

Amarillo

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Adopted October 12, 2010





November 12, 2010

Mr. Kelley Shaw
Planning Director
City of Amarillo
PO Box 1971
Amarillo, Texas 79105-1971

Dear Kelley:

We are pleased to submit the final Amarillo Comprehensive Plan as unanimously adopted by the City Commission on October 12, 2010. The plan document was prepared in accordance with our Professional Services Agreement with the City, and with the assistance of subconsultant Parkhill, Smith & Cooper.

This new long-range plan aims to maintain a community of strong neighborhoods, both new and old; protect and build on Amarillo's economic asset areas (e.g., medical center, airport, retail areas); better manage growth at the city's fringe; ensure adequate provision of infrastructure, parks and public services as new development occurs; accommodate safer and more convenient circulation of pedestrians and bicycles; and continue to enhance Amarillo's image and aesthetics. Recognizing these opportunities and challenges, this plan also elevates the concept of community character, which is a way of looking beyond just the use of land to those site and building design features that influence the "look and feel" – and the true compatibility – of development.

Priorities and action strategies in this plan originated from varied community outreach efforts including informal listening sessions with a cross section of residents and leaders, community forums held in each quadrant of the city in Fall 2009, a hands-on "maps and markers" workshop, eight working sessions with an appointed Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, and a special joint workshop between the committee, Planning & Zoning Commission and City Commission prior to final public hearings and plan adoption. Now attention turns to the pursuit of near-term action initiatives while maintaining a focus on the longer-term vision and strategic direction set by the plan. Change is inevitable, but positive, beneficial change for Amarillo will require the ongoing commitment of all who contributed their time and ideas to this plan.

On behalf of our firm, it has been a pleasure working with all involved. We sincerely appreciated the opportunity to lend our professional skills and experience to this process. We look forward to seeing the continued success and enhancement of Amarillo in the years ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

KENDIG KEAST COLLABORATIVE

Gary Mitchell, AICP
Vice President

Performance Concepts in Planning
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ORDINANCE NO. 7243

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE CITY OF AMARILLO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 213 OF THE TEXAS LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE; DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PLAN TO THE CITY'S DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS; PROVIDING A SAVINGS CLAUSE; PROVIDING A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE; PROVIDING A REPEALER CLAUSE; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, Chapter 213 of the Texas Local Government Code ("Chapter 213") provides that municipalities may adopt comprehensive plans for the purposes of promoting the sound development of the municipality and promoting the public health, safety, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 213 further provides that the municipality may define the content and design of a comprehensive plan, and define the relationship between the comprehensive plan and the city's development regulations; and

WHEREAS, the Amarillo City Commission appointed a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee which, in association with City staff and paid consultants, undertook a series of studies and held public meetings to discuss the comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, the Amarillo Planning and Zoning Commission has held public hearings on the City of Amarillo Comprehensive Plan (the "Comprehensive Plan") and at their meeting held on September 27, 2010, recommended approval of the Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan contains general policies suggestions and guidelines that are proposed to be used by the City of Amarillo to guide the orderly growth, development and redevelopment of the city through the promulgation of land use and development ordinances, in decisions regarding the provisions of City of Amarillo services and capital improvements, and in other policy considerations by the Amarillo City Commission and its various boards, commissions, and committees; and

WHEREAS, the Amarillo City Commission finds that public hearings and review by the Amarillo Planning and Zoning Commission were held on this Ordinance as required by law, and the Amarillo City Commission has heard and considered all comments made at said hearings or in writing;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF AMARILLO:

SECTION 1. That the City Commission of the City of Amarillo hereby approves and adopts the document titled the *City of Amarillo Comprehensive Plan*, being attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference for all purposes, as the City of Amarillo's Comprehensive Plan.

SECTION 2. The City of Amarillo Comprehensive Plan adopted herein supersedes and replaces the Amarillo Comprehensive Plan approved and adopted by the Amarillo City Commission by Resolution No. 11-30-89-2.

SECTION 3. The Comprehensive Plan is hereby declared to be a plan for the long range development of the Amarillo community, and will be used as a guide and companion document to the land use and development regulations of the City of Amarillo. The City of Amarillo recognizes that circumstances may change in ways not anticipated by the Comprehensive Plan,

and the Amarillo City Commission reserves the right to legislatively determine that the Comprehensive Plan needs amendment. Any such amendment shall not be granted without careful study and consideration, but must be made only on a showing of changed circumstances.

SECTION 4. The Amarillo City Commission may refer any requested amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to City staff and such committees as may be appropriate, including the Planning and Zoning Commission, for further study and recommendations.

SECTION 5. The Amarillo City Commission reserves the right to amend the Comprehensive Plan at any time by adding or removing elements or by amending in part or in whole the elements listed in the Plan.

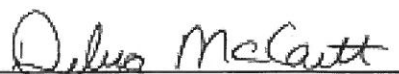
SECTION 6. Savings. Until such time as the existing zoning, subdivision and other land use and development regulations of the City of Amarillo are amended to conform with the Comprehensive Plan, the terms and provisions of such existing land use and development regulations shall control in the event of any conflict or inconsistency with such Comprehensive Plan.

SECTION 7. Severability. If any provision, section, subsection, sentence, clause or the application of same to any person or set of circumstances for any reason is held to be unconstitutional, void or invalid or for any reason unenforceable, the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance or the application thereby shall remain in effect, it being the intent of the City Commission of the City of Amarillo, in adopting this ordinance, that no portion thereof or provision contained herein shall become inoperative or fail by any reasons of unconstitutionality of any other portion or provision.


SECTION 8. Repealer. All ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of conflict with this ordinance.

SECTION 9. Publishing and Effective Date. This ordinance shall be published and become effective according to law.

INTRODUCED AND PASSED by the City Commission of the City of Amarillo, Texas, on First Reading this the 5th day of October, 2010; and PASSED on Second and Final Reading the 12th day of October, 2010.


Debra McCarth, Mayor

ATTEST:


Donna DeRight, City Secretary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Thanks Also To ...

Individual residents,
business owners,
property owners,
community organizations,
and others who
participated in and
contributed their insights
and ideas to Amarillo's
long-range planning
process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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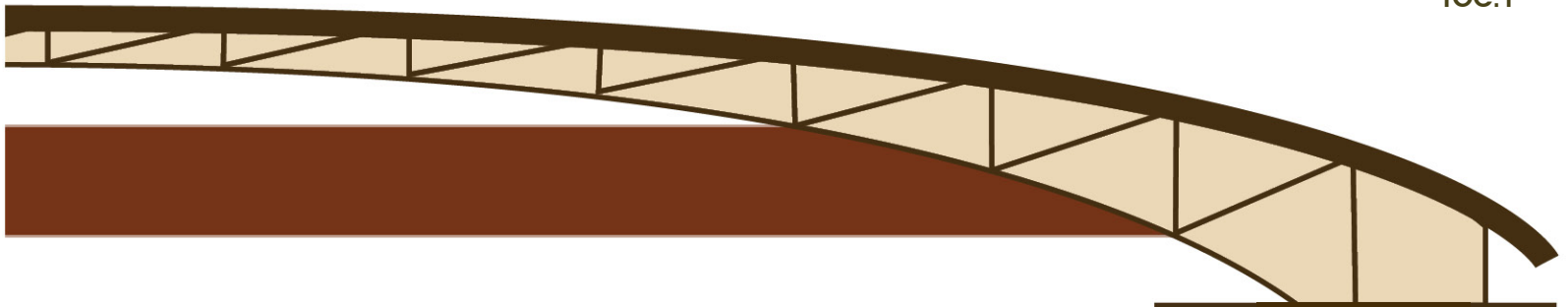


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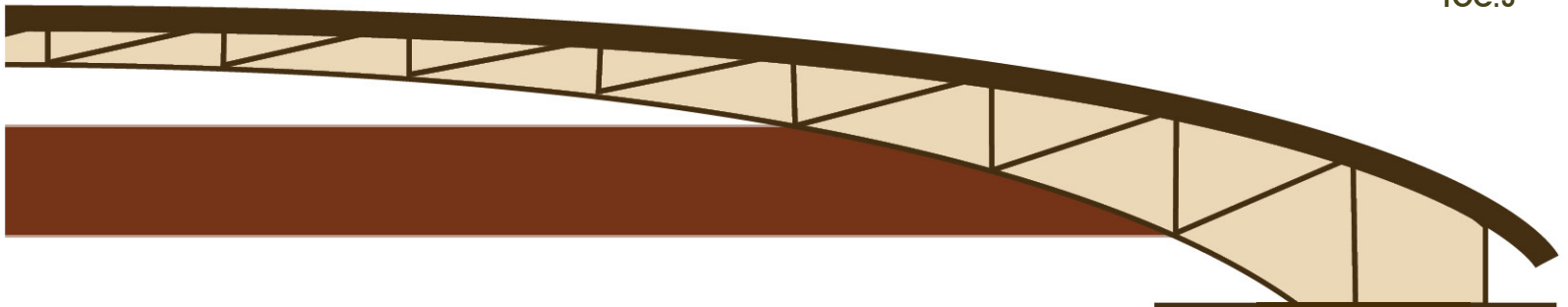
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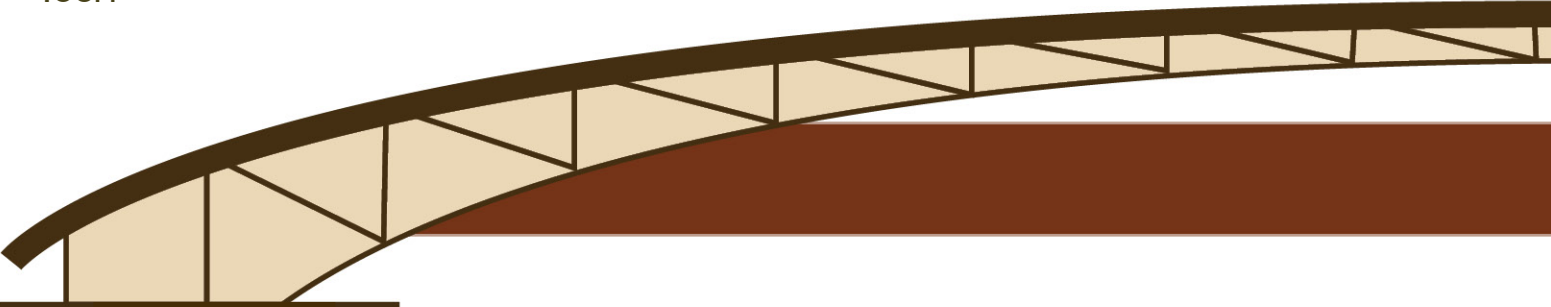


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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Amarillo Comprehensive Plan is designed as a framework for guiding future development, redevelopment, and community enhancement in the City and its surrounding planning area over the next 20 years and beyond. The purpose of this plan is to establish a vision, along with realistic goals and achievable strategies, that residents, business and land owners, major institutions, civic groups, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and public officials prefer—and will support with action—in the years ahead.

In geographic terms, this Comprehensive Plan addresses the 100.2 square miles within the City limits of Amarillo, as well as areas anticipated for growth and development in coming years within Amarillo's five-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Amarillo is the largest city in the Texas Panhandle area and is, therefore, a natural hub for freight movement, health and educational services, and arts and entertainment, and a key retail trade center for much of the Panhandle plus a multi-state area. The City sits at the crossroads of America, almost equidistant from both coasts, with direct highway links to Oklahoma City to the east, Denver to the north, and Albuquerque to the west. It is a freestanding municipality within Texas located 125 miles north of Lubbock, 224 miles northwest of Wichita Falls, and about 350 miles northwest of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Amarillo is in southern Potter County and extends into Randall County, and it is the county seat of Potter County.

While change in the community is inevitable in coming years, there are fundamental decisions that must be addressed in a rational, holistic manner:

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- ★ What type of growth do we want and where should it occur?
- ★ How do we achieve our economic objectives?
- ★ What improvements and enhancements will be needed?
- ★ How do we want our community to appear?
- ★ What are our priorities for achieving our intended future?

The comprehensive planning process is intended not only to celebrate accomplishments of the past, but also as an opportunity to anticipate and address challenges of the future. Land use and transportation changes in the area require attention to ensure that current development efforts are true to the traditions of Amarillo. There are many policy and infrastructure decisions being made on a regular basis that also relate to this plan. In some cases the Comprehensive Plan will offer guidance to decision-makers for challenges only now emerging while other sections reinforce established policies that should be carried forward as a sure and sound basis for future development and redevelopment.

Whether an issue is a challenge or an opportunity, the utmost importance should be placed upon this plan as a mechanism for thoughtful public discussion of the issues and choices facing Amarillo. As the community looks ahead to its near- and longer-term future, the desires of residents are woven through all aspects of this plan. From parks to neighborhoods to downtown, there are many community assets that this plan strives to strengthen to Amarillo's fullest advantage. Local residents have demonstrated their ability to manage and improve an appealing community for more than a century, and this plan seeks to continue that tradition.

PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A comprehensive plan is usually the most important policy document a municipal government prepares and maintains. This is because the plan:

- ★ lays out a "big picture" vision and associated goals regarding the future growth and enhancement of the community;
- ★ considers at once the entire geographic area of the community, including areas where new development and redevelopment may occur; and,

- ★ assesses near- and longer-term needs and desires across a variety of inter-related topics that represent the key “building blocks” of a community (e.g., land use, transportation, urban design, economic development, redevelopment, neighborhoods, parks and recreation, utility infrastructure, public facilities and services, etc.).

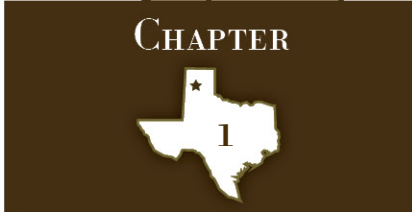
Through a comprehensive plan, a community determines how best to accommodate and manage its projected growth, as well as the redevelopment of older neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. Like most similar plans, this Comprehensive Plan is aimed at ensuring that ongoing development and redevelopment will proceed in an orderly, well-planned manner so that public facilities and services can keep pace and residents’ quality of life will be enhanced. Significantly, by clarifying and stating the City’s intentions regarding the area’s physical development and infrastructure investment, the plan also creates a greater level of predictability for residents, land owners, developers, and potential investors.

Use of this Plan

A comprehensive plan, if prepared well and embraced by the City and its leadership, has the potential to take a community to a whole new level in terms of livability and tangible accomplishments. However, comprehensive plans are only words and images on paper if their action recommendations are not pursued and effectively implemented.

The plan is ultimately a guidance document for City officials and staff, who must make decisions on a daily basis that will determine the future direction, financial health, and “look and feel” of the community. These decisions are carried out through:

- ★ targeted programs and expenditures prioritized through the City’s annual budget process, including routine but essential functions such as code enforcement;
- ★ major public improvements and land acquisition financed through the City’s capital improvement program and related bond initiatives;
- ★ new and amended City ordinances and regulations closely linked to comprehensive plan objectives (and associated review and approval



“Planning” is ... the process of identifying issues and needs, establishing goals and objectives, and determining the most effective means by which these ends may be achieved.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANNING
 The success of the plan depends upon how it is integrated with the operation of local government (planning, policy development, regulation, budgeting and capital investments, and programming through City departments).

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procedures in the case of land development, subdivisions, and zoning matters);

- ★ departmental work plans and staffing in key areas;
- ★ support for ongoing planning and studies that will further clarify needs, costs, benefits, and strategies;
- ★ pursuit of external grant funding to supplement local budgets and/or expedite certain projects; and,
- ★ initiatives pursued in conjunction with other public and private partners to leverage resources and achieve successes neither could accomplish on their own.

Despite these many avenues for action, a comprehensive plan should not be considered a “cure all” for every tough problem a community faces. On the one hand, such plans tend to focus on the responsibilities of City government in the physical planning arena, where cities normally have a more direct and extensive role than in other areas that residents value, such as education, social services, and arts and culture. Of necessity, comprehensive plans, as vision and policy documents, also must remain relatively general and conceptual. The resulting plan may not touch on every challenge before the community, but it is meant to set a tone and motivate concerted efforts to move the community forward in coming years.

It is also important to distinguish between the function of the comprehensive plan relative to the City’s development regulations, such as the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. The plan establishes overall policy for future land use, road improvements, utilities, and other aspects of community growth and enhancement. The City’s zoning ordinance and official zoning district map then implement the plan in terms of specific land uses and building and site development standards. The City’s subdivision regulations also establish standards in conformance with the plan for the physical subdivision of land, the layout of new or redeveloped streets and building sites, and the design and construction of roads, water and sewer lines, storm drainage, and other infrastructure that will be dedicated to the City for long-term maintenance.

Planning Authority

State Support for Community Planning – Section 213 of the Texas Local Government Code

Unlike some other states, municipalities in Texas are not mandated by state government to prepare and maintain local comprehensive plans. However, Section 213 of the Texas Local Government Code provides that, “The governing body of a municipality may adopt a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the municipality.” The Code also cites the basic

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PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Section 2-6-123 of the Amarillo Code of Ordinances establishes the Commission. As stated in this section, “The commission is appointed by the City Commission as an advisory body to it and which is authorized to recommend changes in zoning.” The powers and duties of the Planning & Zoning Commission include:

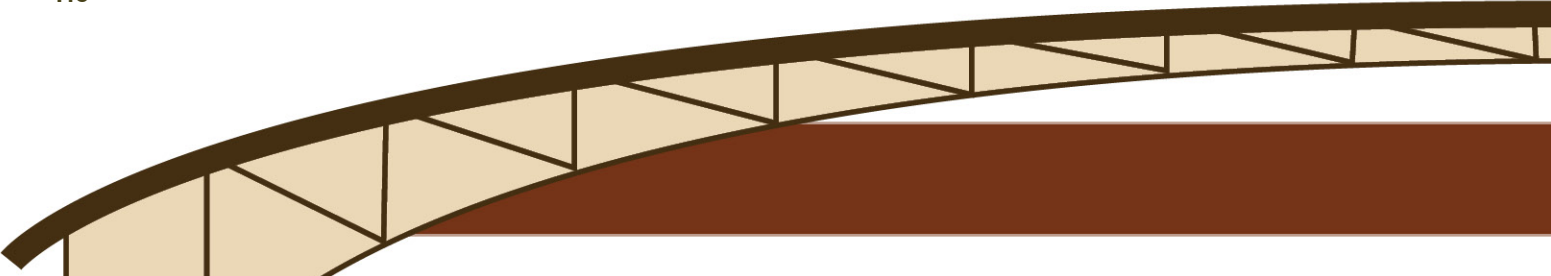
1. Make an annual report to the City Commission concerning the preceding year's activities and recommendations for future projects;
2. Perform special studies and make recommendations on issues and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the City which may be related to the comprehensive planning process of the City;
3. Review and approve Subdivision Plats and the dedication and vacation of Streets, Alleys, Easements and other public facilities associated with Plats;
4. Prepare and recommend a Zoning Map and exercise authorities and powers granted by the state zoning enabling act;
5. Make recommendations for public improvements;
6. Make recommendations through the City Commission to any public authorities, corporations or individuals in the City or in the extraterritorial jurisdiction concerning the relocation of building structures or works to be erected or constructed by them; and,
7. Prepare studies and make recommendations on annexations.


reasons for long-range, comprehensive community planning by stating that, “The powers granted under this chapter are for the purposes of promoting sound development of municipalities and promoting public health, safety and welfare.” The Code also gives Texas municipalities the freedom to “define the content and design” of their plans, although Section 213 suggests that a comprehensive plan may:

- (1) include but is not limited to provisions on land use, transportation, and public facilities;

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- (2) consist of a single plan or a coordinated set of plans organized by subject and geographic area; and,
- (3) be used to coordinate and guide the establishment of development regulations.

The Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for the ongoing development and redevelopment of the community with respect to land use, thoroughfares and streets, and other matters affecting development within the City.

Why Plan?

Local planning allows the City of Amarillo to have a greater measure of control over its destiny rather than simply reacting to change. Planning enables the City to manage future growth and development actively as opposed to reacting to development proposals on a case-by-case basis without adequate and necessary consideration of community-wide issues.

The process required to update the Amarillo Comprehensive Plan may prove more valuable to the community than the plan itself since the document is ultimately only a snapshot in time. The planning process involves major community decisions about where development and redevelopment will

occur, the nature and extent of future development, and the community's capability to provide the necessary public services and facilities to support this development. This leads to pivotal discussions about what is "best" for the community and how everything from taxes to "quality of life" will be affected.

Long-range planning also provides an opportunity for the City's elected and appointed officials to step back from pressing, day-to-day issues and clarify their ideas on the kind of community they are trying to create and maintain. Through the plan development process, they can look broadly at programs for neighborhoods, housing, economic development, and provision of public infrastructure and facilities and how these efforts may

relate to one another. The Amarillo Comprehensive Plan represents a "big picture" of the City, one that can be related to the trends and interests of the broader region as well as the State of Texas.

CHOICES AND PRIORITIES
 For the plan to be effective, community issues must be researched and analyzed, solutions and alternatives evaluated, and a realistic and feasible plan of action put in place to overcome particular problems. The evaluation of alternatives for resolving issues—and the selection of one or more strategies that are both reasonable and acceptable—are essential elements of the community planning process.

In summary, important reasons for long-range planning in Amarillo include:

- ★ To provide a balance of land uses and services throughout the community to meet the needs and desires of the City's population.
- ★ To ensure adequate public facilities to meet the demands of future development and redevelopment.
- ★ To achieve an efficient development pattern that reflects the values of the community.
- ★ To ensure the long-term protection and enhancement of the image and visual appearance of the community.
- ★ To involve local citizens in the decision-making process and reach consensus on the future vision for Amarillo and its ongoing development.
- ★ To guide annual work programs and prioritize improvements consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT – “EARLY AND OFTEN”

Local planning is often the most direct and efficient way to involve residents and other stakeholders in determining the vision for their community. The process of plan preparation provides a rare opportunity for two-way communication between citizens and local government officials as to their aspirations for the community and the details of how their shared vision is to be achieved.

The Plan results in a series of guiding principles and policies that, ideally, will guide the City in administering development regulations; determining the location, financing, and sequencing of public improvements; and guiding reinvestment and redevelopment efforts. The Plan also provides a means of coordinating the actions of many different departments and divisions within and outside the City.

Specific community outreach and leadership involvement activities conducted in support of this Comprehensive Plan included:

- ★ 7 small-group interview sessions conducted with a cross section of Amarillo residents, business owners, public officials, and representatives of community organizations.

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- ★ 4 community forum events, each held in a different quadrant of the City.
- ★ 7 working sessions between a City-appointed Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and the plan consultant and City staff.
- ★ A “maps and markers” community workshop event, hosted by the Steering Committee, to provide for “hands-on” discussion of land use, transportation, and other physical planning issues.
- ★ Periodic briefings to the Planning & Zoning Commission and City Commission.
- ★ Periodic updates and posting of Plan-related information on the City’s website.
- ★ Associated media coverage of the planning process, particularly through the *Amarillo Globe-News*.

The ability to implement the Plan effectively is directly correlated to the amount of citizen and stakeholder participation and the sense of ownership derived from the process. The Plan contains many components and serves numerous functions, such as providing information, describing existing community conditions and characteristics, and establishing policies and strategies for overcoming challenges and capitalizing on opportunities.

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**INSIGHTS FROM AMARILLO RESIDENTS**

Through the course of small-group interviews conducted at the start of the comprehensive planning process, various comments summarized broader planning issues facing Amarillo. For example:

What are some considerations related to land use and community character in Amarillo?

- ★ "A town gets its character from Downtown. We need a viable Downtown."
- ★ "The Comprehensive Plan is going to be a great tool to guide zoning changes. As a land owner I am concerned what could go next to me due to the current uncertainty of the zoning process."
- ★ "We need professional jobs to retain youth. We also need to look into activities and interests for absorption of 25-40 year olds."
- ★ "Providing awnings and bringing back the wonderful neon signs can make a huge difference to the character of downtown."

How should Amarillo's growth—and capacity for growth—be managed?

- ★ "The big challenge is infill. It's easy for developers to build on the fringes rather than infill."
- ★ "The ETJ needs to meet City development standards but lacks enforcement. The City does not indulge in involuntary annexations. To protect the City's interest it should have involuntary annexations and zone those properties."
- ★ "People go where there are jobs. We do need to be cognizant of the types of industries we attract. Is the company diverse in its hiring? The industries need to be good for all ethnic groups in Amarillo."
- ★ "We have to drive some growth north of town—south is getting too busy."
- ★ "As we grow we dilute our fire and police. These issues need to be addressed."

What improvements are needed for better mobility?

- ★ "Need more sidewalks and trails, and to improve the connectivity of sidewalks and trails."
- ★ "Need transportation alternatives."

How to address existing and future housing needs and neighborhood quality?

- ★ "Need to address inappropriate uses in close proximity, which could destroy existing stable communities."
- ★ "Residential presence in downtown is essential."
- ★ "Need historic preservation."

What changes are needed for better image and amenities?

- ★ "Compliance with the tree ordinance makes a big difference."
- ★ "Sports make a huge impact in our quality of life. There is a need for a sports arena. The current facilities are mediocre."
- ★ "Need beautification along corridors. Need to restrict huge signs along I-40."

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COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Before looking to the future, it is important to consider past, current, and projected community conditions through a brief socioeconomic assessment.

Renewed Population Growth

Over the last 60-plus years, Amarillo has increased its population roughly four-fold. During the same timeframe, Potter County more than doubled its overall population and Randall County grew from less than 10,000 residents in 1940 to more than 100,000 today. The historical growth of these jurisdictions is displayed in **Table 1.1, Population History of Amarillo and Potter and Randall Counties**.

TABLE 1.1
Population History of Amarillo and Potter and Randall Counties

Year	Amarillo Population	Percent Change	City Share of Potter & Randall County Population	Potter County Population	Percent Change	Randall County Population	Percent Change
1930	43,132	-	81.15%	46,080	-	7,071	-
1940	51,686	19.80%	84.11%	54,265	17.80%	7,185	1.60%
1950	74,246	43.60%	85.20%	73,366	35.20%	13,774	91.70%
1960	137,969	85.80%	92.29%	115,580	57.50%	33,913	146.20%
1970	127,010	-7.90%	87.96%	90,511	-21.70%	53,885	58.90%
1980	149,230	17.50%	85.91%	98,637	9.00%	75,062	39.30%
1990	157,615	5.60%	84.04%	97,874	-0.80%	89,673	19.50%
2000	173,627	10.20%	79.70%	113,546	16.00%	104,312	16.30%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

From 1930 to 1960, Amarillo grew dramatically from fewer than 45,000 to almost 138,000 residents. This trend averaged about a five percent increase in population annually. Between 1940 and 1960 the City was growing at an average of about 7 percent per year. The establishment of Amarillo Army Air Base in 1942 contributed to this increase in City population as well as the growth of Potter and Randall counties' populations.

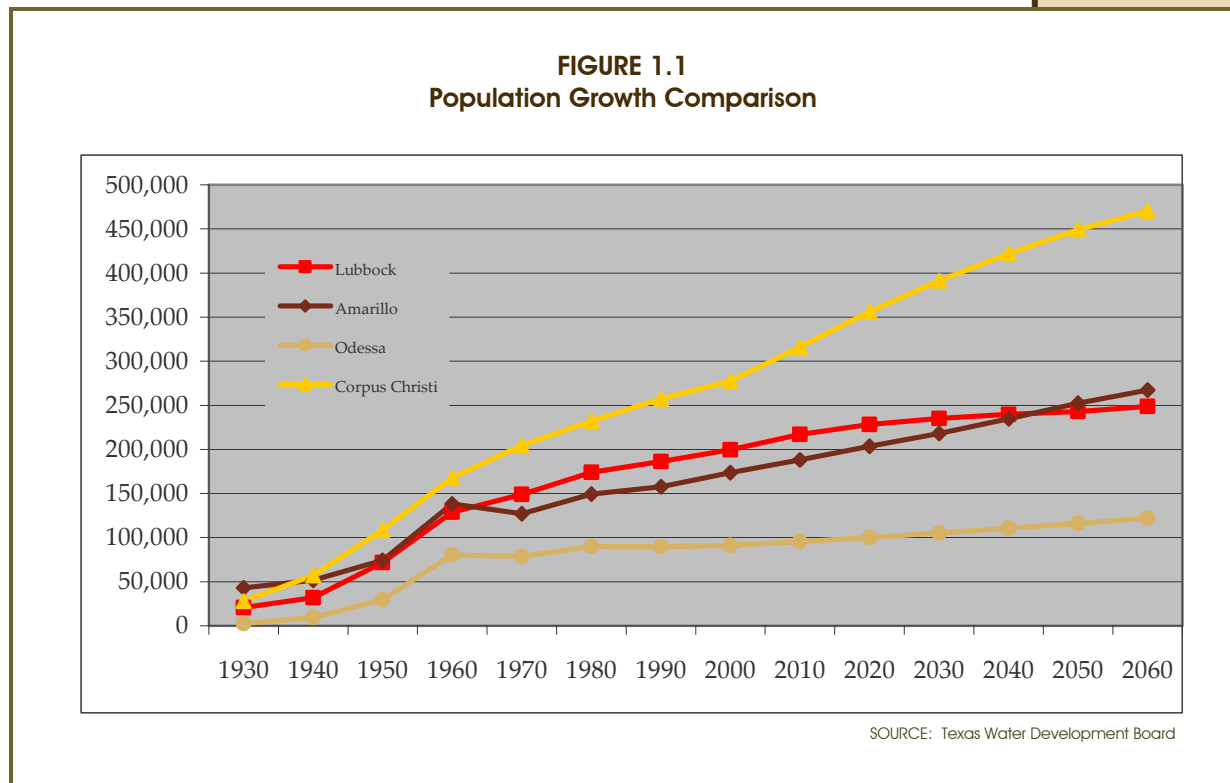
After 1960, the City began losing residents and Amarillo’s population fell from 137,969 to 127,010 in 1970. This loss was due to the closing of the Air Force Base. Potter County’s population declined by 21.7 percent during the 1960s. Randall County’s population growth rate also slowed from 1960 onwards.

Renewed growth in the ensuing decades has added approximately 40,000 residents to the City since 1980. The 2009 U.S. Census Bureau population estimate for Amarillo was 189,389, compared to a local City of Amarillo estimate of 191,500. The Texas State Data Center estimate as of May 2010 was 188,004.



Continued Steady Growth?

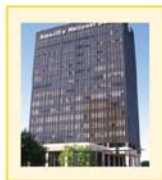
Displayed in **Figure 1.1, Population Growth Comparison**, is the previous and projected future growth of the City of Amarillo compared to several other



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Amarillo Historical Timeline



1892

Amarillo National Bank was founded.

1888

Bonds were voted for a two-story brick courthouse to replace the original small frame building and for Amarillo's first school.

1900

Population 1,442.



1905

The Amarillo Independent School District was formed.

1908

Amarillo Street Railway Company began operating its electric streetcar lines.

1913

Amarillo was the first city in Texas and only the fifth in the nation to adopt a City Commission/ City Manager form of government.

Images

- (1892) Amarillo National Bank, Source: Flickr-Photo Sharing
- (1902) St. Anthony's Hospital, Source: Baptist St. Anthony's Health System website
- (1905) Amarillo Independent School District, Source: Official website for AISD
- (1910) West Texas A&M University, Source: www.wtamu.edu
- (1942) Amarillo Air Force Base, Source: Panoramio website
- (1948) American Quarter Horse Association, Source: Wikipedia
- (1974) Cadillac Ranch, Source: www.texastravel.hu
- (2003) Texas Panhandle War Memorial, Source: Wikipedia
- (2006) Globe-News Center, Source: Globe-News Center Gallery

Early Years

Amarillo is the commercial center of the Texas Panhandle. In 1887, Amarillo boomed as a cattle-marketing center. By 1890 Amarillo had emerged as one of the world's busiest cattle-shipping points.

Ellwood Park, the first of Amarillo's many city parks, was established in the 1890s.

1887

J.T. Berry arrived from Abilene to plat the new town.

Amarillo became Potter County seat and the first railroad freight service came to the area.

1890

Population 482.

1902

St. Anthony's Hospital, the first hospital in the Panhandle, was erected.



1906

New stone courthouse and jail were completed.

1910

Population 9,957.

West Texas State College was founded.



1929

The U.S. Bureau of Mines' Amarillo Helium Plant was completed, and the city was on the way to becoming "Center of the Helium Industry".

Amarillo International Airport opened.



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Amarillo Historical Timeline

 1948 The American Quarter Horse Association(AQHA) moved its headquarters to Amarillo.	 1974 The Cadillac Ranch, located along old historic Route 66, brings international attention to Amarillo.	 2006 Globe-News Center for Performing Arts opened.
1940 Population 51,686.	1968 Amarillo Air Force Base closed.	1995 Working Ranch Cowboy Association (WRCA) was created.
2000 Population 173,627.		

Air Force Base Establishment	Recent History in the Last 10 Years
During the late 1960s a municipal building, a civic center, a branch library, a corporation court building, High Plains Baptist Hospital, and a multimillion-dollar medical center were built.	In the 1980s the Santa Fe and Burlington National railroads provided freight service, and Amarillo International Airport served five major airlines.

1942 Amarillo Army Air Base (later known as Amarillo Air Force Base) was established. 	1950 Population 74,246.	1960 Population 137,969.	1970 Population 127,010. Texas State Technical Institute opened campus on the former Air Force Base grounds.	1980 Population 149,230.	1990 Population 157,615.	1999 Bell Helicopter Textron opened a helicopter assembly plant.	2003 Texas Panhandle War Memorial dedicated. 	2008 Downtown Amarillo Strategic Plan completed.
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Texas cities sometimes used as benchmarks for Amarillo: Corpus Christi, Lubbock, and Odessa. These projections are from the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB).

All four cities have experienced periods of rapid growth in their history, with Odessa, like Amarillo, also having dealt with some population loss. The TWDB projections suggest a leveling off of Lubbock's growth in coming decades, while both Amarillo and Corpus Christi will maintain relatively steady growth rates, and Odessa will see limited growth.

Factors in Employability and Income Potential

The level of education within a community determines the capabilities of the area labor force. This, in turn, influences the types of businesses that come to or remain in a community, as well as the success certain businesses will have at finding the types of labor skills they require. **Figure 1.2, Educational Attainment Comparison**, shows that Amarillo residents compare closely with the entire state of Texas and Potter County, though attaining less education overall in comparison to all of Randall County. As of 2006-2008 estimates, Amarillo had a higher rate of residents who graduated high school or better (80.7 percent) than Corpus Christi, Odessa, Potter County, and the statewide level—and also compared closely with Lubbock (84.3 percent). Just under a fifth of Amarillo residents (19.9 percent) had a bachelor's degree or higher, which was less than the Texas (25.1 percent) or Randall County (28.8 percent) averages yet greater than the Potter County level (14.4 percent).

Level of education, skills, and transportation access all factor into the "employability" of individuals, which, in turn, determines one's income-earning potential. Displayed in **Figure 1.3, Income Comparison**, are the median household and per capita income levels of Amarillo residents, based on 2006-2008 estimates, relative to the three comparison cities, Potter County, Randall County, the State of Texas, and the nation. Amarillo has a per capita income (\$22,724) and a median household income (\$42,886) similar to most comparison cities, and exceeds Potter County's income level. Among the comparison cities, Lubbock had the lowest median household income at \$41,549, which reflects a sizable university student population. Meanwhile, Odessa had the highest per capita income (\$24,742) and median household income (\$48,944). Randall County (\$28,318 per capita; \$55,977 median household), the State of Texas (\$24,709 per capita; \$49,078 median household),

and the United States (\$27,466 per capita; \$52,175 median household) were all above Amarillo's income levels.

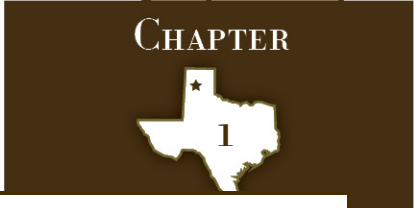
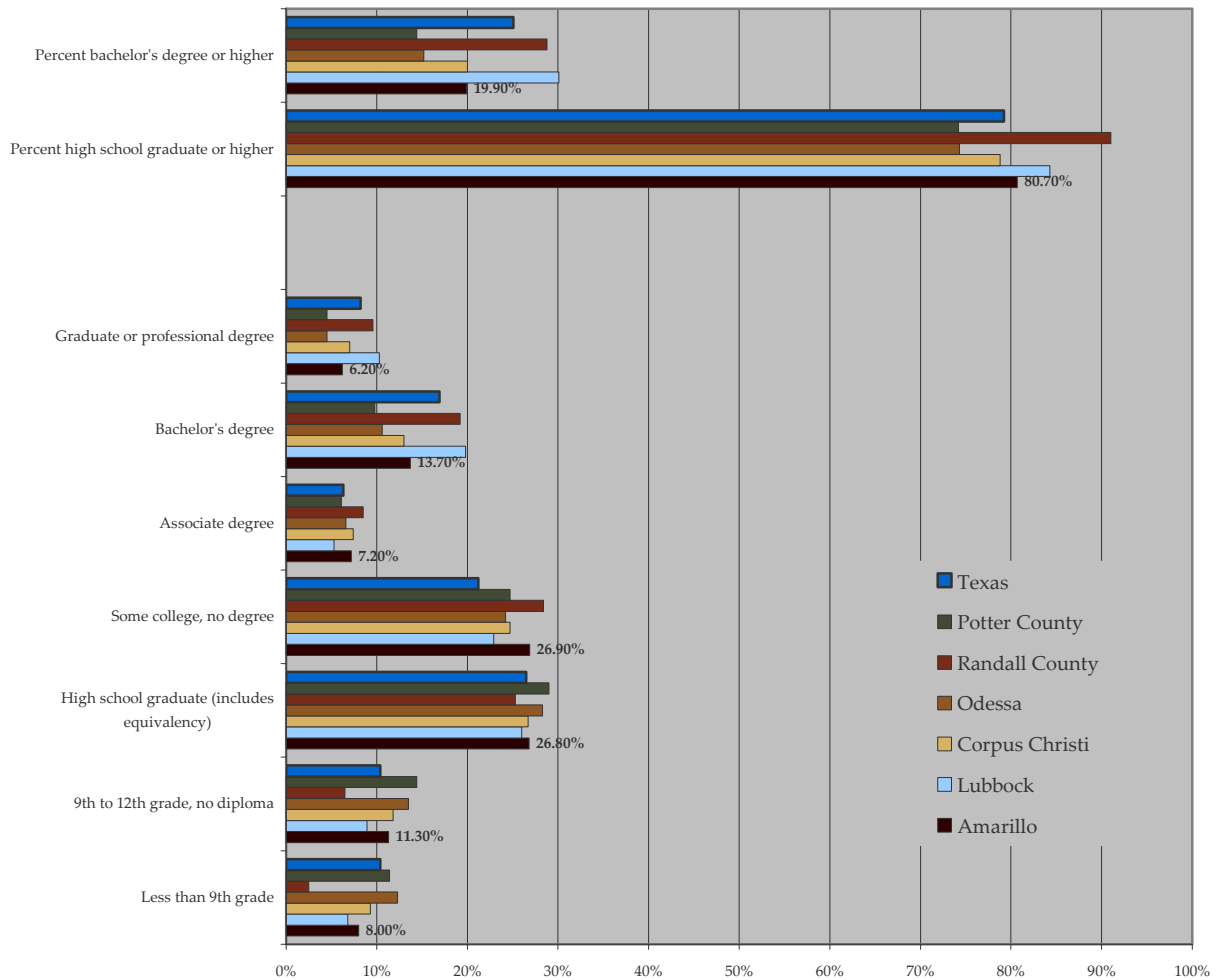


FIGURE 1.2
Educational Attainment Comparison



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

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Panhandle Twenty/20 and Educational Attainment

Since 2003, a committed group of concerned residents has worked to create a regional plan for the future of Amarillo and its surrounding area. Panhandle Twenty/20 seeks to address educational attainment, social services for families, water, recycling, and other issues facing the Panhandle region.

Regarding educational attainment, Panhandle Twenty/20 produced the 2007 report, *The Panhandle Imperative: Economic Implications of Educational Attainment in Amarillo and the Texas Panhandle*, which presented these cautionary statistics:

- ★ Amarillo and the Panhandle at large rank below state and national averages in the number of adults with a bachelor's degree or above.
- ★ 1 in 4 Panhandle adults lacks a high school diploma (1 in 5 in Amarillo).
- ★ Less than 18% of area adults have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- ★ More than 50% of Panhandle adults have no more than a high school diploma.
- ★ Amarillo ranked 149th among 200 cities for educational attainment in a *Forbes* study.
- ★ 58.8% of area school children are on the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.
- ★ Texas ranks last in states for the number of adults over age 25 with a high school diploma.
- ★ Texas is 3rd for percentage of adults over 25 with less than a 9th grade education.
- ★ Texas is 44th for percentage of children living in poverty.

The report outlined the economic consequences of an uneducated population and noted that **"if current trends remain, the future workforce needed for a vibrant economy may no longer exist in the Texas Panhandle."**

A follow-up 2008 publication, *A Community in Action – an update on community solutions in response to educational attainment concerns*, outlined goals to:

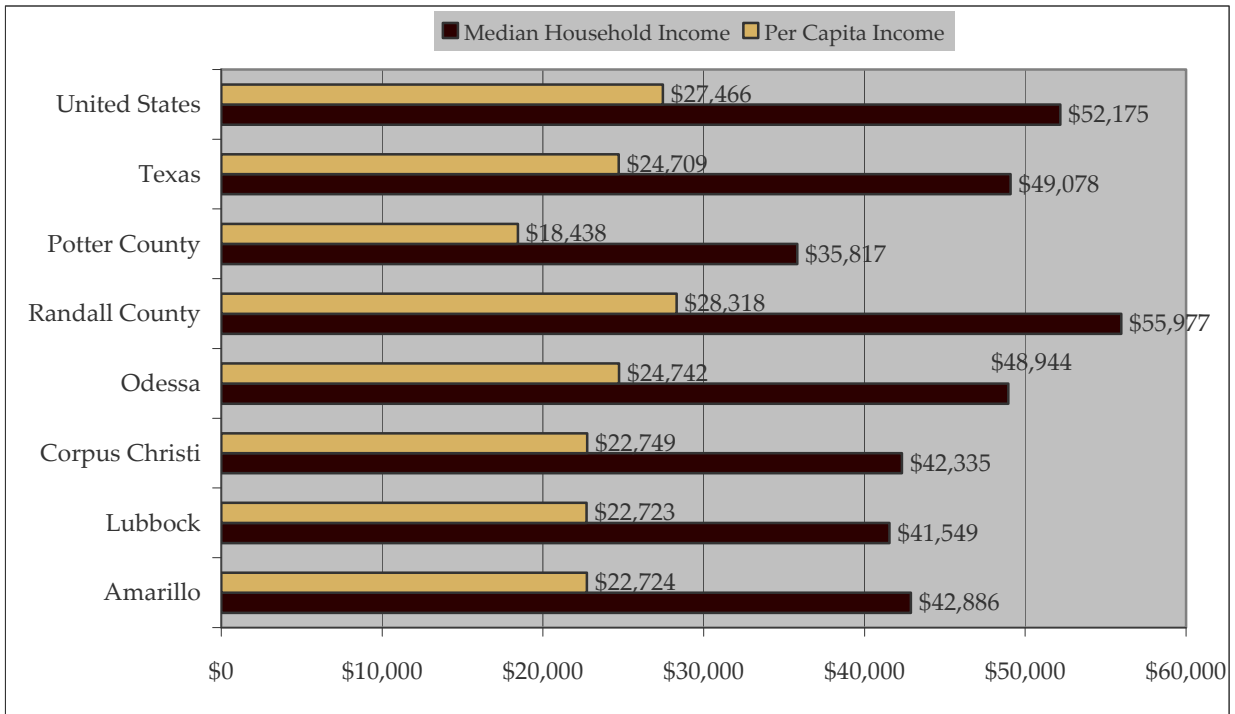
- ★ Create a Culture of Expectation
- ★ Improve Access
- ★ Connect Our Resources
- ★ Create a Career Vision
- ★ Encourage Educational Rigor, Relevance and Innovation

The report gave recommendations for each of the goals including information on businesses and educational institutions that can be enlisted in achieving higher education for residents, contributing to the future economic vitality of the region.

"Students are totally unaware of the career opportunities that exist in our community. Internship programs allow them to gain experience and knowledge that will literally change their lives by building self-confidence and making good, sound decisions about life."

LeAnn Estep
Director, Career & Technical Education
Amarillo ISD

FIGURE 1.3
Income Comparison



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

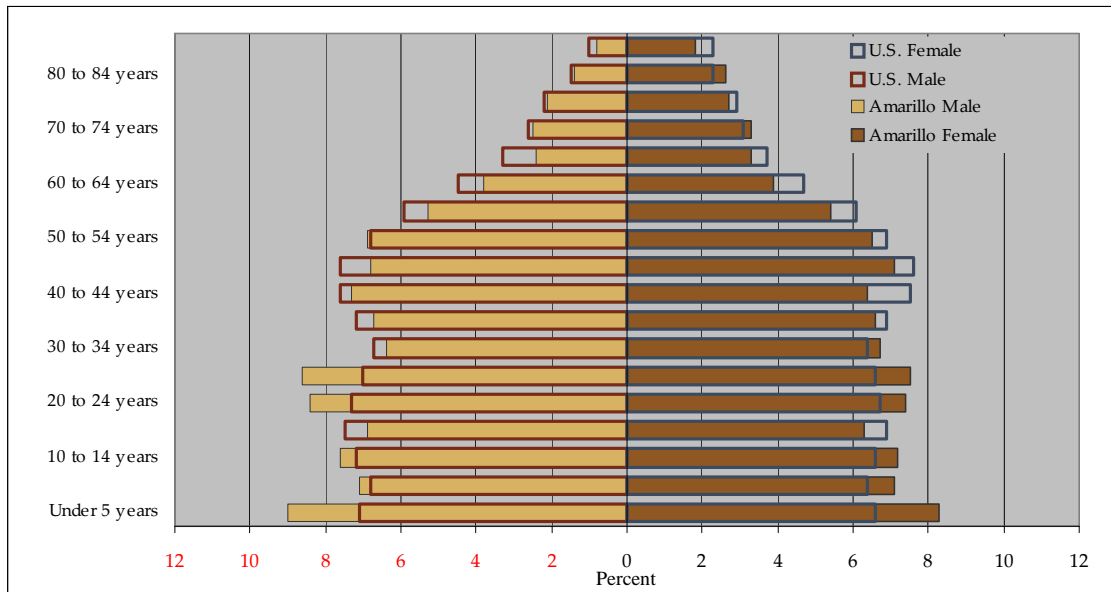
The age distribution of the local population is another key factor that shapes an area’s labor force, as well as the particular outlook and service needs of residents. The age distribution in Amarillo as of Census 2000 indicated a younger population (median age of 33.3 years) than the nation (36.4 years). Most evident from **Figure 1.4, Age and Gender Distribution**, are the relatively high percentages of individuals in Amarillo that were in the childhood years, especially under five years old and through age 14, as of Census 2000. The proportion of young adult population, in the age cohorts between 20 and 30, was also higher in Amarillo compared to nationwide. On the other hand, Amarillo had less of its population in the prime earning

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years from age 30 through 65. Most retirement-age cohorts did not vary significantly from U.S. percentages.

