to the distribution system.
 - a. We will conduct another smoke test in 2012 for I&I prevention.
 - b. Recondition Manhole Risers – 5 per year
 - c. Property owner assistance with abating I&I issues. The City will budget \$1,500 per year to assist qualifying property owners with sewer repairs that eliminate potential public safety issues and / or I&U issues. When used, the property owners agree to make payments to reimburse the City for these emergency repairs. The City will continue to offer this option as a last case scenario and with the Council's approval as funding allows.

2. **Confirm and carry out sewer commitments using dedicated funds.** With major rate increases in years past, the city has committed to specific actions including:
 - a. Lift Station repairs
 - b. Dredging of #1 Lagoon
 - c. Sewer line expansion and repair.
 - d. Reserving funds annually for significant repair expenses equipment replacement and capital improvements.
 - e. Perform sewer inspections, using the newly acquired camera system and rebuilt sewer machine.

3. **When feasible, replace sections of sewer mains prior to new asphalt being laid.**

Stormwater - The City has been advised that, upon posting of the 2010 census, it will be served notice to comply with the National Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program. In addition to becoming compliant with this program, the City will:

1. **Reach a council consensus on how involved the city will be in maintaining Swifty Creek** through the city considering legalities, impact on appearance, economic development, neighborhood stabilization, and preventative maintenance.

2. **Continue to reserve funds** from the Parks and Stormwater Sales tax for future compliance requirements.

Public Safety & Emergency Services

Sarcoxie enjoys the protection of four separate emergency service departments. Each has different responsibilities but share the same common theme of protecting and serving our community.

Police Department - The goal of the city council is to have a competent and competitively paid department that provides 24/7 protection and encourage community involvement and interaction with our citizens. The PD has a council approved Operating Policies & Procedures manual.

1. **Continue the pursuit of grants** to augment equipment and services through grant programs such as the LEST, COPS, and CDBG.
2. **Address numbering on all residential properties in the City.** The local Girl Scout troop has requested this project as a service project. This will greatly assists emergency services getting where they are needed in a timely basis. The city would cover the costs of the labeling and support the GSA in the logistics.

Fire Department – The Sarcoxie Fire Department is a volunteer department that went through major changes in command staff and tasking in 2011. These painful but necessary changes have seen a complete turn around of the department and dramatic improvements in their capabilities and unit cohesion. There is much to do to get the department caught up from years of stagnation but the command staff now in place has the training and experience to make it happens for the benefit of everyone in their service area.

1. **The City will continue an aggressive leadership role in supporting our Fire Department** through oversight, resource allocation, support, and eliminating obstacles.
2. **Improve capabilities of the department** through:
 - a. Maintain ongoing training pace and culture
 - b. Developing written operating procedures
 - c. Developing a written comprehensive plan
 - d. Complete an asset inventory
 - e. Pursue Grants
 - f. Department specific software for tracking operations and mandatory reporting.
 - g. Supplemental accident insurance
3. **Upgrade the radio communication system to comply with federal law.** Federal narrow banding requirements threaten to make the department's radios inoperable by 2013.
4. **Codify the authorization to operate the FD and establish a contract for service with the rural board.**
5. **Pursue a voluntary audit in 2014 to improve the district's ISO rating.** Success in improving the ISO rating would reduce costs for property owners in insurance costs.
6. **Assist the Fire Department in pursuing a taxable fire district** to benefit the department and the residents in the district.

Emergency Management – This office is less than 2 years old but plays a critical role for our community. Emergency Management replaces the former Civil Defense office and is tasked with coordinating and documenting disaster preparations, response, and recovery. A functioning office increases resource availability for disasters as well as cost recovery afterwards.

1. **Codify the position of Emergency Management Director** and ensure available resources to accomplish the mission of the office.
2. **Pursue a grant for an emergency storm siren** with USDA Rural Development.
3. **Complete the federally mandated NIMS emergency plan.**
4. **Complete the federally mandated NIMS training.**
5. **Work with MGE to get a map overlay of the natural gas system in the city.**
6. **Complete 1 multi department desktop training exercise.**

Sentinels – This group of volunteers report to the Police Chief and serves in traffic control and public assistance during special events. They are trained to assist with emergency operations when disaster strikes.

1. The City will **support the Sentinels** in growing membership, improving training and equipment, and expanding services for our community.

City Government & Administration

The City's elected officials are primarily responsible and committed to pursue the goals of the comprehensive plan and bring available resources to bear to achieve them. Most goals of the plan are directly in line with good governing.

An important priority has to include securing city government's basic systems. In addition to the actions detailed in the supplemental action plans, the following system actions will be pursued:

Council

1. Continue supporting local organizations and events in our city. The success and growth of these types of organizations and events strengthen a positive image and are a net benefit to the community.
2. The Council will continue to review and modernize 3 chapters of ordinances per year.
3. Utility rates will be reviewed annually to ensure they cover operating and maintenance costs.
4. Review out of town water and sewer rates to ensure they are fair to all involved parties.
5. Work on real estate issues per the 12/20/11 closed session.

City Hall

1. Complete written office procedures which include cash handling, accounts payable, records retention, etc.
2. Establish a written personnel manual
3. Simplify and improve the accounting system by consolidating all possible operations under a single account.
4. Ensure the TIF system is operating properly.
5. Complete the asset inventory from all departments to ensure we are properly insured and have a fair accounting of assets.
6. City Hall personnel will take a more active role in assisting volunteer groups such as the park board on administrative projects as provided by the groups (i.e. calling for quotes, getting information, making calls, etc.)
7. Council re-approve all Water & Sewer Utility Procedures
8. Consider administrative charges to better distribute costs
9. Consolidate the fax and 2nd phone line as a cost savings measure.

Library

1. Transfer the library's automation system from server to cloud based and go back to a network system for cost, support, and reliability improvements. This needs to be done ASAP.
2. Consolidate phone and fax line as a cost saving measure.

Water & Sewer

1. Elected officials review of all State and federally required water & sewer records.
2. Review Work Order Software to better track work flow and cost centers and as a means to verify critical work requirements.