**Figure 1.4
Age and Gender Distribution**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

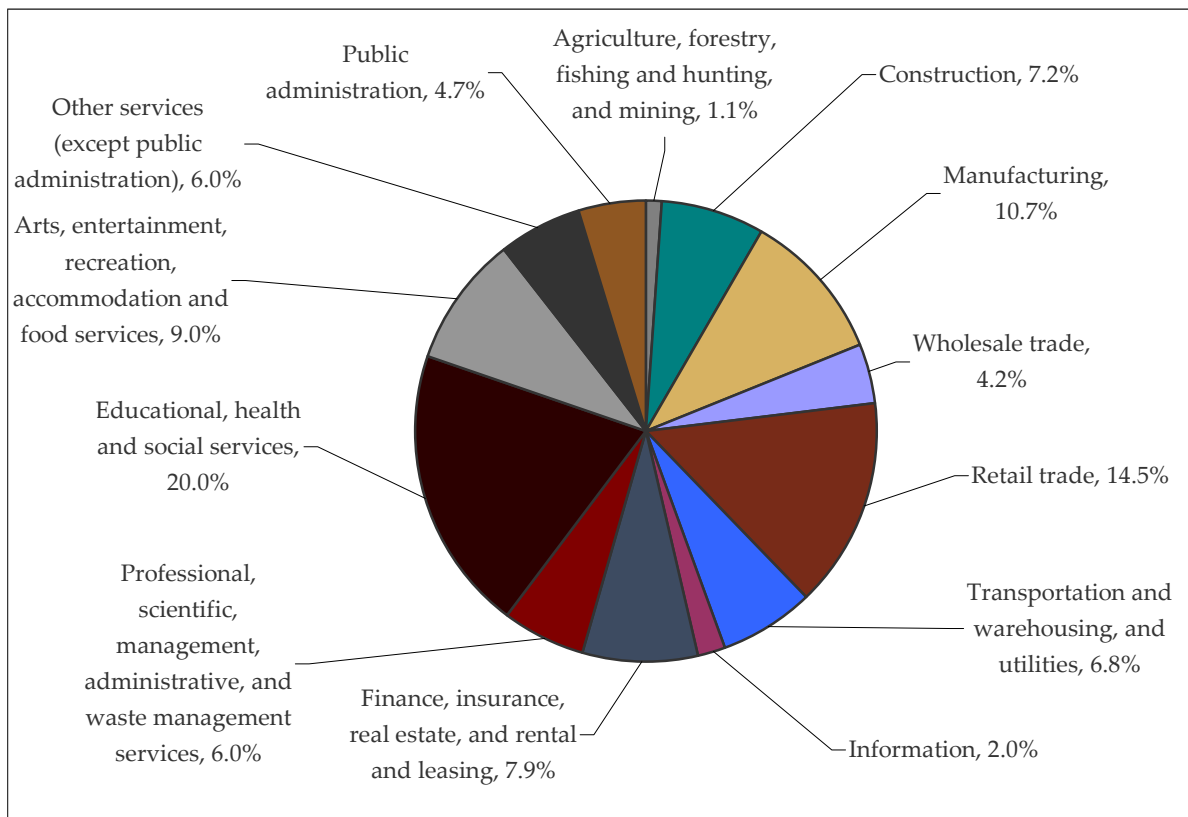
Shorter Commutes, But Dependent on Automobiles

The fact that Amarillo residents’ average commute time to work in 2006-2008 was 15.9 minutes, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, implies that residents live relatively close to work and face minimal traffic congestion. Amarillo is well supplied with regional transportation infrastructure for automobile commuting. Corpus Christi (18.7 minutes) and Odessa (17.6 minutes) have somewhat higher mean travel times to work while Lubbock (16.0 minutes) is effectively identical to Amarillo. County-wide commuting time averages for Potter County (16.4 minutes) and Randall County (16.8 minutes) are slightly higher with some rural residents driving longer distances to their jobs. In general, area residents spend substantially less time commuting than people across all of Texas (24.9 minutes) and the nation (25.3 minutes).



Related journey-to-work data from 2006-2008 estimates show that the vast majority of the population (82.3 percent) traveled alone to work by automobile, while 12.0 percent carpooled. Another 2.2 percent of residents said they worked from home, while 1.3 percent reported that they walked to work. Only 0.6 percent of Amarillo residents used public transportation.


FIGURE 1.5
Employment of Amarillo Residents by Industry Type



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Diversified Employment

The distribution displayed in **Figure 1.5, Employment of Amarillo Residents by Industry Type**, confirms that educational, health, and social services

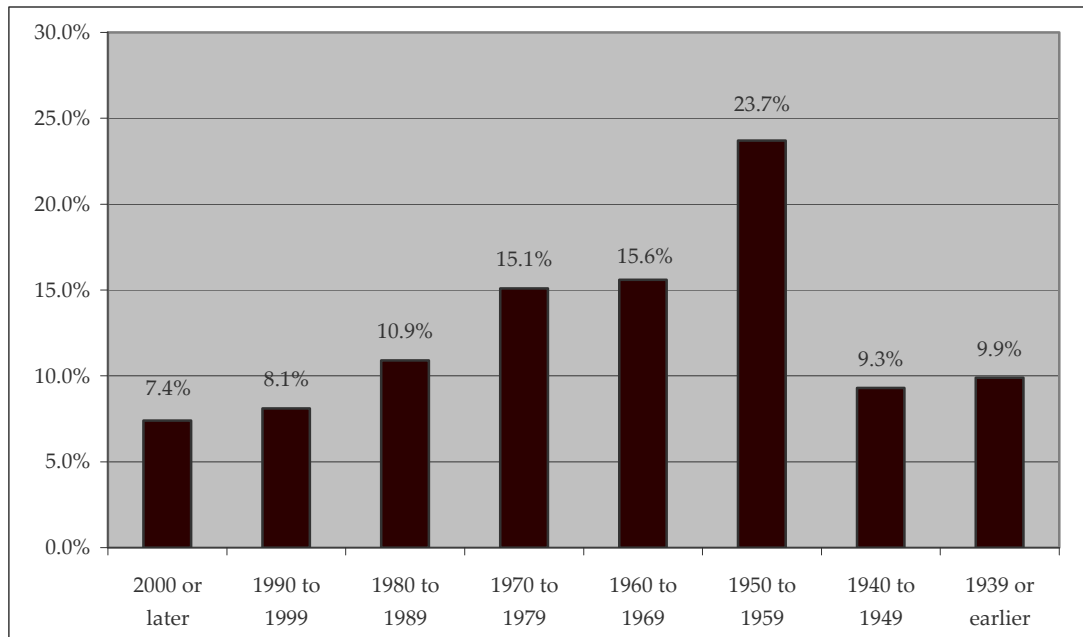
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(20.0 percent); retail trade (14.5 percent); and manufacturing (10.7 percent) accounted for nearly half (45.2 percent) of the local jobs base as of 2006-2008 Census Bureau estimates. Only 1.1 percent of local employment was in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining compared to 2.9 percent statewide.

Housing Stock Relative to Needs

As shown by **Figure 1.6, Age of Housing**, roughly two-thirds of Amarillo’s housing stock was built in the 40 years from 1950 to 1990, including 23.7 percent during the 1950s. This has implications for housing conditions in older neighborhoods within the community and ongoing maintenance needs of older dwellings. If residential construction totals this decade end up similar to the 1990s, then about 16-17 percent of local housing will have been built in the last 20 years.

FIGURE 1.6
Age of Housing Structures in Amarillo



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

According to 2006-2008 estimates from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 78.8 percent of housing in Amarillo was single-family (including mobile homes) whereas 21.2 percent was multi-family (including duplexes and apartments). These single-family statistics are slightly higher than state (76.1 percent) and national (74.3 percent) averages. Potter County's housing stock consists of 80.3 percent single-family and 19.7 percent multi-family. The percentages for Randall County are similar, with 81.1 percent single-family and 18.9 percent multi-family.

It will be important to consider the anticipated quantity, quality, and variety of housing for the existing and future population of Amarillo through this Comprehensive Plan. As of the 2006-2008 estimates, 62.7 percent of dwelling units in Amarillo were owner occupied and 37.3 percent were renter occupied.

FUTURE POPULATION OUTLOOK

Population projections are an important component of the long-range planning process. They help determine and quantify the demands that will be placed on public facilities and services based on the potential pace and scale of the community's physical growth. Projections reflect local, regional, and even national and international trends and offer a basis to prepare for the future. However, it should be noted that preparing population projections is challenging, particularly for the long term, because it is often difficult to account for all circumstances that may arise. It will therefore be important for the City to monitor population and economic growth continually to account for both short- and longer-term shifts that can influence development activity and trends in the City and larger region.

Randall and Potter County Projections

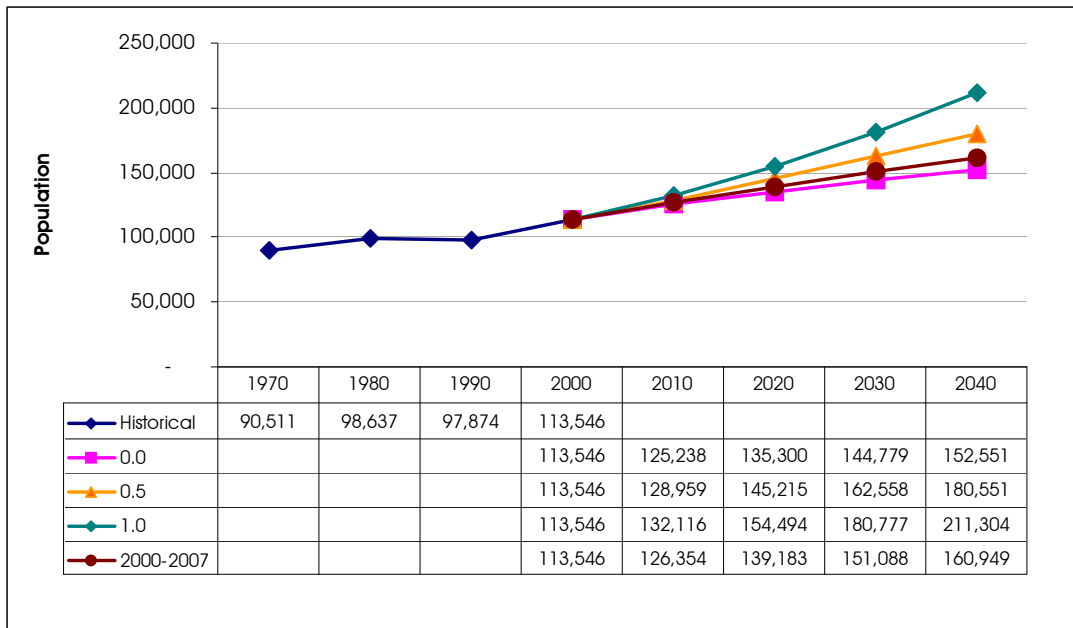
The Texas State Data Center (TSDC) prepares four population scenarios for the State of Texas and all counties in the State that use the same set of birth and death rate (fertility and mortality) assumptions but differ in their assumptions regarding net migration (incoming versus outgoing population). The net migration assumptions for three scenarios are derived from 1990 to 2000 patterns, which have been altered relative to expected future population trends. The TSDC scenarios are referred to as the Zero Migration (0.0) Scenario, the One-Half 1990-2000 (0.5) Scenario, and the 1990-2000 (1.0) Scenario. A fourth scenario, 2000 to 2007, takes into account post-2000 population trends.

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The TSDC scenarios vary in the forecasted future population for Potter and Randall counties as illustrated in **Figures 1.7A and 1.7B, Potter and Randall County Population Projections.**

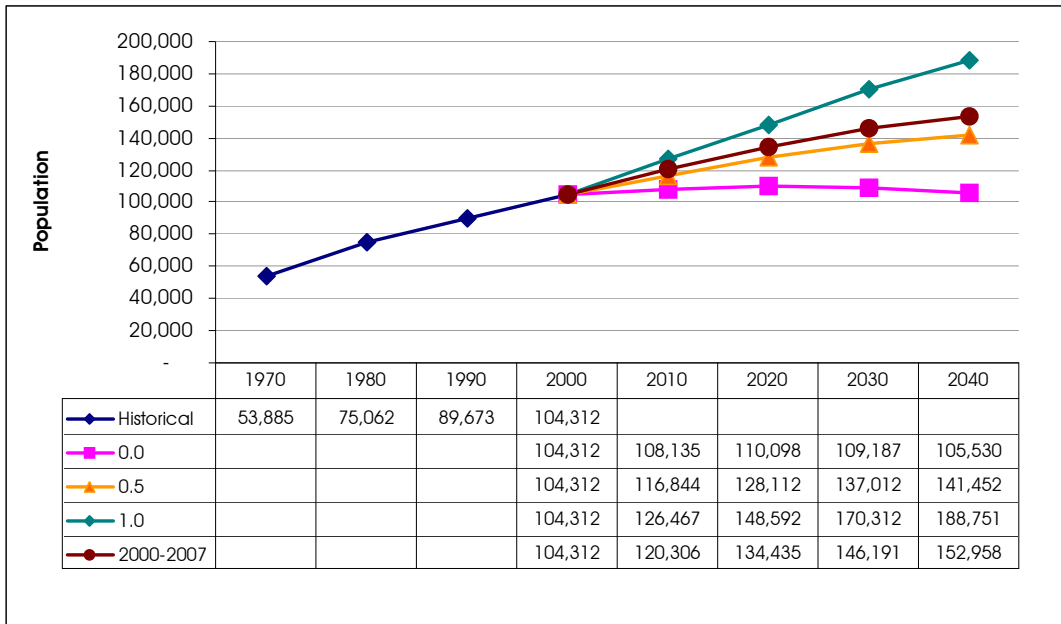
**FIGURE 1.7A
 Potter County Population Projections**



SOURCE: Texas State Data Center

The State Data Center recommends the One-Half (0.5) Scenario as the most appropriate scenario for most counties in Texas. For Potter County, this means the county-wide population would increase by 60 percent by 2040, to roughly 181,000 residents. For Randall County, the increase would be 36 percent, to roughly 141,000 residents.

FIGURE 1.7B
Randall County Population Projections




SOURCE: Texas State Data Center

City of Amarillo Projections

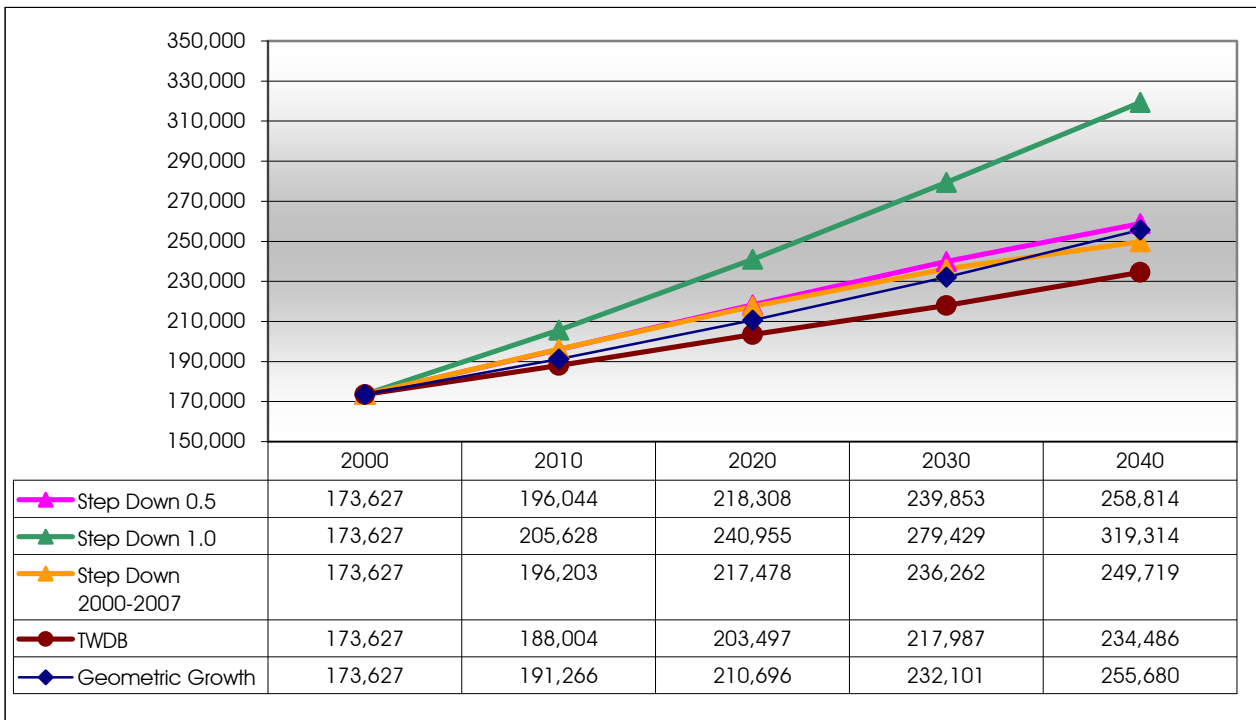
Population forecasting methods that model births, deaths, and migration are more appropriately used at the county and regional levels where records of these statistics are kept. Sub-county population growth is strongly influenced by less predictable nuances such as housing prices, availability of vacant land to develop, and annexation of additional territory (and, in some cases, additional residents) by cities.

Therefore, to project future population at the city level, there are several techniques that can be used including linear regression, exponential (or “geometric”) growth, and step-down methods. Projections prepared by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) can also be referenced for comparison. **Figure 1.8** displays various population projections for the City of Amarillo.

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The exponential (or “geometric”) growth technique assumes a constant rate of growth over time. Depending on the rate, this can result in significant growth, similar to how an initial dollar investment can increase dramatically through the power of compounding interest. The population projection for Amarillo utilizing this method results in 255,680 residents in 2040. This assumes an annual growth rate of 0.97 percent.

FIGURE 1.8
City of Amarillo Population Projections



The Texas Water Development Board uses the cohort-component procedure for the projection of county populations. However, projections for cities are based on a share of the county’s population growth between 1990 and 2000. The TWDB projects that Amarillo’s population will be 234,486 in 2040. This

would mean an average annual growth rate of 0.75 percent between 2000 and 2040, which is lower than the City's recent growth experience.

The step-down method simply assumes that Amarillo's population will remain a set proportion of those of the counties encompassing it. This method uses the State Data Center's scenarios as the basis for the county projections. In 2000, 57.5 percent of Amarillo's population was in Potter County while the remaining 42.5 percent was in Randall County. Therefore, in this case, it is assumed that Amarillo will maintain the same percentages of the respective county populations as it had in 2000, which was 87.9 percent for Potter County and 70.7 percent for Randall County. The step-down method yields projections of 249,719 (2000-2007 Scenario) to 319,314 (1.0 Scenario). This reflects an annual growth rate of 0.9% to 1.5% (2000-2040).

It is wise for cities to think in terms of a range of potential growth rather than absolute numbers given the uncertainty of any small-area forecast that extends beyond a few years. **It is assumed for this Comprehensive Plan that Amarillo's 2040 population will fall within a forecast range of 240,000 to 270,000 persons, which yields a midpoint of 255,000.** These figures represent a potential average annual growth rate ranging from 0.73% to 1.11% through 2040 (from a base of 191,500 in 2009 as estimated by the City of Amarillo).

Beyond the comprehensive planning process, it will be essential for Amarillo to monitor its actual growth from year to year to determine if the longer-term trend line is still remaining within the expected range—and whether on the high or low end of this range. Any sign of eventual significant variance outside this range, higher or lower, would indicate the need for rethinking of the assumptions and strategies reflected in the Comprehensive Plan.

PAST AND RECENT PLANNING EFFORTS

City of Amarillo Comprehensive Plan

The City's 1980s Comprehensive Plan envisioned an improved quality of life for all Amarillo residents and was intended as a vehicle by which citizens and government could be guided to build and maintain a desirable city. Through the efforts of the City Commission, Planning & Zoning Commission, City departments, and many of Amarillo's citizens, this Plan charted a course for the City's future development.

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The 1980s Plan took a traditional approach to community-wide urban planning but also incorporated aspects of sector planning, policy planning, and strategic planning. Various issues from the previous Comprehensive Plan are still resonant today in Amarillo, including historic preservation, image and beautification, and the City's limited planning and growth guidance capabilities outside its corporate limits.

Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development (2005-2010)

The 2005-2010 Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development is a coordinated approach to addressing Amarillo's housing and community development needs. The Consolidated Plan is developed under guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) as required by the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 and the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992. The goal of the Consolidated Plan is to integrate physical and economic development with human services in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion so families and neighborhoods can work and thrive together. The City was completing its five-year update to the 2005-2010 plan in conjunction with this new Comprehensive Plan.

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) #1

The City of Amarillo's TIRZ #1 was established in December 2006, and subsequent planning and programming continued into 2007 and is ongoing. A TIRZ is an economic development tool intended to capture the projected increase in property tax revenue created by development within a defined area, starting from some baseline point, so these funds (the "increment") may be invested in other public improvements or development projects that benefit the zone and further bolster the area tax base.

Downtown Amarillo Strategic Action Plan

Adopted in 2008, this Action Plan aims to revitalize and restore downtown Amarillo for new commercial, entertainment and educational opportunities. The five major steps behind the Amarillo Downtown Strategic Action Plan were: (1) Background Research & Market Analysis, (2) Existing Conditions Analysis, (3) Downtown Plan, (4) Development Goals & Design Guidelines, and (5) Action Steps & Implementation Strategy, with input from community workshops and stakeholder groups influencing each step. This process was

used to ensure recommendations met community expectations and were reflective of the community's vision and goals for Downtown Amarillo.

Amarillo Economic Development Plan and Policy Guidelines

This pending study assesses the current state of development in Amarillo amid a steady increase in the number of requests from businesses and developers seeking economic development incentives. The study and plan also comes at a time when the City of Amarillo is experiencing unprecedented expansion in its southwest corridor, stressing the City's existing infrastructure and leaving older neighborhoods in need of revitalization. This has caused the City to look into imposing impact fees on new suburban development so the City may recoup the extraordinary costs of rapid expansion.

The economic development plan and policy guidelines are to be finalized in coordination with this new Comprehensive Plan. They are intended to guide staff decisions regarding focused neighborhood revitalization, the allocation of future incentives, and the continued advancement of Amarillo's quality of life.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

To facilitate the process of updating Amarillo's Comprehensive Plan, the City engaged Kendig Keast Collaborative, community planning consultants, and appointed a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to work with City officials, staff, residents, and the consultant team. Over the course of an 18-month period, public outreach and leadership involvement activities were conducted, background studies were completed, and individual elements of the plan were drafted, reviewed, and refined to produce a document for public and official consideration. The plan contains and is organized in the following manner:

Chapter 1, Introduction

This chapter explains the purpose of long-range and strategic community planning and emphasizes the value that will accrue from undertaking this comprehensive planning process in Amarillo. The chapter also focuses on compiling and summarizing meaningful information on key community indicators, trends, and context, and it references similar data compilations already available through other area entities and websites. The chapter also documents the public participation activities that served as the foundation of the planning process.

CHAPTER

**Chapter 2, Land Use & Community Character**

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the community's long-range development outlook and establish the necessary policy guidance that will be used in making decisions about the compatibility and appropriateness of individual developments within the context of the larger community. The land use plan will also serve as the City's policy for directing ongoing development and managing future growth, preserving valued areas and lands, and protecting the integrity of neighborhoods, while also safeguarding and enhancing community image and aesthetics. This chapter also includes an assessment of conditions in the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction and recommends appropriate land uses based on natural and topographical features, the City's thoroughfare plan, and the existing pattern of land use.

Chapter 3, Growth Management & Capacity

The focus of this chapter is the City's intent and policy regarding how growth and new development will be accommodated consistent with other fiscal and community considerations. A prime consideration is efficient use of land, along with existing and planned investments in transportation and utility infrastructure, to achieve and maintain a desired community form and character. Current and projected infrastructure capacities and "planning level" improvement needs are also evaluated through this chapter.

Chapter 4, Community Mobility

The purpose of this chapter is to ensure orderly development of the transportation system, considering not only facilities for automobiles but other modes of transportation as well, such as pedestrian and bicycle circulation (and safety), freight movement facilities, public transportation, local and regional airports, and associated needs. Recommendations in this chapter utilize context-sensitive design principles that address mobility improvement while also simultaneously taking into account safety, neighborhood integrity, urban design, community appearance, and historical and environmental considerations, all of which are essential to establishing and maintaining a particular community character within an area.

Chapter 5, Parks & Cultural Resources

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate and recommend enhancements to the community's quality of life amenities consistent with growth expectations and other physical planning elements in the Comprehensive Plan. Such

amenities include Amarillo's park and recreation facilities, open space areas and views, cultural facilities and resources, and leisure opportunities. The chapter also promotes opportunities to preserve natural features and open space in the community, particularly along corridors, adjacent to natural and man-made water features, at community gateways, and in other key areas.

Chapter 6, Housing & Neighborhoods

The underlying premise of this chapter is to ensure that there is an adequate supply of housing within varying price ranges and dwelling types so as to accommodate persons desiring to relocate within or to the community. Another key focus is to create and maintain livable neighborhood environments, so design and compatibility issues are also highlighted. This includes considerations such as how to deal with infill development in older, revitalizing neighborhoods, and how to ensure quality and sustainable outcomes in new residential development.

Chapter 7, Implementation

The Implementation chapter utilizes the recommendations of the individual Plan elements to consolidate an overall strategy for executing the Comprehensive Plan, particularly for the highest-priority initiatives that will be first on the community's action agenda following plan adoption.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional indicator data and background information on Amarillo is available from the following online resources:

- ★ City of Amarillo
<http://www.ci.amarillo.tx.us/>
- ★ Amarillo Economic Development Corporation
<http://amarilloedc.com/>
- ★ Amarillo Chamber of Commerce
<http://amarillo-chamber.org/>
- ★ Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council
<http://www.visitamarillotx.com/index.cfm>
- ★ Amarillo Metropolitan Planning Organization
<http://www.amarillompo.com/>

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- ★ Panhandle Regional Planning Commission
<http://www.prpc.cog.tx.us/>
- ★ The Handbook of Texas Online
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/AA/hda2.html>
- ★ Texas State Data Center
<http://www.txsdcenter.utsa.edu/>
- ★ Texas Workforce Commission, Labor Market Information
<http://www.tracer2.com/>
- ★ U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder
http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en

Data Availability

This Comprehensive Plan was prepared toward the end of a decade. This is when one-of-a-kind data from the last decennial U.S. Census is growing increasingly out of date and data from the next census is still up to five years away. In the meantime, results from the last census are still, in many cases, the best source of data about socioeconomic conditions at the local community level.



CHAPTER TWO

LAND USE & COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Land use considerations and guidance are at the core of any comprehensive city plan. Effective land use planning contributes to many aspects of a community's ultimate success and livability, including the integrity and appeal of its neighborhoods; the proximity of schools and recreation opportunities; the appropriate location and design of commercial development for convenience and compatibility with residential areas; and the provision of adequate acreage and protections for areas meant to accommodate the community's key economic drivers. Efficient provision and extension of municipal services also depends upon a sound strategy for future use of land in both fringe areas and previously developed areas that offer redevelopment and infill opportunities.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the necessary policy direction to enable the City of Amarillo to manage future land development and redevelopment effectively. Specific action strategies address anticipated opportunities and challenges related to future land use. Of prime importance is the City's ability to ensure compatibility between varying land uses while preserving and enhancing community character.

RESULTS OF PAST PLANNING

A look back at the last Amarillo Comprehensive Plan from the 1980s indicates both areas of community progress, as well as lingering challenges that will again be a focus of this new plan. The overall goal for land use stated in the previous plan was:

Provide properly proportioned amounts of land uses for the community use, and direct the location of land uses in accordance with physical constraints that would affect development. This will ensure that an efficient, harmonious,

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and active city will evolve from these coordinated development efforts.

Successful outcomes over the last several decades from this planning legacy include:

- ★ A generally “harmonious pattern of development,” on a macro scale, as new residential, commercial, and industrial projects have been absorbed into the fabric of the community.
- ★ Continued development of quality residential neighborhoods in growth areas of the City.
- ★ The continued growth and consolidation of a premier medical center that makes Amarillo a destination for visitors and professionals from throughout the Panhandle and other nearby states.
- ★ Substantial commercial development along the Soncy corridor, especially with more attractive building design and site amenities in various cases.
- ★ Ongoing revitalization of downtown as more than just a business and government base, but also a cultural center and re-emerging location for both nightlife and residential living.
- ★ Further private investment and economic development activity around both Rick Husband International Airport and Tradewind Airport.

Issues and needs that are carried over from the previous Comprehensive Plan, even after more than 25 years of growth and change in the community, include:

- ★ Ongoing vacancy, blight, and redevelopment needs, particularly in sections of north and east Amarillo, which has made it difficult to achieve the 1980s vision that “older developed areas be maintained as sound contributing neighborhoods.”
- ★ The legacy of residential uses having inter-mixed with industrial activity and heavy commercial uses in some areas of east Amarillo.
- ★ The desire for more extensive infill development to bolster older areas of the City and offset urban sprawl tendencies at the edges.

- ★ Continuing concern over development patterns and impacts in the vicinity of some of the area's playa lakes.
- ★ Further exploration of consensus strategies "to reduce excessive use of signs which cause sight restrictions and urban clutter."

"Urban image" was a key focus of the 1980s plan, in which it was stated that "visual quality of projects and their potential impact on the urban image of Amarillo should be paramount in setting goals for the City." While new residential and non-residential developments in various areas of the community have contributed greatly to achieving a higher quality standard, some "legacy" issues highlighted in the 1980s plan remain ongoing challenges for the community, as pointed out again later in this chapter.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

As its title signifies, this chapter emphasizes the concept of community character as a way to enhance Amarillo's approach to land use planning and growth guidance. A character-based approach looks beyond the basic use of land (residential, commercial, industrial, public) to consider the placement and design of buildings and the associated planning of sites, as well as of entire neighborhoods and districts. Whether new development or redevelopment, and whether private or public construction, the pattern of land use—including its intensity, appearance, and physical arrangement on the landscape—determines the character and contributes to the image of the entire community over the long term.

Therefore, examined in this chapter is the generalized use of land in Amarillo, along with the character of its neighborhoods, commercial areas and corridors, and undeveloped and rural lands. This approach allows the formulation of standards within the City's development regulations to achieve the desired character in newly developing areas, redevelopment and infill areas, and areas where a more rural atmosphere is more appropriate for the long term.

Existing Community Character in Amarillo

There are three main character types: Urban, Suburban, and Rural. These are common terms that should bring immediate images to mind as one thinks of

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A **character focus** highlights the range of settings in which land uses can occur within communities, from the most rural to the most urban. Community character accounts for the physical traits one can see in an area which contribute to its "look and feel."

A character-based approach focuses on development intensity, which encompasses the density and layout of residential development; the scale and form of non-residential development; and the amount of building and pavement coverage (impervious cover) relative to the extent of open space and natural vegetation or landscaping. How the automobile is accommodated is a key factor in distinguishing character types, including street design, parking, and the resulting arrangement of buildings on sites.

It is this combination of basic land use and the characteristics of the use that more accurately determines the real compatibility and quality of development, as opposed to land use alone. Aesthetic enhancements such as the design of buildings, landscaping and screening, sign control, and site amenities also contribute to enhanced community character.

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traveling from the city center to the outskirts of a typical community. Over the years, and particularly since the advent of widespread automobile ownership, much of Amarillo developed in an Auto Urban pattern, which falls in the range between Urban and Suburban. On the next several pages, images from Amarillo and associated text help to clarify the key features of and differences between the primary categories along the community character spectrum.

**RURAL Character**

This ETJ area at the southeast curve of Loop 335 exemplifies a Rural development character:

- Wide open landscapes, with no sense of enclosure, and views to the horizon unbroken by buildings.
- Very high open space ratios and very low building coverage.
- Very low-density development, providing privacy and detachment from other dwellings in the area.
- Much greater reliance on natural drainage systems, except where altered significantly by agricultural operations.

**SUBURBAN Character**

This residential neighborhood to the south of Hester Road, just outside the City limits in northwest Amarillo, typifies a Suburban development character:

- A more open feeling than Auto Urban subdivisions due to greater separation between dwellings.
- Lower lot coverage and a correspondingly higher open space ratio.
- Buildings still secondary to green areas and open space.
- More opportunity for natural drainage and storm water absorption versus concentrated storm water runoff and conveyance.

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This office building site, between I-40 and Albert Street in west Amarillo, also exhibits some aspects of a Suburban character with:

- A significant portion of the site, especially the freeway frontage in this case, devoted to open space versus building and parking areas, providing a development amenity.
- Surface parking areas placed behind and to the side of the building rather than in the most visible location along the site frontage.
- More extensive landscaping than in Urban and Auto Urban settings.



AUTO URBAN Character

This neighborhood north of SE 34th Avenue in southeast Amarillo follows a classic Auto Urban development pattern:

- Smaller lots and less separation between dwellings mean that more of the total land area is devoted to structures and accommodation of the automobile (street, alleys, and driveways).
- Straight streets and uniform front setbacks (and, in some cases, minimal variation in individual house design) can create a monotonous atmosphere compared to the curvilinear street pattern found in many Suburban neighborhoods.
- Extent of impervious surface and reduced open space ratio leads to increased storm water runoff.

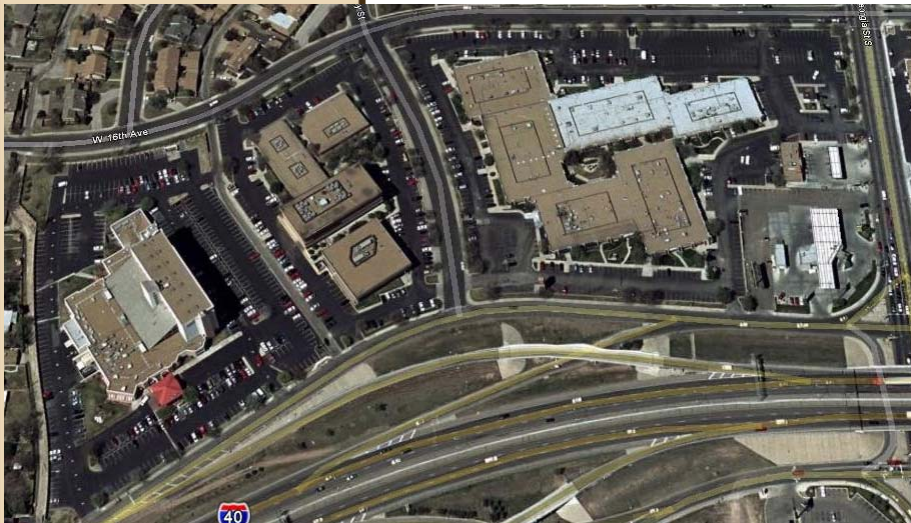


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The large retail centers along Soncy also have many common elements of an Auto Urban character, as does Westgate Mall:

- A much more horizontal development pattern compared to Urban areas.
- Buildings set well back from streets, usually to make room for surface parking at the front (or on all sides in the classic regional mall design of Westgate Mall).
- A very open environment, but mainly to accommodate extensive surface parking versus the more prominent green spaces found in Suburban areas.



The office and retail buildings along I-40 west of Georgia are further Auto Urban examples:

- Significant portions of development sites devoted to vehicular access drives, circulation routes, surface parking, and loading/delivery areas, making pavement the most prominent visual feature versus green or open areas.
- Buildings centered on their sites and surrounded on all sides by parking areas.
- Often not conducive for access or on-site circulation by pedestrians or cyclists.

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URBAN Character

Downtown is the most obvious area of Amarillo with an Urban character:

- More vertical development, with multi-story structures throughout the area.
- Some streets and other public spaces framed by buildings, creating “architectural enclosure” versus the progressively more open feel in other character districts.
- Zero or minimal front setbacks (building entries and storefronts at the sidewalk).
- Greater reliance on on-street parking, although the prevalence of surface parking detracts from the Urban atmosphere and introduces Auto Urban elements into the core downtown area.
- The most conducive area of a City for pedestrian activity and interaction, assuming that accommodation of vehicular traffic flows, circulation, and access does not take precedence through auto-oriented street and site design.
- The place in a City where structured parking typically makes the most sense, allowing for greater development intensity (and creative integration of public and civic spaces) and less area devoted to surface parking.



Polk Street (left) is the most notable example of a traditional downtown street framed by continuous building faces and storefronts. Elsewhere in downtown Amarillo, surface parking and multi-level garages break up this pattern, resulting in a loss of critical mass for pedestrian-oriented street activity.



ADOPTED 10-12-10

MARILLO
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN

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Zero-setback buildings oriented toward the street and sidewalk are also part of the appeal and distinction of the Route 66 Historic District along SW 6th Avenue.



KEY PLANNING THEMES

A long-range planning process provides opportunity to ponder and address fundamental questions about the future development pattern and livability of a city. Based on the concerns and hopes expressed by residents, public and private leaders, and key community stakeholders and investors, the following themes emerged as priorities for this Land Use & Community Character element of the Comprehensive Plan:

1. A City of Strong Neighborhoods
2. Neighborhood and Commercial Revitalization in Older Areas of Amarillo
3. Protection of Economic Anchors and Investment Areas
4. Community Aesthetics and Image

Strong Neighborhoods

A definite implementation success from the 1980s Comprehensive Plan is adherence to the Neighborhood Unit Concept in many new development areas as illustrated on the following page. Even with some new residential growth occurring in areas to the northwest where terrain issues impact subdivision layout, the core principle of centralized school and park siting within neighborhoods remains a priority.

An Auto Urban approach to subdivision design is evident in some areas of Amarillo as is common in most large cities. The illustrations in this section show how other design factors, especially yard landscaping and tree cover (plus rear garage access via alleys in some areas of Amarillo), can soften the appearance of such neighborhoods and give them a more Suburban look and feel. But even these measures cannot always overcome a fundamentally “cookie cutter” residential design and street layout.



DESIRABLE NEIGHBORHOOD PATTERN

Neighborhood and Commercial Revitalization

The extent of vacant, obsolete, and under-utilized commercial and industrial properties and structures within certain areas of central, north and east Amarillo pose a significant redevelopment challenge for the community. Added to this are neighborhood areas with substandard dwellings and relatively low-income populations with limited means to upgrade an aging housing stock.

The task for the City and community is to pursue strategies aimed at stabilizing neighborhoods at risk of further decline while working to avoid a similar trend in areas vulnerable to such problems. Neighborhood and corridor revitalization initiatives must be multi-faceted (i.e., community development programming, code enforcement, capital improvements, enhanced security and crime prevention, expanded transit service, coordinated community outreach and social services between schools and other institutional partners, etc.). But they will also involve land use

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management steps to protect residential and commercial values and establish a positive investment environment.

Economic Anchors and Investment Areas

Just as protection of neighborhood integrity is a prime mission of community planning, Amarillo's key economic assets must also be protected from intrusive and/or incompatible development. Otherwise, their economic development appeal and long-term success can be undermined by nearby development that is out of character, contributes to localized traffic congestion, or detracts from area aesthetics. Among the economic drivers which generate jobs, investment, and income for the area, particular attention should be directed to the Harrington Regional Medical Center and vicinity, Amarillo's two airports, downtown, the various Amarillo College campuses, the Tri-State Fairgrounds area, the two interstate highway corridors (especially in hospitality areas), and other corridors and nodes where shopping and services are focused.

Community Aesthetics and Image

Amarillo's image and visual appeal were definitely on the minds of residents and leaders who participated in early community outreach activities for this Plan update. As one person noted, "Appearance standards are tough but important." Others pointed out that appearances are particularly crucial in a "pass-through" city like Amarillo where so many visitors see the community and form their first and lasting impressions from their brief drive through town on the interstate—or, for many others (including potential investors), on that all-important trip into town from the airport. Another person warned against judging all of Amarillo based on the look of the I-40 corridor. But that is the undeniable reality of the situation, and one business owner expressed his concern about giving the "appearance of a City that is struggling."

As noted at the beginning of the chapter, aesthetic issues remain an ongoing challenge some 25 years after the City's last Comprehensive Plan in the early 1980s, which highlighted the need for action. Sign regulation returned as a "front burner" issue at the time this Plan update was starting, and images in this section highlight examples of other progress made since the 1980s. But community image and beautification will likely continue to be contentious issues in Amarillo. In that context, and when considering where and how best to focus efforts and resources to upgrade aesthetics, Amarillo should take a holistic approach which recognizes that design quality and community

appearance result from the cumulative influences of many factors, including private site development, development code requirements and standards, public roadway design and access management methods, and public streetscape enhancements.

FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER


The following designations, which correspond with the categories depicted on **Map 2.1, Future Land Use & Character**, are designed to guide the pattern and relative intensity of future residential and non-residential development and redevelopment in and around Amarillo. The descriptions indicate the development types anticipated in each category, as well as the intended character of the areas in which these land uses occur and, in some cases, intermingle or are near one another.

Specific dimensional requirements and design standards associated with each category are articulated through the City's implementing regulations as they currently exist and may be amended based on this plan. Any amendments pursued should be preceded by further community dialogue to ensure consensus on the most appropriate and practical strategies for achieving the desired development outcomes.

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Categories

Most Intensive

- Urban Center
- Urban
- Multi-Family Residential
- Industrial

Medium Intensity

- Neighborhood Conservation
- General Residential
- General Commercial
- Business Park
- Parks-Recreation*

Least Intensive

- Suburban Residential
- Suburban Commercial
- Estate
- Rural

* Depends on park type, size, design, and level of patronage and activity.

Urban Center

Development Types

- Mixed use (on single sites and within individual structures)
- Attached residential
- Live/work units
- Commercial retail
- Office
- Public/institutional
- Entertainment
- Parking structures
- Parks and public spaces



Characteristics

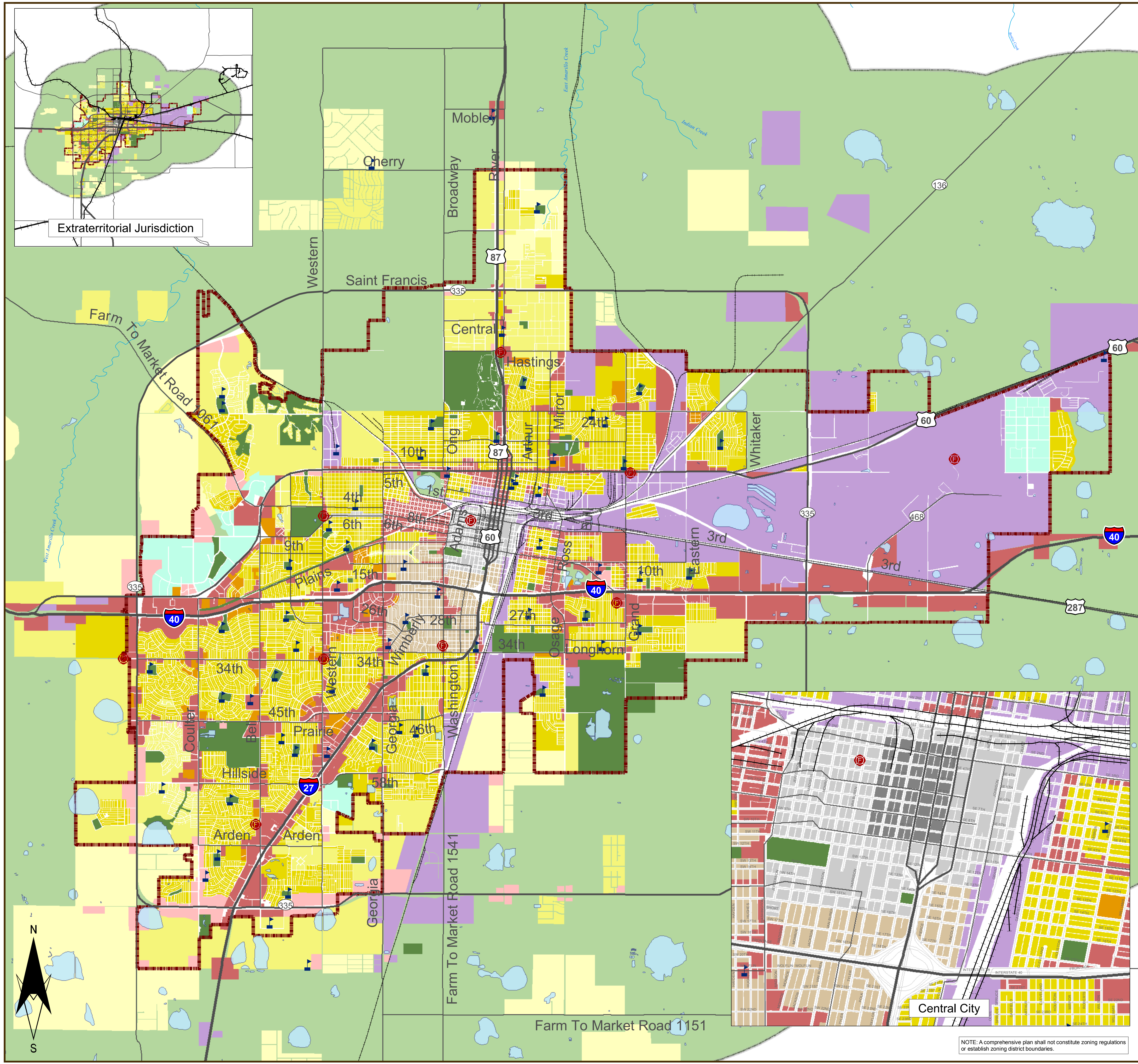
- Most intensive development character in City.
- Streets framed by buildings with zero/minimal front setbacks.
- Greatest site coverage.
- Multi-story structures encouraged.
- Minimal off-street surface parking (reliance on on-street parking, public parking areas, and garages).
- Public/institutional uses designed to match Urban character.
- Most pedestrian-oriented setting in City.

Urban

Development Types

- Mixed use (on single sites and within individual structures)
- Attached residential
- Detached residential on small lots

Map 2.1: FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER



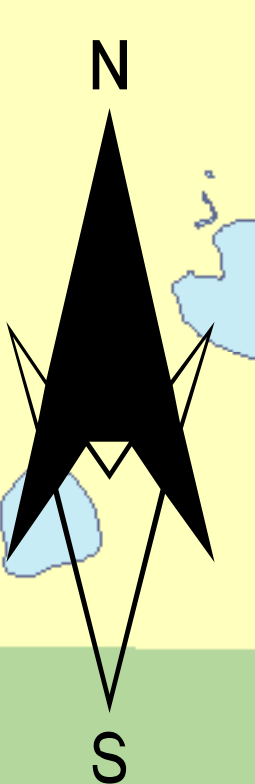
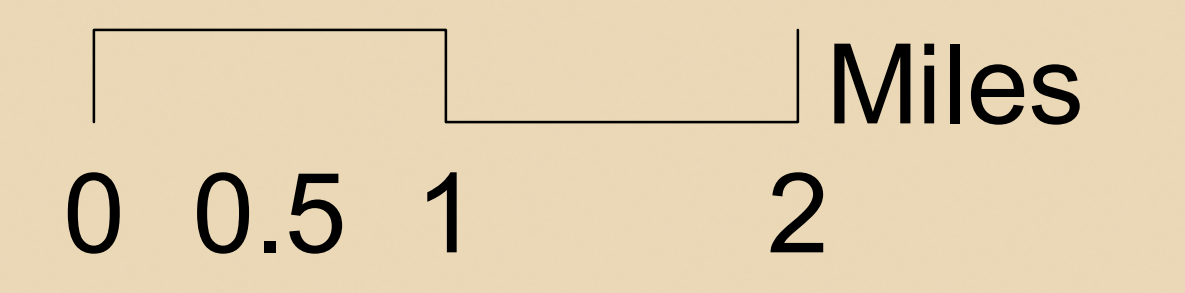
Legend

- Urban Center
- Urban
- Neighborhood Conservation
- Multi-Family Residential
- General Residential
- Suburban Residential
- Estate Residential
- Parks-Recreation
- General Commercial
- Suburban Commercial
- Business Park
- Industrial
- Rural

Boundaries and Facilities

- City Limits
- ETJ (5-mile)
- Streams and Water Bodies
- Schools
- Fire Stations

Adopted 10/12/10



NOTE: A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.

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- Live/work units
- Commercial retail
- Office
- Public/institutional
- Entertainment
- Parking structures
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Transition area between Urban Center and more auto-oriented character areas.
- Still predominantly Urban character (building forms, pedestrian emphasis, site coverage, on-street parking, etc.), but somewhat less intensive than Urban Center.
- May exclude some auto-oriented uses that, by their very nature, cannot achieve an Urban character.
- Public/institutional uses should be designed to match Urban character.
- Alleys and rear-access garages can reinforce Urban character of blocks with detached residential dwellings.

Neighborhood ConservationDevelopment Types

- Detached residential dwellings
- Public/institutional
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Integrity of older, intact neighborhoods protected through customized Neighborhood Conservation zoning with standards that ensure no significant change in the development type or pattern and reinforce existing physical conditions (e.g., prevailing lot sizes, building setbacks, etc.).
- Designed to preserve existing housing stock (and avoid excessive nonconformities and variance requests), and also to govern periodic infill and/or redevelopment activity within a neighborhood to ensure compatibility.
- Depending on the particular neighborhood, the customized zoning may provide for small-scale office or retail uses on vacant sites at the edge of the neighborhood or other appropriate locations.



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Multi-Family Residential

Development Types

- Multi-unit attached residential in concentrated developments, whether for rent (apartments) or ownership (condominiums)
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Auto-oriented character typically, but can be softened by perimeter and on-site landscaping, minimum spacing between buildings, site coverage limits, and on-site recreation or open space criteria.
- May be limited to 2 or 3 stories outside of Urban character areas.
- Height and/or setback regulated near less intensive residential uses for compatibility.
- Encouraged near transit routes.



General Residential

Development Types

- Detached residential dwellings the primary focus
- Attached housing types subject to compatibility and open space standards (e.g., duplexes, townhomes, patio homes)
- Planned developments, potentially with a mix of housing types and varying densities, subject to compatibility and open space standards
- Public/institutional
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Residential areas with less openness and separation between dwellings compared to Suburban areas.
- Auto-oriented character (especially where driveways and front-loading garages dominate the front yard and facades of homes), which can be offset by “anti-



monotony” architectural standards, landscaping, and limitations on “cookie cutter” subdivision layouts characterized by straight streets and uniform lot sizes and arrangement.

- Neighborhood-scale commercial uses are expected to emerge over time and should be encouraged on sites near the edges of General Residential areas which are best suited to accommodate such uses while ensuring compatibility with nearby residential uses.

Suburban Residential

Development Types

- Detached residential dwellings
- Planned developments to provide for other housing types (e.g., attached residential) in a Suburban character setting
- Public/institutional
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Suburban character from balance between buildings and other site improvements relative to degree of open space maintained on the site (compared to predominance of site coverage over undeveloped space in auto-oriented areas).
- Larger baseline minimum lot size allows for larger front yards and building setbacks and greater side separation between homes.
- Also results in less noticeable accommodation of the automobile on sites compared to more intensive residential areas, especially where driveways are on the side of homes rather than occupying a portion of the front yard space, and where garages are situated to the side or rear of the main dwelling.
- Can establish development options which allow for lot sizes smaller than the baseline in exchange for greater open space set-aside, with the additional open space devoted to maintaining the overall Suburban character and buffering adjacent properties.
- Can also provide a cluster development option that further concentrates the overall development footprint while providing the developer the same lot yield—or even a density bonus to incent conservation designs with a higher open space ratio and discourage “cookie cutter” subdivision designs.
- More opportunity for natural and/or swale drainage (and storm water retention/absorption) relative to concentrated storm water conveyance in auto-oriented areas.



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Estate

Development Types

- Detached residential dwellings
- Public/institutional
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Transition between Suburban and Rural character areas, with further progression along the character spectrum toward environments where the landscape is visually dominant over structures.
- Still in Suburban portion of character spectrum, but with larger lots (typically 1 acre minimum), especially where required by public health regulations to allow for both individual water wells and on-site septic systems on properties where centralized water and/or wastewater service is not available or feasible.
- One-acre lots are usually adequate in wooded areas to achieve visual screening of homes (from streets and adjacent dwellings). Three- to 5-acre lots may be needed to achieve and maintain Estate character in areas with more open land.



Parks-Recreation

Development Types

- Public parks and open space
- Public trails
- Joint City-school park areas
- Public recreation areas (e.g., public golf courses)

Characteristics

- Public parkland theoretically will remain so in perpetuity compared to other public property and buildings that can transition to private ownership at some point.
- Park design, intensity of development, and planned uses/activities should match area character (e.g., public squares/plazas in Urban downtowns; nature parks for passive recreation in Suburban, Estate and Rural areas).



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General Commercial

Development Types

- Wide range of commercial retail and service uses, at varying scales and intensities depending on the site
- Office (both large and/or multi-story buildings and small-scale office uses depending on the site)
- Public/institutional
- Parks and public spaces



Characteristics

- Auto-oriented character, which can be offset by enhanced building design, landscaping, reduced site coverage, well-designed signage, etc.

Suburban Commercial

Development Types

- Range of commercial retail and service uses, at varying scales and intensities depending on the site
- Office (both large and/or multi-story buildings and small-scale office uses depending on the site)
- Planned development to accommodate custom site designs or mixing of uses in a Suburban character setting
- Public/institutional
- Parks and public spaces



Characteristics

- Suburban character primarily from reduced site coverage relative to most commercial development.
- Especially at key community entries and along high-profile corridors, may also involve other criteria to yield less intensive and more attractive development outcomes relative to auto-oriented areas, including higher standards for landscaping (along street frontages and within parking areas), signs, and building design.
- May exclude some auto-oriented uses that, by their very nature, cannot achieve a Suburban character.
- Near residential properties and areas, the permitted scale and intensity of non-residential uses should be limited to ensure compatibility (including adequate

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buffering/screening, criteria for placement and orientation of buildings and parking areas, height limits, and residential-in-appearance architectural standards).

- More opportunity for natural and/or swale drainage (and storm water retention/ absorption) versus concentrated storm water conveyance in auto-oriented areas.



Business Park

Development Types

- Primarily office, medical, and technology/research uses
- Possibility of light industrial uses (including warehousing/distribution), but well screened and in buildings with enhanced architectural design
- Commercial retail uses (secondary to primary office focus, to serve local workers and visitors)
- Public/institutional
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Suburban character, typically in a campus-style setting featuring reduced site coverage and increased open space, together with enhanced building design.
- Typically a minimum open space ratio of 30%, which still allows for a sizable cumulative building footprint since most such developments involve large sites.
- Extensive landscaping of business park perimeter, and special streetscaping and design treatments at entries, key intersections, and internal focal points.
- Development outcomes often controlled by private covenants and restrictions that exceed City ordinances and development standards.
- Intended to create a highly attractive business investment environment.



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Industrial

Development Types

- Heavy and light industrial
- Heavy commercial
- Office uses accessory to a primary industrial use
- Public/institutional

Characteristics

- Typically auto-oriented character, although industrial park developments may feature more open space and landscaping, regulated signage, screening, etc.
- Outdoor activity and storage, which should be screened where visible from public ways and residential areas.
- Certain publicly-owned uses (e.g., public works facilities, fleet maintenance, treatment plants) are best sited within Industrial areas.



Rural

Development Types

- Residential homesteads
- Planned development to accommodate conservation and cluster designs
- Agricultural uses
- Agriculture-focused commercial retail
- Public/institutional
- Parks and public spaces

Characteristics

- Rural character from wide open landscapes, with minimal sense of enclosure and views to the horizon unbroken by buildings in most places.
- Scattered residential development on relatively large acreages, resulting in very high open space ratios and very low site coverage.
- Very large parcel sizes, providing greater detachment from neighboring dwellings than in Estate areas.
- Typically no centralized water or sanitary sewer service available. Also much greater reliance on natural drainage systems, except where altered significantly by agricultural operations.
- Potential for conservation developments that further concentrate the overall development footprint through cluster designs, with increased open space set-aside to maintain the overall Rural character and buffer adjacent properties. (May also make alternative community wastewater treatment methods feasible to eliminate the need for individual on-site septic systems.)



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ACTION STRATEGIES

This section provides potential action strategies for responding to the key planning themes related to Amarillo's land use and community character that were outlined earlier in this chapter:

1. A City of Strong Neighborhoods
2. Neighborhood and Commercial Revitalization in Older Areas of Amarillo
3. Protection of Economic Anchors and Investment Areas
4. Community Aesthetics and Image

Table 2.1, Land Use & Community Character Actions, summarizes the action possibilities that were considered by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and which were classified as Basic actions that are relatively straightforward to implement, Intermediate actions that could be more challenging and require more advance work, and Advanced actions that would represent "stretch" objectives for the City because they are new (or a break from past practice), potentially controversial, or otherwise more difficult to accomplish due to cost or other considerations. They also fall into five categories which represent the main ways that comprehensive plans are implemented (as elaborated upon in Chapter 7-Implementation):

- ★ Capital investments
- ★ Programs/initiatives
- ★ Regulations and standards
- ★ Partnerships/coordination
- ★ Ongoing study/planning (especially as required to qualify for external funding opportunities)

These options are elaborated on in the remainder of this chapter. It should be noted that many of the proposed actions in this particular plan chapter involve regulatory considerations. This is because this core element of the Comprehensive Plan provides the most direct policy direction for guiding and influencing the future use of land and the character of ongoing development and redevelopment in the City and its planning area. These

policy ends are then accomplished through application of the City’s zoning, subdivision, and other development-related ordinances and standards.

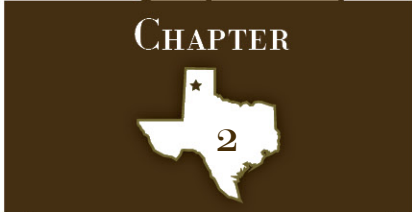
**TABLE 2.1
Land Use & Community Character Actions**


Basic Actions

Action	Action Type
1. Public facility design	Capital Investment
2. Side benefit of City capital projects	Capital Investment
3. Another role for City parks	Capital Investment
4. Reinforce the Neighborhood Unit Concept	Regulation / Standards
5. School district coordination	Partnerships / Coordination
6. Community development priorities and programming	Program / Initiative
7. Special implementation mechanisms	Program / Initiative
8. Compatibility opportunity	Program / Initiative
9. Beyond physical planning	Partnerships / Coordination
10. Enhanced development features and amenities	Program / Initiative
11. Protection from encroachment	Regulation / Standards
12. Property owner outreach	Partnerships / Coordination
13. Mitigation of tree loss	Program / Initiative
14. Tree initiatives	Partnerships / Coordination
15. Sign ordinance monitoring	Regulation / Standards

Intermediate Actions

Action	Action Type
16. Character emphasis	Regulation / Standards
17. Compatibility of neighborhood commercial/service uses	Regulation / Standards
18. TND provisions	Regulation / Standards
19. Reinforce the Urban character of downtown	Regulation / Standards
20. Regulatory relief for redevelopment	Regulation / Standards
21. More focused planning	Ongoing Study / Planning
22. Corridor design	Program / Initiative



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23. Adequate and flexible buffering and screening standards	Regulation / Standards
24. More significant gateway features	Capital Investment
25. Multi-purpose esplanades	Capital Investment
26. Property owner support	Program / Initiative
27. Mitigate aesthetic impacts of auto-oriented development along corridors	Regulation / Standards
28. Special zoning districts or overlays	Regulation / Standards
29. Incentive approaches	Regulation / Standards

Advanced Actions

Action	Action Type
30. Flexible zoning districts	Regulation / Standards
31. Neighborhood Conservation zoning	Regulation / Standards
32. Tie lot coverage to character intent	Regulation / Standards
33. Anti-monotony provisions	Regulation / Standards
34. "Menu" and point system approaches to design and development standards	Regulation / Standards

- 1. Public Facility Design.** Design and renovate City buildings and facilities with area character in mind, especially in residential neighborhood settings. This can have implications for building size and height; building arrangement and setbacks; roof and window design and façade treatments; extent of site coverage relative to open space and landscaping; type of fencing and screening materials; and the location of site access and parking, among other factors.
- 2. Side Benefit of City Capital Projects.** Use City street and drainage improvements as an opportunity to install landscaping and screening that can address nearby compatibility concerns between varying land use types and development characters.
- 3. Another Role for City Parks.** Recognize screening and buffering between differing land use types and intensities as a key contribution and design consideration for pocket, neighborhood, and linear parks.
- 4. Reinforce the Neighborhood Unit Concept.** In general (except where Planned Developments and other unique development opportunities arise), continue to zone superblocks amid the City's arterial street grid to

achieve a development pattern and arrangement of land uses consistent with the Neighborhood Unit Concept (e.g., lower-density housing types in the interior, centered around a neighborhood park and/or elementary school campus; larger commercial and institutional uses at the neighborhood edges and major intersections; and attached and multi-family housing and small-scale office uses providing a transition from the interior to the more intensive perimeter uses).

5. **School District Coordination.** Continue close coordination with area school districts regarding new campus locations and joint planning for City-school park and recreation areas.
6. **Community Development Priorities and Programming.** Continue to target federal funding infusions and community development and housing rehabilitation efforts through the City's HUD-approved Consolidated Plan and related coordination and implementation programs.
7. **Special Implementation Mechanisms.** Continue to use special district mechanisms, together with City tax policy and other incentives, to encourage revitalization and infill, especially to invigorate commercial activity in under-served areas.
8. **Compatibility Opportunity.** Use individual residential and neighborhood-wide redevelopment projects near non-residential uses as an opportunity to encourage and/or assist with new or supplemental tree planting, landscaping, taller fences (in accordance with zoning ordinance Division 7, Fences and Walls), and other measures to enhance screening and buffering.
9. **Beyond Physical Planning.** Continue City coordination with area foundations and the non-profit sector to address social services, educational attainment and skills training, and other fundamental factors in neighborhood and community revitalization (as well as housing rehabilitation and neighborhood redevelopment considerations addressed further in Chapter 6-Housing & Neighborhoods).
10. **Enhanced Development Features and Amenities.** Continue to use Public Improvement Districts, Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones, and similar mechanisms through which additional amenities or aesthetic enhancements can be funded and achieved. This occurs either through special assessments on area property owners or by earmarking tax revenue gains for such targeted improvements.

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11. **Protection from Encroachment.** Just as neighborhood integrity must be protected against encroaching, incompatible land uses, also continue to use the City's zoning authority to safeguard economic asset areas (medical center, airport vicinity, etc.). This can include residential and/or non-residential uses that would alter the area character or, if allowed to proliferate over time, might lead to objections about the operations and/or nature of the pre-existing economic anchor uses.
12. **Property Owner Outreach.** Pursue retroactive screening/buffering improvements in conjunction with private property owners in sensitive locations with longstanding compatibility issues or aesthetic concerns.
13. **Mitigation of Tree Loss.** Commit the City to plant equivalent size trees in close proximity to the location of public improvement projects where tree removal cannot be practically avoided.
14. **Tree Initiatives.** Partner with Keep Amarillo Beautiful and other civic improvement groups to plant trees and other concentrated landscaping in appropriate locations within neighborhood street rights-of-way community-wide, especially where mature trees or other vegetation has been lost to age, disease, or unavoidable construction impacts.
15. **Sign Ordinance Monitoring.** As specified when sign ordinance amendments were adopted in late 2009, evaluate the effectiveness of the new rules and parameters at an appropriate point in 2010.
16. **Character Emphasis.** Incorporate further character-related standards into the zoning and subdivision regulations to build upon the reference in the subdivision ordinance purpose statement that the regulations are intended to "protect the character" of the City [Section 4-6-3(2)].
 - ★ Add purpose statements to the zoning ordinance for each zoning district, in addition to the overall ordinance purpose statement in Section 4-10-2, to clarify what policy ends and particular—and varied—development outcomes the City aims to accomplish through its regulations.
17. **Compatibility of Neighborhood Commercial/Services Uses.** Rather than trying to achieve compatibility by focusing mainly on land use (plus certain physical development features like minimum building setbacks and maximum building height), adopt an approach which focuses much more on building scale and site design to ensure that whatever use occurs on the site, it is compatible and in keeping with area character.

“Neighborhood” retail, office and service uses are especially conducive to a character-based regulatory approach. Currently in the Neighborhood Service (NS) district, a Food and Beverage Sales Store is permitted but a Bakery or Confectionary Shop is not. Likewise with a Pet Grooming business (permitted) versus a Pet Shop for the sale of small animals, birds and fish (not permitted), or a Tattoo Shop or a Palm Reader (both permitted) versus a Hobby Shop or a Key Shop (not permitted).

- ★ Still restrict certain commercial uses that, by their very nature, should not be permitted in close proximity to homes (e.g., veterinary clinics with outdoor kennels or activity).
- ★ Establish a maximum site area and not just a minimum site area (although Amarillo’s NS district does not set a minimum area for non-residential uses).
- ★ Restrict the maximum possible floor area of the principal building (as is currently done for a Cleaning Shop or Laundry, which is limited to 6,000 square feet in Section 4-10-83(a)(69)).
- ★ Include parking and loading/service areas within the maximum lot coverage standard versus just structures.
- ★ Place parameters on the placement and orientation of non-residential buildings and parking areas on sites near residential uses.
- ★ Apply “residential-in-appearance” design standards for small office and commercial uses near neighborhoods (addressing such architectural and site design elements as roof slope and materials, façade materials, window design and orientation, yards and landscaping, and lighting).

Such standards automatically limit the possible development intensity on a site in terms of building scale, needed parking, overall impervious surface, etc. In this way development intensity and design are directly linked to the character of nearby development, especially residential areas. Some communities also limit the amount of retail floor space within primarily office developments (e.g., a pharmacy within a medical office building). Other ordinance restrictions, to maintain more of a Suburban office setting versus a typical retail environment, may include that accessory retail uses have public access only from the building interior (no external entries) and have no external signage or merchandise display.

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- 18. TND Provisions.** Provide a special Planned Development option within the zoning ordinance to encourage and set parameters for Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) approaches (e.g., grid street pattern with shorter block lengths, homes close to street, emphasis on walkability, architectural design guidelines, neighborhood focal points, street trees, etc.).
- 19. Reinforce the Urban Character of Downtown.** Incorporate development and design standards into the zoning ordinance which reinforce the development pattern and architectural elements that create an Urban character and set apart a traditional downtown from more contemporary development, particularly Auto Urban areas. The Amarillo zoning ordinance does include a downtown-specific district (CB, Central Business). But it encompasses a wide variety of permitted uses without addressing the intended character of such uses in a holistic way aside from waiving minimum building setbacks and maximum height limits—and allowing up to 100% site coverage.
- ★ Limit uses not compatible with an Urban, less auto-oriented setting (e.g., conventional single-family detached dwellings and various “auto service” uses).
 - ★ Add Urban character standards (e.g., minimum building height, maximum building setbacks—also known as “build-to lines,” architectural design criteria that ensure that building fronts have entrances and ground-floor windows that are oriented toward and complementary to the public street and a pedestrian-oriented environment, etc.).
 - ★ Establish provisions, and potential zoning incentives, to encourage mixed-use projects, including vertical mixed used within buildings, especially if the only other path to such outcomes is the Planned Development process.
- 20. Regulatory Relief for Redevelopment.** Add provisions to the zoning ordinance to allow relaxation of specified standards that may add difficulty to the redevelopment process, so long as certain precautions and mitigation criteria can be met. Such obstacles often arise when contemporary development standards must be applied in older areas of communities. Common regulatory constraints to redevelopment include site access and circulation standards, limited on-site area for parking and

loading, nonconforming building setbacks (and/or inadequate area to meet minimum yard requirements), and on-site drainage requirements. The intent is that known obstacles peculiar to targeted redevelopment areas should be addressed directly in the zoning ordinance, including a defined procedure for offering flexibility in such areas with longstanding revitalization needs. Otherwise, an applicant with viable reinvestment plans must pursue typical hardship-based variance requests before the Board of Adjustment, which takes time and can be unpredictable. However, in providing a procedure under which such relaxation of standards should be allowed, the ordinance should also spell out parameters for and conditions under which such flexibility might be provided so that development applicants have an idea of what is possible and so that other property owners and residents see that adequate precautions are in place to protect area character.

21. **More Focused Planning.** Following adoption of this new city-wide Comprehensive Plan, pursue more detailed and area-specific planning for particular neighborhoods, districts and corridors within Amarillo. More focused planning efforts of this sort also provide an opportunity to coordinate more closely with key partners and entities, as well as to obtain public input at a more “grass roots” level. Also refine strategies and initiatives for downtown based on the pending special studies on housing, land use, and parking issues.
22. **Corridor Design.** In coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), insist on Context Sensitive Design approaches in all construction and rehabilitation project involving the community’s primary, high-profile corridors. This includes corridors tied to the City’s economic anchors, such as Amarillo Boulevard (Business 40), Airport Boulevard (SH 468), Loop 335, key downtown streets (Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce, Buchanan in conjunction with US highways 60, 87, and 287), and the area’s interstate highway corridors.
23. **Adequate and Flexible Buffering and Screening Standards.** Adopt a flexible bufferyards approach for screening/buffering between land uses of different types and/or intensities, which can be especially beneficial in and around economic asset areas. The zoning ordinance currently addresses the design of required screening walls and

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Context Sensitive Design is a contemporary approach to transportation project design, operation and maintenance—embraced by TxDOT—that requires more careful consideration of the natural and built settings through which roads and transit projects pass (e.g., rural and scenic areas, commercial and industrial districts, campuses and business parks, downtowns, neighborhoods, etc.). In other words, the project should be responsive to its context and fit the physical setting. So, as described by various sources, this approach “seeks to balance the need to move vehicles efficiently and safely with other desirable outcomes, including historic preservation, environmental sustainability, and vital public spaces.”

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visual barriers in Section 4-10-268(a). This section allows development applicants to propose installation of a “landscaped strip containing a solid planting or hedge not less than six (6) feet in height” in lieu of the usual masonry wall or other permanent and solid wall or fencing, subject to approval of the Building Official. The philosophy behind a flexible bufferyard approach is that the extent and method of buffering should be based on the character of the subject and abutting properties and be commensurate with their level of impact to ensure development compatibility and protection of character. Under a full-fledged bufferyard approach, a combination of buffer width, landscape material selection and density, earthen berms, and fences or walls may be used in various arrangements, each enabling the applicant to achieve compliance. In this way, either a wide bufferyard with limited plant density or a narrow bufferyard with or without a fence and increased plant density may each meet the requirement. The standard may also be altered due to the size of the parcel, site constraints, or individual preference.

24. **More Significant Gateway Features.** Design and construct signature gateway and streetscape treatments at high-profile entry points into Amarillo, as well as at key intersections and locations within the community. The gateway improvements (e.g., monument signage, flags/banners, landscaping, special lighting, public art, etc.) should be carefully sited and of sufficient scale and quality design to stand out from other corridor signage and visual elements—and also to match the scope of Amarillo as a major Texas and U.S. city. Keep Amarillo Beautiful should be a key partner in efforts to prioritize and accomplish such enhancements.
25. **Multi-Purpose Esplanades.** Install esplanades in place of continuous center left turn lanes in strategic locations on Amarillo’s arterial street network to control turning movements and increase safety, but also to enhance corridor aesthetics through landscaping and special design treatments in the new median areas.
26. **Property Owner Support.** Offer mini-grants to existing commercial property and business owners to help finance building façade improvements, enhanced landscaping, or other site upgrades that might not otherwise occur where no construction or expansion activities are planned that would trigger compliance with newer development standards.

27. Mitigate Aesthetic Impacts of Auto-Oriented Development Along Corridors. Add more specific parameters in zoning ordinance Division 6, Landscaping Requirements, regarding landscape design and placement for non-residential development sites, especially for parking areas. Otherwise, the only specifics in the ordinance appear to be the quantity requirement in Section 4-10-248(a)(1) (5% of the total off-street parking area), and the provision in Section 4-10-249(2) that all required trees be planted in the front yard area of the site. Landscaping and perimeter screening of off-street parking areas is an important factor in community and corridor aesthetics, especially in an Auto Urban character setting. Unless more guidance is provided elsewhere, through the City's standard specifications for improvements (or in the Driveway and Parking Manual maintained by the Traffic Engineering Department), the current ordinance provides minimal direction, in general, to those preparing landscape plans as to whether a particular mix of plant materials (trees, shrubs, ground cover, grass) should be provided, where the plantings should be placed on the site, and whether planting materials should be clustered in any way or spread out along the property's public street frontages or along property lines or around parking areas for screening purposes. This places the burden on City staff to evaluate landscaping proposals on a case-by-case basis, and this degree of discretion can also make the process more unpredictable for development applicants.

Parking area landscaping typically serves two functions: (1) perimeter screening, and (2) interior greenery (on islands and other areas amid the parking bays and spaces) to break up the expanse of continuous paved surface within a parking area. Therefore, the ordinance should establish certain basic standards for the placement and distribution of plantings to ensure that both functions are addressed. In addition, landscaping provisions often require low, dense plantings (shrubs, etc.) or berms around parking lot perimeters, in combination with tree planting, to screen the vehicles and block headlight glare. Furthermore, raised and curbed islands of a specified minimum size should be required within larger parking areas, with one island for at least every 20 required parking spaces (alternatively, some ordinances require an island or other parking lot landscaping area within a certain minimum distance of every parking space). Trees should not necessarily have to be placed within these islands, but other landscaping (shrubs, groundcover, grass) should be required versus concrete surfacing.

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- 28. Special Zoning Districts or Overlays.** Establish special development and design standards for properties abutting high-profile corridors and key community gateway locations to improve community appearance and reduce “visual clutter.” These can be applied through targeted zoning districts or overlays to supplement the requirements of underlying base zoning districts. In addition to the lot coverage and landscaping considerations already addressed above, potential provisions can address building placement and orientation, as well as parking area placement and setbacks; building scale, design, and appearance; higher standards for any outdoor activity, merchandise display, or storage; supplemental standards for signs and lighting; and potential underground placement of utility lines that are typically installed overhead.
- 29. Incentive Approaches.** See the incentive and flexibility approaches described further in Chapter 3-Growth Management & Capacity to reward and encourage greater open space set-asides and preservation on development sites.
- 30. Flexible Districts.** Create flexible zoning districts that allow for a series of residential development options and lot sizes, with various development and compatibility standards (e.g., maximum lot coverage, buffering) on a sliding scale and tied to the proposed development intensity to maintain a consistent area character. Amarillo’s current zoning ordinance is cumulative in that lower-intensity housing types (e.g., single-family detached, two-family duplex) in the more restrictive residential districts are carried over to later districts that provide for moderate density and multiple-family housing types. Many communities today actually seek greater mixing of housing types, and the flexible district approach provides for this but with attention to specific compatibility standards that are often missing when simply allowing uses to accumulate across successive zoning districts (which Amarillo’s current ordinance actually does to the point of allowing single-family detached homes in every zoning district other than I-2, Heavy Industrial, including in districts established for manufactured housing, offices, retail, light and heavy commercial, and light industrial, as well as the downtown CB, Central Business, zoning district).
- 31. Neighborhood Conservation Zoning.** Create Neighborhood Conservation zoning districts for specific, established neighborhoods that are largely built out and stable, and where no significant change in

development type or pattern is desired. The standards for each district should reinforce the existing, prevailing physical conditions (e.g., lot sizes, building setbacks, dwelling sizes and styles, building heights and roof pitch, driveway location and design, garage placement relative to the street and principal structure if separate, sidewalk location and design, etc.). This effectively customizes zoning by neighborhood area rather than applying “one size fits all” or more contemporary standards for newer residential development, which can lead to excessive nonconformities and variance requests in older areas. This approach also ensures that existing neighborhood character is maintained in case of any redevelopment or infill activity.

- 32. Tie Lot Coverage to Character Intent.** Adjust the maximum lot coverage standards in the zoning ordinance to establish a link to the existing and/or desired character for various areas of the community, and also so “coverage” encompasses impervious surfaces and not just structures, which is typical of most zoning ordinances. By limiting lot coverage, Amarillo’s current ordinance already has an important element of a character-based approach. This zoning tool helps to control the extent of site area that may be covered by improvements, which also maintains open space and is particularly important where a more Suburban development character is desired. However, because the current non-residential coverage standard is the same (50% maximum) in almost every type of zoning district, except for the higher limits in the industrial (75%) and Central Business (100%) districts, this is one important reason why distinct development characters are not evident in different areas of the community. In particular, most of Amarillo’s main corridors and highest-profile commercial areas have a predictable Auto Urban character because the lot coverage standard does not include “non-structural” improved surfaces such as paved circulation, parking and loading areas on non-residential development sites. This approach in Section 4-10-173 is not how maximum coverage standards are applied in most zoning ordinances.

Limiting the extent of impervious surfaces in urbanized areas not only benefits the community’s appearance and aesthetics; it is also a basic factor in the volume and rate of storm water runoff, particularly from commercial sites with substantial paved surfaces. Because of federal and state mandates, the City of Amarillo must also monitor and address pollutants in storm water runoff, which are typically more prevalent in Auto Urban environments. And avoiding excessive paved surfaces can

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also reduce the “heat island” effect that contributes to higher summer temperatures in cities.

- 33. Anti-Monotony Provisions.** Require in the zoning ordinance that certain architectural elements of residential dwelling units must be varied within a specified area to avoid monotonous development outcomes and neighborhood appearance. Typical elements required to vary include floor plans, façade treatments, and dimensional features (height, roof type, material types, garage placement, etc.). The variations may be required every so often on the same block face, same block, or facing lots across a common street, or at a certain minimum rate within an overall development. A more basic alternative, which does not involve regulation of architectural design, is to require variation in front setbacks along block faces.
- 34. “Menu” and Point System Approaches to Design and Development Standards.** Since Amarillo has not previously regulated non-residential building design and architectural features—and may be wary about this next level of standards—consider adopting a “menu” approach to certain development standards as used in some cities in Texas and elsewhere. This involves identifying certain of the City’s standards as base standards that all developments must meet. Then various other supplemental design features and site enhancements are itemized from which the applicant must choose and implement a certain number. In some cases points are assigned to the various options, and the applicant must accrue a specified point total to receive site plan approval. Certain supplemental items the community considers highly desirable can then be assigned a relatively high number of points, meaning the applicant can quickly achieve compliance through one or a few key enhancements. Otherwise, the applicant may have to implement a series of other items, with fewer points assigned to each, to reach the necessary point total. In effect, this approach can provide applicants a range of ways to achieve compliance with various potential standards versus have to satisfy highly prescriptive or “one-size-fits-all” standards. This method has the added benefit of establishing a “level playing field” among all developments as opposed to more subjective, case-by-case design review/approval methods. Applicants should also be encouraged to exceed such minimum requirements for the long-term benefit of their site investment and the community.



The superblock bounded (clockwise) by SW 34th, Bell, SW 45th, and Coulter provides an excellent example of the Neighborhood Unit Concept implemented on the ground in Amarillo. At the core of the area is an elementary school campus, Puckett (in blue), paired with a City-maintained School Park (in green). These are neighborhood-oriented destinations that are well away from the busy arterials that frame the superblock. On the other hand, Amarillo High School (in blue) is situated along Bell Street, which is appropriate since a high school campus is a significant traffic generator. Likewise, the highest density housing in the superblock is found along its perimeter (in orange), which, in some areas, also buffers lower density housing from the arterial streets. Both convenience commercial and a larger-scale retail center (in red) are located at the four corners of the superblock, which are the busiest intersections in the area. Several small office buildings (in brown) are also located in the northwest corner. Then much of the interior of the superblock is devoted to single-family detached housing arranged around a curvilinear street layout to discourage non-local and through traffic. This superblock also features a small area near its core with several homes on significantly larger lots (in yellow).



A school park in the middle of a neighborhood not only offers a recreational amenity in close proximity to homes, but it also provides valuable open space that bolsters the area's Suburban character. Even where a neighborhood park and elementary campus are several blocks apart, as in this older neighborhood around East Park, the City park amenity offsets the Auto Urban nature of the surrounding area, including the adjacent Ross Street corridor.



The aptly named Greenways development in southwest Amarillo demonstrates the amenity value that reserved open, green spaces provide within the interior of a new neighborhood that would otherwise be closer to the Auto Urban segment of the community character spectrum. Wide medians and walkways on residential streets, as well as neighborhood focal points such as this traffic circle and clock tower, add to the Suburban character of The Colonies.



Renewal of basic shopping and consumer services on the east side of Amarillo is a fundamental concern of area residents who are otherwise proud of their part of the community but are frustrated by the concentration of new retail development, medical facilities, and other commercial activity elsewhere in the City. This is not a new concern as the 1980s Comprehensive Plan included a policy to: "Devise alternatives to encourage land development in areas other than southwest Amarillo."



Extensive tree cover puts this established neighborhood (just north of SW 34th Avenue) more in the Suburban versus Auto Urban character category even though the homes are relatively close together. The absence of driveways is another major factor since garage access from rear alleys allows for more continuous front yard areas. Higher-density housing styles (such as below, along Seville Drive) also blend in well because of tree cover and landscaping treatments similar to those of nearby single-family detached homes.



Likewise, the small-scale office use below (near SW 34th Avenue and Coulter Street) matches the tree cover of the residential neighborhood immediately behind and adjacent to it, improving its compatibility.



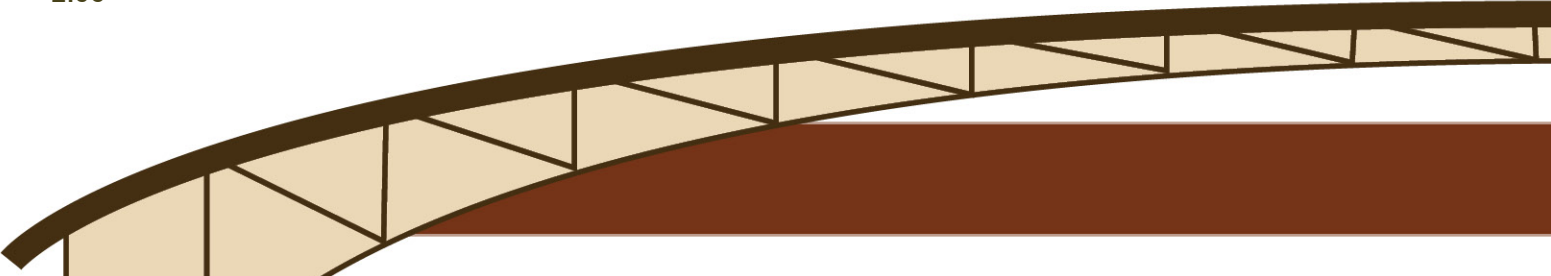
An Auto Urban character is even more evident when homes are built in a standardized style with uniform setbacks, as in this new construction off of southwest Loop 335 along Buccola. As they mature, the street trees will help to offset somewhat the Auto Urban feel of the development.



Residents of this assisted living, multi-family style development (along Bernay Street, west of I-27) definitely live in an Auto Urban environment since the units are oriented toward the parking areas, and both buildings and parking cover almost the entire site except for some small areas of landscaping.



The importance of protecting airport vicinities from residential encroachment and other noise-sensitive uses works hand in hand with the desire to expand complementary economic development in the Amarillo International Airport area.



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Harrington Regional Medical Center is perhaps the prime economic anchor for Amarillo in the coming decades. But it also contributes greatly to community appearance with its campus atmosphere and park and open space amenities, as well as hosting museum and botanical garden attractions in the same area.



Amarillo's Gateways

A person's first impression of Amarillo begins at the major entrances into the City particularly along Interstates 27 and 40 and U.S. Highway 87 and 287. Views seen from these freeways should be deliberately planned since these visual impressions reveal the quality of the City. Amarillo has the opportunity to create a pleasing image along these traffic corridors.

Beauty along these highways is comprised of many aspects. There are (1) the views seen by the driver and passengers; (2) the highway itself, with its bridges and signs, colors and lights; and (3) the shapes of the land it is built upon and the land uses that are adjacent to it, including landscaping, if any. The essential beauty lies in the interrelationship of all of these aspects and its quality is based on how well everything is working together.

The City image does not necessarily begin at the city limits line. There are many tracts of land that are



I-40 East Gateway

Many of the gateways into Amarillo reflect the rural heritage; however, as one progresses toward the City, the profile becomes one of a major urban center.



Airport Blvd. Gateway

This view from Airport Blvd., a major gateway into Amarillo, shows industrial land uses such as grain elevators and a salvage yard. Screening or perimeter tree planting around the salvage yard would improve this gateway view.



Open alleys and unscreened trash dumpsters along primary roadways is a legacy issue in Amarillo from when alleys in subdivisions were allowed to be built parallel rather than perpendicular to arterial streets.



Signs

Sign control in Amarillo is a difficult problem that has a significant effect on urban image. Uncontrolled signage causes visual pollution. In fact, sign control (or lack of it) is an indicator of what the community thinks of itself and what they think of their environment. Signs reveal a great deal about a city's pride and morale, its aesthetic level, its vitality and diversity as well as the originality of the people. Signs can convey a sense of order or no order at all. In essence, signs can express the culture of the community.

In Amarillo, sign regulations are much more liberal than many other major Texas cities. There are many places in the City where the number, size, and grouping of signs make it almost impossible to absorb all of the



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Minimally regulated signage gets out of hand in an Auto Urban environment because sign heights and sizes get progressively larger in the competition for motorist attention. Coordinated signage yields much more attractive outcomes.



Even simple frontage landscaping can enhance development types where customers do not typically come with high expectations. Trees, berms, and other enhancements clearly add value to uses such as high-profile office buildings.



ADOPTED 10-12-10

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In an increasingly manmade world, plants are the native components in our environment. They are important for keeping our environment in balance. Plants have a calming, unifying quality and trees along streets can form the linkage between parks and other green areas in the City. In order to overcome the environment being dominated by buildings and parking lots, development should be visually integrated into the natural environment through the use of landscaping.



Above: Large expanses of asphalt parking lots are unattractive and could be enhanced with landscaping as shown by this parking lot along Bell Street



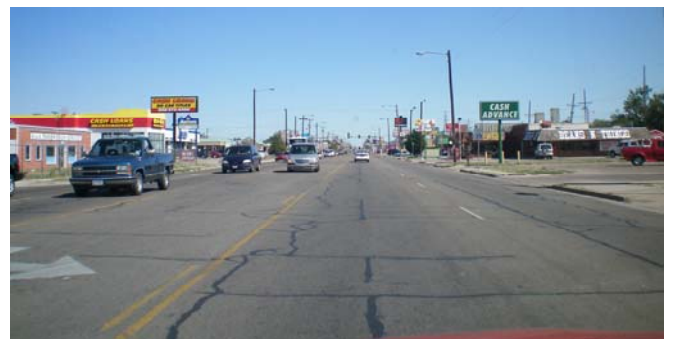
Right: Landscaping buffers parking lot and provides natural beauty along an arterial street as shown by this parking lot along Coulter Street.



Parking lot landscaping requirements have made a difference in newer commercial projects, but many areas of the City still reflect the lack of such standards in earlier years.



Frontage landscaping, especially in an Auto Urban environment, breaks up the otherwise continuous view of paved surfaces from the public right-of-way onto private development sites.



Frontage and right-of-way tree plantings make a tremendous difference in softening an Auto Urban commercial corridor. A landscaped median would complete the picture while also enhancing traffic, pedestrian, and bicyclist safety.





Enhanced building design in newer development along the Soncy corridor, while still exhibiting an Auto Urban pattern, sets it apart from older commercial centers. Coordinated signage and building design also sets a positive example.



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Enhanced building design and materials also help to counteract the plainness typical of many Auto Urban sites. The site below also benefits from having the building pulled closer to the frontage, especially since greater attention was devoted to architectural detail and building quality.



In the classic Auto Urban pattern, retail centers (such as this example at SW 34th and Coulter) often have their principal buildings pushed to the rear of the site to focus parking and pad site uses toward the frontage. This can create compatibility issues with adjacent homes, especially since this often places delivery, loading, and trash collection activity nearest to the immediately abutting residential uses.



CHAPTER THREE

GROWTH MANAGEMENT & CAPACITY

A community's fiscal health depends, in part, on its pattern of growth and the efficiency of public service provision. Local government resources can be strained when the overall form of development becomes increasingly scattered around the periphery of the City and into its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), as has occurred in certain directions around Amarillo in recent decades. It is essential for a municipality to stay ahead of the "growth curve" and minimize the times when it is reacting to both the negative and positive impacts of adding population and expanding its developed area. Instead, a City must plan ahead for the timely extension of adequate infrastructure, provision of quality public services, and a logical sequencing of future development in line with its capacity to serve this growth.

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify and establish City policy regarding how growth and new development will be accommodated and should occur in an orderly and beneficial manner in and around Amarillo consistent with other fiscal and community considerations. Chief among these are utility infrastructure and public service capacities, as well as efficient land and roadway network utilization to maintain and achieve a desired urban form and character. With regard to critical public safety services, the paramount concern is the City's ability to serve its current geographic area and residents while also preparing for the service demands that will come with ongoing development and added population.

This plan element also assesses the growth opportunities and challenges facing the community in coming decades and considers where Amarillo, especially as a larger city, does not have adequate tools or mechanisms in place to respond effectively and ensure beneficial physical and financial outcomes from ongoing growth.

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RESULTS OF PAST PLANNING

A look back at the last Amarillo Comprehensive Plan from the 1980s indicates both areas of community progress, as well as lingering challenges that will again be a focus of this new plan. The previous plan did not have a single section devoted to growth management and capacity issues, as in this new plan. So relevant goals from the earlier plan are found in sections that separately address the physical environment, land use, and utilities and drainage:

Plan and guide the physical growth of the City by following consistent City standards and procedures to assure annexed land will be an asset to the City. [Physical Environment]

Provide properly proportioned amounts of land uses for the community use, and direct the location of land uses in accordance with physical constraints that would affect development. This will ensure that an efficient, harmonious, and active city will evolve from these coordinated development efforts. [Land Use]

Provide an adequate future water supply and sanitary sewage collection system and proper surface water drainage in all parts of Amarillo and provide utility services in the most efficient and equitable manner. [Utilities and Drainage]

Additionally, the following related policy statements were—and still are—particularly germane to growth and utility infrastructure planning:

Preserve open spaces and promote natural features of the environment to enhance their natural setting. [Physical Environment, Policy 1]

Preserve environmentally sensitive areas in and around Amarillo from potentially harmful conditions ... and

conserve Amarillo's natural resources ... [Physical Environment, Policy 3]

Develop areas that have flooding problems with proper flood control measures and preserve drainage-ways in their natural state as feasible. [Physical Environment, Policy 4]

Encourage infill development to achieve more efficient utilization of the City's existing resources and infrastructure such as utilities, streets, schools, parks, and public safety services, as well as other services and facilities. [Physical Environment, Policy 6]

Maintain a constant surveillance to ensure that new developments will be adequately served by streets, utilities, schools, parks, and other community facilities ... [Land Use, Policy 2]

Promote infill development of various types as appropriate areas to reduce urban sprawl and duplication of public services thereby saving tax dollars and preserving agricultural land. [Land Use, Policy 3]

Promote a quality of development both within the City and within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction to direct orderly and systematic growth through the adopted City subdivision regulations. [Land Use, Policy 13]

Promote a contiguous and planned urban form by using utility service to guide growth in a logical and cost efficient pattern. [Utilities and Drainage, Policy 1]

Encourage development in existing undeveloped portions of the City where utility service is already available, taking into consideration physical constraints and development problems. [Utilities and Drainage, Policy 2]

Withhold provision of City water and sewer facilities outside the City limits unless the user is a major industry which would serve and employ Amarillo residents. [Utilities and Drainage, Policy 5]

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PURPOSE OF EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION (ETJ)

As a Home Rule municipality (greater than 5,000 population and with its own City Charter), Amarillo has some authority over a larger unincorporated planning area, beyond its current City limits, which is known in Texas as the "Extraterritorial Jurisdiction," or ETJ. In Chapter 42 of the Texas Local Government Code, the Texas Legislature declares it to be State policy that ETJs be created around cities so that municipal governments can "promote and protect the general health, safety, and welfare of persons residing in and adjacent to" the City limits. For all cities like Amarillo which exceed 100,000 population, the ETJ is defined as the area contiguous to the corporate boundaries of the municipality and within five miles of those boundaries.

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Successful outcomes over the last several decades from the 1980s planning legacy include:

- ★ A relatively slow but steady growth pace in recent decades, thanks to ongoing economic development and diversification efforts, which helped Amarillo rebound from what could have been the devastating after-effects of the closure of the area's Air Force Base in 1968. This has enabled Amarillo to avoid the "boom and bust" cycles that some other cities and regions go through, which disrupts economic stability, local tax base conditions, and the degree of future predictability that is desirable for a favorable investment environment.
- ★ The degree to which the current developed area of Amarillo nearly matches what was projected on the Comprehensive Development Plan map prepared by the City's Planning Department in 1983. Somewhat less development has occurred on the north and far east sides (airport vicinity) than anticipated at that time. However, the most significant divergence from the 1983 land use projection is the extent of low-density residential development that emerged outside the City limits to the south of Hollywood Road and in the vicinity of the IH-27 corridor and farther eastward.
- ★ The City of Amarillo maintaining its position as the primary water supplier in its area. There are few other water supply options in the general vicinity that could viably serve development on a large scale in accordance with Texas Commission on Environmental Quality standards. In some other regions, rural water districts, municipal utility districts, and other special entities do offer a realistic supply alternative in unincorporated areas, which is a key factor enabling construction of residential subdivisions at densities comparable to those within the City limits. Instead, homeowners in unincorporated areas around Amarillo must have at least a one-acre property, for public health reasons, to install both a water well and septic system. On the other hand, when significant numbers of people choose to live in these locations, such as is occurring south and southwest of Amarillo, this can result in substantial land consumption as the countryside is divided into one-acre pieces to accommodate individual dwellings.

- ★ Use of a Storm Water Management Criteria Manual, maintained by the Engineering Department (as well as the City's standard specifications for storm water facilities and improvements), to govern new development. The 1980s plan had recommended that, because of past drainage design problems, Amarillo should prepare and adopt a drainage criteria manual "to specify written policies to guide installation of storm sewers and other drainage facilities."
- ★ Continued investment by the City and area school districts in new and expanded facilities to serve a growing population, including campuses at all grade levels, new and enhanced parks and recreation sites, and additional public safety facilities. Most recently, in early 2010, the City purchased property on SW 58th Avenue, between Western and Georgia streets, for a new Fire Station 12. Several residential neighborhoods in the area will be better served as a result.
- ★ Maintaining a strong and positively perceived central-city school district in Amarillo ISD. In some cities with sprawling development patterns, an additional force that pulls population and growth away from the center is gradual decline in the quality of the original core public school system, as well as the relative newness and appeal of school facilities in growth areas. A stagnant central city tax base can eventually impact program quality and campus maintenance and facility upgrades. Once a perception of inferiority sets in, school quality becomes a prime factor in individual decisions on where to live and purchase a home in a community. It can also be very difficult to stem this trend, sometimes contributing to further tax base erosion and potential neighborhood and commercial area blight. While some of Amarillo's growth is occurring in other school districts, school choice does not appear to be a critical location factor in Amarillo as it is in some large cities in Texas and elsewhere.

GROWTH CONTEXT

The recent pattern of growth in and around Amarillo has occurred for several reasons, including, but not limited to:

- ★ A lure to greenfield development due to the ease of development approval, particularly since the City has no authority within its ETJ, under the Texas Local Government Code, to regulate:
 - The use of any building or property for business, industrial, residential, or other purposes;

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**THEN AND NOW**

At the time of the 1980s Comprehensive Plan, Amarillo had grown by 17.5% during the previous decade of the 1970s, adding just over 22,000 people as it approached the 150,000 mark. As this new plan was being developed in 2009-2010, Amarillo had added nearly 18,000 residents from 2000 (173,627) to 2009 (191,514), for 10.3% growth since 2000.

The 1980s plan projected that Amarillo's 2005 population would range from 180,100 to 211,100. In 2005, the Texas State Data Center estimated Amarillo's population at 184,365. The current plan projects that in 20 years, by 2030, Amarillo could add anywhere from 45,000 to 88,000 new residents.

- The bulk, height, or number of buildings constructed on a particular tract;
 - The size of a building that can be constructed on a particular tract of land, including, without limitation, any restriction on the ratio of building floor space to the land square footage (floor area ratio);
 - The number of residential units that can be built per acre of land (density);
 - The size, type, or method of construction of a water or wastewater facility that can be constructed to serve a developed tract of land, subject to specified criteria; or,
 - Building standards by requiring building permits and inspections.
- ★ Land is generally less expensive outside the City limits due primarily to the absence of public infrastructure and improvements, which equates to lower development costs.
 - ★ Property in the ETJ is not subject to City ad valorem (property) taxes. Therefore, residents and businesses outside the City limits benefit from access to municipal facilities and services, such as streets, parks, and other community facilities, but do not share equitably in the tax burden associated with constructing and maintaining these facilities and services.
 - ★ The allure of "country" living for people seeking an open, more rural landscape as is often found at the City's fringe.

Community Concerns

The map series in this section illustrates how Amarillo has experienced the same type of geographic dispersion seen in many parts of the nation in recent decades as the amount of developed land area has increased at a faster rate than growth in area population. To the extent that this occurs in a scattered and "leapfrog" pattern, then "sprawl" is the word used to describe this land utilization trend.

SPRAWL is a spread-out or leapfrog development pattern which blurs the urban edge and intrudes, often in a haphazard way, upon the low intensity nature of the rural landscape.

When this growth trend map series was displayed for information and reaction during a community meeting, the following types of comments were received:

- ★ “People moving out to new development—leaving older housing stock to decline.”
- ★ “Need infill and redevelopment strategy.”
- ★ “Need strong downtown core to be base in City while supporting other areas.”
- ★ “Too much land is being consumed by unplanned development.”
- ★ “Prohibit urban sprawl.”
- ★ “Providing City services and infrastructure to growing outskirts.”
- ★ “New developments have leapfrogged traffic corridors and created many bottlenecks—will be very challenging to correct now.”
- ★ “Scattering and sprawling tends to cost a lot more than concentrating development.”
- ★ “Stop sprawl—re-infill.”
- ★ “I would like to see Amarillo develop back to the center, reusing the large number of abandoned lots in the City.”

KEY PLANNING THEMES

Orderly growth of a City, within the current corporate limits and ultimately into strategic portions of its ETJ, is critical to its long-term viability. A municipality has a responsibility to its residents and taxpayers to ensure a growth pattern that makes good fiscal sense, particularly in terms of the infrastructure investments needed to keep pace with growth. The integrity of public safety services must also be maintained as the service areas for police, fire, and emergency medical response are stretched by a City’s geographic growth.

The challenge—and opportunity—for Amarillo is how to attract and sustain economic development and quality new residential development while ensuring a sound financial footing for municipal government, among other community values (housing affordability, natural resources, downtown vitality, aesthetics). Continuation of trends toward a more scattered and leapfrog development pattern will become increasingly problematic as it can

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lead to rising inefficiency in service provision. Besides straining local government resources, a sprawl trend can also undermine community character and individual quality of life as traffic congestion appears in more locations (and particularly on rural roadways and at four-way-stop intersections not designed to accommodate such traffic volumes), as provision of parks and other public facilities lags behind new growth, and as older neighborhoods and commercial areas lose their vitality.

Based on the concerns and hopes expressed by residents, public and private leaders, and key community stakeholders and investors, the following themes emerged as priorities for this Growth Management & Capacity element of the Plan:

1. Reconsider the Fundamentals
2. Willingness to Use Available Municipal Tools
3. Character Protection

Reconsider the Fundamentals

In 2007 a special committee appointed by the City Commission, the Development Policy Review Committee, worked with City staff to assess challenges the City was facing related to community growth patterns and associated infrastructure demands. The following overview in the Executive Summary of the committee's report sums up the situation:

Over the last 10 years, the City of Amarillo has seen a significant increase in requests from developers for City funded capital improvements related to proposed residential development. The majority of these requests are in areas on the outer periphery of the City which require, in most cases, extension of existing improvements. Examples of improvements include roads, water and sewer mains, and off-site storm water drainage facilities. Current City development policies dictate that the City is responsible for the full cost of extending water and sewer mains, constructing storm drainage facilities, and the majority of arterial roadway extensions or widening. Given limited fiscal resources, the City is not able to accommodate many of these requests.

The committee was also presented with potential strategies, along with examples and experiences from other Texas cities. However, few substantive changes to City policies, ordinances, or practices resulted from the Development Policy Review Committee process in 2007. As a result, the City continues to struggle with the practical and financial challenges of:

- ★ Maintaining a much lower ad valorem (property tax) rate than most large Texas cities, which clearly limits the revenue available for municipal government operations and new initiatives.
- ★ Participating much more extensively in street and infrastructure design and construction necessitated by new private development than do most other cities, where provision of basic street, water, sanitary sewer, and drainage improvements (as well as parkland dedication, in many cases) is a well established aspect of subdivision approval and private construction.

In essence, the fundamentals of the situation have not changed. The desire to keep Amarillo “development friendly” through relatively low costs and limited regulation is a worthy objective many cities strive for. However, the extent to which Amarillo does so, compared to its peer cities in Texas, places the City’s fiscal stability and levels of municipal service—and, ultimately its economic development potential—at risk.

While no fiscal analysis was completed for this Comprehensive Plan, the combination of below-average taxation and above-average participation of municipal government in infrastructure provision for private development would seem to be an unsustainable situation, especially in times of more brisk growth. It is clear that the City gains substantial revenue from new development over time, especially as growth in residential “rooftops” spurs additional investment in retail and service establishments. What is less clear about the fiscal equation in Amarillo is whether the cumulative revenue generated by new development, especially with a low tax rate, ever surpasses the cost borne by the public sector to provide supporting infrastructure and services—and then maintain them long term. The kicker is that the City must cover up front the significant infrastructure costs associated with new growth and then hope to recoup its investment over a longer timeframe, all the while having to maintain an extensive physical plant already in place for a community approaching 200,000 residents.

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Under the circumstances, the predictable outcomes include:

- ★ A backlog in City capital projects necessitated by new development (i.e., unfinished drainage work, delayed street improvements, etc.— even after completion of the associated private development).
- ★ Limited municipal resources to increase annual capital budget allocations (and reduced cash reserves to tap into as in some past periods).
- ★ Greater use of debt instruments (e.g., certificates of obligation) to generate more funds for infrastructure rehabilitation projects and service extensions made necessary by growth pressures.
- ★ Inability of the City to commit to the extent or timing of specific infrastructure projects it will prioritize and implement beyond the current fiscal year.

PAYOFF FROM FACILITY AND SERVICE UPGRADES

Aside from public health and safety considerations, the ability to meet defined service standards and performance criteria can have real financial implications for the City and its taxpayers. For example, the Insurance Services Office (ISO) rates a community's fire suppression capabilities, as measured by a variety of factors including the water system, fire department staffing and equipment, emergency communications, fire and building codes, and public education efforts. The ISO then assigns a rating ranging from Class 1 for the best to Class 10 for the worst. This can directly affect property insurance rates paid by residents and businesses in the area. The City of Amarillo recently improved its ISO rating from Class 3 to Class 2. It is estimated that homeowners could save about 5% on insurance premium costs, and the savings for commercial property owners could be in the 3% to 5% range, depending on the response by individual insurers.

City officials had requested a new ISO review because of various improvements implemented since 2005 including:

- The addition of 30 new firefighter positions;
- Construction of new fire stations and renovation of existing fire stations;
- The purchase of new, specialized fire apparatus and equipment;
- Water supply and distribution system improvements;
- The development and opening of the new Amarillo Emergency Communications Center, which centralizes emergency dispatch; and
- The adoption of up-to-date national building and fire code standards.

[Based, in part, on reporting by the Amarillo Globe-News.]

Such unpredictability can create an unfavorable environment for private investment and economic development. And while the average resident does not know all the intricacies of infrastructure provision and financing, some public meeting attendees for this Comprehensive Plan questioned why storm water from a new subdivision did not appear to be captured or channeled anywhere at the edge of the property.

To the extent that the City's current policies are favoring and encouraging primarily fringe development to accommodate population growth, then basic public health and safety concerns also arise. This is because Amarillo's police and fire departments are also feeling strains from the City's physical growth and increasing service demands. This is partly a matter of larger service areas to cover, but also a reflection of staff, facility, and equipment additions and upgrades needed to keep pace with growth—

and, in some cases, to be better positioned to respond effectively to service calls in both existing and newly developed areas.

Willingness to Use Available Municipal Tools

An array of strategies is available for influencing the pattern and timing of development, ranging from simply minimizing the impacts of growth without affecting the direction and pattern to strictly controlling growth. Given the limitations of Texas law governing city and county government, there are few, if any, mechanisms currently available to entirely prevent sprawl, particularly within a City's ETJ. Instead, Texas cities are faced with a complex set of rules regarding a municipality's ability to manage its development. While there are some mechanisms available to better manage peripheral development, there are also factors over which the City has little control (e.g., no building permit requirements or building code enforcement in the ETJ).

Within this context, it is wise for Amarillo to consider ways in which it can exert more influence over the direction, timing, pattern, and quality of fringe development that it ultimately must serve. The intent should not be to stop or slow growth in the area, but to guide growth toward areas that can best be served with public utilities and services in a cost-efficient manner.

The bottom line is that no single "silver bullet" solution is available to the City. Rather, the Amarillo community must be prepared to consider a combination of ways to better manage its growth. Some of these options were considered but not acted upon through the 2007 Development Policy Review Committee process. This chapter points toward specific strategies that should again be considered based on the anticipated growth Amarillo will see over the next several decades:

- ★ Strategies that directly address development patterns and intensities including:
 - Long-range planning to identify locations the City intends to target for the gradual expansion of its urbanized area—versus areas that are less conducive for intensive development because of terrain, environmental, or service provision constraints.
 - Application of the City's zoning and subdivision regulations to carry out this growth strategy, particularly in terms of the location and timing of new development.

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- City-County coordination to better synchronize development policies and procedures, and to improve regulatory enforcement in the ETJ.
- Advance annexation of both key growth areas and areas intended for limited development so they are brought into the City limits well before any significant development activity begins, and so appropriate zoning and development standards can be established early on.
- Inclusion of conditions in development agreements, where appropriate, to require that ETJ projects comply with certain aspects of in-City development regulations and standards prior to their annexation into the City.
- ★ Strategies that directly address the responsibility for and oversight of infrastructure provision including:
 - Multi-year capital improvements programming to make clear the City's intentions for extending its primary arterial streets, trunk water mains, and wastewater collection lines to targeted growth areas.
 - Clear infrastructure standards in the subdivision regulations, and associated City specifications and criteria, regarding minimum improvements required of private development.
 - Use of interlocal cooperation contracts as a means for the City and other units of government to coordinate on the provision of infrastructure (as well as public services and administrative functions).
 - Negotiation of development agreements with private interests that request extension of the City's utility infrastructure to fringe and/or ETJ locations, especially to clarify the timing of future planned improvements, as well as any conditions in exchange for the City's infrastructure and service commitments.
 - Continued City responsibility for permitting and inspection of on-site sewage facilities (OSSFs) in all of Potter and Randall counties to ensure that sewage management for low-density fringe development is carried out as appropriately as possible

under existing regulations and standards, especially to protect public health and the environment.

★ Strategies that directly address financing of expanded public infrastructure and services including:

- Fee mechanisms that generate additional revenue for infrastructure construction, upgrades, and ongoing maintenance in an equitable fashion by linking the fees to factors that create infrastructure demand (e.g., impervious surfaces that affect post-development storm water runoff, traffic generation that reduces remaining road capacity).
- Impact fees assessed on new residential and non-residential development, which provides earmarked funding for particular capital improvements that are specifically needed to serve the new development (as authorized in Texas for water, sanitary sewer, drainage, and road improvements).
- Use of development agreements to establish levels of participation in public/private cost-sharing arrangements for infrastructure improvements, as well as reimbursement provisions for infrastructure oversizing or other special circumstances.
- Continued use of improvement districts and reinvestment zones to take advantage of additional state-authorized mechanisms for infrastructure financing and private participation.
- Recognition of annexation as a mechanism to expand the City's tax base, especially to incorporate into the pool of tax and fee payers all those who benefit from municipal infrastructure and services.

In general, Amarillo needs to move toward fees and infrastructure financing approaches that generate additional revenue for urgently needed improvements while reducing the cost burden placed on existing residents and taxpayers to pay for extension of public utilities and services necessitated purely by new development. It is common in many cities for new development—even mid-market residential development—to be subsidized

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ONGOING POLICY ISSUE SINCE THE 1980s PLAN

"The annexed area(s) are to pay a fair share of the costs of any essential public improvements."

- *Physical Environment Goals, Policy B3*

"... Require new developments to finance construction of future drainage facilities needed to protect those developments."

- *Utilities and Drainage Goal, Policy 21*

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to some extent. But, given City government's extensive role in development-related infrastructure provision in Amarillo, along with the City's low-tax policies, a much lower share of limited public resources is being directed to street and infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation in older areas, especially to make such areas more attractive and competitive for private investment and needed redevelopment activity and infill development. And to the extent that this approach is mainly supporting fringe development and the geographic spread of the City's developed area, significant growth management considerations are also involved.

Character Protection

It is ironic, and ultimately unfortunate, that people who move to more remote locations just outside cities to get away from denser, in-City living can end up part of a trend that gradually erodes rural character through piecemeal, barely regulated development. This dispersed development activity can begin to impact daily quality of life as traffic increases and raises safety issues on minimally improved county roads and at four-way stop intersections. Eventually, the City—and its existing taxpayers—may have to bear the burden of bringing substandard infrastructure and public facilities up to municipal standards when previously developed land is annexed and such standards were not met originally.

As noted above, early annexation of targeted ETJ locations enables the City to extend its zoning regulations in advance of new growth to set a tone for the initial and longer-term development of these fringe areas. At the same time, the City should zone for lower-density residential development areas within the City limits where Suburban, Estate, and Rural characters will be established and protected over the long term. Otherwise, those seeking these types of settings and lifestyles are forced to look outside the City, creating further pressure for ETJ development.

Finally, the City can also use its annexation and zoning authorities to protect longstanding agricultural operations and other ETJ land uses that can be gradually undermined by the encroachment and proximity of new residential development. More generally, given the lack of regulatory authority at the county level in Texas, only municipalities have the wherewithal to manage the "city-country interface" effectively.

ACTION STRATEGIES

This section provides potential action strategies for responding to the key planning themes related to Amarillo's growth management and capacity that were outlined earlier in this chapter:

1. Reconsider the Fundamentals
2. Willingness to Use Available Municipal Tools
3. Character Protection

Table 3.1, Growth Management & Capacity Actions, summarizes the action possibilities that were considered by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and which were classified as Basic actions that are relatively straightforward to implement, Intermediate actions that could be more challenging and require more advance work, and Advanced actions that would represent "stretch" objectives for the City because they are new (or a break from past practice), potentially controversial, or otherwise more difficult to accomplish due to cost or other considerations. They also fall into five categories which represent the main ways that comprehensive plans are implemented (as elaborated upon in Chapter 7-Implementation):

- ★ Capital investments
- ★ Programs/initiatives
- ★ Regulations and standards
- ★ Partnerships/coordination
- ★ Ongoing study/planning (especially as required to qualify for external funding opportunities)

These options are elaborated on in the remainder of this chapter.

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TABLE 3.1
Growth Management & Capacity Actions

Basic Actions

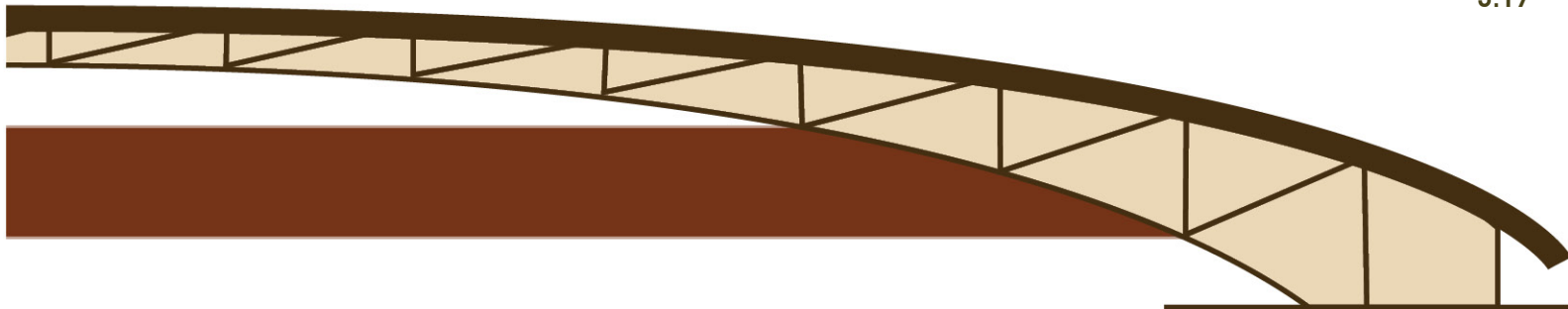
Action	Action Type
1. Coordinated planning and public investments	Program / Initiative
2. Financial and strategic considerations for annexation	Ongoing Study / Planning
3. Green building and management practices	Program / Initiative
4. Initial zoning of annexed areas	Regulation / Standards
5. Voluntary annexation and ETJ extension	Program / Initiative

Intermediate Actions


Action	Action Type
6. Cost of growth study	Ongoing Study / Planning
7. Utility mechanism and fee	Program / Initiative
8. Advance annexation	Program / Initiative
9. Protection of annexation areas not targeted for growth	Regulation / Standards
10. Traffic impact analysis	Regulation / Standards
11. Public Improvement Districts (PIDs)	Program / Initiative
12. Development agreements	Partnerships / Coordination
13. Growth planning map	Ongoing Study / Planning
14. Zoning for rural character	Regulation / Standards
15. "Country living" options within the City	Regulation / Standards
16. Lot size averaging	Regulation / Standards
17. Conservation through public (or non-profit) acquisition	Program / Initiative

Advanced Actions

Action	Action Type
18. Impact fee consideration	Ongoing Study / Planning
19. Development platting	Regulation / Standards
20. Natural resource conservation	Regulation / Standards
21. Cluster and conservation development provisions	Regulation / Standards



22. Sign regulation in ETJ	Regulation / Standards
23. Dark sky protection	Regulation / Standards

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1. **Coordinated Planning and Public Investments.** Ensure that the policy direction of this Comprehensive Plan carries through to other master planning efforts across City government, including plans for utility infrastructure, highways and streets, sidewalks and trails, bike routes, parks and recreation facilities, housing, public safety facilities, and other City facilities and projects. Also coordinate with the Amarillo Independent School District and other area districts on demographic projections and campus/facility planning.

Also monitor actual population and development trends and various community indicators (e.g., traffic counts and collision frequency, roadway and intersection capacities, police and fire call volumes and response times, storm drainage volumes and rates in key locations, floodplain changes, water quality parameters, etc.) to detect any growth-related impacts of concern.

2. **Financial and Strategic Considerations for Annexation.** Use reliable, sophisticated cost/benefit analysis methods to evaluate the anticipated revenues and up-front and ongoing costs to the City of all proposed annexations. However, recognize that, in some cases, other strategic, non-financial considerations must guide annexation decisions, such as the need to exert early control over future critical growth areas or corridors, protect water supply resources or other public assets, etc.
3. **Green Building and Management Practices.** Continue to monitor trends and practices in the building code, land development, and public facilities arenas related to “green” building and operational standards (including for energy efficiency; water conservation, capture, and re-use; waste reduction and recycling, etc.) to ensure that the City’s codes and policies promote and do not discourage such activity in Amarillo. The National Green Building Program sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders is an important resource, along with other governmental and non-profit resources.
4. **Initial Zoning of Annexed Areas.** Continue to automatically apply “A” Agricultural zoning to all newly-annexed territory (as provided through Section 4-10-64(a)) unless the City designates other zoning as part of completing the annexation. It is appropriate to apply the most restrictive

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zoning to reinforce the “holding area” function of the Agricultural district so that rural character is maintained at the community’s fringe in areas not yet ready to transition into more urban uses. While a property owner may immediately apply for a change in zoning classification following annexation, the ordinance should also include criteria for the review of such applications to ensure that adequate public facilities are available to serve any of the uses permitted by right in the requested new zoning district.

5. **Voluntary Annexation and ETJ Extension.** Pursue opportunities to incorporate strategic areas via voluntary petition by area landowners. Also consider voluntary requests by landowners outside the current ETJ to have the ETJ extended to their property where it suits the long-term interests of both parties.
6. **Cost of Growth Study.** Commission a professional study of the implications of the City’s recent and projected development patterns from a fiscal impact and sustainability standpoint. Relevant considerations include the relationship between development location and densities and public infrastructure costs, the return on municipal investment under varying development scenarios, and the City’s up-front capital costs compared to the near-term and projected revenue stream. This can lead to adjustments in a range of municipal programs and practices, including future land use and thoroughfare planning, capital improvements programming, annexation planning, and annual and multi-year budgeting (including revenue mechanisms and levels of service). The study results could also be cited in implementing the City’s development regulations, as is indicated in the purpose statement for the subdivision regulations in Section 4-6-3(1) (orderly development in accordance with “planning studies related to the development of the City”).
7. **Utility Mechanism and Fee.** Should impact fees prove unworkable in Amarillo, due to its more gradual growth pace or for other reasons, consider other mechanisms for equitable financing of improvements necessitated by ongoing growth, along with maintenance and upgrades to existing infrastructure. One option explored by the 2007 Development Policy Review Committee involves utility fees charged to a wide range of residential and non-residential “users” of City infrastructure systems, who would benefit from enhanced maintenance and speedier completion of capital projects that such fee revenue would help to accomplish.

For example, various Texas cities assess a monthly drainage utility fee, typically paid through overall utility billing. Some cities apply the fee to each developed lot or parcel, with fee amounts dependent upon the type of residential structure (single-family, duplex, multi-family) or the scale of non-residential development (square feet). Others tie the non-residential fee to the extent of impervious surface on a site. Typical activities funded and undertaken by a municipal drainage utility include:

- ★ Completing periodic updates to the City's Drainage Master Plan, as well as a storm drainage system maintenance plan to prioritize targeted inspections, cleaning and debris clearance, and repairs.
 - ★ Implementing specific capital improvement projects based on these plans, including potential land acquisition to preserve natural open spaces for their water absorption and pollutant and erosion reduction benefits.
 - ★ Addressing state and federal mandates related to storm water discharge permitting and monitoring, including both municipal and private activities that can impact the quality of water discharged from the City's storm sewer system.
 - ★ Expanding citizen, business, property owner, and builder/contractor outreach, education/ training, and assistance, especially in support of the mandatory storm water permit program (including pollution reporting, volunteer activities).
8. **Advance Annexation.** Continue to identify ETJ areas that are priorities for annexation into the City limits based on immediate and near-term development pressures (generally over the next 5-10 years). These areas should be feasible for the City to serve within statutory timeframes and also make fiscal sense (projected revenue relative to costs of service extension). ETJ areas where City utilities have already been extended should also be high priorities. By statute, a three-year planning and "waiting" period will be required for some areas, but other areas may be exempted and eligible for much quicker annexation.
9. **Protection of Annexation Areas Not Targeted for Near-Term Growth.** Employ growth management measures in areas the City annexes for strategic reasons or resource protection purposes to prevent premature and/or inappropriate development (e.g., agricultural zoning, no infrastructure extension, etc.). Also coordinate with individual property owners in targeted ETJ areas to promote the benefits of special non-

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annexation development agreements the City must offer, prior to annexation proceedings, to those owners who maintain a Texas Tax Code exemption on their property for agriculture, wildlife, and/or timber land management (per Texas Local Government Code Chapter 43, Section 43.035). Owners who accept the agreement must commit to forego any development activity (other than maintaining an existing single-family residence on the property). In turn, the City can put off annexation for the term of the agreement (up to 15 years) and, significantly, is also able to enforce its planning and development regulations so long as they do not interfere with the tax-exempted use of the property. If an owner does not accept the agreement, then the City can proceed with annexation as appropriate.

10. **Traffic Impact Analysis.** Protect roadway capacity and safety, especially in fringe and rural areas with limited existing road infrastructure (and no near-term improvement plans), by requiring Traffic Impact Analyses (TIAs) and potential mitigation measures when proposed developments exceed a threshold size (by number of lots/units, non-residential square footage, etc.) or projected trip generation.
11. **Public Improvement Districts (PIDs).** Continue to use public improvement districts in appropriate growth and investment areas as they allow for funding of a broad range of public improvements (including streets, sidewalks, water and wastewater infrastructure, drainage facilities, and parks, as well as associated land acquisition for such improvements). They also may be established within the ETJ, just as in the City limits, after completing statutory service planning and public hearing procedures. Improvements are then funded through a special assessment against the property owners who principally benefit from them, in fair proportion to the level of their benefit. PIDs may prove feasible as a means for meeting infrastructure needs within designated growth areas where the City is not yet prepared to commit capital resources to extend services—or where City/PID cost-sharing arrangements can expedite such extensions and/or make more improvements possible. Governing statutes also provide for annual budgeting and review of the assessment plan, as well as ongoing service plan updates and associated capital improvements planning.
12. **Development Agreements.** Pursue development agreements in the ETJ to influence development activity and patterns to the extent possible,

especially in targeted long-range growth areas. When and where appropriate, the City could allow a certain amount of desirable development to occur by way of utility extensions (or other interim service arrangements), but it should negotiate potential cost-sharing and also push for voluntary compliance with development regulations and standards that apply within the City limits. The City also can offer a guarantee not to annex the property for a stated period of time, providing leverage for other negotiable items.

- 13. Growth Planning Map.** Prepare and maintain a long-range Growth Planning Map for coordination across City departments and with other governments and entities. Beyond the core, largely contiguous developed area of the existing community (where infill opportunities are available, along with existing infrastructure and public services), the map should generally delineate: (1) Protection Areas (e.g., airport runway protection zones, drainage ways and playa lakes and their associated 100- and 500-year floodplains, designated ground water protection areas, and other natural features and areas that warrant permanent protection); (2) Growth Areas, which are developable and contiguous areas where the next 20 years of projected population growth and associated land development activity can best be accommodated and served; and (3) Holding Areas, which encompass the remainder of the ETJ and are not intended or well suited to absorb any significant growth or intensive development over the 20-year planning horizon.

The Growth Planning Map is not intended as a rigid regulatory mechanism but rather as a tool for general long-range planning purposes. It is very likely that some development outside delineated Growth Areas may make sense and cause no difficulties from a public service or fiscal impact standpoint within the 20-year timeframe. Likewise, some locations included within the Growth Areas may turn out not to be conducive for near-term development, at least with the support of City utilities and services. However, the Growth Planning Map should directly influence periodic updates to the Future Land Use & Character map in this Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, to ensure that the growth timing aspect of municipal zoning is employed effectively, a direct link should be established between character areas indicated on the Future Land Use & Character map (e.g., Urban, Suburban, Rural) and the development intensities permitted in these areas through the City's zoning ordinance and map. On a more routine basis, the City must also guard against zoning map amendments that, cumulatively, can lead to extensive

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residential development in growth areas without adequate land reserves for a balance of commercial, public, and recreational uses.

For this mapping tool to be effective as part of the City's ongoing growth management efforts, the various designated areas must be reviewed at least annually and updated, as appropriate, based on changed market (or other) conditions, economic development opportunities, ongoing capital improvements and their timing/location/capacity, annexation activity by the City, etc.

14. **Zoning for Rural Character.** Establish a new zoning district that would accommodate large-lot, low-intensity residential development as an intermediate district between other districts intended to promote and maintain suburban development character on the one hand, and rural character on the other. An Estate zoning district of this type typically has a one-acre minimum lot size and is particularly appropriate for residential areas that do not have municipal water and wastewater service and must have acre lots to be permitted for both a water well and on-site septic system on the same lot. The "A" Agricultural district in Amarillo's zoning ordinance currently provides for this one-acre minimum lot size, and the next largest lot size is 7,500 square feet in the "R-1" Residential district. Instead, with an Estate district established, the "A" district could become a true Agricultural zoning district and be devoted purely to the purpose of maintaining rural character and protecting and preserving farm and ranch activities around the outskirts of the community. Instituting a substantially larger minimum lot size (e.g., 3, 5, or even 10 acres) would support this zoning objective and also enable the Agricultural district to fulfill the "holding area" function described elsewhere in this plan chapter. Again, this function is to limit premature urbanization in areas that cannot be served by current public utility infrastructure or adequate roads for increased traffic volumes—or where more intensive development is not contemplated at all over the long term due to certain constraints. The current zoning ordinance also allows for various uses in the Agricultural district, either by right or via a Specific Use Permit (e.g., indoor/outdoor commercial amusements, drag strip or commercial racing, go-cart track, roller/ice skating rink, theater or playhouse, zoo, etc.), that go beyond permitting only single-family rural homesteads and agricultural support activities, in addition to basic farm and ranch uses.

15. **“Country Living” Options within the City.** Incorporate and zone appropriately adequate land at the City’s fringe to accommodate low-density residential development that will maintain an estate or rural character over time. Otherwise, those seeking larger-lot living arrangements with a more open feel will continue to look to property and developments in unincorporated areas, which can reinforce a spread-out development pattern and reduce the City’s long-term tax base potential.
16. **Lot Size Averaging.** To provide greater flexibility—without the need for a Planned Development application (or use of the subdivision variance procedure in Section 4-6-79)—and promote resource protection and more creative design, allow proposed subdivisions to use an average lot size (which would apply by phase in the case of multi-phase projects). This approach, if provided for directly through Chapter 4-6, in conjunction with the zoning ordinance, would allow some lots to be smaller and others larger than a minimum area standard normally required of all lots, which often leads to “cookie cutter” subdivision layouts that do not work around or buffer natural features. With the ability to reduce lot sizes on some areas of the site, land planners can lay out larger lots in more sensitive or scenic areas, such as along a water feature or wetland fringe, steep-slope location, or where floodplain covers a portion of the property (and also to buffer homes from a highway or railroad corridor, pipeline easement, abutting incompatible land use, etc.). The average-lot design would have the same total number of lots as a conventional layout to ensure no density increase and, therefore, no increased traffic generation or utility demands. However, density bonuses (with offsetting open space requirements) could also be offered as an incentive since lot size averaging, like clustering, can help to achieve expressed community objectives. Besides resource protection and open space preservation, varied lot sizes can also enable a developer to incorporate a mix of housing types in a single project.
17. **Conservation through Public (or Non-Profit) Acquisition.** In the absence of parkland dedication provisions in the City’s subdivision review and approval process, continue to negotiate voluntary land dedications and donations that could preserve key natural features and asset areas in perpetuity. This would also add to the City’s inventory of limited-development parkland for passive recreation uses while also maintaining “ecological services” that benefit the entire community (e.g., flooding attenuation, pollutant absorption and water quality protection, reduced “heat island” effect, intact wildlife habitat, etc.). Alternatively, the City

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can recruit land trusts and conservation organizations to consider acquisition and preservation of targeted lands in the area.

Another option, for either the City or other organizations, is to negotiate a conservation easement rather than outright purchase of property. As described by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department in a related guidebook, a conservation easement “is a restriction landowners voluntarily place on specified uses of their property to protect natural, productive or cultural features. A conservation easement is recorded as a written legal agreement between the landowner and the ‘holder’ of the easement, which may be either a nonprofit conservation organization or government agency.” Such easements can help to reassure prospective owners of new homes—and nearby rural land owners—that large, contiguous areas of undeveloped land will be preserved for a specified time to maintain a particular character as further growth is absorbed in the vicinity.

18. **Impact Fee Consideration.** Investigate the feasibility of implementing development impact fees in Amarillo (for water, wastewater, and/or road improvement needs). Impact fee programs are designed to isolate, through technical analysis, infrastructure improvements or upgrades that are directly necessitated by new development, and then provide earmarked funding for completing specified capital projects (separate from the City’s overall Capital Improvements Plan that benefits existing developed plus newly developing areas). Impact fees are similar to special assessments except that they are charged to new development as it is approved rather than to all property owners within a particular area. In this way, impact fees can be particularly appropriate in portions of the City’s defined growth area for which there are no other definitive capital improvement plans, thereby helping to ensure that new development does not exhaust existing available infrastructure capacities. This also enables development to occur consistent with the City’s growth plan, but without committing the City to construct infrastructure prematurely before actual development emerges.

Impact fees provide certainty by identifying specific improvements to be completed in a specified timeframe—otherwise the fees must be refunded. Governing statutes also prevent fee revenue from being spent on operation and maintenance of existing facilities and other activities not related to serving new development. However, impact fees are not a cure-

all for infrastructure financing because cities often set their impact fees below the maximum allowable level, and the resulting fee revenue only supplements other City expenditures that are usually necessary to fully fund needed capital improvements. But impact fees do help to internalize into land development and real estate transactions more of the true costs of bringing new residential units or non-residential space to the market, for more direct payment by those actually creating the market demand.

- 19. Development Platting.** Consider adopting development plat requirements for review and approval of developments which do not involve land subdivision as authorized by the Texas Local Government Code in Chapter 212, Municipal Regulation of Subdivisions and Property Development. Through Chapter 4-6 of the Municipal Code (Platting and Subdivision Improvement and Maintenance), the City of Amarillo regulates subdivision activity in its City limits and ETJ. This type of regulation is authorized by the first portion of Chapter 212 in the Local Government Code. However, Amarillo does not make use of the authority granted to it under the second portion of Chapter 212, which is Subchapter B, Regulation of Property Development. This would enable City departments to review site plan details involving buildings, rights-of-way and easements, and other physical improvements to ensure they conform to the City’s “general plans, rules, and ordinances” related to mobility, utility infrastructure, parks, etc.—and the extension of these public systems within the City and its ETJ.

From a growth management perspective, one advantage of having development plat requirements is that, along with subdivision regulations, this is one of the few regulatory mechanisms that Texas cities can also apply in their ETJs to “promote the health, safety, morals, or general welfare of the municipality and the safe, orderly, and healthful development of the municipality” (Local Government Code Section 212.044). Section 212.003 of the Texas Local Government Code prohibits cities from applying typical zoning provisions in the ETJ through subdivision regulations, including regulation of land use, building bulk and scale, and residential density. Cities are also prohibited from requiring municipal building permits or otherwise enforcing their building code in the ETJ (Section 212.049). But the development plat procedure would give the City a basis to require modification of site plans—or deny plats—that are not consistent with City “plans, rules, and ordinances.” This could also provide a vehicle for ensuring effective implementation of potential rural development standards in the ETJ

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versus in-City standards (e.g., narrower street sections, different or waived sidewalk requirements, drainage via swales, etc.).

- 20. Natural Resource Conservation.** Incorporate explicit resource protection standards into the City's development regulations, especially in the subdivision regulations in Chapter 4-6 of the Municipal Code as the City may apply these requirements throughout its ETJ in addition to the City limits. This should include a broader purpose statement in Section 4-6-3 to cite natural resource considerations (beyond generic language on the "orderly, safe and healthful development of areas within the City and within the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction"). Likewise, the zoning ordinance does not address environmental factors directly in its purpose statement (in Section 4-10-2). The only substantive reference to resource protection is in Section 4-10-104, which outlines the site plan requirements for Planned Development applications, including potential analysis of impacts related to noise, air and water quality, visual quality, and "other site-specific requirements made necessary by the activity's effect upon the environment" (Section 4-10-104(4)).

Specific criteria should also be added that address ecological factors in a holistic manner, in accord with Low Impact Development principles. This should include decision-making guidance for assessing potential development impacts and mitigation options during the early stages of subdivision design and site planning and associated City reviews. In sum, Chapter 4-6 should do more than just spell out the mechanics of preparing land for development and transfer of ownership. It should also emphasize that the subdivision and development platting process is the time to consider the natural conditions and ecological assets and functions existing on a site and determine its basic development capacity and suitability. Applicants and City staff should then plan accordingly for subdivision layouts and development approaches that reserve asset areas both to preserve them and capitalize on them as development amenities.

- 21. Cluster and Conservation Development Provisions.** Add provisions to the subdivision regulations to allow for cluster development approaches—again, without the need for subdivision design standard variances, or having to go through the Planned Development process on the zoning side. Cluster designs provide developers and land planners flexibility to reduce lot sizes below typical minimum standards and thereby focus the proposed development footprint on only a portion of

the site. This approach may be necessary due to certain constraints on the site, or it may be intentional to bring a conservation design to market, which is increasingly popular in Texas and across the country for both retirees and in fringe development areas. Clustering results in better land utilization by preserving natural assets while still allowing some degree of development on constrained sites, which provides return on investment to property owners and addresses area housing needs (including incorporation of townhomes, patio homes, and other housing options in a well-planned setting). In the best designs, natural features are preserved and incorporated as development focal points and amenities, thereby adding value for both the developer and home owners over time, especially when homes and/or other uses are arranged and oriented to take advantage of open space views. By setting aside natural areas and open space, cluster designs are also effective at reducing both storm water runoff and water quality impairment. Better drainage practices can reduce site infrastructure costs, and more compact development generally requires less linear feet of street, water and sewer lines, sidewalks, other utilities, etc.

Given the diversity of terrain in Amarillo's growth areas and ETJ, several levels of alternative subdivision design should be outlined: "cluster," "conservation," and "preservation" options. The operating principle is to trade density for open space—with "open space" meaning all the non-built, non-paved/pervious portions of a site. The increased concentration of units/buildings allowed through each successive category would be offset by a higher open space requirement for the overall site. Particularly for suburban and rural character areas, this is meant to ensure compatibility of the development with area character, with more space on the site automatically set aside for buffering purposes. As with lot size averaging, various incentive provisions can be incorporated directly into the standards to promote use of clustering on sites where a conventional layout would work against community character and resource preservation objectives. Incentive possibilities include density bonuses, reduced building setbacks, narrower streets, and greater reliance on natural infiltration and drainage versus "hard" infrastructure to handle storm drainage. Cluster development methods should be promoted with applicants at the concept plan stage and through educational seminars for area land planners and developers.

Additionally, clustering can be an important tool for preserving agricultural activity despite development pressures (and rising land

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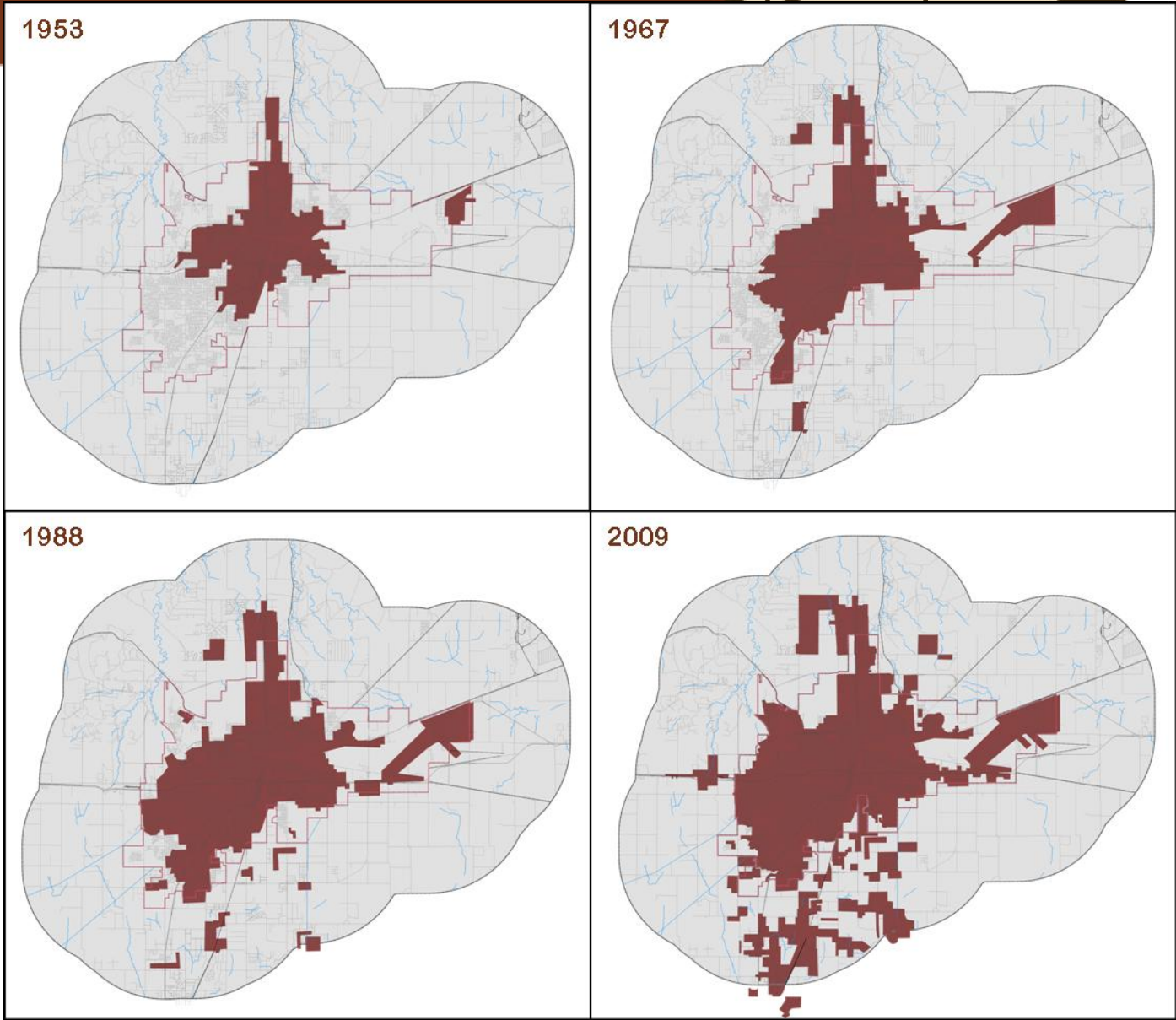
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prices and property tax appraisals) by allowing a rural property owner to gain greater return on his or her land by devoting a portion to housing or other non-agricultural development while keeping much of the property in agricultural use (with appropriate buffering standards to protect both land uses).

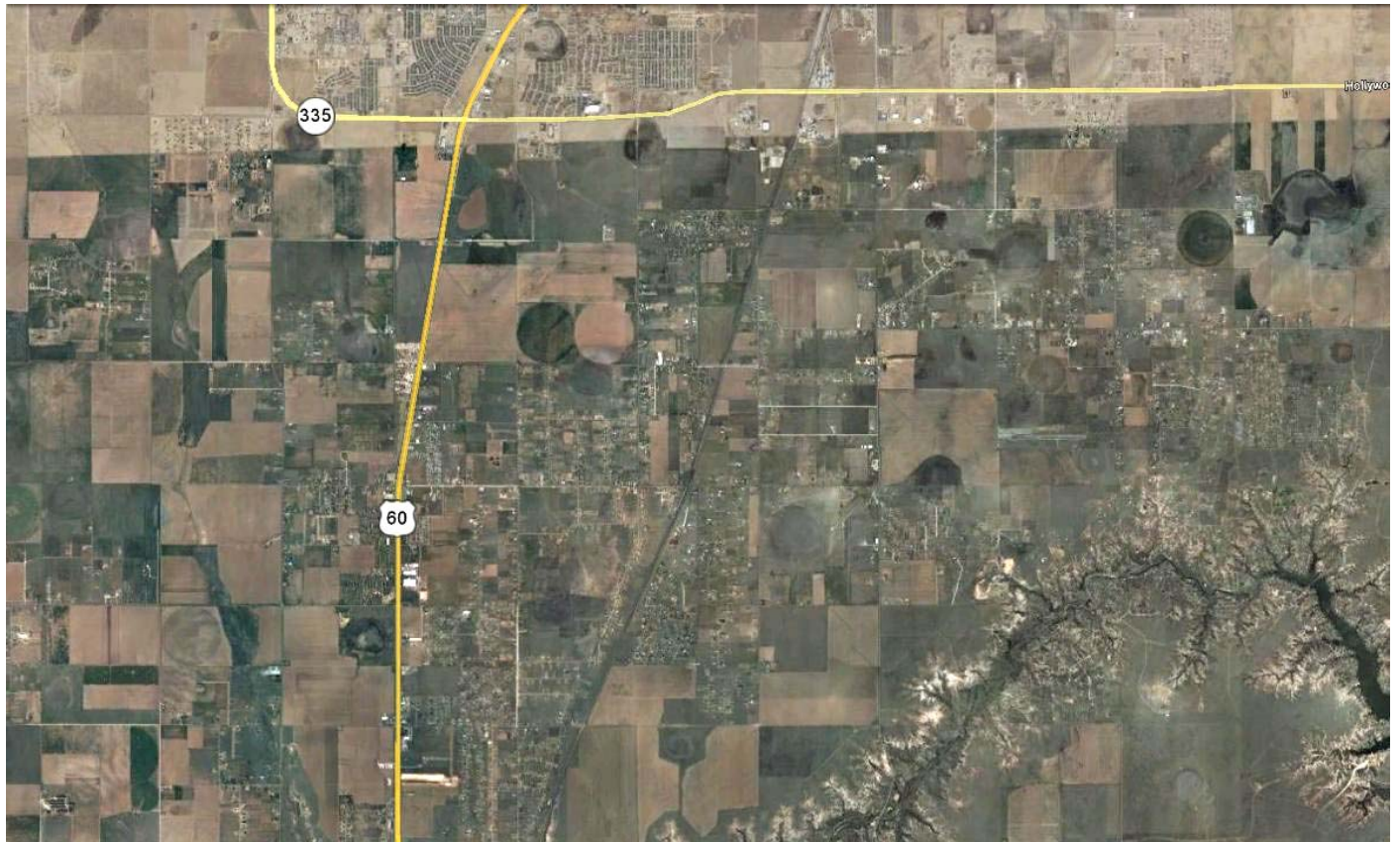
22. **Sign Regulation in ETJ.** Continue to take advantage of the opportunity afforded under Texas Local Government Code Section 216.902 to extend and enforce the City's sign regulations within the ETJ (in Amarillo's case, limiting any new off-premise signs per Section 4-2-13B in Chapter 4-2, Signs, of the Amarillo Municipal Code). This is a critical tool for preserving the suburban and especially rural character of fringe areas around the City, as well as to protect the visual quality of various entry corridors into the community. Among the regulatory purposes stated in Amarillo's recently amended sign ordinance is "Landscape Quality and Preservation" (in Section 4-2-1C), "to protect the public welfare and to enhance the appearance and economic value of the landscape." Ongoing coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation will also be essential as the City relies on TxDOT standards and enforcement for sign control along various key interstate and state highway corridors within the City and ETJ.
23. **Dark Sky Protection.** Consider incorporating "dark sky" standards into the City's development regulations, as adopted by various U.S. cities, which are aimed at reducing glare and lighting spillover that detracts from a rural character in less developed areas away from the core city. Such provisions should apply to residential lighting, as well as to non-residential site design, in sparsely populated areas of the ETJ. The City should apply the same standards in its own lighting practices for capital projects and at public facilities, and also coordinate with the Texas Department of Transportation, Potter and Randall counties, area school districts, and others to do the same. Resource information is available through the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) and the Illuminating Engineering Society (IES), which has produced a model lighting ordinance (also to promote energy conservation).



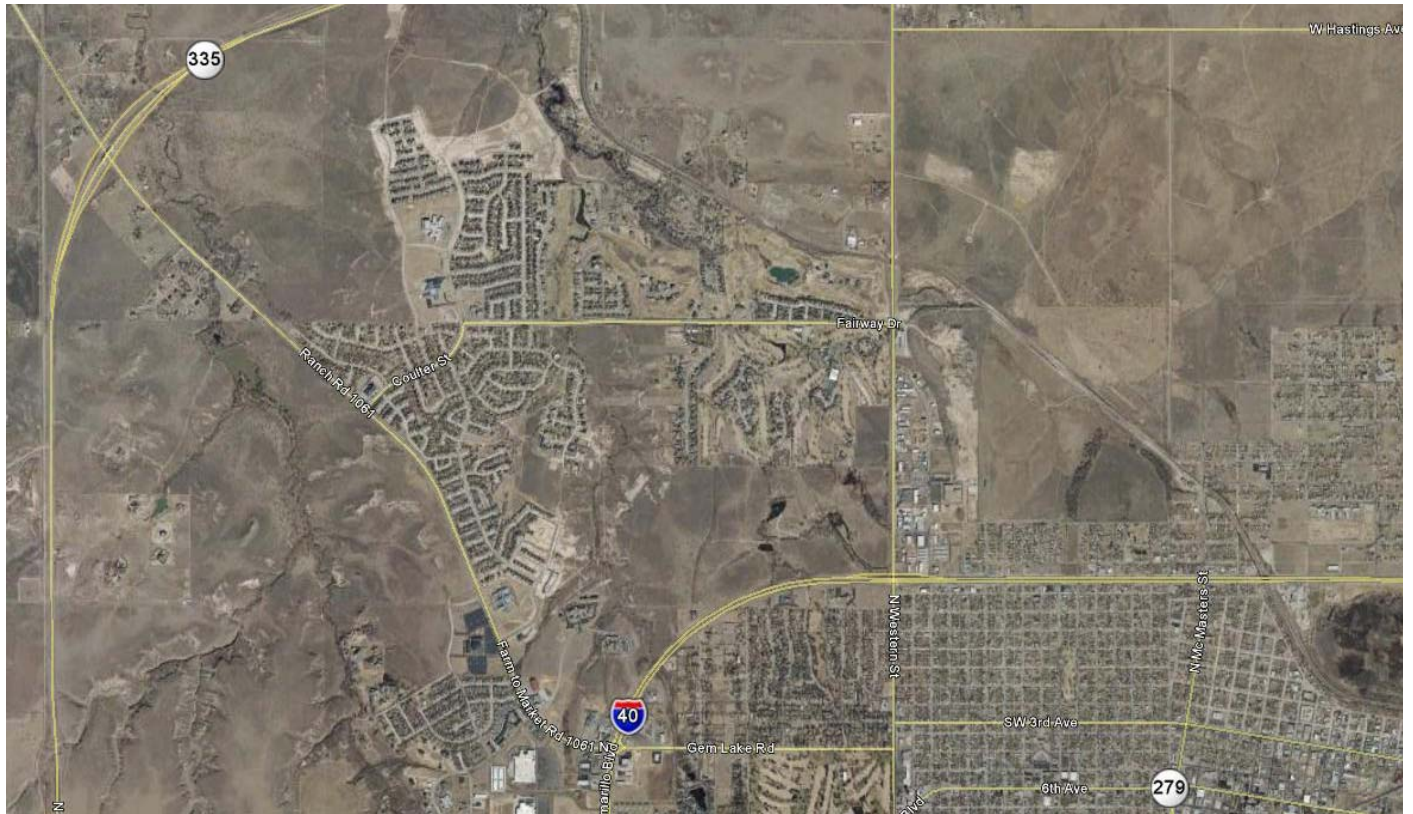
Dispersed residential development dots the landscape north of Amarillo along Western Street.

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AMARILLO
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN



This aerial view of territory south of Hollywood Road-Loop 335 shows how low-density residential development has proliferated in Amarillo's southern ETJ, toward Canyon, in a patchwork pattern interspersed with continued agricultural uses and vacant land. Residential development to the northwest (below) remains concentrated closer to the primary developed area of the City and near main roadways, and has also been incorporated into the City limits.





The sequence of past section development in north Amarillo illustrates a classic leapfrog pattern, with large areas of intervening, vacant land between the core city and emerging concentrations of residential development. This presents the City with a basic growth management dilemma: whether to extend infrastructure to non-contiguous growth areas to ensure good development outcomes—and in anticipation of potential future annexation into the City, or to withhold City infrastructure, which can lead to more scattered and larger-lot development to accommodate on-site well and septic systems. As in the example below, the resulting need for lots one acre or larger can accelerate land consumption in the City's ETJ. Home buyers end up with a large-lot living option but not really a rural or "country" atmosphere as homes are still relatively close together along local streets.

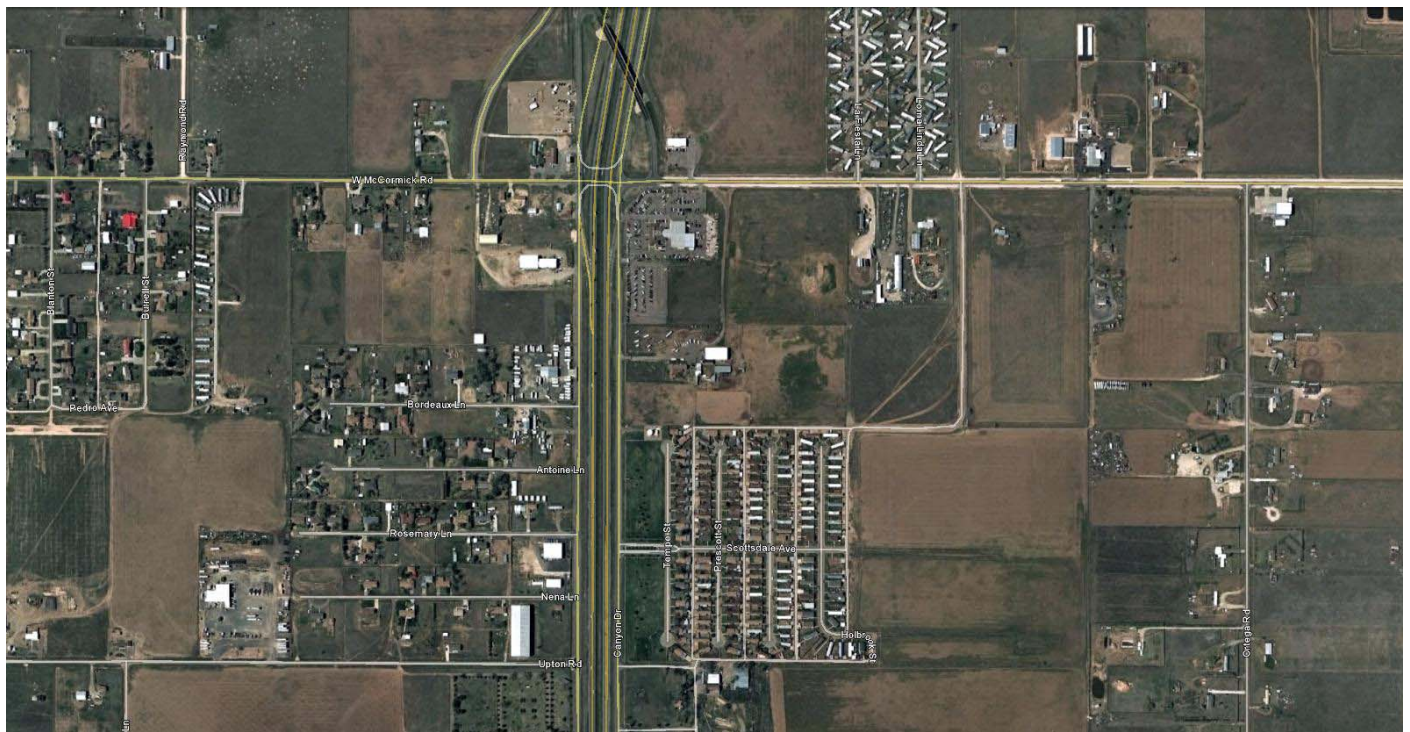


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This series of images shows some current conditions in Amarillo's ETJ, including scattered rural subdivision activity (above), concentrations of manufactured homes in some locations, selling points highlighted by some fringe developments, and some newly-built homes fronting directly on Loop 335, which adds further to the access management concerns emphasized in Chapter 4-Mobility.





The lack of zoning in an ETJ area that has already attracted significant development, such as this situation around the intersection of IH-27 and McCormick Road, leads to a mish-mash of development types and densities and no common development character—with the area’s rural development character long since eroded. Additionally, a single homestead on larger acreage (below) ends up surrounded by a variety of commercial, industrial, and residential uses with incompatible development intensities, unscreened outdoor activity and storage, and other site characteristics that undermine a rural residential lifestyle.





Minimum 1-acre lots are required in ETJ developments that will rely on individual water wells and on-site septic systems versus centralized water and sanitary sewer service.



The relatively isolated location of Sundown Elementary School, in the center of this aerial view, shows a breakdown of the Neighborhood Unit Concept as section areas outside the City limits begin to develop in a more scattered fashion.



Where homes are strung along long stand-alone streets in fringe areas, as in the example above, it becomes difficult to establish an interconnected street network over time, as well as to extend water and sewer infrastructure cost-efficiently.



New residential growth areas attract retail and service businesses. But it is not necessarily a net gain in terms of economic activity or municipal tax revenue if similar establishments in older areas of the City close in a more competitive and geographically spread-out marketplace.





The transition from an urban to rural atmosphere can be abrupt in Amarillo, as in the scene above just south of IH-40 East.



The intermingling of residential activity and active agriculture uses is evident in various ETJ locations, as in the scene above along Sundown Lane in close proximity to newer home construction.



The scenes above and below show new residential and commercial activity emerging where agricultural operations once predominated.



For the City, continuing edge growth requires further infrastructure investment, such as this water storage tower along Hillside.



Residential subdivision activity in the ETJ puts pressure on the counties encompassing Amarillo to provide more services, such as this Randall County Fire & Rescue Station on FM 2186 (with homes in the background).



These scenes show current growth edges around Amarillo, including northwest subdivision activity pushing toward Loop 335 above.



The growing Medical Center area as seen from Loop 335 west.



Vacant land immediately behind the commercial development that lines the west side of Soncy Road, south of IH-40.



The urban-rural interface in southwest Amarillo as seen from FM 2186.



CHAPTER FOUR

MOBILITY

The means and infrastructure for moving people and goods through and within a city are central to so many aspects of successful community building. Highways and streets, railroads, and airport locations all influence the city's physical form and arrangement of land uses. Economic development depends upon efficient freight movement and links to other cities and markets. For individual citizens, mobility between home and work, school, shopping, and services is a basic element of quality of life – and a particular challenge for those without vehicles in an auto-oriented environment. A well-planned and managed transportation system should provide options, both in terms of ways to move around the city (driving, via transit, and by bike or on foot) and multiple, alternative paths to get places. Those using the system seek convenience, avoidance of traffic congestion, and – above all – safety.

This chapter also works hand in hand with the Land Use & Community Character chapter by highlighting the need to establish and protect the distinct character of particular districts, neighborhoods, and corridors. From the transportation perspective, this is accomplished through roadway design that is sensitive to its natural and built surroundings, as well as through a commitment to “complete streets” and related improvements in areas where walking, biking, and/or transit use are as much or more important than getting places by car.

RESULTS OF PAST PLANNING

A look back at the last Amarillo Comprehensive Plan from the 1980s indicates both areas of community progress, as well as lingering challenges that will again be a focus of this new plan. The overall goal for mobility stated in the previous plan was:

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Establish both inter-city and intra-city transportation systems which are capable of safely and efficiently transporting people and goods.

Successful outcomes over the last several decades from this planning legacy include:

- ★ Continuation of a grid arterial street network based on section lines in new growth areas, which creates superblocks for implementation of the Neighborhood Unit Concept as discussed in Chapter 2, Land Use & Community Character.
- ★ As anticipated, adjustment of the major street grid in northwest Amarillo as development emerged in areas with more varied terrain and topography.
- ★ Completion of the northwest section of Loop 335.
- ★ Elimination of unpaved streets in areas that developed prior to newer regulatory standards and where they existed upon annexation into the City.
- ★ Completion of several key grade separations identified in the 1980s plan, including

BY THE NUMBERS

- In 2008 there were approximately 218,750 registered vehicles in Potter and Randall counties, or nearly one vehicle per person (0.94) based on an estimated population of 233,811. This vehicles-per-person ratio was 0.69 in 1970.
[SOURCE: TxDOT Amarillo District]
- The City of Amarillo has synchronized traffic signals at more than 70% of its signalized intersections.
[SOURCE: Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 2010-2035]
- Amarillo City Transit (ACT) serves approximately 350,000 passengers annually, with 8 fixed routes centered on downtown plus specialized paratransit services. About 32 square miles of the 85 square mile ACT service area is within ¼ mile of a route. A recent survey showed that only 5% of residents ever use ACT – 3% at 1-2 times a week, and 2% at more than 3 times a week.
[SOURCE: Amarillo Economic Development Corporation]
- More than 60 flights arrive or depart daily from Rick Husband Amarillo International Airport. This includes direct flights to various major U.S. hub airports, through which Amarillo is linked to numerous international destinations.
[SOURCE: Amarillo Economic Development Corporation]
- Two mainlines of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway intersect in Amarillo, making the City a rail hub with links to various other major U.S. and international cities and markets (and Union Pacific Railroad also has rights to use BNSF tracks in the Amarillo area). BNSF's local intermodal facility handles about 30,000 containers and trailers annually.
[SOURCE: Amarillo Economic Development Corporation]

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rail/street separations at St. Francis Avenue (with completion of Loop 335), Hollywood Road-South Loop 335, and South Washington Street-FM 541; and street separations where Loop 335 intersects Tascosa Road and Western Street.

- ★ Continued terminal and facility upgrades at Rick Husband International Airport, including the City's current airport expansion project, both to better serve air travelers and to support economic development initiatives associated with the airport.
- ★ Ongoing improvements to the regional highway system, which supports Amarillo's trade and transportation center role. A longer-term vision involves gradual completion of the Ports-to-Plains Corridor as a national priority, including a segment from the U.S.-Mexico border to Denver through Amarillo (with further links to Canada).

Issues and needs that are carried over from the previous Comprehensive Plan, even after more than 25 years of growth and change in the community, include:

- ★ The ongoing importance of a policy to, "Continue to limit access points (intersecting local streets and curb cuts) along major arterial streets and to design arterials to facilitate safe and efficient movement of traffic."
- ★ Several rail/street grade separations identified in the 1980s plan that were never built, including at SE 46th Avenue, NE 24th Avenue, and on Eastern Street at SE 3rd Avenue, plus at the next rail crossing to the north on Eastern. Another needed grade separation at Grand Street and SE 3rd Avenue is moving forward after coming to the forefront during 2009. Additional street separations were anticipated at the intersections of Soncy Road and Amarillo Boulevard and Western Street and Hollywood Road.
- ★ Continued protection of the International Airport vicinity from incompatible land uses, especially those sensitive to noise.
- ★ Exploring any possibility of restored passenger rail service to and from Amarillo in future years.

Finally, the Economic Base section of the 1980s Comprehensive Plan included a suggestion to, "Promote reasonable city growth and transportation patterns that are cost and energy efficient ..." This policy statement has even greater resonance nearly three decades later given much more widespread

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environmental awareness and public and official attention to international energy trends, costs, and alternative sources.

Community Concerns

Through the various public meetings and discussions conducted for this Comprehensive Plan, the following citizens concerns and priorities were noted:

North Amarillo

- ★ Traffic flow problems along Amarillo Boulevard due to a lack of turn lanes.
- ★ Pedestrian and bicycle circulation on Amarillo Boulevard west of McMasters Street.
- ★ Possibility of extending NW 24th Avenue from its current terminus at Ong Street westward to Western Street (would involve a railroad crossing east of Western Street).

East Amarillo

- ★ Pedestrian safety on Ross-Mirror bridge over railroad.

Downtown Amarillo

- ★ Truck traffic through downtown.
- ★ Safe and pleasant circulation once there (focus on walkability, potential circulator trolley service).
- ★ Pedestrian safety at intersections.

South Amarillo

- ★ Traffic and safety along IH-27 from downtown to SW 45th Avenue (lack of direct connection from IH-40 eastbound to IH-27 southbound, safety of entering IH-27 northbound to the north of SE 26th Avenue).

West Amarillo

- ★ Congestion around Medical Center (especially Coulter Street at IH-40, Wolflin Avenue, and Amarillo Boulevard).
- ★ Traffic flow and safety along Soncy corridor, north and south of IH-40.
- ★ Need a true loop highway west of Soncy.

- ★ Pedestrian circulation and safety along Gem Lake Road.
- ★ Possibility of a bike lane on SW 3rd Avenue to connect West Hills area to downtown.
- ★ Extension of Coulter Street from current terminus at SW 9th Avenue northward to Tascosa Road.
- ★ Extension of Rock Island Rail-to-Trail (east into downtown, west of Coulter Street).

Public meeting participants also cited the following as specific intersections of concern for traffic congestion and/or safety reasons:

- ★ Amarillo Boulevard at Hughes Street.
- ★ SE 3rd Avenue at Buchanan Street (near Civic Center).
- ★ NE 15th Avenue at US 87/287-Dumas Highway.
- ★ Grand Street at railroad crossing.
- ★ Airport Boulevard and IH-40 (truck traffic in same area as airport arrival/departure traffic).
- ★ Southeast Regional Park entrance at SE 46th Avenue.
- ★ Ross-Osage at IH-40 and segment just south (Sam's Club and post office vicinity).
- ★ SE 27th Avenue in vicinity of railroad.
- ★ SE 46th Avenue at railroad crossing.
- ★ Georgia Street at IH-40.
- ★ Georgia Street at IH-27.
- ★ Hillside Road at IH-27 (design).
- ★ SW 34th Avenue jog at Western Street (and Janet Drive link).
- ★ Sundown Lane at Western Street.
- ★ SW 48th Avenue at Bell Street (John Stiff Memorial Park access).
- ★ Bell Street north and south of IH-40, and at Plains Boulevard.

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Intersection Rankings

- The intersection of Coulter Street and IH-40 had the highest 24-hour traffic count (54,922 vehicles) among numerous locations monitored by the City during 2006-08. Other locations above 50,000 vehicles per day were Bell Street at IH-40 (50,618) and Bell at SW 45th Avenue (50,573) – also the busiest intersection away from IH-40.
- The next busiest intersections were:
 - Western Street and SW 45th (47,712)
 - Bell at SW 34th Avenue (47,304)
 - Coulter and SW 34th (45,372)
 - Soncy Road and IH-40 (42,650)
 - Coulter and SW 45th (40,979)
 - Western and IH-40 (40,719)
 - Western and SW 34th (40,016)
- The intersection of Grand Street and NE 24th Avenue had the highest traffic accident rate in 2008 based on traffic count data and the number of incidents by intersection. Other locations in the top 5 were Paramount Boulevard at the IH-40 south frontage road, Taylor Street at SE 10th Avenue, Soncy Road at Hillside Road, and Georgia Street at the IH-40 south frontage road. This last intersection also had the highest number of accidents (26) during 2008, which tied with Western Street at SW 34th Avenue/Janet Drive.

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- ★ Amarillo Boulevard and Gem Lake Road (retail traffic).
- ★ Bushland Boulevard, Western Street, and SW 8th Avenue.
- ★ SW 6th Avenue and Georgia/McMasters streets.
- ★ Amarillo Boulevard, NW 4th Avenue, and Avondale Street.

KEY PLANNING THEMES

An overarching theme for this entire Comprehensive Plan is the need for the Amarillo community to invest in its people, its infrastructure, and its amenities to enhance residents' quality of life. Based on the concerns and hopes expressed by residents, public and private leaders, and key community stakeholders and investors, the themes below emerged as priorities for this Mobility element of the plan. Significantly, these are in line with the "major opportunities for the transportation system" identified in the area's current *Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 2010-2035*: (a) maintain, upgrade and expand the existing roadway system, (b) manage and reduce existing congestion, (c) provide improved transit services, (d) create a safe and efficient bicycle network, and (e) provide improved pedestrian facilities.

1. Corridor Management
2. More Attention to Non-Vehicular Circulation
3. Emphasis on Safety
4. Dealing with the Transit Dilemma

Corridor Management

While acknowledging increasing traffic and related inconveniences on occasion as the City has grown, most public meeting attendees said that Amarillo remains relatively easy to get around, with few "traffic jams." A continued focus on smooth traffic flow and safety is essential while working to address some particular locations where congestion has emerged as a regular and relatively significant problem at peak hours, such as the Medical Center area and nearby arterial intersections with IH-40 (Soncy, Coulter, Bell).

The necessary approach combines the notion of protecting significant past investment made in street and highway infrastructure, together with an emphasis on making the most of existing rights-of-way and improvements to

meet the community's mobility needs. Actual physical improvements, whether to maintain the roadway surface or upgrade basic design features, are implemented routinely through the City's Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and through the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO's) multi-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Very targeted improvements, such as increasing capacity at key intersections (e.g., with new turning lanes) or installing advanced traffic signals, may eliminate or postpone the need for more costly and disruptive roadway widening projects. But, at some point, new road construction and extension of the existing major arterial network becomes necessary to keep pace with land development activity and new traffic demands and patterns. It was suggested that wider rights-of-way be acquired in the future to ensure adequate space for long-term, ultimate roadway cross sections, but also to accommodate "multi-modal" use of corridors by transit vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. Of course, there is also the fundamental question of whether a new north-south corridor to the west of Soncy Road should be planned, protected, and eventually developed to restore the circumferential loop highway function in west Amarillo that was lost with the way the Soncy corridor was allowed to develop. The MPO has also laid the groundwork for eventual expansion of two-lane segments of IH-27 to three lanes in each direction between Amarillo and Canyon. Additionally, during 2009, \$1.6 million in federal stimulus funds enabled repaving of IH-27 between downtown and SW 45th Avenue.

Back on the "protecting investments" theme, the obvious lesson from the Soncy corridor experience is the essential need to safeguard the through-traffic function—and capacity and safety—of key arterial and highway corridors, particularly through prudent access management policies and development standards for abutting properties. The failure to control access along Soncy Road made it impossible to ever upgrade this Loop 335 segment to complete expressway standards for high-speed, limited-access operation. As stated in the summary of the 1980s Comprehensive Plan:

Expressways have characteristics similar to freeways except the majority of intersections are at grade. (Usually only railroad crossings and those intersections with high volume traffic are grade separated.) An expressway may be improved with or without frontage roads, but where access to adjacent property is important, frontage roads should be provided.

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Even with the expressway opportunity gone along Soncy, more effective and consistent access management is needed there – and along the Hollywood Road section and elsewhere in Amarillo – to protect the major arterial function of these principal thoroughfares, which are the “backbone” of the area’s overall transportation system. In particular, public meeting attendees pointed out the need to preserve traffic flow and accommodate turning traffic more effectively around high school campuses, large churches and other institutional uses, and in busy commercial areas.

More Attention to Non-Vehicular Circulation

A consistent theme in the public discussions for this plan was the need to elevate walkability and bicycle “friendliness” community wide. Ways that these shortcomings in Amarillo’s transportation system currently manifest themselves include the lack of sidewalks on some busy thoroughfares (as well as in some neighborhood settings), the limited extent and discontinuity of existing bike lanes and routes, and the degree to which bicycle and pedestrian mobility needs conflict with—and are too often subservient to—vehicular circulation in many areas of the community. Walking and biking advocates also emphasized the need for better connectivity between neighborhoods, from neighborhoods to and from commercial areas, and to City parks.

The 1980s Comprehensive Plan concluded that, “Bicycle riding in Amarillo is essentially limited to recreational purposes ... There is very little interest in using the bicycle to commute to work, high school or college.” Nearly three decades later, public comment indicates that such a blanket statement no longer holds in Amarillo, just as interest in mobility and commuting alternatives has risen across the nation. The current *Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 2010-2035*, notes that a primary objective of the City’s *Hike and Bike Plan* (adopted in 2003) is “to carefully integrate bicycle and pedestrian transportation modes with vehicular transportation in order to achieve a balanced multimodal transportation system.” This will require some retrofitting of existing street cross sections, integration of “complete street” design principles into new roadway projects, and continuing exploration and implementation of off-street routes and paths that, through their location, design, and interconnectedness, serve more than just a recreational function.

Greater official and public awareness of non-vehicular circulation issues and options is also needed. Street rehabilitation and other capital projects help to

accomplish sidewalk repairs, eliminate sidewalk system gaps, and improve conditions for seniors and disabled individuals by removing poles and other barriers and installing drop curbs at intersections. More fundamentally, pedestrian and bicycle circulation needs to be a basic consideration in residential and commercial site design. Some public meeting attendees also emphasized the need for more retail activity near residential areas to reduce automobile dependence.

Emphasis on Safety

With traffic congestion a relatively isolated problem in Amarillo, safety concerns emerged as a more pressing mobility issue in public discussions for this Comprehensive Plan. This covered the entire spectrum of travel situations, from going across town on Interstate 40 or navigating potentially dangerous railroad crossing locations to moving about safely in one's own neighborhood and keeping school vicinities safe. Some also expressed concern about transport of hazardous cargoes through Amarillo.

As highlighted in Chapter 2, Land Use & Community Character, one important benefit of the Neighborhood Unit Concept is minimization of non-local and cut-through traffic. However, this benefit is only gained through effective layout of collector and local streets within superblocks amid the arterial grid network—but balanced against the need to avoid overly curvilinear street patterns that confuse drivers (e.g., the Sleepy Hollow area was cited). Where longer, straighter streets show up in subdivision designs, after-the-fact traffic calming solutions often become necessary. Some residents noted that excessive installation of stop signs is not a good solution to speeding problems.

Safety around school campuses was also mentioned repeatedly, partly related to bus activity and vehicle queuing during busy morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times. In some locations, it is more a matter of the basic adequacy of sidewalks and crosswalks for children and parents on foot or those who go to and from school by bike. The Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) program, which provides 100% federal funding and is administered by the Texas Department of Transportation, emerged as an important, but highly competitive, new financing mechanism in recent years. Specific capital improvement projects were identified in the Amarillo MPO's newest Metropolitan Transportation Plan update in preparation for the next SR2S funding round.

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Some Amarillo residents expressed concern about hazardous conditions in some locations where IH-40 traffic interacts with vehicles on the frontage roads alongside the highway. In particular, those who have seen improved Interstate corridors in Texas's major metropolitan areas recognize that the configuration, length, and design of the IH-40 on/off ramps in Amarillo are not always up to contemporary standards, which can lead to dangerous situations, including when traffic occasionally backs up from a surface intersection onto the freeway main lanes.

As noted earlier in this chapter, grade separations to eliminate conflicts between vehicular and rail traffic have always been important in Amarillo given its railroad history and continuing level of activity. Another key conflict (and congestion) point in east Amarillo will be addressed once new bridge construction is completed on Grand Street at SE 3rd Avenue. Meanwhile, residents expressed concern about safety at various at-grade rail crossings in the area, including for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The importance of access management policies and regulations along busy roadway corridors was already emphasized in the Corridor Management discussion. Controlling driveway proliferation and spacing also provides important safety benefits, as does elimination of continuous center left turn lanes in favor of median installation, in appropriate places, to control the extent and location of left turn movements. Other fundamentals mentioned to ensure safe driving conditions include basic street maintenance, adequate street lighting, and ongoing policing of vegetation, signs, and other obstructions that can hinder sight visibility at intersections and driveways. It was also noted that Amarillo has taken advantage of recent statutory measures intended to address hazardous driving behavior, including installation of red-light cameras at key intersections and posted restrictions on cell phone use in school zones.

Dealing with the Transit Dilemma

As in so many other cities with public transportation, Amarillo City Transit (ACT) faces the continual "chicken or egg" challenge of needing to increase ridership to justify and fund service enhancements while, at the same time, being called upon to upgrade its services and amenities to draw more riders. Most public meeting attendees agreed that a public transit system is necessary for a well functioning city, especially to connect those without vehicles to employment and services, and also to benefit seniors and disabled

individuals. However, it was noted that operating public transit in Amarillo is not easy because of the spread-out nature of the City, as well as a mindset that only low-income individuals use the bus system. In describing Amarillo's public transportation offerings on its website, the Amarillo Economic Development Foundation states that, "... the vast majority of people have access to, and prefer to use, private transportation," as confirmed by a recent Amarillo MPO survey in which 95% of respondents said they never use public transit.

In its *Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 2010-2035*, the MPO points out that, "The existing transit system provides an excellent transportation alternative to the citizens of Amarillo." However, as long as there is limited traffic congestion and ease of private mobility in the community, the MPO recognizes that most residents will not seek out transit as an alternative to driving. Further contributing to this transit aversion, as noted by public meeting attendees for this plan, is the time most riders have to spend on a bus to get to their destinations because of the length of the current set of eight fixed routes—and with all necessary transfers occurring through ACT's downtown facility.

Significantly, with the City's population approaching the 200,000 mark, Amarillo is facing a difficult transition with ACT. That is because, under the Federal Transit Administration's Large Urban Cities funding program, transit system operations are no longer an eligible expense once an urban area surpasses 200,000 population. Additionally, the federal funding formula for urbanized areas below the 200,000 threshold is based primarily on population size and density. However, once above 200,000, other factors related to ridership and vehicle miles influence the funding allocation. As a result, the City's own annual budget contribution for the transit system will have to increase dramatically, or other funding options will have to be pursued to maintain current levels of service.

In addition to this pending financial scenario, the MPO points out that opportunities to upgrade and/or expand the transit system are limited by a shrinking passenger base and the difficulty of meeting Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Fortunately, Amarillo should have at least another decade before it reaches the 200,000 population mark, but the challenges cited above will likely remain in place, as well, and need to be confronted sooner rather than later.

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ACTION STRATEGIES

This section provides potential action strategies for responding to the key planning themes related to mobility in Amarillo that were outlined earlier in this chapter:

1. Corridor Management
2. More Attention to Non-Vehicular Circulation
3. Emphasis on Safety
4. Dealing with the Transit Dilemma

Table 4.1, Mobility Actions, summarizes the action possibilities that were considered by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and which were classified as Basic actions that are relatively straightforward to implement, Intermediate actions that could be more challenging and require more advance work, and Advanced actions that would represent “stretch” objectives for the City because they are new (or a break from past practice), potentially controversial, or otherwise more difficult to accomplish due to cost or other considerations. They also fall into five categories which represent the main ways that comprehensive plans are implemented (as elaborated upon in Chapter 7-Implementation):

- ★ Capital investments
- ★ Programs/initiatives
- ★ Regulations and standards
- ★ Partnerships/coordination
- ★ Ongoing study/planning (especially as required to qualify for external funding opportunities)

These options are elaborated on in the remainder of this chapter.

**TABLE 4.1
Mobility Actions**

Basic Actions

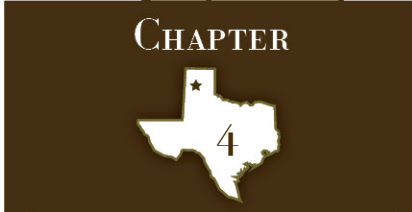
Action	Action Type
1. Intersection focus	Capital Investment
2. Transportation System Management (TSM)	Program / Initiative
3. Thoroughfare Plan updates	Ongoing Study / Planning
4. Non-vehicular circulation and safety	Capital Investment
5. Hike & Bike Master Plan update	Ongoing Study / Planning
6. Intersection safety	Capital Investment
7. School area safety	Program / Initiative
8. Special grant opportunities (transit)	Program / Initiative
9. Transit Summit	Partnerships / Coordination

Intermediate Actions

Action	Action Type
10. Context-sensitive corridor design	Program / Initiative
11. Access management	Program / Initiative
12. "Complete Streets" approach	Program / Initiative
13. Pedestrian/bicycle accommodation on commercial sites	Regulation / Standards
14. Bicycle/pedestrian circulation within neighborhoods	Regulation / Standards
15. Trail alternative to sidewalks	Regulation / Standards
16. Screening without eliminating local circulation	Regulation / Standards
17. Traffic calming through original development design	Regulation / Standards
18. Comprehensive transit system study and plan	Ongoing Study / Planning

Advanced Actions

Action	Action Type
19. Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA)	Regulation / Standards
20. Thoroughfare Plan approach to bike/ped network	Regulation / Standards



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1. **Intersection Focus.** Recognize the significance of intersections in maintaining an efficient and safe transportation system, especially where roadway widening or other capacity enhancements are not practical along the overall corridor. Intersection capacity and performance can be improved by adding left and/or right turning lanes (or multiple turning lanes in some instances), increasing lane length to accommodate vehicle queuing, eliminating and relocating access points that are too close to increasingly busy intersections, and upgrading signal equipment and/or operation. In some cases, complete reconstruction of a problem intersection may be necessary but particularly beneficial to traffic flow along an entire corridor.
2. **Transportation System Management.** Continue to conduct targeted studies and invest in advanced signalization and other technology upgrades and “non-structural” solutions aimed at maximizing the efficiency of the existing transportation system.
3. **Thoroughfare Plan Updates.** Refine the Thoroughfare Plan for particular areas as more detailed corridor and/or special area studies and plans are prepared in follow-up to this Comprehensive Plan.
4. **Non-Vehicular Circulation and Safety.** Pursue opportunities to upgrade certain streets in Amarillo to special pedestrian and bicycle corridors while still accommodating other transportation modes at reduced volumes and lower speeds. This could occur through rehabilitation of existing roadways plus new street projects and could feature narrower or fewer traffic lanes, wider sidewalks and/or walking/jogging paths, pedestrian-scaled lighting (versus general roadway illumination), benches, exercise stations, pedestrian shelters, street trees, landscaping, etc. Such projects could also be coordinated with Safe Routes to Schools improvements to benefit both school kids’ safety as well as provide a general community amenity for all residents in an area. This type of “special corridors” initiative would also provide an opportunity for further consideration of street cross section issues that were debated during the comprehensive planning process, including standards for street widths, on-street parking, appropriate placement of sidewalks relative to the street edge or curb (immediately adjacent versus set back with an intervening parkway strip), and appropriate location of street trees and other landscaping relative to roadway edges, for both aesthetic

reasons and their demonstrated traffic calming benefit versus safety and visibility concerns.

More generally, continue to focus on non-vehicular circulation and safety in both older and newly developing areas of the city, especially in areas that clearly have (or potentially could have) higher levels of walking and biking activity, such as around schools, parks, public facilities, neighborhood retail areas, and in and around downtown. Consider increasing the width of sidewalks in such high-use areas from four feet to eight feet or more, as appropriate, along with enhanced crosswalks, signage and/or signalization, reduced speed limits, etc.

5. **Hike & Bike Plan Update.** Complete a thorough update of the City's 2003 Hike and Bike Master Plan, especially to:
 - ★ Review progress and revisit priorities for all recommended alignments and improvements in the 2003 plan, and also evaluate potential new routes that might be incorporated into the 2010 plan.
 - ★ Review and update key plan sections, as needed, including Goals and Objectives, Policies, Transit, and Implementation.
 - ★ Reflect new and future proposed City parks and school locations in the plan (and on plan maps), and identify proposed bike lanes, routes and trails that will connect to new park/school sites.
 - ★ Coordinate with thoroughfare and street improvement planning to identify where trail linkages might be planned and built within rights-of-way, and where bike lanes or trails might cross thoroughfares and be accommodated at intersections.
6. **Intersection Safety.** Identify and prioritize those intersections in the community that have the most pedestrian and bicycle activity and determine what safety improvements may be needed (e.g., marked, signed, and/or signaled bike/ped crossings; pedestrian-actuated signal detectors, bikeway signage, retro-fitting of wheelchair ramps).
7. **School Area Safety.** Continue coordination with Amarillo ISD, other area school districts, and private schools to manage bus traffic and vehicle queuing associated with peak-hour drop-off and pick-up activity, ensure the safety of students and parents on foot and on bikes, and to control on-street and overflow parking in campus areas. Also monitor and prepare for future TxDOT Calls for Projects for the Texas Safe Routes to

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Schools (SR2S) program to secure external funding support for safety-related improvements.

8. **Special Grant Opportunities.** Continue to monitor new or one-time federal funding initiatives, through the Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, or other sources, which may aim to expand transit capacity and services in U.S. cities and/or promote sustainable communities and alternative fuels and technologies.
9. **Transit Summit.** In conjunction with the transit system study effort described below, the City and other community partners should host a high-profile summit meeting on the future of public transit services in Amarillo. Given the challenges ahead, there is a need for a community-wide conversation to determine the level of support and commitment, especially for pursuing alternative funding and operational strategies that are less dependent on federal funds. The summit should bring together private, public, and non-profit interests to share perspectives, concerns, and ideas from employers, medical institutions, schools, retailers, hospitality industry representatives, and social service agencies and groups.
10. **Context-Sensitive Corridor Design.** In coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), insist on Context Sensitive Design (CSD) approaches in all construction and rehabilitation projects involving the community's primary, high-profile corridors, as was also recommended in Chapter 2, Land Use & Community Character (Corridor Design). This includes Interstates 40 and 27, Business 40-Amarillo Boulevard, and Loop 335.

Context Sensitive Design is a contemporary approach to transportation project design, operation and maintenance—embraced by TxDOT—that requires more careful consideration of the natural and built settings through which roads and transit projects pass (e.g., rural and scenic areas, commercial and industrial districts, campuses and business parks, downtowns, neighborhoods, etc.). In other words, the project should be responsive to its context and fit the physical setting. So, as described by various sources, this approach “seeks to balance the need to move vehicles efficiently and safely with other desirable outcomes, including historic preservation, environmental sustainability, and vital public spaces.”

The City should also require a CSD approach for all major roadway projects implemented through its Capital Improvements Plan and/or through economic development incentives or other City programs so that the resulting transportation infrastructure is consistent with—and enhances—area character. Enhanced design is particularly critical at all major community entry locations which, in addition to the corridors cited above, include “gateways” into Amarillo from the east on U.S. Highways 287 and 60,

from the west on FM 1061-Tascosa Road and FM 2186, from the north on U.S. Highways 87/287-Dumas Highway and State Highway 136-Fritch Highway, and from the south on FM 1541, as well as the drive to and from Rick Husband Amarillo International Airport along Airport Boulevard.

In general, CSD considerations can be factored into most all major road design and construction projects by incorporating relevant criteria and procedural steps into the City's project development process, as well as the thoroughfare standards that govern private street design for eventual public dedication. For example, roads in suburban and especially rural character areas could be designed with: a narrower cross section to leave more open and green space within the available right-of-way; drainage methods that rely more on swales and natural features versus "hard" infrastructure and curb-and-gutter design; wide and winding trails and/or bikeways versus typical sidewalks; preserved existing tree lines/stands and vegetation, sometimes by acquiring extra right-of-way beyond the minimum needed; avoidance of adverse impacts to cultural or historic features, including one-of-a-kind structures; protection of prominent natural vistas and other scenic views; and higher standards for private perimeter fencing along key corridors.

In Auto Urban character areas, new or retro-fitted medians are especially valuable to accommodate landscaping and other aesthetic treatments that can soften an otherwise harsh visual environment while also contributing to traffic safety.

11. **Access Management.** Determine the need for more stringent access management policies and standards for new development and redeveloping sites to maintain traffic capacity, reduce conflict points, and enhance safety along the City's major thoroughfares. This would be in addition to practices already implemented through Section 9, Driveways and Parking Lots, in the City's Development Policy Manual, and as a supplement to TxDOT requirements on state-maintained roads. As was also recommended in Chapter 2, Land Use & Community Character (Multi-Purpose Esplanades), a potential priority at the corridor level is installation of medians in place of continuous center left turn lanes in selected locations to control turning movements and increase safety. Esplanades also provide an intermediate refuge area for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing major streets, and they can enhance corridor aesthetics when landscaped or improved with other design treatments.

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Access management is particularly important for preserving capacity along minimally-improved rural roadways and other corridors that are not already lined with development. The City can impose standards for development along ETJ roadways consistent with or similar to those recommended by TxDOT. The minimum spacing between property access points should increase as the posted speed limit increases. Minimum required lot widths should also correspond to the access standards to allow adequate access for each property or development. In turn, the wider lots and limited access points help to preserve the traffic-carrying capacity and safety of roadways that may be improved to arterial standards in the future. In some cases a developer may choose to construct a marginal access street parallel to the main roadway to enable more lots and driveways. Public dedication of the access street would trigger City plat review for a subdivision that would otherwise be exempted under Section 212.004 of the Texas Local Government Code (“... a division of land into parts greater than five acres, where each part has access and no public improvement is being dedicated.”).

12. **“Complete Streets” Approach.** Adopt a “Complete Streets” policy for new and reconstructed roadway corridors, where appropriate. Under this philosophy and approach, which is being implemented in jurisdictions nationwide, more effective corridor design and operation—and usually a wider right-of-way—provides for the mobility and safety of users of the transportation system and not just automobile traffic. As described by the National Complete Streets Coalition (www.completestreets.org), elements of Complete Streets can include: sidewalks/trails, bike lanes, raised crosswalks, wide shoulders, refuge medians, audible pedestrian signals, sidewalk bulb-outs, pedestrian amenities, special bus lanes, bus pull-outs, shade and shelter, and trees and landscaping.

A Complete Streets approach can be difficult to apply to many established thoroughfares unless road reconstruction projects make possible a significant redesign, as well as acquisition of additional right of way. Otherwise, existing corridors are often already designed—and widened to their full extent—to provide for maximum movement of vehicular traffic. In such cases, only some Complete Street features, such as wider sidewalks or streetscape enhancements, may be feasible through a redesign and retrofitting process. At the collector street level, narrowing the pavement width in appropriate situations would allow the extra

right-of-way area to be used for wider sidewalks, trails, pedestrian-scale street lighting, tree preservation, landscaping, and open space.

13. **Pedestrian/Bicycle Accommodation on Commercial Sites.** Add development standards to require dedicated pathways and other features within the expansive parking areas of large auto-oriented commercial developments to allow for safer movement of pedestrians and bicyclists on such sites. Other possibilities include requiring dedicated bike parking locations near building entrances, and designated pedestrian connections to adjacent developments and/or transit stops. The key point is that these considerations should be a basic feature of commercial site design from the start, especially in close proximity to residential neighborhoods.
14. **Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation within Neighborhoods.** Add provisions to the subdivision regulations (and Section 8, Street, Alley & Drainage Facilities Design Criteria, in the Development Policy Manual) to require public access paths and/or easements in mid-block locations where long block lengths—or the particular subdivision layout—will limit bicycle and pedestrian circulation options within a neighborhood (or access to/from portions of the City trail network). A typical standard is to require such a mid-block opening at least every 800 feet where there are continuous rows of homes abutting trails or collector and arterial roads (with a minimum easement width of 15 feet to accommodate a minimum five-foot sidewalk or trail link). Section 4-6-71(j) in the subdivision regulations specifies that the length of residential blocks should be “approximately” 1,000 feet (and can vary based on circulation and topography). Section 4-6-71(h) likewise limits the length of dead-end streets (cul-de-sacs and courts) to 1,000 feet. For perspective, 1,000 feet is the length of 3.3 football fields. Motivation to walk or bike to nearby destinations, even within the same subdivision, is undermined when the scale of the street network and associated block design is geared primarily toward automobile circulation and speeds (which help to overcome distance).

Similar off-street paths and/or easements should be provided at the end of cul-de-sacs where another cul-de-sac bulb is in close proximity in the subdivision layout, and where a cul-de-sac bulb is near an adjoining street, public sidewalk or trail, or the edge of a neighborhood park or school campus. This emphasis on internal circulation within neighborhoods is consistent with a key criterion for subdivision review listed in the Land Impact Measurement Statements section of the

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Development Policy Manual. The criterion specifically related to non-vehicular circulation states that a proposed development should “encourage proper sidewalks, bicycle paths, and pedestrian walkways ... [to] reduce dependence on automobiles.”

15. **Trail Alternative to Sidewalks.** As a potential alternative to “one-size-fits-all” sidewalk requirements for new residential subdivisions (as contained in Section 4-6-125(a)(1) of the subdivision regulations), consider a more flexible approach that would allow provision of off-street trails in lieu of sidewalks where appropriate, such as in subdivisions in suburban character areas. Off-street trails can actually be safer, more convenient, and provide more direct routes compared to road-side sidewalks, as well as being situated in a more appealing setting than adjacent to roadways. Additionally, the total extent of internal trails can be less, in linear feet, than if sidewalks are required along all local neighborhood streets. This can lead to cost savings that could help keep house prices lower or go toward other site amenities.
16. **Screening without Eliminating Local Circulation.** Ensure that screening walls and/or visual barriers mandated by the zoning ordinance in certain situations (e.g., Section 4-10-269(a)), while serving a legitimate purpose to increase land use compatibility, do not also eliminate completely the ability for residents to travel directly and safely between neighborhoods and nearby commercial areas by means other than vehicles. This effective barrier to bicycle and pedestrian circulation is built into Amarillo’s current screening provisions since Section 4-10-269(b) states that all such screening must involve a “solid visual barrier.” The screening requirement should provide for gaps in a permanent wall or fence barrier at certain maximum intervals, typically with some horizontal overlap of wall/fence segments where each gap occurs so the visual screening function is preserved. Section 4-10-268(a) does specify that “openings” in such walls or fences “shall be equipped with gates equal in height and screening characteristics to the wall or fence and shall be closed and securely latched at all times except during business hours.” However, rather than requiring such openings, this provision seems only to set design parameters for if and when an opening is provided.

Where screening and buffering is allowed to be accomplished with vegetation versus walls/fences (as provided for through the “landscaped strip” option in Section 4-10-268(a)), pedestrian/bicycle circulation

through the landscaped area can also be addressed in the buffer design. The key point is to avoid total separation of uses on either side, thereby eliminating any direct, non-vehicular access.

- 17. Traffic Calming through Original Development Design.** Consider making traffic calming design considerations and/or criteria more explicit and detailed in the subdivision regulations and Development Policy Manual. Section 4-6-71 of the regulations (and Development Policy Manual Section 8, Street, Alley & Drainage Facilities Design Criteria) has several relevant provisions, including that residential streets be “so laid out that their use by through traffic will be discouraged,” and that block length and width contribute to “circulation control” and pedestrian safety. Additionally, a City Engineer (and/or Traffic Engineer in Amarillo’s case) typically has some discretion to require modification of street system designs, as necessary, to promote public health, safety, and welfare. This feedback and guidance to development applicants can occur early on in Amarillo since the subdivision regulations (Section 4-6-42) and Development Policy Manual (Section 1) provide for review of conceptual development plans prior to actual plat review and approval.

The subdivision regulations and Development Policy Manual could require—or at least provide voluntary guidelines for—consideration of street design approaches that are demonstrated to reduce vehicle speeds and make drivers more alert and aware of safety issues in residential areas. These design techniques can be as simple as avoiding long straight segments on local streets and also employing street curvature, “bulb-outs” and other physical diversions, on-street parking, surface textures, and street trees (and other features that create street “enclosure”) to influence driver behavior. The basic idea is to incorporate traffic calming strategies into initial street system design to avoid having to make costly, disruptive, and potentially ineffective retrofits to existing streets (e.g., speed humps, excessive use of stop signs) at some future point when residents complain about speeding, cut-through traffic, and/or other unsafe conditions on neighborhood streets.

- 18. Comprehensive Transit System Study and Plan.** Commission a comprehensive, up-to-date assessment of transit needs, services, improvement priorities, and financing strategies to guide longer-range investments and day-to-day operations of Amarillo City Transit (ACT). Such a study should include analysis of:

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- ★ existing services (including overall system strengths and weaknesses, system-wide and route-level evaluations, ridership patterns and trends, and performance measures);
- ★ market factors (including transit competitiveness considerations and potential new ridership based on development and travel patterns, major activity centers, socioeconomic characteristics and trends, location and extent of unmet mobility needs, costs of private vehicle use and parking, etc.);
- ★ recommendations for adjusted and new services (including potential express and/or frequent-service corridors/routes, direct and/or cross-town service between key origins and destinations, improvements to route directness, potential route consolidations or elimination based on low ridership and/or service duplication, potential new or extended routes into emerging growth areas, potential flexible service in lower-density service areas, and potential special-area circulator or “shuttle” services);
- ★ capital investment needs and priorities, including enhanced stops/shelters and other amenities aimed at drawing new riders to the system (and recommended phasing in line with available resources); and,
- ★ implementation and operation plans, including available and viable revenue and financing options (especially to supplement federal funding with other local and partnership sources), vehicle types and fuel alternatives, and marketing/promotion strategies.

Typical goals are to improve system connectivity and route directness and enhance service for customers, thereby increasing ridership and the cost-effectiveness of bus operations. The study and planning process would also provide a valuable opportunity for community input from residents, system users and employees, major employers and institutions, and other private and public stakeholders and partners. The study could also be timed for the 2011-2012 timeframe to take advantage of the latest detailed socioeconomic data for Amarillo resulting from Census 2010.

- 19. Traffic Impact Analysis.** As also recommended in Chapter 3, Growth Management & Capacity (for fringe development and rural areas), incorporate explicit provisions into the subdivision regulations and the zoning ordinance that authorize the City to require a traffic impact

analysis (TIA) study if projected traffic from a particular development site would exceed a certain established traffic generation threshold or specified development conditions (e.g., square feet of non-residential development, number of residential lots or units, etc.). Such situations could require submission of a study as part of the official acceptance of an application for subdivision, site development, a change in zoning classification, or planned development (in some cases, a city may choose to conduct such a study itself or share the study cost with the applicant). The TIA helps to quantify the altered traffic conditions and justify mitigation steps that may be required. This information would directly support two criteria that the Development Policy Manual cites for consideration when evaluating requests for zoning changes:

- ★ Would the change alter the population density pattern and thereby increase the demand placed upon public facilities (schools, sewers, streets)? [Comprehensiveness, item c]
- ★ Will the change create or excessively increase traffic congestion? [Public Welfare, item b]

TIAs are commonplace in many Texas and U.S. communities. They are used to help evaluate if the scale of development is appropriate for a particular site and what mitigation steps may be necessary, on and/or off the site, to ensure safe and efficient access and maintain traffic flow on affected public roadways and at nearby intersections. TIAs are essential for significant new development and redevelopment projects as this information helps to clarify when an adverse impact is isolated to a particular site and its newly-generated traffic. Even if it is City policy to encourage economic development by not placing the entire burden of mitigation on individual private projects (especially significant off-site and intersection improvements), the TIA will highlight impacts that need to be addressed immediately or near term to avoid very localized congestion and/or unsafe traffic conditions. Cities and county and state governments plan for phased widening and improvement of primary roadways over time to accommodate economic development and increased traffic volume. However, they cannot anticipate how a certain development at a particular location may impact traffic flow and safety along a given roadway segment or at a nearby intersection.

Any TIA provisions should be very clear in spelling out the specific thresholds when such an analysis will be required and the study expectations, including evaluation of potential mitigation measures. The

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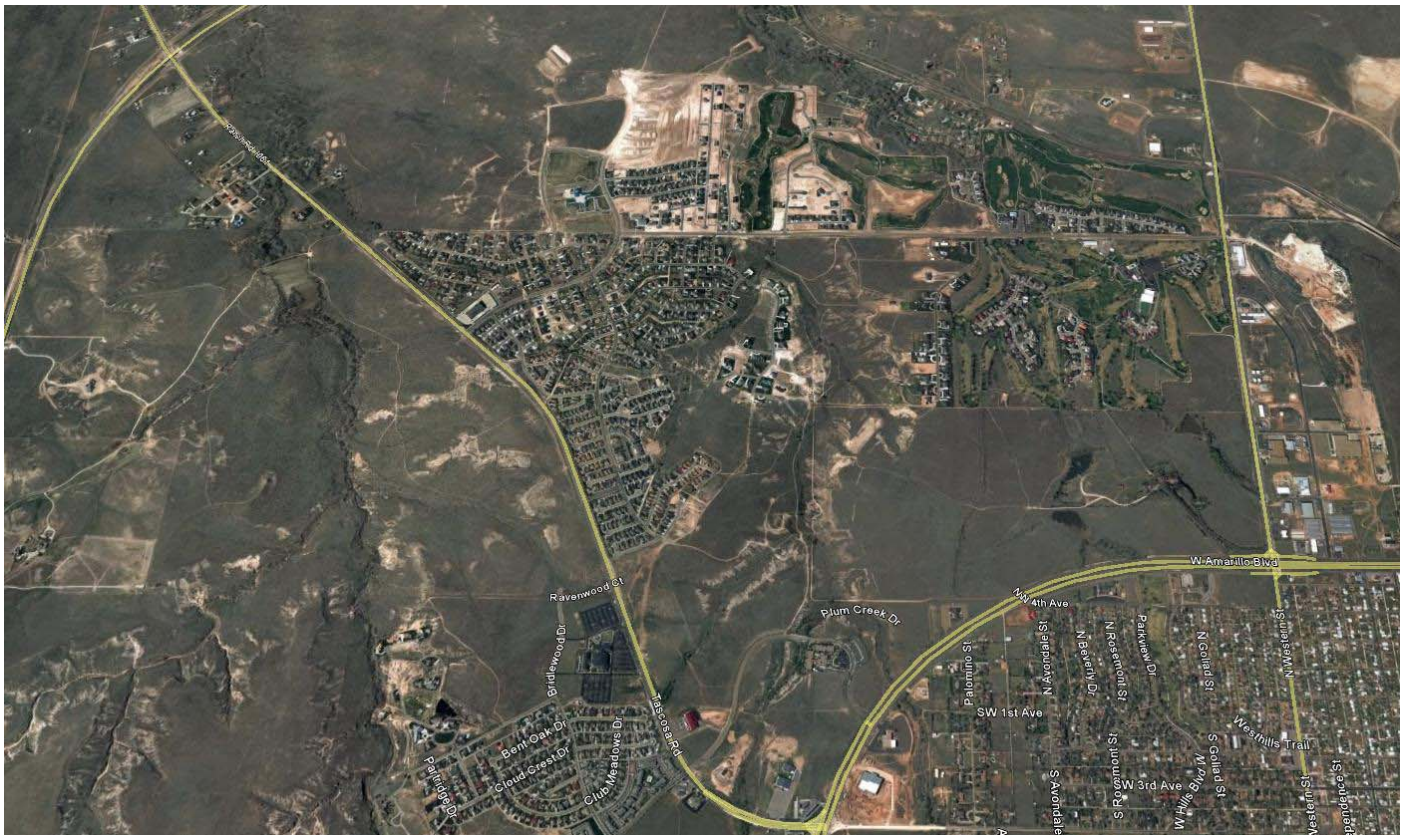
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scope and complexity of TIAs varies depending on the type and size of the proposed development, but most are brief and quickly conducted and submitted. In practice, mitigation measures are often a shared effort between the developer and the public agency.

- 20. Thoroughfare Plan Approach for Implementation of Bicycle/Pedestrian Network.** Ensure that a map of planned alignments and improvements comprising an eventual community-wide network for pedestrian and bicycle circulation is formally adopted by the City Commission so it can function just as a Thoroughfare Plan does. It is then well-established practice by cities in Texas and elsewhere to require linear land dedications during subdivision and/or development platting, as well as construction (on a proportionate basis) of associated trail or bikeway segments in some cases, in accordance with City specifications. In effect, the adopted plan depicts another form of future “public ways” for which rights-of-way must be preserved, either for public or private construction of improvements. Easements are an alternative way to provide for public circulation and improvements but have various shortcomings relative to permanently dedicated land.

Some ordinances require development applicants with property affected by the bike/ped network plan to meet early with City staff to determine potential dedication and/or improvement requirements (including criteria to ensure feasible routes and conditions for construction, public use, and long-term maintenance). Any trails internal to the development should also be designed to link to the city-wide system. Compensation and/or cost reimbursement provisions can also be included for cases where the dedication or construction disproportionately affects a particular site.

The bike/ped system should also be developed similar to a community’s thoroughfare network, with primary and secondary alignments established and designed according to their anticipated system role and utilization level—and with principal segments usually built first, followed by secondary linkages.




This aerial image of northwest Amarillo, to the north and west of Amarillo Boulevard, illustrates how variance from the section-line arterial grid network that holds in most of the City was necessary due to terrain conditions once development emerged in the vicinity of Tascosa Road.



Red-light cameras are a new enforcement method available to Texas cities, which the City of Amarillo has already implemented at various locations to improve intersection safety.



This view at the current western terminus of SW 45th Avenue highlights the importance of orderly extension of the thoroughfare network, in conjunction with new growth and land development, such as may occur to the west of Soncy Road in coming years.

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Older segments of Amarillo Boulevard illustrate the lack of access management controls in earlier arterial construction, even on roadways designated as U.S. and/or State highways (Business 40 in this case). The proliferation of driveways along a major thoroughfare, together with a continuous center left turn lane, not only detracts from smooth traffic flow, but each driveway (along with intersecting side streets) creates a potential conflict point between entering and exiting vehicles and pedestrians and bicyclists moving along the arterial.



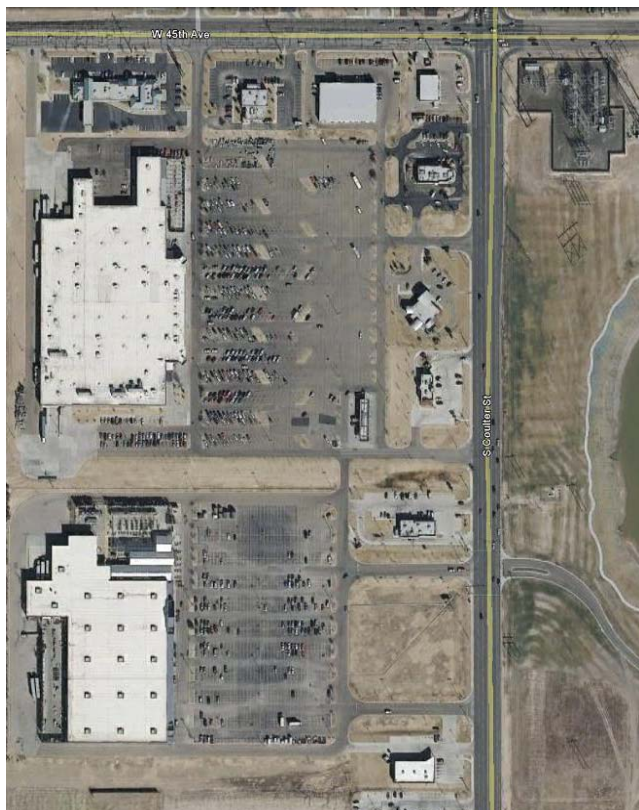
On this stretch of Amarillo Boulevard, west of Hughes Street to Western Street (and continuing on the south side of Business 40 to NW 4th Avenue), parallel frontage roads provide access to various businesses that front toward this major thoroughfare while protecting the integrity of the main lanes of Business 40 for higher-speed, through-traffic flow.



These scenes from W. Amarillo Boulevard (above) and Soncy Road south of Hillside (below) show the benefits of a median, even where frontage access is still allowed, to help control left turn locations and provide a roadway cross section that is more conducive for higher speeds.



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In this example of newer commercial development along Coulter Street at SW 45th Avenue, off-street cross-access links between the larger stores and smaller adjacent businesses and pad sites helps to reduce the number of direct access points along the Coulter frontage. This also leaves more area for frontage landscaping and enhanced corridor aesthetics as a result.



This example shows the extent of access (orange) that was permitted for earlier site development, even for a corner property at the intersection of two major highways (Bus. 40 and U.S. 287).



Soncy Road, south of IH-40, could never fulfill its intended, eventual function as part of a circumferential loop highway around the City once single-family detached residential and commercial development began to hem in the corridor, together with direct tie-in of collector and local cross streets, alleys (below), and numerous access drives to abutting properties. As one public meeting attendee noted, "Soncy became just another commercial street in town."





Most newer arterials were built with sidewalks. In other places, gaps in the sidewalk network lead to dangerous situations such as below, as well as pedestrians following well-worn paths adjacent to major streets where sidewalks are absent.



Drop curbs and wheelchair ramps are an essential feature as street and sidewalk upgrades are completed.



Some public meeting attendees were appreciative of the City's existing bike lanes around the community but suggested better placement and connectivity of such lanes going forward. The scene below depicts another concern of bike lane users – the placement of some bike lanes relative to on-street parallel parking.



Another community concern is the inability of pedestrians and bicyclists to use some bridges and railroad overpasses due to their auto-focused design.





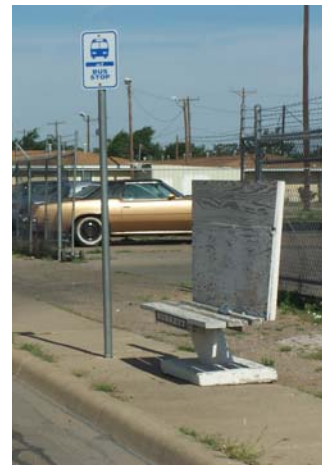
A “Complete Streets” approach aims to optimize the use of available rights-of-way and also balance the mobility needs of pedestrians and bicyclists with private vehicles and public transit. In this example, the pavement width provides for a vehicular travel lane in each direction (blue), a marked bike lane (green) placed away from the curb line, and space for on-street parking (yellow) between the bike lane and curb line, which, in this case, is being used by a pedestrian given the absence of sidewalks (and the bike lane provides some buffering between the pedestrian and vehicular traffic).



Wide and curving sidewalks along Hillside, associated with the Greenways development, provide a more pleasant pedestrian environment along an arterial, as well as safer school access.



The decision to use readily available public transit services, for those who have other mobility options, is strongly influenced by the convenience and appeal of this alternative. Like all transit agencies, ACT has the challenge of devoting limited resources to basic operations while hoping to invest in upgrades and amenities, such as enhanced and sheltered bus stops, that residents say would make transit use more attractive. These photos show examples of current conditions at some area bus stops.



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PARKS & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Countless aspects of a community contribute to its livability and to individual quality of life. Residents often mention local parks first when considering the amenities they most value within their city. A full-service park and recreation system encourages outdoor exercise, participation in athletic programs, and community gatherings. Beyond leisure activities, these open spaces also provide relief from an intense urban environment, serve environmental functions such as flood control and habitat protection, and enhance community character. Typically, arts and culture also rate highly as particular benefits of living in a larger city, with the joys and inspiration they bring. Furthermore, historic areas, sites, and structures enable both long-time residents and relative newcomers to appreciate and maintain links to their city's past.

This chapter focuses on Amarillo's quality of life amenities including its park and recreation facilities, open space areas and views, cultural resources, and leisure opportunities. Given Amarillo's role as the key trade-center city for the entire Panhandle and a multi-state area, its parks and cultural offerings also serve many more people than just City residents.

Parks, open space, and recreation facilities are an essential part of a healthy and sustainable community, offering relaxation and exercise outside of the home, after work, and beyond school activities. Much like streets, utilities, and police and fire protection, parks and open spaces are integral parts of any municipality. This includes maintaining and enhancing existing facilities, increasing the quantity of developed recreation areas, and capitalizing on natural features and assets of the High Plains landscape.

Regarding Amarillo's vibrant arts and entertainment scene, one resident in an early public discussion for this Comprehensive Plan pointed out that, "We are not a suburb to a larger city and, therefore, Amarillo had to create things for

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itself.” This Amarillo has done well, as highlighted in this chapter, with substantial charitable and private support, backed by strong community spirit and pride. Another public meeting participant noted that historic buildings and areas are a signature asset for Amarillo that visitors and newcomers are always impressed by: “Maybe they were not expecting it; historic preservation is another way of investing within the City” when it is spreading out so much with growth.”

RESULTS OF PAST PLANNING

A look back at the last Amarillo Comprehensive Plan from the 1980s indicates both areas of community progress, as well as lingering challenges that will again be a focus of this new plan. Goals and policies from the 1980s plan that are still relevant to this plan were contained in the land use, community facilities, central business district, and historic preservation sections:

Provide properly proportioned amounts of land uses for the community use, and direct the location of land uses in accordance with physical constraints that would affect development. This will ensure that an efficient, harmonious, and active city will evolve from these coordinated development efforts. [Land Use Goal]

Provide a full range of community facilities, including public buildings, parks and related areas, and structures to meet the broad social, cultural, recreational, educational, safety, and service needs of the citizens of Amarillo and the region. [Community Facilities Goal]

Make the Central Business District the heart of Amarillo by preserving and promoting the concentration of businesses, offices, and governmental services and making the CBD the cultural and entertainment focus of the City. [Central Business District Goal]

Preserve, enhance, and promote the integrity and authenticity of historically significant structures which are characteristic of Amarillo’s past. [Historic Preservation Goal]

Successful outcomes over the last several decades from this planning legacy include:

- ★ Continued growth in public parkland across the community. As of the 1980s plan there were 2,320 acres of land set aside for parks and open areas, and today that figure is 2,928 acres, or 608 additional acres in the overall system. Of the 1980s total, about 59% (1,375 acres) had already been developed for public use. The current developed acreage is 2,125, with about 73% of the total current acreage developed. Based on local park system standards at the time, Amarillo should have had 1,600 developed acres in the 1980s, so the community was about 225 acres short.
- ★ Significant improvements to the overall park system in recent years, as resources have allowed. It was noted in the 1980s plan that resources for park development were limited and required effective prioritization of park development projects. Of the 41% of the parkland inventory that remained undeveloped in the 1980s, significant acreage was within the three major regional parks: Thompson Memorial, Southwest, and Southeast (plus Medical Center Nature Park). These major City parks are much improved today.
- ★ Employing a variety of programs and tools, including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) funds and Public Improvement Districts (PIDs), along with the City's ongoing capital improvements programming, to refurbish older parks and add recreational amenities within the City's oldest neighborhoods.
- ★ Maintaining a Parks Master Plan and incorporating parks-related guidance in the City's Development Policy Manual to highlight the need to acquire and improve public parkland in conjunction with overall City growth and new residential development.
- ★ Using parkland acquisition as a vehicle for preserving open spaces and unique natural features, including multiple playa lakes within the urbanized area (e.g., Southeast Park, John Stiff Memorial Park) and drainageways (Medical Center Park). This was in line with a Community Facilities policy statement in the 1980s plan that called on the City to "Conserve and develop as park land the unique recreational potentials of area playa lakes and creeks."
- ★ Accomplishing a large nature preserve in the "rough terrain" area of northwest Amarillo, to the west of Soncy Road, through the non-profit Wildcat Bluff Nature Center. The 1980s plan had envisioned

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another regional public park in this location, along with significant expansion of the Southeast and Southwest (now John Stiff Memorial) parks.

- ★ Continuing to follow the Neighborhood Unit Concept, as highlighted in Chapter 2-Land Use & Community Character, by expanding to what is now a 29-campus network of school parks achieved through partnerships between the City, school districts, and land developers. This approach currently provides 240+ acres of convenient recreational and play space within a variety of Amarillo neighborhoods. This is a notable success from the 1980s plan (and dating back to original City policies in the 1950s and 1960s), which included a policy directive to “Combine elementary schools and park sites, wherever possible.”
- ★ Taking advantage of opportunities to put unique and underutilized spaces to public recreational use, especially near neighborhoods and commercial areas, as with the Rock Island Rails to Trails linear park.
- ★ Nurturing a cultural/entertainment focal point in downtown Amarillo through the clustered development of a multi-purpose Civic Center, the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts, and the Central Library, together with expanded dining and nightlife offerings in downtown—plus ongoing efforts to revive downtown lodging. This is consistent with a policy in the 1980s plan to “Encourage people-oriented activities for both day and night such as cultural, entertainment, and recreational uses.” Additionally, with the combined initiatives of Downtown Amarillo Inc., Center City, and the Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council, Amarillo has followed through on another key policy in the 1980s plan to “Create a downtown organization or association which would include both City government and private sector interests to develop and implement a successful redevelopment program and to market the CBD as a whole.” Along with its funding support, the City of Amarillo provides other essential revitalization tools, including the creation of a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) for downtown.
- ★ Maintaining diverse leisure and entertainment facilities and attractions for all ages—with wide-ranging support from private and charitable interests—through the downtown arts and event venues

(with performances by the Amarillo Opera and Symphony and the Lone Star Ballet, plus professional sporting events); Amarillo Little Theatre; the Amarillo Museum of Art, American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame & Museum, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Kwahadi Museum of the American Indian, and other area museums; Amarillo Zoo, Amarillo Botanical Gardens, Don Harrington Discovery Center, Wonderland Amusement Park, and Splash Amarillo; the Tri-State Fairgrounds and Amarillo National Center; and the Historic Route 66 district. Local public schools and higher education institutions provide additional cultural activities around the community. Across the Panhandle region, outdoor recreation opportunities are close by at Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Lake Meredith National Recreation Area, and other unique destinations.

Issues and needs that are carried over from the previous Comprehensive Plan, even after more than 25 years of growth and change in the community, include:

- ★ Adequate funding and support for timely development of new parkland and periodic enhancement of older, established parks.
- ★ The continuing challenge of acquiring adequate acreage and suitable sites for neighborhood park development in conjunction with subdivision platting given the lack of required parkland dedication in Amarillo. The 1980s Comprehensive Plan recommended that the City “Enact and implement an ordinance requiring mandatory dedication of parks or fees in lieu of parkland dedication for future developments” (Community Facilities Policy 18), but this approach has never been adopted in Amarillo as in many other Texas cities.
- ★ The opportunity to preserve and enhance more playa lake locations, both within older portions of Amarillo’s urbanized area, as well as in new growth areas given the lakes’ environmental, aesthetic, and recreational value.
- ★ The importance of linear park opportunities as a way to serve walkers, runners, and bicyclists near multiple neighborhoods and accommodate longer-distance recreational activities; provide greenbelts along creek corridors, arroyos, and natural drainage ways, which addresses both environmental protection needs and the need for community amenities; serve as an attractive element of parkway treatments on key streets and boulevards with medians, both within

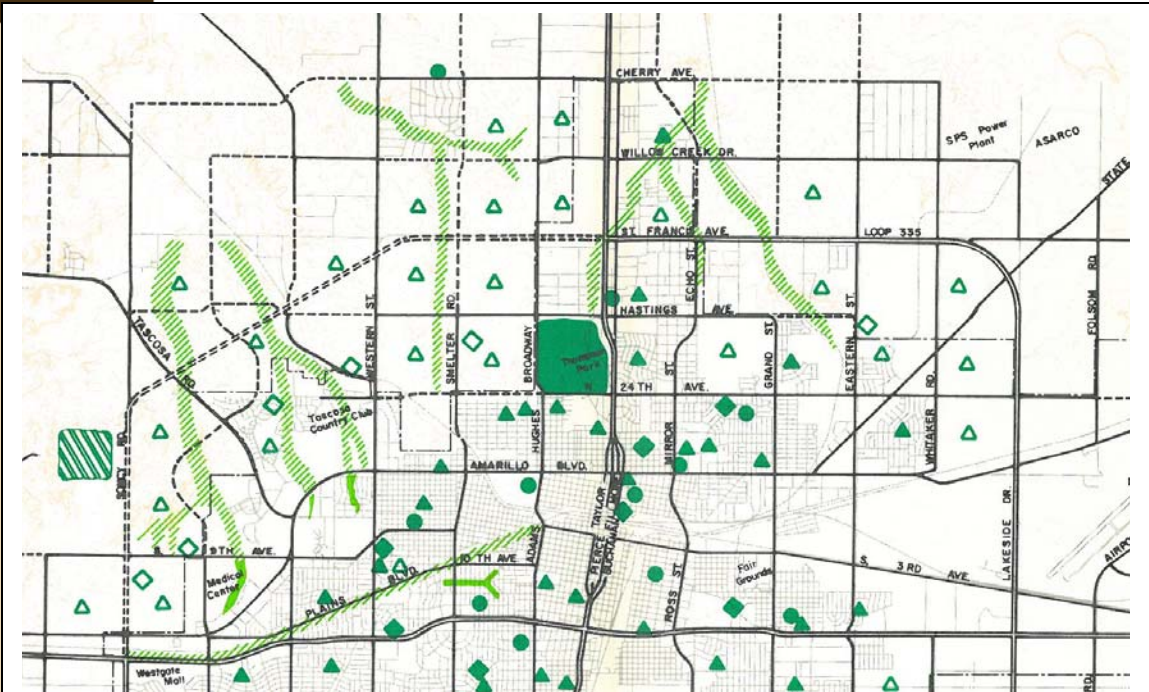
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and between neighborhoods (e.g., Julian) and along arterials and main corridors within commercial, business park, and institutional campus areas.



The Park and Recreational Areas Map in the 1980s plan included a series of proposed linear parks along drainageways generally north of the City. This concept was consistent with Physical Environment Policy 4, which suggested that the community “Preserve drainageways in their natural state as feasible” while adding more passive recreation opportunities to the park system.

- ★ The need to continue building consensus on the value of hike-and-bike improvements to the community in terms of the amount of City resources put toward this activity relative to other programs and initiatives.
- ★ The opportunity to continue highlighting the ecological and sustainability role of and example set by City parkland, especially in terms of water conservation, including capture and re-use opportunities; xeriscaping; low-impact drainage methods; habitat protection; efficient lighting and reduced energy use in general; recycling; and community gardening locations.

PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY

The City's Parks & Recreation Department maintains 69 parks and special use facilities. This includes 2,125.1 acres of developed land and 802.5 acres of undeveloped land.¹ The locations of these parks and facilities are displayed on **Map 5.1, Park System**. The system accommodates traditional recreation sports and offers a diverse selection of community amenities, such as the Amarillo Zoo and National Tennis Center.

The City has been actively renovating existing facilities, including annual upgrades to the zoo and continual improvements to athletic fields, as well as constructing new parks. In the last three years, five parks have either been built or begun construction, and several additional ones are planned.

Functional Types of Parks

A well-balanced parks and recreation system offers all types and sizes, ensuring adequate and equal opportunity for all persons, and, ultimately, encouraging use by all population groups. In accordance with the 2008 Parks Master Plan, this section defines a comprehensive system by function, service area, and facilities offered, which is applicable to all parks needs for the City of Amarillo. The standards and classifications are primarily derived from the Master Plan, with the addition of "Special Use Facilities" to accommodate unique community assets.

In order to evaluate existing conditions and future needs, all existing parklands have been classified into one of six functional classifications:

1. Regional parks;
2. Community parks;

¹ In addition to parks and special use facilities, this total includes the area associated with public buildings, public improvement districts, and traffic islands. See Table 5.2, System Inventory, for information on each category.

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The beautiful scenery of Thompson Memorial Park is complemented by a number of active and passive recreational amenities, including a dog park, disc golf course, picnic tables, playground, and tennis courts. The Amarillo Zoo, River Road Park, and a private amusement park (Wonderland) are adjoining.

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3. Neighborhoods parks;
4. School parks;
5. Linear parks; and
6. Special use facilities.

The following descriptions are supplemented by park standards and total acreages found in **Table 5.1, Park Classifications**.

Regional Parks

Regional parks accommodate the most users, offering a diverse range of recreational activities. They serve local residents and visitors from surrounding towns, warranting close proximity to freeways, expressways, or major arterials. Amenities include equipment and buildings found in smaller parks plus features such as a swimming pool, model airplane flying field, and softball and baseball fields.

Community Parks

Community parks provide a wide range of both active and passive recreation activities for a large service area. This requires adequate on- and off-street parking. For ease of access and visibility, these parks should be located near major arterial streets. Amenities may include lighted fields, restroom facilities, and a community center.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are small parks centrally located within a residential neighborhood. School parks are designed at a similar scale as neighborhood parks, but for planning purposes they are classified as their own category. Amenities typically include passive recreation areas and playground equipment.

School Parks

School parks consist of leased or City-owned property dedicated for park purposes in addition to the school-owned property. Because school districts only acquire 10-acre sites, the City obtains the remaining five acres by dedication from developers when the property is platted for development. School park amenities are similar to neighborhood parks.

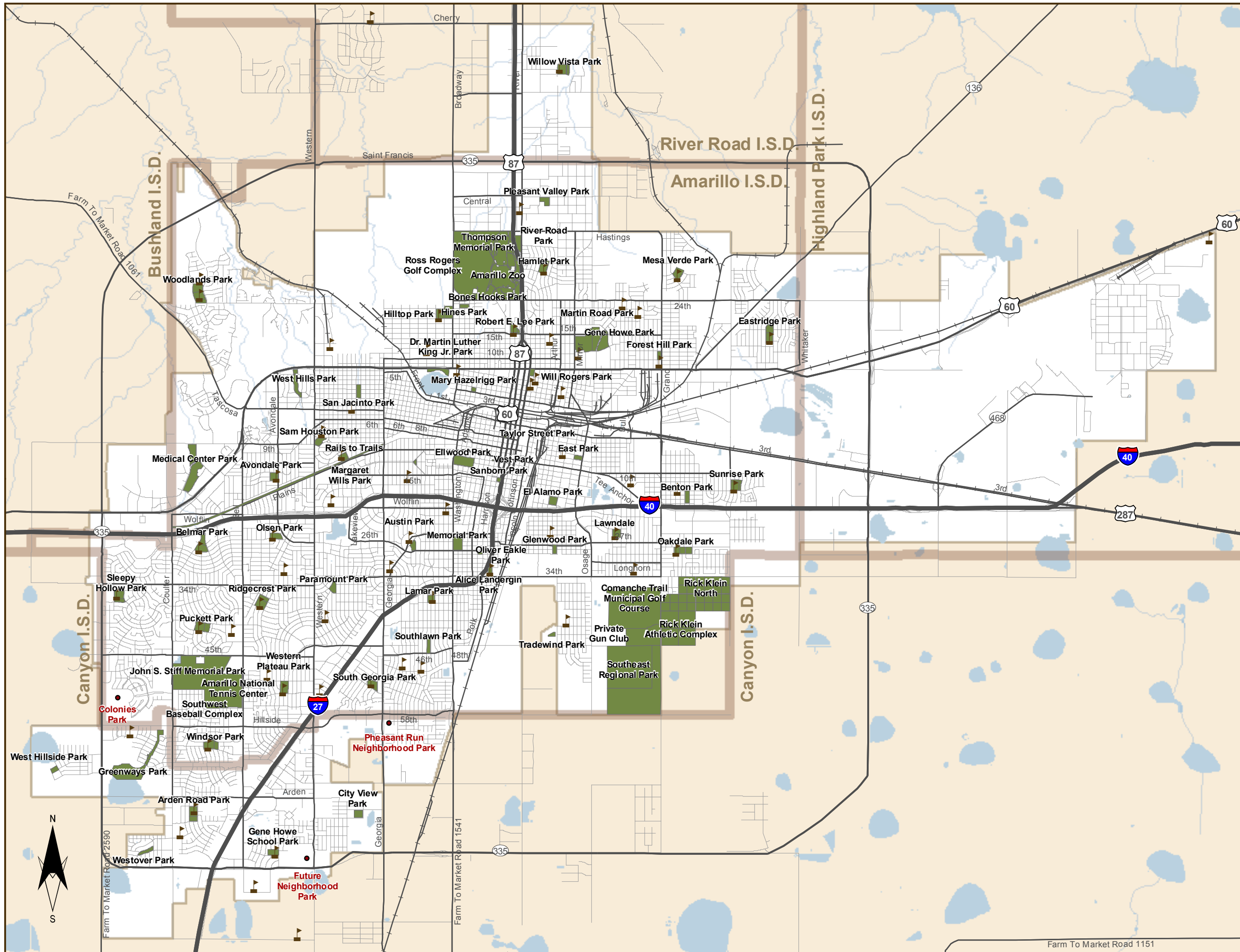
Map 5.1

PARK SYSTEM

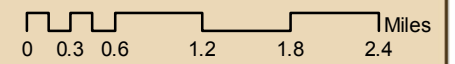


LEGEND

- City Limits
- Streams and Water Bodies
- Parks and Special Use Facilities
- Proposed Parks
- Schools
- School District Boundaries
- Railroad



Adopted 10/12/10



Farm To Market Road 1151

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Linear Parks

Amarillo's unique and varied topographic features facilitate the development of linear parks. These parks can be incorporated into man-made and natural features, such as street rights-of-way and natural drainageways. While the Rock Island Rails-to-Trails path is the only recognized linear park, several potential opportunities have been identified along the tributaries of East and West Amarillo Creeks and the Canadian River Breaks.

Special Use Facilities

Special use facilities serve the region and accommodate specific recreational and leisure activities. These buildings and facilities typically emphasize one or two uses, such as tennis or golfing, rather than a mix of active and passive activity.

SYSTEM INVENTORY

In addition to the six park classifications, public buildings, public improvement districts, and traffic islands have been included in the system inventory. **Table 5.2, System Inventory**, summarizes the total area for all parks, recreation facilities, open space, and accessory buildings.



The Amarillo National Tennis Center is a special use facility that offers three indoor and 14 outdoor courts.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The demand for a varied range of park facilities has increased over the years because of changing conditions such as per capita income, mobility, size and age of population, and the amount of available leisure time. According to the objectives in the 2008 Parks Master Plan, the City aims to provide for an equitable geographic distribution of parks, recreation programs, and facilities. For Amarillo to meet its current and future park and open space needs, the park system must coordinate with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan such as the transportation system, the land use plan, and other community facilities. All these factors must fit the topography and be designed to serve the probable future population.


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TABLE 5.1
Park Classifications

Regional Parks (5)	Developed	Undeveloped	Total
Use: Serves entire populations of a community or region. Exhibits unique natural amenities or cultural characteristics, as well as a variety of recreational facilities.			
Service Area: Citywide and surrounding region			
Desirable Minimum Size: No standard			
Density: No standard			
Site Characteristics: Protect and preserve natural amenities, sufficiently buffered from nearby urban development.			
John S. Stiff Memorial Park	198.4	168.8	367.2
Martin Road Park	60.7	4.1	64.8
Medical Center Park	58.2	20.0	78.2
Southeast Regional Park	60.7	10.8	71.5
Thompson Memorial Park	227.3	24.5	251.8
Total	605.3	228.2	833.5
Community Parks (8)	Developed	Undeveloped	Total
Use: Serves the broad community. Includes facilities for active and passive recreation and leisure, including athletic fields, swimming pools, picnic areas, walking/jogging paths, open play areas, exercise stations, and restrooms, among other improvements.			
Service Area: 4 to 8 square miles (1.6 mile radius)			
Desirable Minimum Size: 20 acres			
Density: 1 acre per 1,000 residents			
Site Characteristics: Located to provide full access to the city.			
Ellwood Park	27	-	27
El Alamo Park	9.7	-	9.7
Gene Howe Park	28.1	-	28.1
Hines Memorial Park	13.4	-	13.4
Memorial Park	15.2	-	15.2
Rick Klein Athletic Complex	83.8	420.4	504.2
River Road Park	27.0	-	27.0
Southeast Complex	18.2	4.5	22.7
Total	222.4	424.9	647.3

TABLE 5.1
Park Classifications (continued)

Neighborhood Parks (20)	Developed	Undeveloped	Total
Use: Serves neighborhood residents within walking distance. Facilities are for active use (e.g., sports activities, playgrounds) and passive use (e.g., walking, picnicking).			
Service Area: 1 square mile (0.6 mile radius)			
Desirable Minimum Area: 10 acres			
Density: 2 acres per 1,000 residents			
Site Characteristics: Centrally located with a residential neighborhood.			
Benton Park	7.3	-	7.3
Bones Hooks Park	7.0	-	7.0
Bussard Complex	10.0	-	10.0
East Park	5.3	-	5.3
Glenwood Park	5.5	-	5.5
Greenways Park*	15.0	38.0	53.0
Martin Luther King Jr. Park	9.2	-	9.2
Mary Hazelrigg Park	2.7	-	2.7
Oliver Eakle Park	2.5	-	2.5
Paramount Park	8.0	-	8.0
Pleasant Valley Park	8.9	-	8.9
Sam Houston Park	14.0	-	14.0
San Jacinto Park	7.5	-	7.5
Sanborn Park	2.7	-	2.7
SF Austin Park	8.1	-	8.1
Southlawn Park	7.9	-	7.9
Taylor St. Mini Park	0.3	-	0.3
Vest Park*	0.5	-	0.5
West Hills Park	20.9	-	20.9
Will Rogers Park	3.9	-	3.9
Total	147.2	38.0	185.2
School Parks (29)	Developed	Undeveloped	Total
Use: Joint use with existing school.			
Service Area: 1 square mile (0.6 mile radius)			
Desirable Minimum Size: 10 acres			
Density: 2 acres per 1,000 residents			
Site Characteristics: Centrally located with a residential neighborhood.			
Alice Landergin Park	3.5	-	3.5
Arden Road Park	11.4	-	11.4
Avondale Park	6.5	-	6.5
Belmar Park	19.3	-	19.3
City View Park*	7.5	-	7.5
Eastridge Park	13.6	-	13.6
Forest Hill Park	6.5	-	6.5
Gene Howe School Park	5.8	-	5.8
Hamlet Park	9.1	-	9.1
West Hillside Park*	4.4	-	4.4
Hilltop Park	10.3	-	10.3
Lamar Park	4.0	-	4.0
Lawndale Park	8.5	-	8.5
Margaret Wills Park	5.4	-	5.4
Mesa Verde Park	10.1	-	10.1
Oakdale Park	6.2	-	6.2

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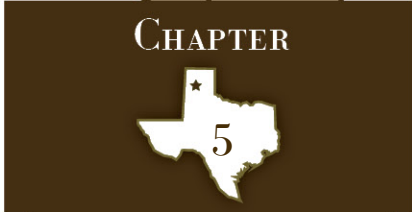
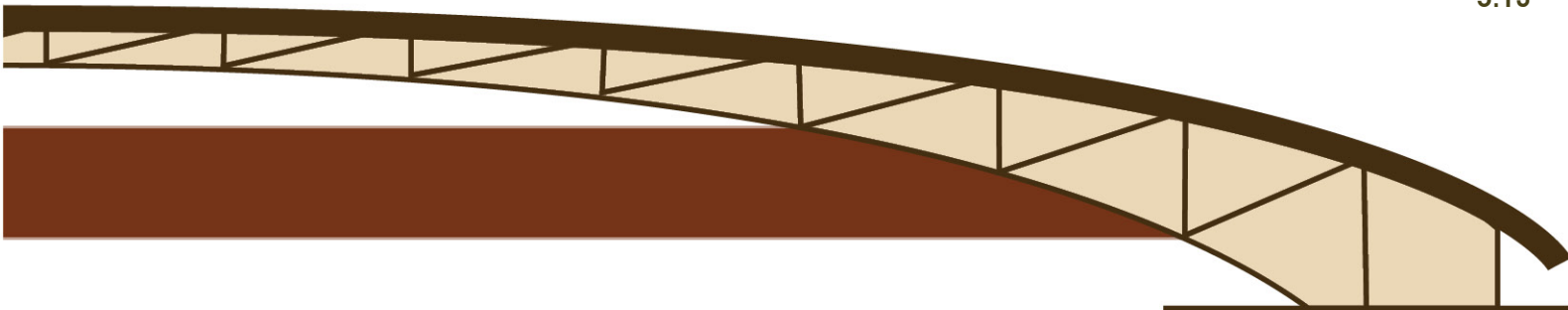
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TABLE 5.1
Park Classifications (continued)

School Parks (29)	Developed	Undeveloped	Total
Olsen Park	6.7	-	6.7
Puckett Park	15.9	-	15.9
Ridgecrest Park	13.5	-	13.5
Robert E. Lee Park	6.6	-	6.6
Sleepy Hollow Park	11.1	-	11.1
South Georgia Park	8.4	-	8.4
Sunrise Park	11.5	-	11.5
Tradewinds Park	3.5	-	3.5
Western Plateau Park	9.4	-	9.4
Westover Park*	5.8	-	5.8
Willow Vista Park	14.0	-	14.0
Windsor Park	10.2	-	10.2
Woodlands Park	10.7	-	10.7
Total	259.4	0.0	259.4
Linear Parks (1)	Developed	Undeveloped	Total
Use: Developed for bicycling, hiking, walking and jogging, and commonly used as a linkage between parks.			
Service area: Citywide			
Desirable Size: Sufficient size to accommodate expected use and provide adequate travel distance, typically a minimum of ½ mile			
Density: No minimum standard			
Site Characteristics: Typically follows a linear natural feature, such as a river, as well as rights-of-way or easements.			
Rails to Trails (Rock Island)	53.0	-	53.0
Special Use Facilities (6)	Developed	Undeveloped	Total
Use: Serves the broader community or region for specialized, multi-purpose recreation activities (e.g., performance center).			
Service Area: Available to all persons			
Desirable Size: No minimum standard			
Density: No minimum standard			
Site Characteristics: Intended for city-wide or regional use.			
Amarillo National Tennis Center*	1.1	-	1.1
Amarillo Zoo	14.0	-	14.0
Comanche Trails (36 Holes)	431.6	-	431.6
Ross Rogers Golf Course (36 Holes)	300.0	-	300.0
Shooting Complex*	-	111.4	111.4
Southeast Pool*	2.7	-	2.7
Total	749.4	111.4	860.8

SOURCE: Updated from the 2008 Parks Master Plan (*) – Amarillo Parks & Recreation Department, Kendig Keast Collaborative

ADOPTED 10-12-10



**TABLE 5.2
System Inventory**

Type	Total Acres	Developed Acres	Undeveloped Acres
Regional Parks	833.5	605.3	228.2
Community Parks	647.3	222.4	424.9
Neighborhood Parks	185.2	147.2	38.0
School Parks	259.4	259.4	-
Linear Parks	53.0	53.0	-
Special Use Facilities	860.8	749.4	111.4
Public Buildings	32.9	32.6	-
Public Improvement Districts	37.1	37.1	-
Traffic Islands	18.5	18.5	-
Total	2,927.4**	2,124.9	802.5

SOURCE: Updated from the 2008 Parks Master Plan (*) – Amarillo Parks & Recreation Department, Kendig Keast Collaborative

** Rounding based on subtotal

The purpose of the needs assessment is to identify current and future needs for additional park acreage, new facilities, and other improvements. This need is measured by determining the degree to which the existing parks and recreation facilities are in sufficient supply, from a system-wide and quantity perspective, and whether they provide sufficient geographic coverage, from a locational perspective relative to the City’s residential areas.

Industry Standards

The standards-based assessment offers a benchmark comparison for evaluating Amarillo’s present and future park needs, typically expressed in terms of acres of land dedicated per unit of population. Based on local characteristics and community input, national standards published by organizations such as the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) have been customized by the Park and Recreation Commission and City of Amarillo Parks & Recreation Department.

Traditionally, a ratio of acres-to-people has been utilized for park planning purposes. Displayed in **Table 5.3, Future Park Needs**, are the acreages of community, neighborhood, and school parks that will be needed to meet future demands. The amount of parkland was calculated by applying acreage

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standards to the base-year (estimated 2009) population of 191,500 and 2030 projected population of 250,700 (assumes an average annual growth rate of 1.29% over the next two decades).

TABLE 5.3
Future Park Needs

Park Type	Standard (Developed)	Existing Developed Supply	Existing Undeveloped Supply	Total Supply	Standard Supply (Developed)		Surplus / Deficit*	
					Current	2030	Current	2030
Community	1 acre/ 1,000 residents	222.4	424.9	647.3	191.5	250.7	+ 30.9	- 28.3
Neighborhood	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	147.2	38.0	185.2	383.0	501.4	- 235.8	- 354.2
School	2 acres/ 1,000 residents	259.4	-	259.4	383.0	501.4	- 123.6	- 242.0
Total		629.0	462.9	1,091.9	957.5	1,253.5	- 328.5	- 624.6
System	10 acres/ 1,000 residents	2,124.9	802.5	2,927.4	1,915.0	2,507.0	209.9	- 382.1

* The "current" acreage deficit does not account for the proposed parks as they are not yet part of the system.

NOTE: This table assumes an estimated 2009 population of 191,500 and a projected 2030 population of 250,700 (1.29% average annual growth rate).

As indicated in the bottom row of Table 5.3, a general standard of 10 acres of developed parkland for each 1,000 residents is desirable and considered to be appropriate for the entire system. As the system row also shows, this translates into a current target of 1,915 total acres for Amarillo. The City exceeds this amount with 2,927.4 acres of overall supply and 2,124.9 acres of existing developed parkland. However, for purposes of standards comparison, golf course land is typically deducted since it skews the acreage totals and is a specialized type of recreational land relative to the broader needs met by community, neighborhood, and other basic park types. When Amarillo's 731.6 acres of public golf course area is deducted, then the existing developed supply is 1,393.3 acres. This adjusted amount is 521.7 acres below

the current target acreage of 1,915 acres of basic developed parkland for the entire system.

Standards-based evaluation of parkland acreage focuses especially on the amount of land dedicated to parks in the community, neighborhood, and school categories as these types are intended to meet basic needs every day. According to the City's park standards, and as shown in the Total row of Table 5.3, Amarillo should already have a supply of 957.5 acres of developed community, neighborhood, and school parkland. The City currently maintains 1,091.9 acres, surpassing the overall standard by 134.1 acres. However, there is a current deficit of 328.5 acres when only developed acreage (629 acres) is considered. The deficit would increase to 624.6 acres by 2030 based on projected population and the current parkland inventory.

With regard to the three basic park categories, Table 5.3 shows that the existing park system exceeds current, standard-based acreage needs only in the community park category (by 30.9 acres). The neighborhood park deficit is 235.8 acres, and an additional 123.6 acres of school parkland is already needed. By 2030 the overall acreage target increases to 1,253.5 acres, or another 161.6 acres beyond the current total supply, both developed and undeveloped, in the community, neighborhood, and school categories.

The major challenge for the City will be to meet the current standards while keeping pace with anticipated population growth and ongoing residential development. Amarillo currently has ample parkland in undeveloped reserves to accommodate future construction. As the City continues to grow primarily to the southwest, proposed parks such as Colonies School/Park and the future neighborhood park near Gene Howe Elementary School will help to meet these needs.

Service Areas

The service area assessment evaluates the geographic distribution rather than the total acres of parks across the City. The location of these recreation opportunities plays into the effectiveness of the entire system. A service area buffer is drawn around each park within the following classifications: regional, community, neighborhood, and school parks. The larger the park, the more residents are attracted to the facility. Therefore, community parks serve up to eight square miles; neighborhood and school parks cover one square mile. This analysis identifies under-served areas, or gaps, as depicted

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on **Map 5.2, Park Service Areas**. The following conclusions can be drawn based on this map:

- ★ From a locational standpoint, the analysis indicates that the City has adequate spatial coverage of parks throughout its developed areas. The even distribution of regional and community parks alleviates neighborhood and school park deficiencies to some extent.
- ★ Community parks have a primary service area of four to eight square miles, meaning that most people who utilize these area-wide parks generally reside within this radius. The combined service areas of Amarillo's eight community parks primarily cover the eastern half of the City. Larger-scale regional parks such as Medical Center Park and John S. Stiff Memorial Park compensate for any gaps in western Amarillo. As the City expands, parkland acquisition needs to be directly and promptly coordinated in conjunction with land development activity (through parkland dedication requirements or continual negotiation of voluntary dedications).
- ★ Neighborhood and school parks are designed to be evenly spaced and within close proximity to most residentially developed areas. They are also some of the easiest to plan given their smaller size and frequent association with master-planned subdivisions. As displayed, the current array of neighborhood parks provides good coverage in concentrated nodes, but there are several gaps in these categories:
 - The older neighborhood between Ellwood, Austin, and Margaret Wills parks does not fall within the service areas of any neighborhood or school parks. However, this area was developed with a signature landscaped median along a portion of Julian Boulevard that terminates in a triangular open space block within the neighborhood. Nearby access to Ellwood Park and Rails-to-Trails linear park also offers equitable amenities compared to the smaller parks of newer developments.
 - The southwest neighborhood to the west of John S. Stiff Memorial Park lacks nearby parkland of any type. The proposed site of Colonies School and Park will fill this need to the west. Additionally, Greenways Park has the potential to expand and increase its level of service. The City owns 38 undeveloped acres in conjunction with the 15 it has already developed.

Map 5.2

PARK SERVICE AREAS

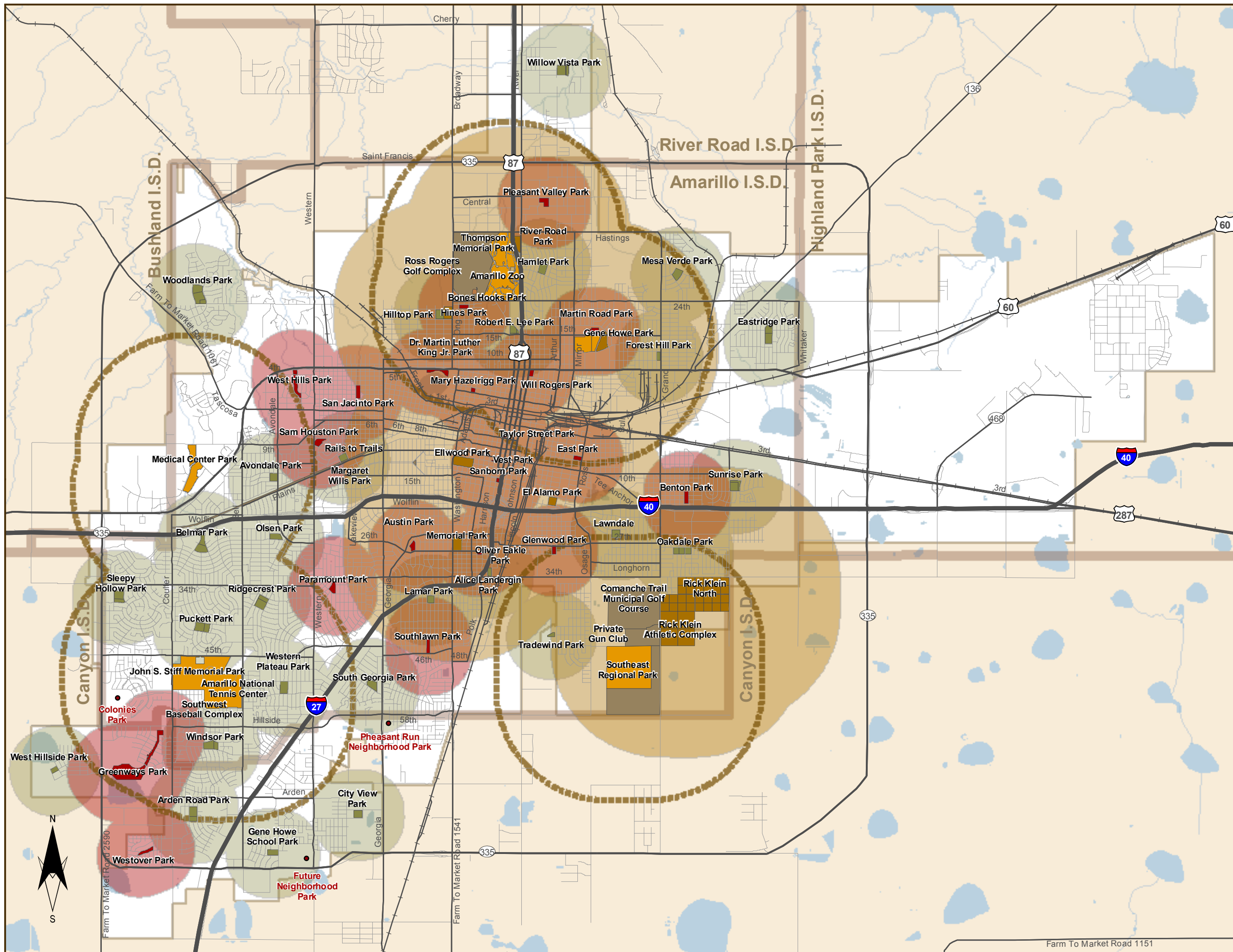
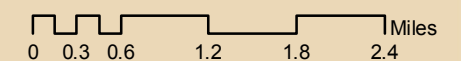


LEGEND

- Proposed Parks
- Other Parks
- Regional Parks
- Community Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- School Parks
- Regional Park Service Area*
- Community Park Service Area
- Neighborhood Park Service Area
- School Park Service Area
- School District Boundaries
- Streams and Water Bodies
- City Limits
- Railroad

* The service area standards for community parks were applied to regional parks. Standards for regional parks typically vary and benefit local residents and visitors within and outside the city limits. To neighborhoods in close proximity, regional parks can also function like community parks by offering comparable amenities.

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Farm To Market Road 1151

- The southwest quadrant has another gap to the east of Windsor Park. This area has experienced new activity with the recent addition of City View Park. Two new neighborhood parks are planned—one to the southwest and one to the northwest of City View Park. Once built, they will help to connect John Stiff Memorial Park with the periphery and strengthen the overall network.
 - The southeast lacks a concentration of neighborhood parks, but the combination of Southeast Regional Park, Rick Klein Athletic Complex (encompassing Rick Klein North), and Comanche Trail Municipal Golf Course will accommodate the recreation needs of new growth in this area. Furthermore, the City owns more than 400 undeveloped acres between these parks, allowing for expansion or subdivision.
- ★ As the City plans for additional parks, new parkland must be selected based on suitability measures and land availability—not just location. For instance, land to the north and northwest of Amarillo has more challenging topography, requiring strict adherence to the slope standards in the Parks Master Plan.

JOINT USE

The City of Amarillo has partnered with local school systems to coordinate school and park development, resulting in 29 shared-use facilities across the community. The City of Amarillo initiated joint park and school projects in 1951 with the development of the Avondale Park and School site. These partnerships promote the development of superior facilities, and they help to avoid needless duplication of amenities and maintenance.

The City's Park and Recreation Commission, which is responsible for studying and encouraging the development and expansion of parks and recreation areas, adopted updated policies for the development of Amarillo's park system in June 2007. These policies call for development of a neighborhood park in each residentially developed section of land in conjunction with public school sites, with community parks and regional parks to be appropriately located throughout the City to serve



High school and middle school campuses supplement the City's inventory with football fields, tracks, and baseball and softball fields.

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multiple neighborhoods or major sections of the community. The system of providing school parks results in a cooperative venture between the City and the applicable school district to acquire the land and make improvements. When development of the park is completed, the school district pays water costs and the City is responsible for maintenance and labor.

Amarillo's municipal parks and recreation system is supplemented by the various improvements found on middle school and high school campuses. These sites are located throughout the City and provide athletic-type facilities for attending students. Middle school sites, which contribute to Amarillo's open space, include Austin, Bonham, Bowie, Crockett, Fannin, Houston, Mann, Travis, and Valleyview. Facilities for recreational activities such as baseball, track events, and football are also found at high schools such as Amarillo, Caprock, Palo Duro, Tascosa, Randall, and Highland Park. Privately owned recreational facilities such as the Maverick Club, YMCA, numerous health clubs, the Amarillo and Tascosa Country Clubs, and Amarillo Technical College (ATC) also help to meet community demand for facilities and recreation options.



The City has 32 baseball and softball fields, totaling 116.5 acres. These types of facilities require ongoing funding support for routine maintenance and upgrades.

IMPLEMENTATION

The 2008 Parks Master Plan established a framework for system expansion, setting a five-year strategy for upgrading the parks and recreation system. In the last three years, the City has added five of the eight proposed projects for a total of 69 parks and special use facilities. The Parks & Recreation Department is currently focused on designing a \$15.5 million aquatic center, which will likely be funded through municipal bonds and completed in 2012. This 68,000 square foot, indoor facility will accommodate leisure and competitive swimming. **Table 5.4, Implementation Schedule**, identifies recently completed and proposed projects.

TABLE 5.4
Implementation Schedule

Completed Projects	Total Estimate
Comanche Maintenance Barn Expansion	\$ 150,000
Comanche Tomahawk Drainage Std	\$ 1,500,000
Ross Maintenance Barn Expansion	\$ 100,000
Trade Winds School Park	\$ 400,000
Westover Park	\$ 400,000
Under Construction	
City View Park	\$ 750,000
Comanche Club House Renovation	\$ 20,000
West Hillside Park	\$ 750,000
Ongoing	
Automate/Renovate Irrigation	
Continue Zoo Expansion	
John Stiff Development	
Medi-Park Shoreline Stabilization	
Outlying Softball Fields Improvements	
Park Security Lighting	
Playground Improvements	
Restroom Replace-Area Parks	
Softball Building Renovation	
Swimming Pool Renovations	
Near Term (0 to 4 years)	
Amarillo Skate Park Extension	\$ 50,000
Baseball Complex Lighting	\$ 100,000
Ellwood Parking	\$ 200,000
New Picnic Shelter	\$ 770,000
Park Road at John Stiff Park	\$ 350,000
Park Spraygrounds	\$ 1,200,000
Pheasant Run Park	\$ 700,000
Practice Soccer Field Lighting	\$ 350,000
Ross East Renovation	\$ 2,000,000
SW Pool Slides	\$ 200,000
Thompson Park Building Renovation (Old Kids, Inc.)	\$ 100,000
Youth Girls Softball Complex	\$ 3,200,000
Long Term (5 to 10 years)	
Indoor Community Center Study	\$ 80,000
Indoor Reunion Pavilion	\$ 1,200,000
Rails to Trails Walking/Trail Imp	\$ 400,000
Soccer Complex	\$ 1,900,000
Tennis Center Expansion	\$ 910,000

SOURCE: Updated from the 2008 Parks Master Plan – Amarillo Parks & Recreation Department,
Kendig Keast Collaborative

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KEY PLANNING THEMES

Amarillo faces an economic imperative to continue to develop even more and better amenities and leisure options for its residents and visitors. The City and region are in competition with others across the nation which have long recognized that economic competitiveness depends on more than just available and inexpensive land, a sound labor force, transportation facilities, and the like. A truly complete community retains and attracts both businesses and workers by making itself appealing in all ways, not just as a place to grow a business and earn a living.

One Amarillo resident noted that his community has “a small city feel with big town amenities.” Enjoyable and well-maintained parks, access to performing and visual arts, and attention to community history help to round out a community already made attractive by stable neighborhoods, good schools, medical facilities, and shopping and dining options. In sum, as another resident concluded, “Quality of life investment is economic development investment,” and also essential to retaining the area’s youth along with better education and job opportunities.

Based on the concerns and hopes expressed by residents, public and private leaders, and key community stakeholders and investors, the following themes emerged as priorities for this Parks & Cultural Resources element of the Plan:

1. Build on a Strong Park System
2. Cluster Cultural and Entertainment Assets
3. Enhance Local Heritage Initiatives and Tools

Build on a Strong Park System

The City of Amarillo updated its Parks Master Plan within the last few years, in 2008, and is currently finalizing an update to its 2003 Hike & Bike Master Plan. The breadth and quality of local parks and recreation facilities is yet another legacy of a long history of planning and phased action in Amarillo.

The stated mission of the City’s Parks & Recreation Department is to, “Enhance the quality of life for Amarillo citizens through quality parks, programs, and people.” The following series of objectives in the Parks Master Plan captures the many ways that a diverse and effective park system can touch residents’ lives and contribute to a quality community:

- ★ Develop long-range park master plans that guide the continued development of the Amarillo park system.
- ★ Increase the quality of parks and recreational opportunities for Amarillo citizens.
- ★ Provide for year-round recreational and leisure opportunities.
- ★ Provide for an equitable geographic distribution of parks, recreation programs and facilities.
- ★ Develop effective programs that increase citizen awareness of parks and recreation programs.
- ★ Seek increased levels of customer service and satisfaction.
- ★ Seek increased community participation in parks and recreation programs and special events.
- ★ Provide for the orderly replacement of aging park and recreational infrastructure to insure that recreational opportunities are not lost.
- ★ Encourage cooperation with local school districts, community organizations and the business community, in order to optimize benefits to citizens.
- ★ Provide for enhanced maintenance of all parks and park facilities.
- ★ Encourage conservation of native habitat, natural and wildlife areas in the City of Amarillo.

Cluster Cultural and Entertainment Assets

A clear link exists between downtown revitalization and the continued growth and enhancement of Amarillo's cultural and entertainment venues and offerings. As stated so well in the City's 1980s Comprehensive Plan, "The basic objective in revitalizing the downtown economy is to attract more people more frequently and to keep them as long as possible by creating a variety of reasons to come and stay downtown." The 1980s plan also pointed out fundamental aesthetic issues in downtown that remain a priority focus today: the extent of surface parking in the core area of downtown, and the need for further streetscape enhancements to soften the intensity of the downtown urban environment.

As is likely to be recommended through the pending land use and facilities study for downtown, Amarillo, like many large cities, should continue to

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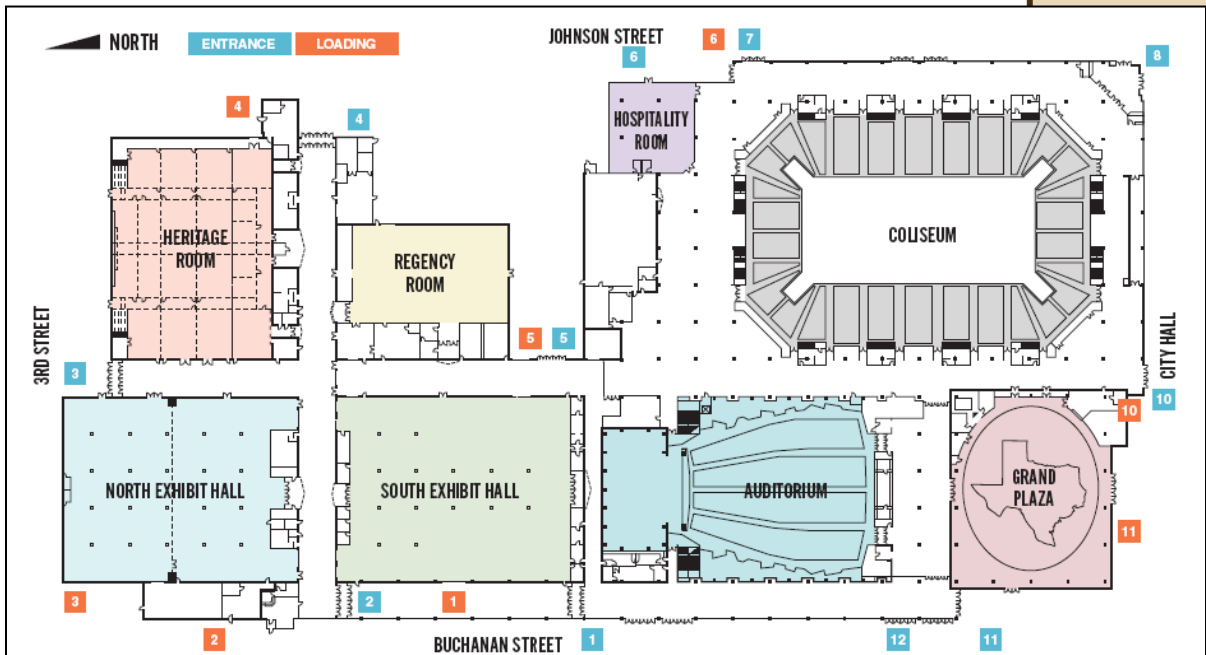
cluster its cultural facilities and entertainment venues within the Central Business District to build on a critical mass of people-attracting activities there. This basic strategy will support various other planning and revitalization objectives including:

- ★ Making downtown a more active and vital place on evenings and weekends, supplementing its prime business and government functions on weekdays.
- ★ Taking advantage of downtown's central location and highway accessibility, plus its available street capacity and on- and off-street parking supply to accommodate large events and patronage, as well as to handle multiple simultaneous events better than any other location in the City.
- ★ Building on the established clustering of the Civic Center, the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts, the Central Library, and City Hall with even more events and activity that will provide further impetus for "nightlife" commerce (restaurants, bars, clubs, hotels, extended-hour retail, etc.).
- ★ Making structured parking economically feasible and a welcome convenience by enabling arts and entertainment patrons to park closer to their destinations, and, depending on facility design, possibly protect them from inclement weather through covered walkways and/or tunnel connections.
- ★ With the addition of structured parking, opening the way for elimination of more surface parking in the vicinity, which can lead to more productive use of land; opportunities for civic amenities such as plazas, fountains, and continuous green links within and between certain downtown blocks; and general "greening" of the downtown cultural/entertainment node with less need for expansive surface parking areas immediately adjacent to facilities. [City staff estimated that the Civic Center and Globe-News Center, together, can host multiple events at once that can involve some 5,000 patrons, with just enough capacity in the surface lots around the facilities to park the associated number of vehicles – assuming no other sizable events are happening nearby in downtown.]

Based on pending study recommendations and ongoing downtown planning, the City and community may choose to invest in other new or upgraded types of facilities or venues in coming years. In the meantime, discussions with City staff for this Comprehensive Plan confirmed that the City does not face any significant “physical plant” issues with its current arts/entertainment/event facilities thanks to ongoing attention and financial commitment to routine maintenance and repair/replacement schedules. Considering its 42-year history, the Amarillo Civic Center is in remarkably good condition. As a much more recent addition, the Globe-News Center remains a new and very attractive community landmark, designed and constructed through public/private partnering before the City assumed responsibility for its long-term management.

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Amarillo's civic and performance facilities have seen a 125% increase in utilization since 2000 based on event activity counts tabulated by City staff (from 784 events in 2000-01 to 1,763 in 2008-09). This includes a wide variety of activities, from banquets, dances, and cultural performances to trade shows and conventions, meetings/seminars, concerts, and sports events. Over these same years annual attendance has averaged 684,000, including a peak of 747,798 in 2005-06. With many visitors included in these attendance figures, the Civic Center helps to inject millions of outside dollars into the local economy.

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One area where some public meeting attendees indicated less satisfaction involves the City's sports arena space. City staff noted that the north expansion of the Civic Center was pursued in a previous round of facility improvements rather than replacement of the Cal Farley Coliseum. Staff also pointed out that seating capacity is an issue at times in several Civic Center venues, although Amarillo will never compete with the United Spirit Arena in Lubbock for certain concerts and larger-scale events, especially with the university connection there. Addressing technological limitations in the current venues is an immediate focus given the needs of various contemporary users.

Operation and maintenance of the Civic Center and Globe-News Center are funded through the facilities' own revenue streams, and also through the City's capital budget. Hotel occupancy tax revenue is utilized as these facilities contribute directly to visitation, tourism, and hotel patronage in Amarillo. However, a highly significant capital investment, such as design and construction of a parking deck, would require other forms of funding support.

Enhance Local Heritage Initiatives and Tools

Through its Landmarks and Historic Districts ordinance (Chapter 4-11, Landmarks and Historic Preservation, in the City Code of Ordinances), as initially adopted in 1991, the City of Amarillo has available the typical array of municipal tools and administrative and hearing procedures for protecting and managing the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, alteration, relocation – and, where unavoidable, demolition – of “historically, culturally, architecturally, and archaeologically significant sites and structures which represent a distinct aspect of the City and serve as reminders of our culture and heritage” (Section 4-11-2(1)). This includes:

- ★ An appointed Board of Review for Landmarks and Historic Districts;
- ★ A Certificate of Appropriateness mechanism, including permits specifically for proposed demolitions, and associated review/approval and hearing procedures (with avenues for appeals to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Commission, as appropriate);
- ★ Use of zoning and site plan review mechanisms (linked to the Planned Development provisions and procedures in the City's zoning ordinance);
- ★ Provisions for ongoing survey, inventory, and designation efforts; and

- ★ Property tax incentives provided through Article VI of Chapter 4-11 (potential 10-year freeze in assessed valuation of the subject land and structure, equal to the assessed value prior to the preservation work).

The purpose statement in the ordinance cites the many benefits that accrue to a community over time through such efforts, including in the arenas of economic prosperity, cultural and educational enrichment, development compatibility and resource protection, and strengthened civic pride. Action strategies for this topic highlight potential ways to build on current regulatory capabilities, expand funding support, and broaden public awareness of the importance of heritage preservation activities by both the public sector and private interests.

ACTION STRATEGIES

This section provides potential action strategies for responding to the key planning themes related to parks and cultural resources in Amarillo that were outlined earlier in this chapter:

1. Build on a Strong Park System
2. Cluster Cultural and Entertainment Assets
3. Enhance Local Heritage Initiatives and Tools

Table 5.1, Parks & Cultural Resources Actions, summarizes the action possibilities that were considered by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and which were classified as Basic actions that are relatively straightforward to implement, Intermediate actions that could be more challenging and require more advance work, and Advanced actions that would represent “stretch” objectives for the City because they are new (or a break from past practice), potentially controversial, or otherwise more difficult to accomplish due to cost or other considerations. They also fall into five categories which represent the main ways that comprehensive plans are implemented (as elaborated upon in Chapter 7-Implementation):

- ★ Capital investments
- ★ Programs/initiatives
- ★ Regulations and standards
- ★ Partnerships/coordination

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- ★ Ongoing study/planning (especially as required to qualify for external funding opportunities)

These options are elaborated on in the remainder of this chapter.

TABLE 5.5
Parks & Cultural Resources Actions

Basic Actions

Action	Action Type
1. Needs assessment	Ongoing Study / Planning
2. Ongoing fiscal support (facilities)	Program / Initiative
3. Arts/cultural education and outreach	Partnerships / Coordination
4. Parks system role	Program / Initiative
5. Effective marketing	Program / Initiative
6. Maximization of grant funding	Program / Initiative
7. Opportunities close the home	Program / Initiative
8. Fiscal support (arts, preservation)	Program / Initiative
9. Early consideration in regulatory processes	Regulation / Standards
10. Volunteerism and effective organization	Partnerships / Coordination

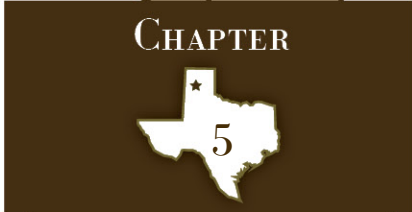
Intermediate Actions

Action	Action Type
11. Parkland dedication and fee-in-lieu requirements	Regulation / Standards
12. Cultural District designation	Program / Initiative
13. Downtown Plan implementation	Program / Initiative
14. Public art	Program / Initiative
15. Umbrella organization	Partnerships / Coordination
16. Community outreach and recognitions	Program / Initiative
17. Local training and networking	Partnerships / Coordination
18. Neighborhood Conservation link	Regulation / Standards
19. Another benefit of small-area planning after the Comprehensive Plan	Ongoing Study / Planning

Advanced Actions

Action	Action Type
20. Demolition waiting period	Regulation / Standards

1. **Needs Assessment.** Complete a thorough physical conditions review and needs assessment to confirm and prioritize necessary improvements to the Civic Center and related buildings to maintain sound operations and appealing, competitive facilities. Technological upgrades are a current priority given the evolving technical expectations and sophistication of facility users.
2. **Ongoing Fiscal Support.** Continue to maintain routine budget support and a multi-year capital budget for the City’s arts/entertainment/exhibition facilities to finance routine and periodic “big-ticket” maintenance items and avoid deferred maintenance issues that can undermine facility integrity over time and lead to even more substantial capital infusions on short notice.
3. **Arts/Cultural Education and Outreach.** Continue to build on the remarkable Window on a Wider World (WOWW) program, which is “dedicated to enriching the education of Texas Panhandle students through arts, science and cultural experiences” (www.windowonawiderworld.org). WOWW is an educational outreach initiative of the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts accomplished through a partnership between the Amarillo Area Foundation, West Texas A&M University, Amarillo Independent School District, Region 16 Education Service Center and region school districts, and participating arts, science and cultural organizations in the region, with support from charitable and private sponsors. After involving seven schools in its 2006-07 pilot year, the program has grown to 43 campuses in 2009-10, with the goal of inviting all K-5 schools in Region 16 to take advantage of opportunities to enrich classroom curricula and benefit from a wide array of program offerings. WOWW provides direct funding to each participating school (\$5 per child), an Educators’ Resource Guide for every teacher (plus an online searchable database of educational programs, as identified by participating non-profit organizations, for access by any educator in the region), campus professional development and curriculum/program support, and support of related research at West



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Texas A&M. Schools may also apply their WOWW funds toward transportation costs to/from programs.

4. **Parks System Role.** Continue to pursue opportunities to incorporate arts and humanities into the community's parks and along trails, especially in flexible, accessible, and visible spaces that are appropriate for temporary exhibitions, murals, performances, and other programming, as well as hosting of local festivals and other special events. Creatively designed infrastructure elements are another way for the City to elevate arts appreciation (e.g., benches, bicycle racks, lighting fixtures, trash containers, signage, etc.). Also, through the City's recreational programming and other community resources, continue to nurture young local artists and offer leisure and cultural education activities to youth, adults, and seniors.
5. **Effective Marketing.** Continue the very good joint marketing which occurs through the Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council. This includes through the Council's attractive, interactive, and comprehensive website (and link to the ArtsinAmarillo site and online events calendar) and through airport displays, brochures, and other traditional outlets that highlight very effectively the entire range of entertainment and cultural attractions in Amarillo. The ArtsinAmarillo website, which is a service of the Arts Committee of the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, also provides a one-stop resource with links to all major arts organizations in the community, in the categories of music, theatre, museums, dance, and arts events/shows/classes. The Participating Organizations page on the Window on a Wider World website (www.windowonawiderworld.org) provides another handy listing with website links and contact information.
6. **Maximization of Grant Funding.** Continue to pursue external funding (plus other forms of support) available to arts organizations and specific cultural activities, including through the Texas Commission on the Arts. The TCA website (www.arts.state.tx.us) highlights just over \$100,000 in grant awards to Amarillo area organizations during the current 2010 fiscal year (September 2009-August 2010), including to the Amarillo Little Theatre (\$13,500); Amarillo Museum of Art (\$17,500); Amarillo Opera (\$8,500); Amarillo Symphony (\$29,935); Amarillo Youth Choirs (\$8,500); Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts (\$2,000); Lone Star Ballet (\$9,000); and the Windows on a Wider World program of the Globe-News

Center (\$14,500). The Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, managed by the National Park Service, is another essential resource for Amarillo given the inclusion of the 6th Street Historic District in the National Register of Historic Places.

7. **Opportunities Close to Home.** Relative to downtown and community-wide cultural/entertainment offerings, promote greater neighborhood-level support and patronage at band and orchestra concerts, plays and musical performances, and visual arts exhibits at area public and private schools. Some school districts have special discount programs for senior citizens, college students, returning school alumni, and others to promote such community interest.
8. **Fiscal Support.** With continued hotel construction and developer interest in Amarillo's hospitality market, consider opportunities to tap further into hotel occupancy tax revenue and increase the City's direct funding support for arts, cultural, and heritage asset programs and initiatives that clearly boost local tourism and draw visitors to the community and Panhandle region.
9. **Early Consideration in Regulatory Processes.** In zoning, subdivision, and other regulatory processes governing land development and redevelopment in Amarillo, continue to make reference to the "Measuring Land Development Impacts" guidance in the City's Development Policy Manual. Specifically, among the Topics for Evaluation is Aesthetic & Cultural Values, including the question of whether a proposed development promotes "the preservation of any cultural, historic, or scientific landmarks or areas?"
10. **Volunteerism and Effective Organization.** Continue to coordinate with and support the efforts and effectiveness of volunteer-based organizations that promote heritage protection and awareness in Amarillo, including Preservation Amarillo and the Historic Route 66 Merchants Association.
11. **Parkland Dedication and Fee-in-Lieu Requirements.** As noted earlier in this chapter, for the last several decades Amarillo has continued to approve and support new

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ONGOING PARKS MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

A primary purpose of the parks portion of this chapter is to incorporate into the Comprehensive Plan the principles and direction of the City's adopted Parks Master Plan. With regard to priority actions, this is accomplished through Table 5.4, Implementation Schedule, which brings into this chapter the phased action agenda already laid out in the Master Plan, with the latest updates also reflected. Added here to this pre-existing action agenda is an overarching topic of concern: the reasons why adoption of a mandatory parkland dedication procedure for new residential development should be seriously considered in Amarillo.

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residential development in the community without parkland dedication provisions, which were recommended in the 1980s Comprehensive Plan (along with a “fee-in-lieu” option), and which is common practice among nearly all large cities in Texas and across the nation. Instead, Amarillo has relied on a voluntary system in which City staff must coordinate with land developers to identify areas within new subdivisions that will be dedicated for public park development, use, and long-term maintenance by the City. This is usually done in conjunction with the school district to accomplish a joint City/school park site within a new neighborhood in keeping with the Neighborhood Unit Concept that is a key part of Amarillo’s planning legacy.

It must be said that, over the years—and even through some recent subdivisions—Amarillo has developed a relatively good network of neighborhood and school parks under this longstanding, negotiation-based approach that definitely relies on community-mindedness and public/private cooperation. However, the problem with this voluntary approach is that it only takes a few instances of developers declining to participate—or to dedicate sufficient or suitable acreage for park purposes—before unacceptable outcomes result. Several residential sections within the City are without any locally accessible park space, or adequate space for the amount of population, to serve the recreational needs of nearby homeowners and residents.

Among the purposes stated for the City’s subdivision regulations is “to provide adequate ... parks, playground, recreation, and other public requirements and facilities” (Section 4-6-3, Purpose). Then the regulations require development applicants to show any existing or proposed parks on their submitted plats, but there are no provisions to *require* land set-asides for public parkland within new residential developments.

The City’s Development Policy Manual includes a brief section on Neighborhood Parks and School Parks (Section 16, pp. 172-173). But this section is focused more on the standards for whatever parks come about (e.g., population to be served, desirable park size, spacing between parks) versus a regulatory-based procedure to ensure that every new neighborhood enjoys the permanent benefit of adequate, suitable public park space. Similarly, the section within the Development Policy Manual that is specifically tied to the subdivision regulations (Section 2) includes guidance on Measuring Land Development Impacts. This section does

recognize that Open Space and Public Facilities are among the items that must be addressed in conjunction with land development which accommodates new population and/or population density in the community (p. 38). But, once again, no procedure is outlined for ensuring that public parkland is dedicated during the platting process, pointing toward the reliance on voluntary cooperation by and negotiation with subdivision applicants. [Interestingly, a Planning Standards section in Section 5, Utility Extension and Service Tap Policy, outlines circumstances under which a development applicant in the ETJ “will dedicate” land to the City for a future park site as one minimum condition for possible extension of City utility service. This mandatory provision uses very direct language, and is among several other provisions described as necessary “to assure the orderly growth of areas outside the City of Amarillo ...”]

Some typical reasons why required parkland dedication works for so many communities are:

- ★ Public acquisition of new parkland occurs in conjunction with the very residential development that will generate the demand for new recreational space.
- ★ It is highly efficient to plan for public park sites when laying out new residential neighborhoods to ensure that the park will be of adequate size, in a convenient and accessible location, and with characteristics that will make it suitable for cost-effective park development and ongoing maintenance.
- ★ If the City cannot rely on mandatory dedication to ensure that new residential areas will have park space, which is a clear citizen expectation in Amarillo as elsewhere (with the City’s existing neighborhood parks highly utilized), then several scenarios can result when a developer declines to dedicate land voluntarily:
 - (1) the City must scramble to find available sites in the area that are appropriately situated and will be suitable for park development and use;
 - (2) the City will be looking to purchase property on its own at a time when development pressure already exists in the subject area, resulting in higher land costs to the City and its taxpayers; and/or

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(3) residents in the newly developed area may have to go without a neighborhood park for some time if the City cannot secure an appropriate site or does not have the resources for both acquiring and developing a new park site in the near term.

- ★ A well-established dedication procedure, with associated standards for park size and location, provides predictability for development applicants, the City, and residents and taxpayers. It also ensures a “level playing field” for all applicants versus an approach that relies on case-by-case negotiation, especially where the City has little leverage to require that community expectations and standards for public parkland be met consistently by every new development.
- ★ While parkland dedication is a type of exaction versus a development impact fee, it serves one of the same basic purposes. That is to ensure that public facilities and services necessitated by new development are provided and/or financially supported by that development, as much as possible, to minimize the burden that existing residents, businesses, and taxpayers must bear to subsidize the public costs of serving new development.

Important considerations when implementing parkland dedication requirements include:

- ★ Any ordinance provisions drafted and ultimately adopted in Amarillo can draw from lessons learned in numerous other Texas cities that have many years of experience with parkland dedication. But all such requirements must be tailored to the local situation to ensure they are realistic and not onerous.
- ★ Land suitability standards should be included to ensure that the City is not presented with “leftover” pieces for dedication that are inappropriate for practical and cost-effective park development, public use, and/or maintenance based on their relative inaccessibility, topography/slope, drainage conditions, etc. Some cities have erred by adopting dedication requirements without including these critical stipulations.
- ★ ETJ areas should be included in the parkland dedication system. This ensures that any relatively dense residential subdivisions outside the City limits, especially in areas likely to be annexed into the City within some reasonable timeframe, will provide for public parkland

from the start rather than this service having to be addressed after the fact. As with many of the growth guidance strategies in Chapter 3, Growth Management & Capacity, part of the rationale is to ensure that developments outside the City limits do not have particular advantages over in-City developments, in this case, by not having to provide for public parkland as part of new residential development.

- ★ A fee-in-lieu option should be included, as is widely used by other cities, to enable payment of a fee by the development applicant instead of actual land dedication, subject to certain criteria. The fee option also gives the City flexibility in planning for future land acquisition and park improvements.
- ★ A series of park planning and improvement zones will need to be delineated across the City limits, and these can be incorporated into a future Parks Master Plan update. This is because one principle of the fee-in-lieu approach is that fee revenue generated in a particular area should be escrowed and dedicated to finance improvements to benefit new development in that same area (versus fee revenue being spent for improvements elsewhere in the community).
- ★ Elected officials in too many cities with parkland dedication requirements defer increases in local park fees due to economic or political considerations. As a result, the fees do not keep up with increasing land costs over time, as well as the rising costs of parkland development and improvements. This leaves their cities with inadequate revenue to accomplish planned improvements and keep pace with the added demands of new development. Some Texas ordinances include an automatic escalator clause for this reason, tied to the local rate of inflation or other measurable indicators.
- ★ Provisions for linear/corridor land dedications can be included to support trail network expansion in conjunction with new development, as is described further in the action item in Chapter 4, Mobility, regarding a Thoroughfare Plan Approach for Implementation of Bicycle/Pedestrian Network

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**Texas Cultural Districts**

Enabling legislation for the Cultural Districts program of the Texas Commission on the Arts defines such districts as:

A well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a community in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction.

Typical district facilities include performance spaces, museums, galleries, artist studios, arts-related retail shops, music or media production studios, dance studios, high schools or colleges dedicated to the arts, libraries, and/or arboretums and gardens.

Goals of cultural districts include:

- Revitalizing a particular area of the community.
- Offering evening activities, extending hours during which the area is used.
- Making an area safe and attractive.
- Providing facilities for arts activities and arts organizations.
- Providing arts activities for residents and visitors.
- Providing employment and housing for artists.
- Connecting the arts more intimately with community development.

According to the Texas Commission on the Arts, “The impact of cultural districts is measurable. The arts attract residents and visitors who support businesses as well as lodging and dining establishments. Having the arts present enhances property values, the profitability of surrounding businesses and the tax base of the region. The arts can be a key incentive for new and relocating businesses. The arts contribute to the creativity and innovation of a community.”

SOURCE: Texas Commission on the Arts website.

City staff noted that larger residential developments in Amarillo typically want to provide for a neighborhood school and park as they see the value in this design approach. This is clearly borne out by academic research on the benefit that accrues to private property owners from nearby public park and open space investments.² However, staff also pointed out recent examples of developments that did not cooperate with the City on parkland provision and public dedication, and another case where only half the land needed for a suitable park site was offered. These outcomes are cost-inefficient for the City and its taxpayers, unfair to residents of the new developments, inequitable for residential and non-residential taxpayers citywide, counter to the “level playing field” notion that benefits all area developments—provided that all participate in a voluntary system, and ultimately a burden on City staff who must pursue other options to ensure that all City residents have access to nearby park and recreational space.

12. Cultural District Designation. Pursue designation of downtown Amarillo as a state-recognized Cultural District. The Texas Legislature authorized the Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) to make such designations in cities across Texas. A single organization on its own or representing a collaborative effort must file an application with the Commission (and must be a Texas-based non-profit). A TCA assessment study must first be requested through a simple one-page description of the cultural district plans and timeline. A TCA-led assessment team meets with

² Crompton, J. L. (2004) *The proximity principle: The impact of parks, open spaces and water features on residential property values and the property tax base*, Ashburn, VA, National Recreation and Park Association [along with related and subsequent publications on this general topic by the author, who is a Professor in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University—and, more recently, was elected to the City Council in College Station].

the applying organization, completes a site visit, and prepares a report. The TCA advises that “applications should be written to demonstrate the measurable impact that the Cultural District will bring to the community. Impact could be described in terms of tourism activity, artist advancement, job creation, property value enhancement, and/or general community revitalization.”

Cultural districts are categorized by TCA in five ways, and the “Major Arts Institution Focus” category would likely be the best fit for Amarillo:

Major arts institutions such as large concert halls, playhouses, libraries and museums, anchor these cultural districts. Smaller arts organizations and entertainment facilities such as nightclubs and cinemas are often a part of these districts. Many of the Major Arts Institution cultural districts are located close to the central business district and often near convention and other tourism sites. These districts can have a particular culture genre, such as museums or theaters.

The “Downtown Focus” category is another possibility but is indicated as better for smaller communities where most all venues, museums, and other visitor attractions are in one area, which is not the case in Amarillo:

A cultural district that encompasses most of the downtown area, including the central business district, and uses most or all of a community’s cultural attractions to attract citizens and visitors. “Culture” in these districts is broadly defined and includes major arts institutions, popular attractions, restaurants, nightclubs, movie theaters, parks and tourism sites.

Another benefit of the Cultural District designation is that the community is highlighted on a statewide map of cities with state-recognized districts, on the “Explore Arts in Texas” portion of the TCA website. To date, the TCA has designated districts in Abilene, Austin, Dallas, Denison, Fort Worth, Houston, Huntsville, Lubbock, McAllen, San Angelo, and Winnsboro.

13. **Downtown Plan Implementation.** Continue to pursue key initiatives from the Downtown Amarillo Strategic Action Plan and subsequent studies, including the concept of a downtown convention center hotel, the 6th Avenue urban design and streetscape link between the Civic Center

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and municipal complex node and the Polk Street entertainment/retail area, a potential multi-purpose sports facility, and loft residential and/or live/work units which can be attractive to artists and others involved with cultural pursuits. One aim of some public/private partnerships and development subsidies is to ensure that a redeveloped building or site includes space dedicated to arts programs (e.g., studios, galleries, rehearsal rooms, classrooms, administrative offices, etc.). Also, through the proposed new Urban Design Standards for downtown and other initiatives (e.g., Center City's "Hoof Prints" art horse installations), continue to create a distinct sense of place, especially if the Cultural District designation is pursued through the Texas Commission on the Arts.

14. **Public Art.** Continue to capitalize on opportunities to install and maintain public art pieces in high-profile locations for the enjoyment of residents and visitors to Amarillo, in conjunction with local arts institutions and organizations, Amarillo College, other levels of government and area school districts, the Texas Department of Transportation, and private businesses and community groups. The City and other public agencies should also maximize the use of available wall and open floor space within their facilities for temporary exhibitions, rotating displays, and informal performances by local arts and school groups—and also recognize downtown office building owners and other private interests for doing the same in their spaces. Finally, public infrastructure can be supplemented with art and design elements that help to enliven and/or screen an otherwise utilitarian capital project. Possibilities include underpasses and viaducts, roadway medians, ground and elevated water storage tanks, utility boxes, fire hydrants, and irrigation facilities.
15. **Umbrella Organization.** Consider creating a non-profit organization to serve as an umbrella mechanism for coordinating arts fundraising and grant efforts, coordinated programming/scheduling, joint marketing and promotion (including community-wide events, such as the annual Celebration of the Arts event organized by the Arts Assembly of Midland), educational offerings, financial and other support to small cultural organizations and individual artists, and networking within the local and regional arts communities and beyond. The Texas Commission on the Arts website includes a listing of, and provides links to, more than 40 such organizations across the state, including the Abilene Cultural

Affairs Council, Lubbock Arts Alliance, Arts Assembly of Midland, Odessa Council for the Arts & Humanities, and the San Angelo Cultural Affairs Council. To the extent that much of this synergistic activity and fundraising already occurs through existing means (Arts Committee of the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, area foundations, Center City, etc.), then Amarillo can weigh the pros and cons of building on existing arrangements or potentially moving toward a more collaborative model based on those found in other Texas communities. In Abilene, the Cultural Affairs Council remains an affiliate of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce. In El Paso, City government provides for this type of function internally through its Museums and Cultural Affairs Department.

16. **Community Outreach and Recognitions.** Beyond the Board of Review’s internal annual report required by Section 2-6-247(13), provide for a much higher profile, colorful, and very public update to the community on historic preservation successes and major accomplishments, as well as continuing challenges and areas, sites, and structures that are at particular risk of irreparable decline and/or demolition. This would also provide another opportunity to recognize exceptional efforts by private property owners and positive results of public/private/non-profit partnerships.
17. **Local Training and Networking.** Aim to host regional and statewide conferences and seminars related to heritage preservation programs and historic resource topics to provide local opportunities for training, continuing education, networking, and identification of new grant opportunities and technical assistance resources; to increase local community awareness; and to raise Amarillo’s profile as a historic preservation leader in Texas and the Southwest. This can include annual conferences and/or other special events sponsored by the Texas Main Street Program and Texas Heritage Trails Program (both under the Texas Historical Commission), Preservation Texas, Texas Downtown Association, and affiliates of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
18. **Neighborhood Conservation Link.** Use the Neighborhood Conservation zoning approach recommended in Chapter 2-Land Use & Community Character and Chapter 6-Housing & Neighborhoods to further clarify—and customize for specifically designated Neighborhood Conservation zones—the development standards and design criteria upon which Certificate of Appropriateness determinations will be considered and made for such areas. For example, Section 4-11-17 refers generally to the scale of structures and evaluation of “appurtenant” features such as signs,

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sidewalks, fences, light fixtures, and landscaping. Then, in Section 4-11-16 regarding site plan criteria, various items are cited that factor into the ultimate compatibility of new development and redevelopment. These include the type and extent of structural alterations allowed; permitted and special uses; height and area regulations; minimum dwelling size; floor area; sign regulations; landscaping and open spaces; paving and parking areas; and other design guideline elements for a nominated landmark or historic district. Many of these parameters can be pre-defined for a specific area through a Neighborhood Conservation zoning district, and then individual Planned Development applications can propose further modifications and refinements.

19. Another Benefit of Small-Area Planning After the Comprehensive Plan.

Use the neighborhood/district/corridor planning efforts recommended elsewhere in this Comprehensive Plan to boost and support various responsibilities assigned, by ordinance, to the Board of Review for Landmarks and Historic Districts. This includes:

- ★ Refining design guidelines related to historic resources and landmarks (Board responsibilities 2 and 3 in Section 2-6-247, Powers and Duties).
- ★ Conducting resource surveys/inventories (item 4, as well as to bolster the “continuing survey and research” efforts called for in Section 4-11-15(a) of the Landmarks and Historic Districts ordinance, which, notably, are indicated as being “subject to available funds”).
- ★ Identifying priority landmark structures for potential public acquisition (item 7).
- ★ Raising community awareness and expanding public education on historic resources and preservation mechanisms (item 9).
- ★ Recognizing private owners involved in protection and preservation (item 10).
- ★ Identifying further additions/amendments to the City Code of Ordinances to support historic resource protection, preservation and/or restoration, especially as it relates to specific districts and/or designated Planned Development areas on the City’s official zoning district map (item 11).

- ★ Identifying specific special studies and/or projects that are needed (item 14).

Survey and inventory efforts are also a good opportunity to enlist qualified university programs, which can involve reasonable costs for the City and the chance to support historic preservation education and professional development in Texas.

- 20. Demolition Waiting Period.** With regard to the maximum time currently afforded the Board of Review to complete its consideration of a Certificate of Appropriateness application to demolish a structure (30 days per Section 4-11-28(a)), consider amending the Landmarks and Historic Districts ordinance to provide the Board the ability to extend its consideration period to as much as 60 or 90 days. (This potential code amendment would also affect Section 4-11-21, Failure to Issue Certificate of Appropriateness in a Timely Fashion, which similarly specifies the maximum 30-day decision period for the Board of Review.) As applied in other cities, this “waiting period” would provide additional time during which the pending demolition could spur prospective private interests and/or non-profit organizations to formulate and approach the applicant with purchase offers and/or other proposed arrangements aimed at postponing or eliminating the need for demolition.

Current code provisions in Section 4-11-29, Completion of Hearing Process, recognize that such interaction and exploration of options (property sale, arrangements to move the structure to a new location, etc.) might occur *after* an applicant has been denied a demolition permit, has exhausted all available appeals, or has decided not to appeal. At that point no further consideration of demolition is allowed for one year. In the interim the Board of Review is required to lend its support to (“shall support”) potential offers to and negotiations with the property owner. (Section 4-11-29(a)(3) also acknowledges that this 12-month period could allow for eminent domain proceedings by the City, based on a Board of Review recommendation to the City Commission, to condemn and acquire a property “for rehabilitation or reuse by the City with appropriate preservation restrictions in order to promote the historic preservation purposes of this Chapter.”)

The crucial distinction motivating this recommendation is that the current procedure relies on denial of the initial demolition application and of all subsequent appeals as the way that time will be bought for possible alternative outcomes. Yet, because an applicant can request and the Board

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of Review approve a demolition permit within 30 days, this scenario leaves little time for other interested parties to consider and execute potential intervention efforts. As an alternative to the “waiting period” approach, the list of decision criteria in Section 4-11-28(a) could be amended to also require confirmation by the applicant that he/she has not received inquiries from any individuals, businesses, or organizations regarding their potential interest in acquiring the property for purposes of conservation or to offer financial or technical assistance that could make feasible an alternative course of action short of demolition.

Through Section 4-11-28, the City’s Building Official would still be authorized to determine that a structure poses an immediate hazard to public safety and should be addressed expeditiously, including demolition as appropriate.



CHAPTER SIX

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

Attentiveness to the quantity and quality of housing in a community is a core focus of urban planning. Shelter is among the most basic of human needs. For most individuals and families, the ongoing cost of a home or apartment is also one of the largest expenditures within their overall cost of living—but also at the heart of attaining the “American Dream.” At a community-wide scale, residential land uses typically represent the majority of developed acreage within a city. The physical arrangement of buildings and related spaces to accommodate the way people live dictates so much else about a community’s “fabric.” In this way, residential land use serves as a starting point for other essential community building blocks such as schools, parks and neighborhood stores and services. Across all the diverse groups in a community, there is a basic desire for affordable, safe, and quality housing located within livable and attractive neighborhood settings.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider current and future housing issues and priorities in Amarillo based on review of the existing housing stock, activity and trends in the area housing market, and projected population growth over the next several decades. This chapter also builds on all previous sections of the Comprehensive Plan by highlighting the various elements that contribute to quality and sustainable neighborhoods, both in new construction and in the City’s oldest residential areas.

While the development of new residences and rehabilitation of older housing occurs primarily through the private sector, municipal government and other public and non-profit partners have an essential role to play in protecting residential investments over time, as well as the local economy and tax base which strong neighborhoods support. Having a diverse stock of housing—new and old, big and small, ownership and rental—is instrumental in offering choice and providing for the individual needs of all households, regardless of economic conditions.

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RESULTS OF PAST PLANNING

A look back at the last Amarillo Comprehensive Plan from the 1980s indicates both areas of community progress, as well as lingering challenges that will again be a focus of this new plan. The overall goal for housing stated in the 1980s plan was:

Promote the conservation and expansion of Amarillo's housing stock to ensure an adequate supply of decent, safe, and sanitary housing with a wide range of housing types and price ranges. This should provide the greatest possible housing choice to all residents, and protect, stabilize, and improve residential neighborhoods.



Successful outcomes over the last several decades from this planning legacy include:

- ★ Continuing to respond to local housing demand with an adequate supply of dwelling units. Between 1980 and 2008, the supply of housing increased by 33.2%, from 60,242 to 80,247 units, while population increased by 27.3%, from 149,230 to approximately 190,000 in 2008. Units coming to the market somewhat faster than the market itself is growing results in more available units per person, which can contribute to housing choice and reduced price pressure.

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- ★ Maintaining a balance of housing types over time. The share of the local housing stock devoted to single-family detached units was nearly unchanged in recent decades, estimated at 71.7% in 2008 as compared to 70.9% in the late 1980s. Similarly, multi-family units accounted for 20.6% of the housing stock toward the end of the 1980s, and today their share is only slightly lower at 19.3%.
- ★ As highlighted in Chapter 2-Land Use & Community Character and Chapter 5-Parks & Cultural Resources, remaining committed to the Neighborhood Unit Concept, which promotes quality neighborhoods with a balance of housing types and convenient access to elementary school campuses, neighborhood parks, and nearby commercial and service uses.
- ★ Continuing to clear vacant and unsafe residential structures that have deteriorated beyond the point of cost-effective rehabilitation. This action by the City, which requires considerable resources and legal process, benefits nearby properties and surrounding neighborhoods, while also creating potential sites for redevelopment activity and infill housing. Data in the City's Survey of Housing 2009 report shows that 451 substandard structures were razed from 2000 to 2008, or an average of 43 per year (with a high of 89 in 2005 and low of 24 in 2001). Of the total demolitions over these nine years, 410, or 91%, were in the Potter County portion of Amarillo given the relative age and condition of many north-side structures.



Issues and needs that are carried over from the previous Comprehensive Plan, even after more than 25 years of growth and change in the community, include:

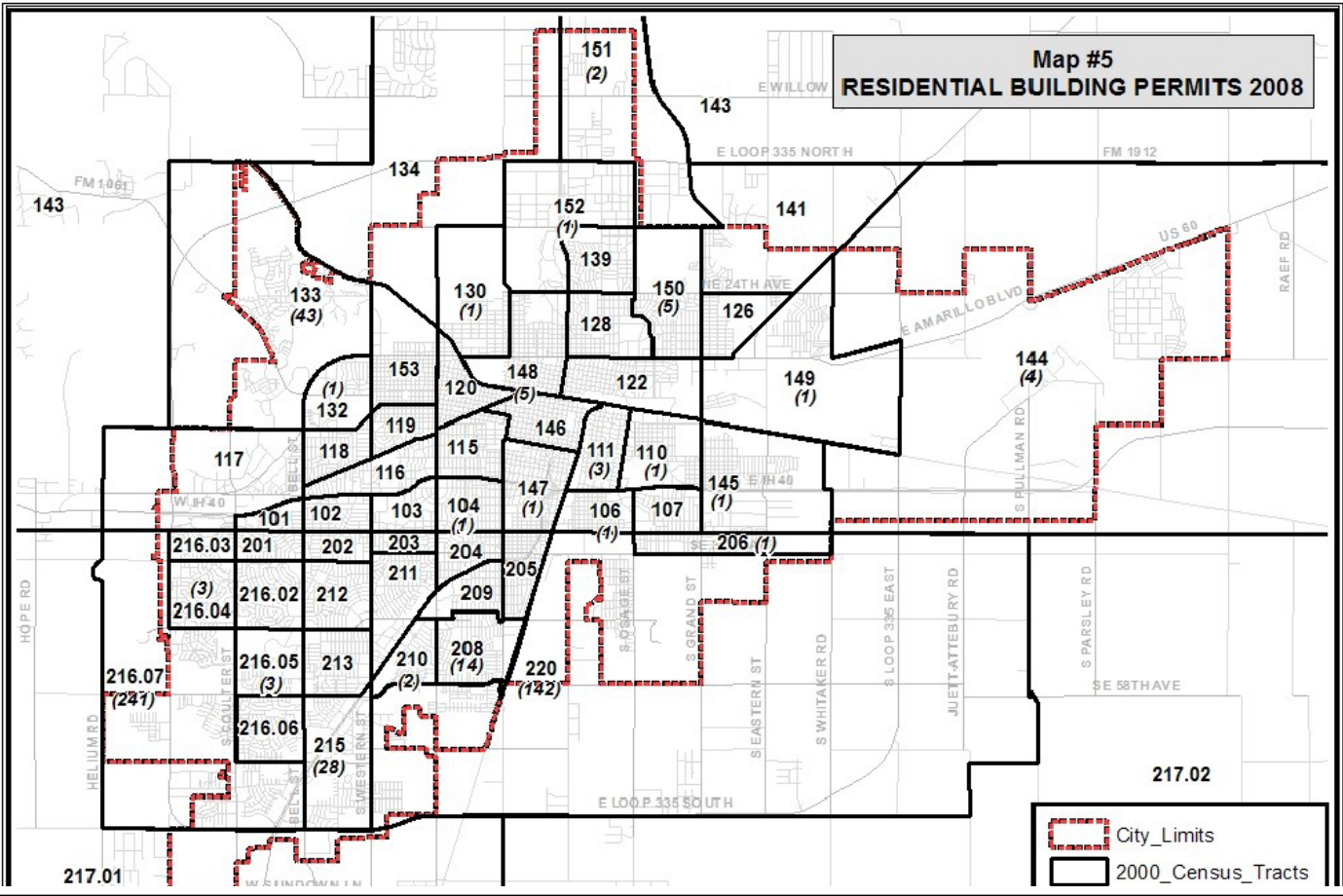
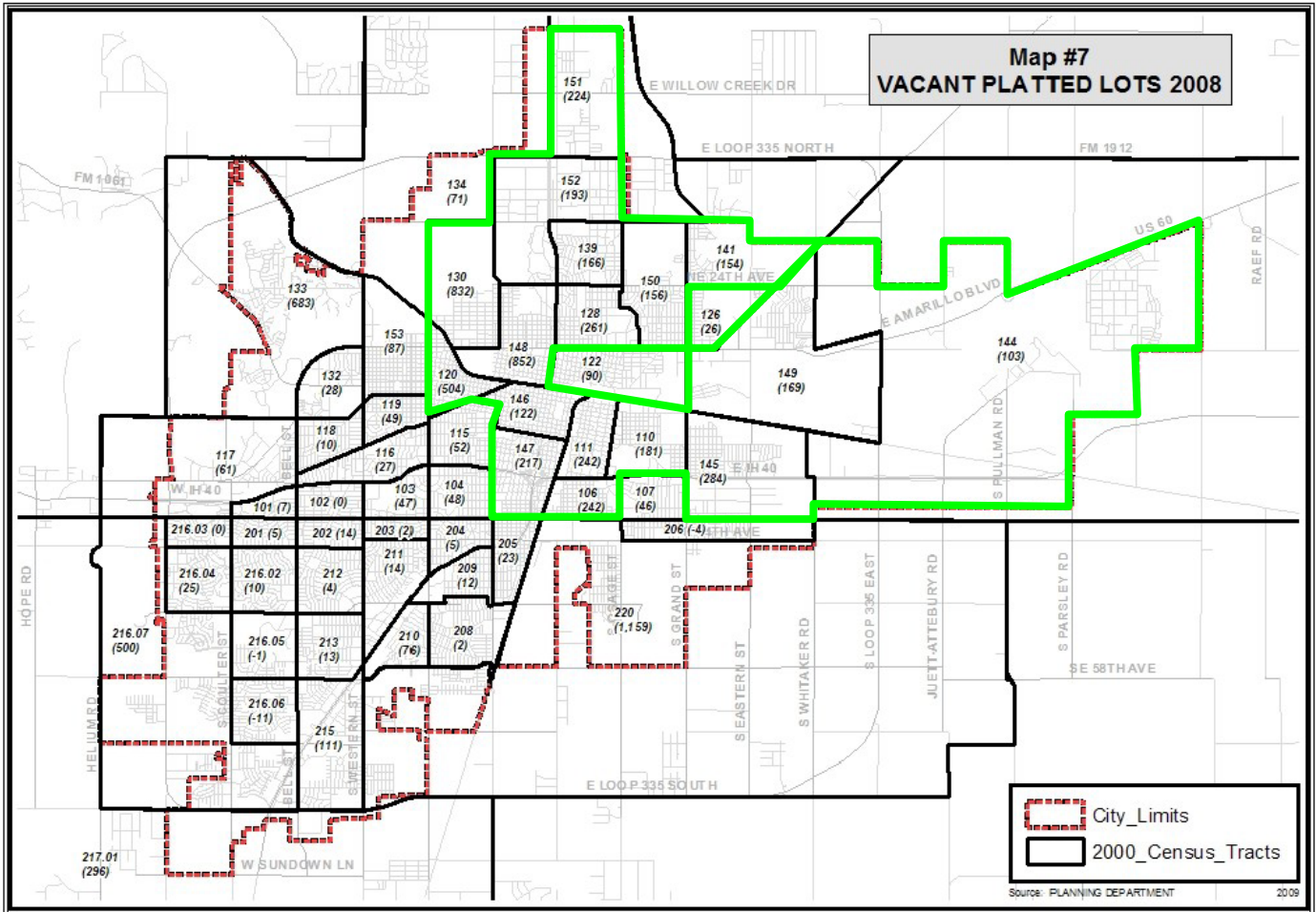
- ★ Efforts to increase homeownership opportunities and rates as the percentage of owner-occupied units in Amarillo was estimated at 62.7% in 2008 as compared to 67% in the Census results from both 1970 and 1980.

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- ★ Continued attention to housing affordability, especially for first-time homebuyers. Comparisons between 2008 and the late 1980s show that while median family income in Amarillo has increased 53.8% over the last two decades (from \$35,000 in 1989 to \$53,822 in 2008 according to the U.S. Census Bureau), the median home value has increased 137.4% (from \$40,000 in 1988 to \$94,975 in 2008 according to the Potter Randall Appraisal District). Likewise, the average Multiple Listing Service price for all new and existing home sales increased 140.6% (from \$59,779 in 1988 to \$143,800 in 2008).
- ★ The ongoing need for neighborhood reinvestment and revitalization in north/northeast Amarillo. As reproduced on the next page, Map 7 in the City's Survey of Housing 2009 shows that 17 Census tracts generally to the north and east of downtown each had 100 or more vacant platted lots in 2008. Taken together, this sizable land area within the City contained 4,746 vacant platted lots. Applying Amarillo's average household size of 2.70 persons, this number of additional homes would theoretically accommodate 12,814 people—or just over one-fifth (21.6%) of the 59,200 growth increment projected through 2030 in this Comprehensive Plan. Comparison of Map 5 against Map 7 shows that these same 17 Census tracts saw just 26 residential building permits issued during 2008, or only 5.1% of the 505 permits issued citywide. The 2009 Survey report provides building permit data by tract back to 2003, which shows that 2003 was when the number of residential permits (73) and the share of the City total (9.6%) last peaked in the subject Census tracts. In the intervening years the permit total has ranged from 29 in 2005 (3.5% of citywide total) to 59 in 2004 (8.3% of total). Additionally, Map 3 in the City report shows that of 17 retirement centers and 11 licensed nursing homes in Amarillo as of 2008, only one is east of downtown and north of Interstate 40.
- ★ Renewed interest in downtown residential use after many years of outward City growth. The 1980s plan noted that the Central Business District had lost 36% of its housing supply (227 units) during the 1970s (along with housing losses in Census tracts all around downtown) as fringe areas of the City to the west and southwest were experiencing explosive rates of new housing development. Some newer living options became available in downtown in recent years, but residential population in the City's core is still limited.



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HOUSING MARKET TRENDS AND CONDITIONS¹

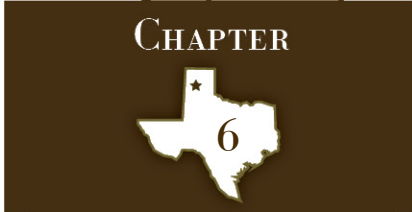
Demographics

The following indicators provide a picture of the quantity and types of people living in and seeking new or different housing within Amarillo. All data, unless otherwise noted, are estimates for 2008 and come from the American Community Survey which the U.S. Census Bureau conducts periodically between decennial census years.

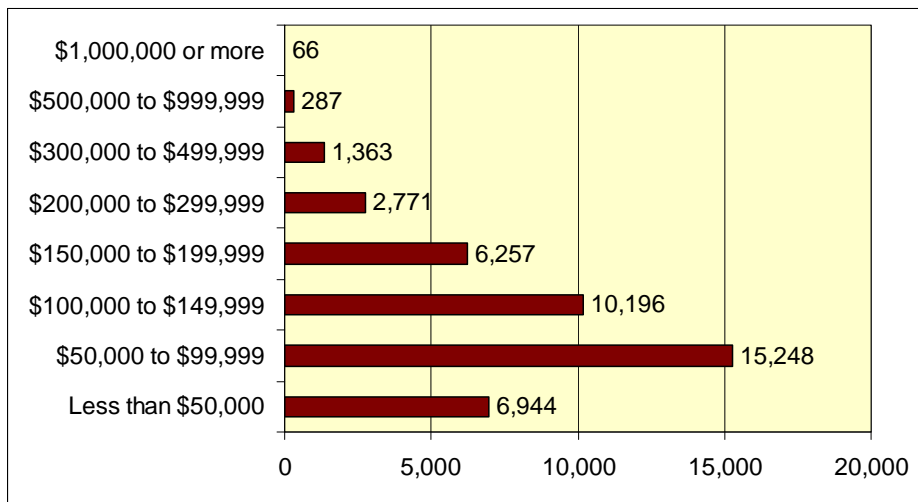
- ★ **Households in Amarillo.** The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that Amarillo had 68,842 households in 2008. The average household size was 2.70 persons, slightly below the 2.82 household size statewide. In owner-occupied housing, the average household size was 2.83 in 2008, compared to 2.46 for renter-occupied housing. (In its Survey of Housing 2009, and based on the results of a city-wide apartment survey that takes into account current occupancy levels, the City reported a much lower average of 1.90 persons per occupied apartment unit.)
- ★ **Household Characteristics.** The estimated median age in Amarillo during 2008 was 33.1 years, roughly equivalent to the statewide median (33.2 years). Also similar to all of Texas was the percentage of households having one or more persons age 65 or older—20.6% in Amarillo and 20.3% statewide. 37.1% of households had one or more persons under age 18.
- ★ **Residency Turnover.** Amarillo's population is somewhat more transient than in other places. Among the City's residents in 2008, 21.3% had lived in a different home one year earlier compared to 17.5% for all of Texas, which had been absorbing significant new

¹ Much more information about the area housing market, including detail by geographic sub-areas, is available in the *Survey of Housing* reports prepared periodically by the City of Amarillo Planning Department. This includes data on mortgage activity, rental rates, platted and vacant lots, and housing for the elderly. Additionally, concurrent to this Comprehensive Plan, the City of Amarillo is updating its 5-Year Strategic Plan in compliance with the Consolidated Planning requirements of the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development to maintain eligibility for federal funding. The Strategic Plan report will also include considerable detail on a variety of topics related to housing and community development in Amarillo, beyond the overview level of discussion provided in this Comprehensive Plan chapter.

population, in general, especially as the economic recession impacted other parts of the nation more severely. Just over half of those who had changed their residence still lived within the same county. About 3,700 individuals, or 2% of the local population, were estimated to have lived in a different state one year earlier, and about 14,500 persons were newcomers to Amarillo from elsewhere in Texas. Less than 1%, or about 650 individuals, had relocated from outside the U.S.



Value of Existing Homes – City of Amarillo, 2008



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Among the estimated 43,132 owner-occupied units in Amarillo during 2008, the median value was \$97,900 compared to \$126,800 statewide. As illustrated in the chart above, the greatest share of these homes (35.4%) was in the \$50,000-\$99,999 range (the largest percentage statewide is also in this range but only at 24.2%). With another 23.6% of local homes in the \$100,000-\$149,999 range, this means that almost 60% of owner-occupied units in Amarillo are valued within a range from \$50,000 to \$149,999. The percentage in this range for all of Texas is only 46.9%.

These figures confirm the extent of home ownership opportunities in Amarillo at relatively low prices. Looking at higher price ranges, 14.5% of local homes in 2008 were valued in the \$150,000 to \$199,999 range, comparable to 16% statewide. But only 10.4% were above the \$200,000 mark relative to 24.5% across the state. According to the U.S. Census Bureau data, less than 1% of homes in Amarillo were valued at \$1 million or more.

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Housing Stock

The following indicators describe various characteristics of the dwellings already on the ground in Amarillo. All data, unless otherwise noted, are estimates for 2008 from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

- ★ **Housing Units.** The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that Amarillo had 76,661 total housing units as of 2008 (the City of Amarillo estimate for 2008 was slightly over 80,000). Among the existing units in 2008, it was estimated that 89.8% were occupied and the remaining 10.2% were vacant. Among owner-occupied units, the vacancy rate was only 2.7%, compared to 11.4% for rental units. (The City's Survey of Housing 2009 reported a vacancy level of 14.7% for apartment sites with eight or more units. Additionally, occupancy of multi-family units had fallen from 92.5% in 2000 to the mid-80% range later in the decade due, in part, to the surge in apartment construction.)
- ★ **Home Ownership.** Among all occupied housing units in Amarillo in 2008, 62.7% were owner-occupied and 37.3% were renter-occupied. This is slightly below the statewide home ownership rate of 64.9%. In its Survey of Housing 2009, the City estimated that approximately 25,000 Amarillo residents lived in apartments.
- ★ **Housing Types.** Among all housing in Amarillo in 2008, 71.7% were single-family detached units. Two-unit duplexes accounted for 3.1% of the housing stock. Also, "mobile homes" accounted for 4.0% of all units (approximately 3,000 units, with the City of Amarillo Planning Department pinpointing the 2008 total at 3,092 manufactured home units based on data from the Potter Randall Appraisal District).
- ★ **Increased Stock of Apartments.** Through its Survey of Housing 2009, the City estimated 15,455 multi-family units in 2008, including tri-plexes and four-plexes. This was compared to 12,780 units in 2000. As a result, the share of multi-family units among all local housing increased from 17.7% to 19.3%.
- ★ **Senior Housing.** In its Survey of Housing 2009, the City highlighted a trend toward more construction of assisted living facilities and retirement centers in Amarillo given an aging population locally as in Texas and nationwide.

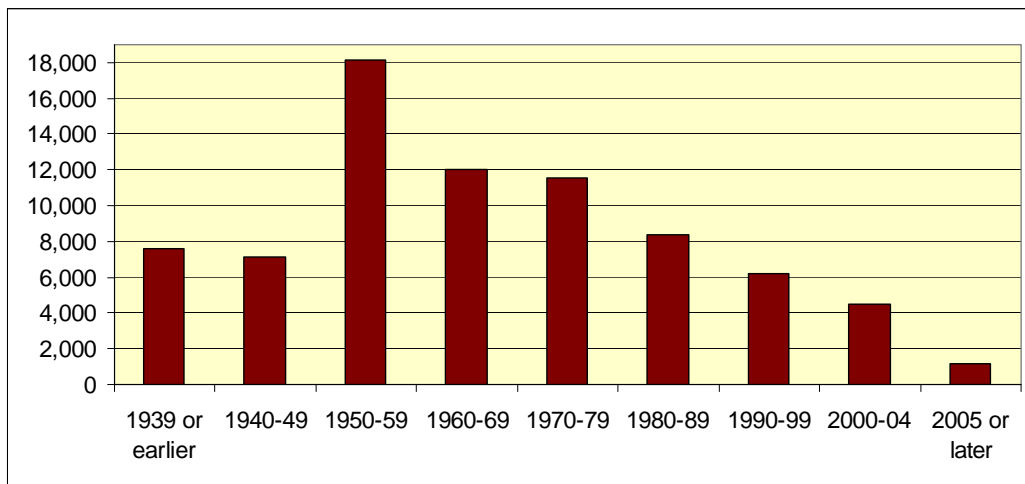


However, affordability of such senior living options remains a concern.

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Age of Housing Stock – City of Amarillo, 2008

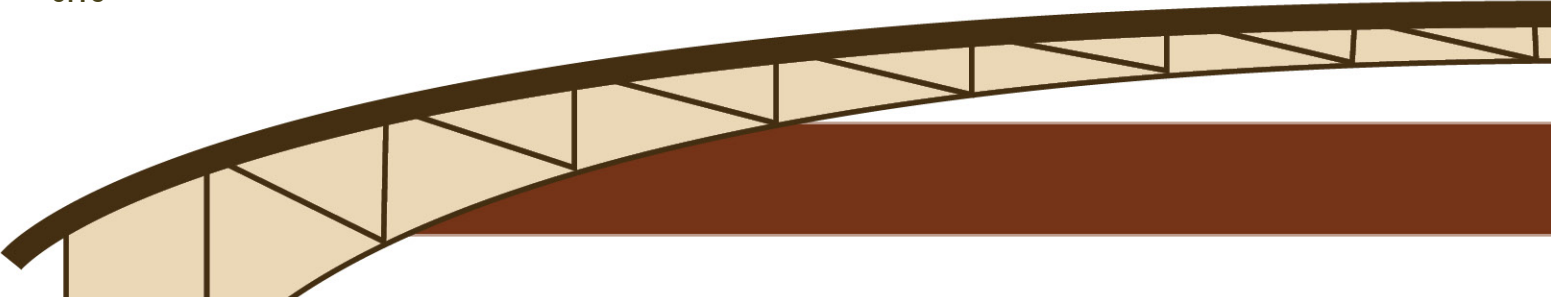


SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

The chart above indicates that about 12% of the owner-occupied housing units in Amarillo in 2008 (5,672 units) had been built so far that decade since 2000. This compared to 18.3% of units for all of Texas. On the other hand, nearly three-quarters (73.6%) of Amarillo’s housing stock was built before 1980—i.e., more than 30 years ago—which is a common point when maintenance of older homes becomes an increasing burden on their owners and can start to impact the integrity of entire neighborhoods.

Amarillo’s overall housing vacancy rate in 2008 was estimated at 10.2% by the U.S. Census Bureau. However, among ownership units, the vacancy rate was very low at only 2.7% in 2008.

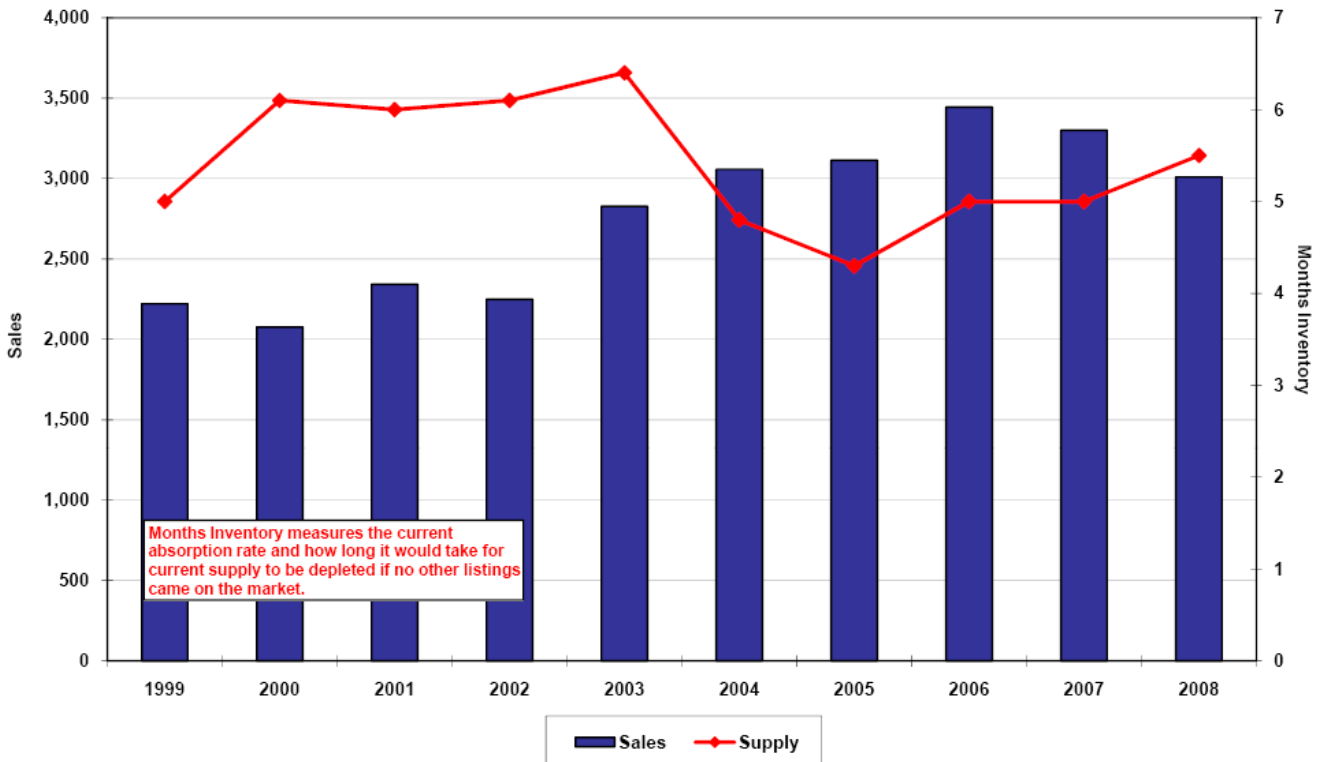
A rule of thumb often used by economists is that 5% to 8% is a “**natural**” vacancy level that promotes healthy functioning of the housing market, as well as supporting the community’s economic development. When the vacancy rate is too low, demand for housing will push up rents and prices as consumers vie for scarce units. Conversely, when vacancy rates are higher, new and relocating households can be accommodated by the existing stock of housing, and new units are not necessary.



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Yearly Home Sales and Months Inventory
 Amarillo MLS



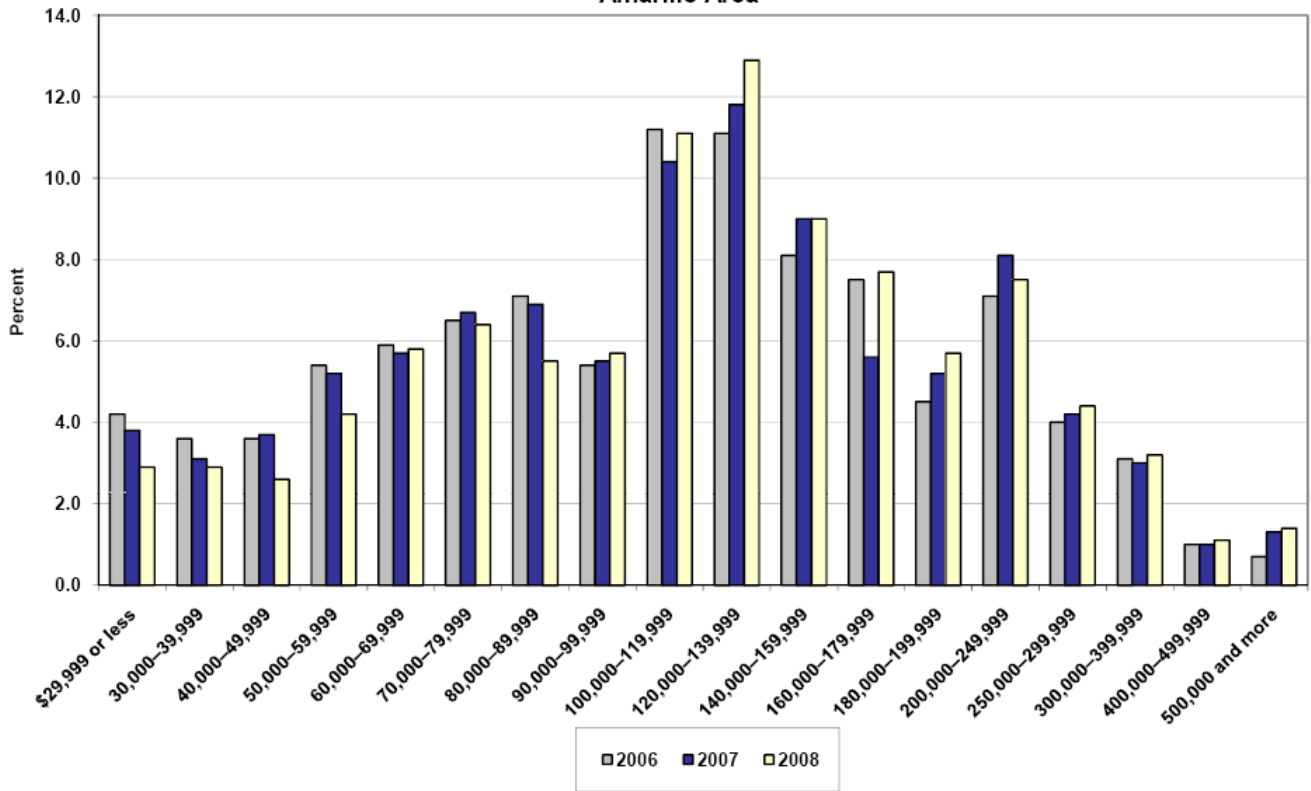
Source: Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University

SOURCE: *Market Report 2009 – Amarillo*, Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University

A significant data set compiled by the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University is Months of Inventory. This figure indicates the number of months it would take for the entire existing backlog of unsold homes in an area to be sold off, assuming a typical sales pace, if no more units were listed in the meantime. The chart above shows that the Months of Inventory figure for the Amarillo Multiple Listing Service area was in the 4-6.5 month range over the last decade, falling to its lowest point in 2005. The fact that the Months of Inventory indicator has remained in a good range for so long means that, even with the steady pace of home construction in the area in recent years, demand for these new homes has been sufficient to ensure a high “absorption” rate (i.e., a “seller’s market”) and avoid a glut of unsold homes (i.e., a “buyer’s market”). On the other hand, if an area’s housing inventory falls too far too fast, too few homes on the market can have cost and choice implications for prospective buyers until the market adjusts.

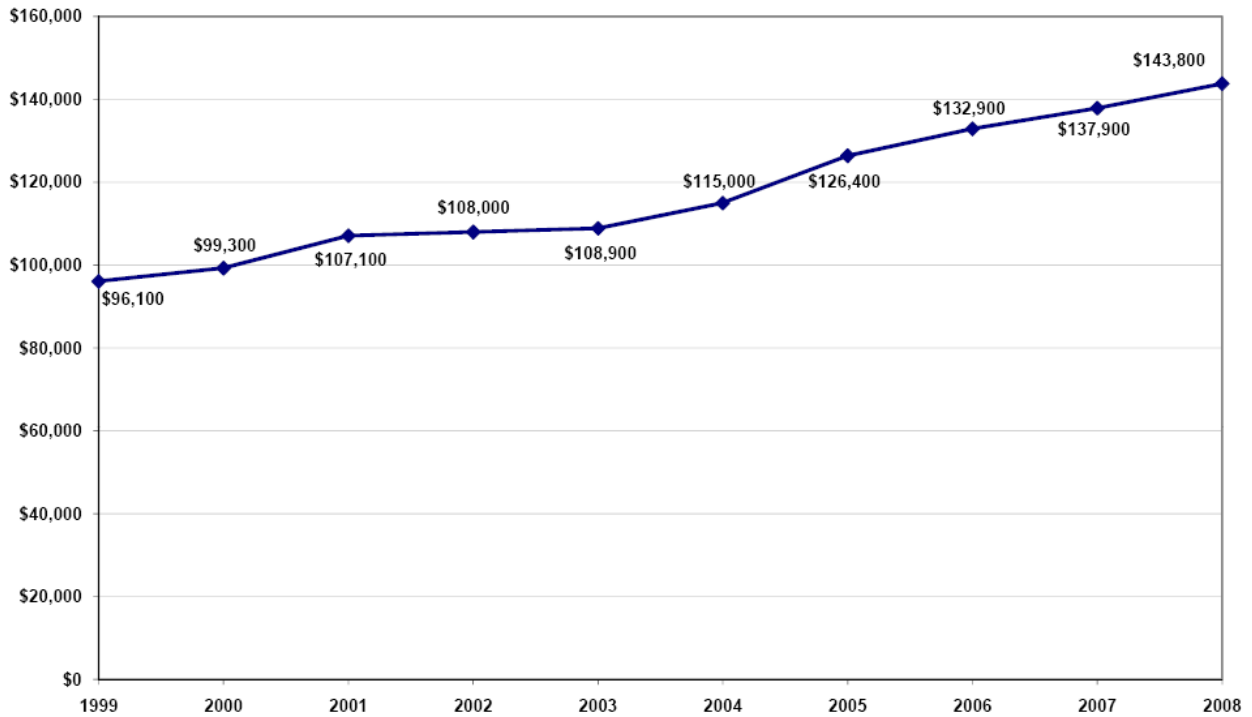
The bar chart portion of the figure above also illustrates that home sale activity peaked during 2006 and then fell off somewhat the last several years with the national economic recession and real estate finance difficulties.

**Price Distribution of MLS Homes Sold
Amarillo Area**



The chart above shows that, among homes sold during 2008 in the Amarillo Multiple Listing Service (MLS) area, the highest number were in the \$120,000 to \$139,999 range. Also, it was during 2007 that the most sales occurred within this range for the first time. The chart below shows the steady increase in average sales price over the last decade, from under \$100,000 in 1999 to more than \$140,000 by 2008. Nearly half of all sales (46.4%) in 2008 were in the \$100,000s.

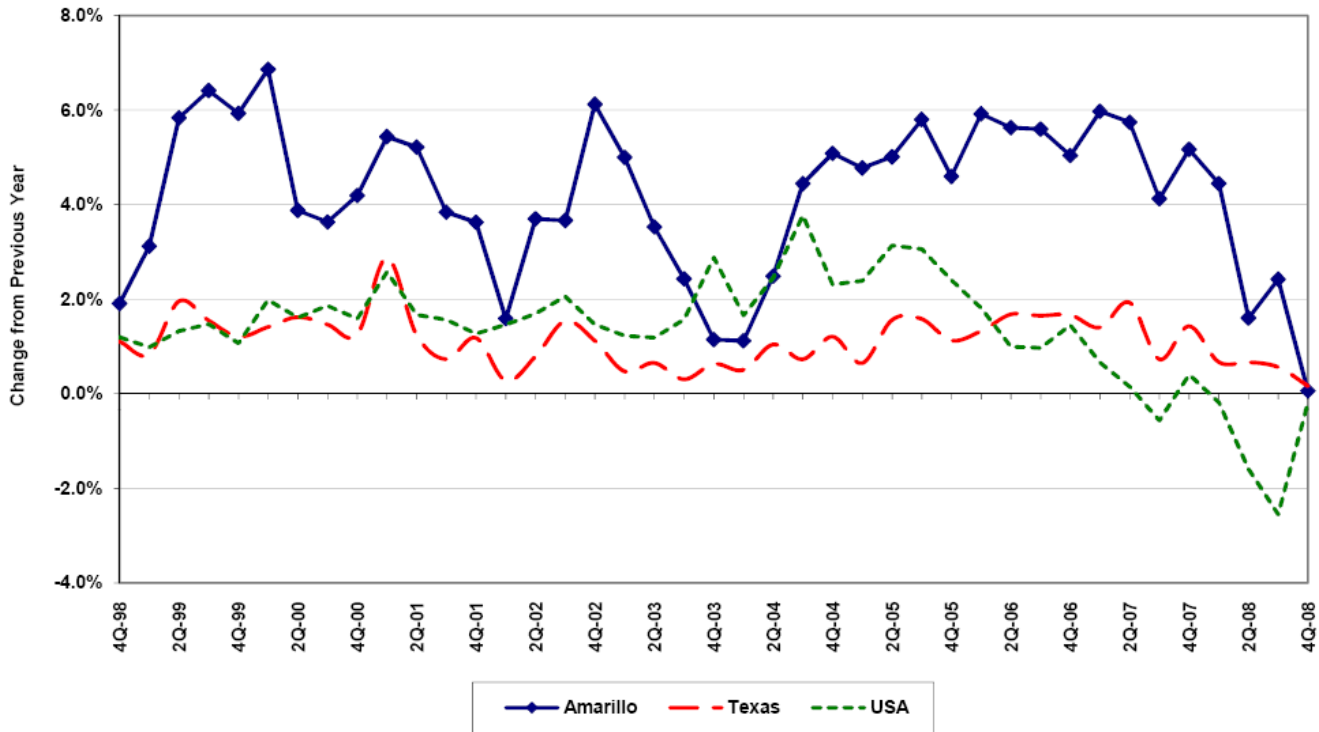
**Average Sales Price
Amarillo MLS**



SOURCE: Market Report 2009 – Amarillo, Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University

Home Price Appreciation Amarillo MSA

The HPI for each geographic area is estimated using repeated observations of housing values for individual single-family residential properties on which at least two mortgages were originated and subsequently purchased by either Freddie Mac or Fannie Mae.



Source: Office of Federal Housing Finance Agency

Even though the *rate* of home price appreciation in Amarillo has risen and fallen in cycles over the last decade, the chart above shows that the average price change had remained positive most of the time until it dropped to zero late in 2008 with the onset of the national economic recession. However, this was a much brighter situation compared to the precipitous fall in average prices that many parts of the nation experienced amid the bursting of the housing “bubble.”

The Affordability Equation

Along with home prices, income is the other essential factor that determines the “affordability” of housing within a market area. The following indicators capture various aspects of the income picture in Amarillo. All data, unless otherwise noted, are estimates for 2008 from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.

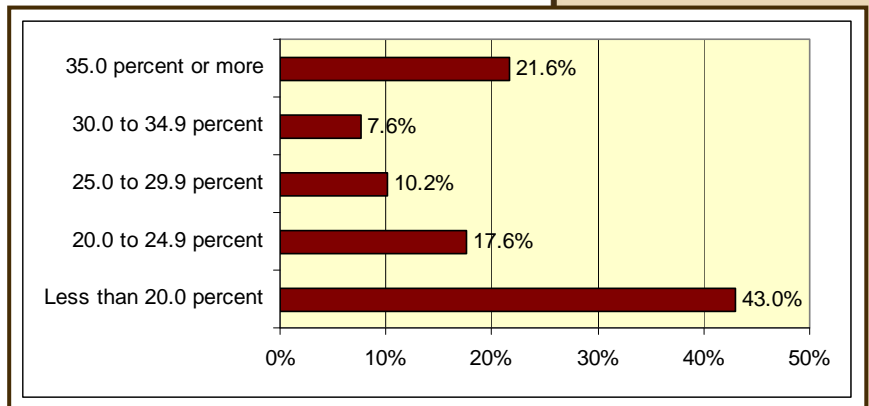
- ★ **Income Comparison.** The generally low cost-of-living environment in Amarillo is reflected in area income levels. The estimated 2008 median household income of \$42,886 compared to \$50,043 statewide. Additionally, only 24.1% of local households had incomes above \$75,000 while the percentage was 38.3% for all of Texas. At the \$100,000 level, only 13.1% of Amarillo households were above this point versus 24.5% in the state. Finally, just less than 5% in Amarillo exceeded \$150,000 median income relative to 10.5% statewide.


- ★ **Incidence of Poverty.** In Amarillo, 13.5% of families and 17.1% of all individuals had incomes in 2008 that put them below the federally-defined poverty level. This was compared to 12.4% of families and 15.8% of individuals statewide.

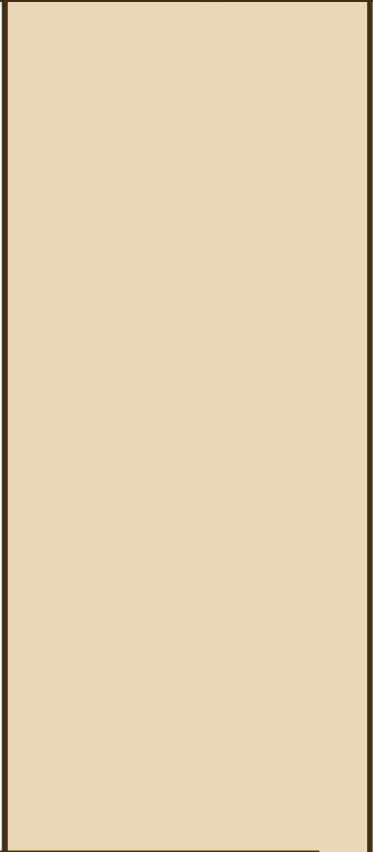
The next important consideration is housing-related expenditures. Among owner-occupied housing units in Amarillo in 2008, 61.1% of owners were paying off a mortgage compared to 64.2% for all of Texas. The Census Bureau estimated that among those with a mortgage in Amarillo, typical monthly owner costs (including mortgage payment, property taxes, insurance, utilities, association fees, etc.) were at a median of \$1,085 per month. The statewide median monthly housing expenditure was considerably higher at \$1,380.


In percentage terms, only 56.7% of local housing units were paying \$1,000 or more per month compared to 75.3% at that level for all of Texas. The highest proportion both locally and statewide were in the range from \$1,000 to \$1,499—and nearly identical with 32.8% within this range in Amarillo and 33.1% in Texas. The key difference is that a much higher percentage in Amarillo fall within the range from \$500 to \$999—22.3% locally versus only 16.6% statewide given that a much larger share of households across the state are above the \$1,000 per month mark. Then, only 15.5% in the local area were paying more than \$1,500 per month compared to a much higher 42.4% statewide. For housing units without a mortgage, median monthly owner costs were \$403 in Amarillo and \$425 for all of Texas.

A common way of gauging housing affordability is to consider monthly owner costs relative to household income. Shelter costs are typically considered excessive when they surpass 30%-35% of household income. The chart to the right reflects that 7,681 units in Amarillo were estimated to be spending 30% or more on housing in 2008, meaning that about 29% of home owners with a mortgage were expending a high proportion of their income on housing costs (31.4% statewide). Just over one-fifth (21.6%) locally were at the 35% or higher threshold.



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On the other hand, a solid majority (60.6%) of Amarillo home owners who were carrying mortgages in 2008 were devoting less than 25% of their incomes to housing costs. This is where the benefit of a lower-cost environment is evident, especially since nearly half (43%) of owners were paying less than 20% toward housing. For those owners without a mortgage, only 11% were putting more than 30% of their income toward housing costs (13.9% for all of Texas), which shows the long-term benefits of homeownership for most people after a mortgage is fully paid.

PROS AND CONS OF LOW RENT

Lower rents reduce housing costs for individuals and families who cannot afford to purchase a home or will not be in the area for long. However, consistently low rents can have some adverse effects on local housing conditions by:

- ★ Potentially discouraging long-term maintenance of rental properties.
- ★ Not sending a signal to the market to supply more new units.
- ★ Potentially discouraging renters from making the leap to homeownership because of the gap in monthly cost.

Among occupied rental units in Amarillo during 2008, the median rent was estimated at \$645, which was more than \$100 lower than the statewide median (\$768). (In its Survey of Housing 2009, the City reported an average rent of \$586 based on sampling results.) Also, only 12.2% of these local units had rents over \$1,000. However, among Amarillo renters, nearly half (46.6%) were spending above 30% of their income on rent (similar to all of Texas at 47.7%). This included 37.2% who were at or above the 35%-of-income threshold, which was also similar to the statewide situation (38.6%). However, HUD defines any household paying more than 35% of its income toward housing as “cost burdened.” This means they must often forego other essential needs— or choose to sacrifice quality of life in another manner.

Focusing again on the income side of the housing affordability equation—and given a median household income of \$42,886 in Amarillo during 2008—the median household should have aimed to pay no more than \$1,072 monthly toward housing costs, with an absolute maximum of \$1,251 per month (35%). This table also shows the monthly “affordability” (30% of income) amount for households at various points above or below the area’s estimated median household income for 2008.

Percent of Median Household Income	Income	Affordable Monthly Housing Cost (30% of Income)
170%	\$72,906	\$1,823
150%	\$64,329	\$1,608
125%	\$53,608	\$1,340
100%	\$42,886	\$1,072
75%	\$32,165	\$804
50%	\$21,443	\$536
30%	\$12,866	\$322

The Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University publishes Housing Affordability Index (HAI) data for communities in Texas, the entire state, and the nation. The index indicates general housing affordability in terms of the ability of the median-income family to purchase the median-priced existing house in the area using standard, conventional financing terms. A ratio of exactly 1.0 would mean that the median family income is exactly equal to the income a conventional lender would require for the family to purchase the median-priced house. A ratio of greater than 1.0 indicates that a median-income family earns more than enough to buy the median-priced house (that is, the family could afford to buy a house priced above the median price). A ratio of less than 1.0 means that a median-income family has insufficient income to qualify for a loan to purchase the median-priced house.

2008 Housing Affordability Index

MLS	2008 Median-Priced Home	Required Income to Qualify	Median Family Income	HAI*	HAI for First-Time Homebuyers**
Amarillo	\$124,600	\$29,343	\$53,900	1.84	1.40
Texas	\$146,900	\$22,985	\$55,000	2.39	1.55
United States	\$196,600	\$46,152	\$61,500	1.33	0.66

*The HAI is the ratio of the median family income to the income required to buy the median-priced house using standard mortgage financing at the current interest rate. Standard financing is a fixed-rate, 30-year loan covering 80 percent of the cost of the home. A HAI of 1.00 indicates that the median family income is exactly equal to the required income to qualify for the standard loan to purchase the median-priced house.

**First-time homebuyer is assumed to purchase a home equal to the first quartile home price using a 90 percent home loan at an interest rate 0.5 percent greater than the standard current rate.

Source: Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University

The latest HAI data, for 2008, has the index for Amarillo at 1.84. As explained above, this means the median-income family in Amarillo (earning \$53,900) would presumably qualify to purchase a substantially higher value house beyond the median-priced home (\$124,600 in 2008). So this is another indicator of the degree of housing affordability in Amarillo. The table above also shows that the statewide ratio in 2008 was even higher at 2.39. However, both Amarillo and all of Texas had a clear affordability advantage over the country in general since the national HAI was 1.33. The Real Estate Center also publishes a first-time home buyers index, which for Amarillo in 2008 was 1.40. This was more than double the national number of 0.66. So this data clearly indicates that overall housing affordability conditions in Amarillo (and within Texas in general) are very favorable compared to what prospective homebuyers face in many other markets around the country.

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Future Potential Housing Need – City of Amarillo

Potential 2030 Population (2009 = 191,500)	Average Annual Growth Rate 2009-2030	Projected Housing Units in 2030	Projected Units Added 2009-2030	Average Units Added Per Year	Potential Owner-Occupied Units	Potential Single-Family Detached Units
229,400	0.86%	94,284	14,037	638	8,703	10,387
244,700	1.17%	99,951	19,704	896	12,216	14,581
259,560	1.46%	105,454	25,207	1,146	15,628	18,653
271,160	1.67%	109,751	29,504	1,341	18,292	21,833

The table above shows the number of additional housing units that would be needed in Amarillo by 2030 under various population projection scenarios, ranging from approximately 14,000 to nearly 30,000 units depending on the City's growth rate over the next several decades. The total number of housing units in the City could increase to as much as 109,751 units, building upon the 80,247 existing units as of 2008 (City of Amarillo estimate). These projections assume that the average household size remains around the current U.S. Census Bureau estimate of 2.70 persons per household. (These are also gross and not net projections as they do not account for demolition and/or replacement of any existing units.)

The two right-most columns in the table show, respectively, the potential number of owner-occupied and single-family detached units that would be added under the various scenarios, assuming steady trends through 2030 in the home ownership percentage (62%) and types of housing construction (74% single-family detached) based on current estimates by the City of Amarillo.

According to the City of Amarillo's Survey of Housing 2009, 980 residential building permits were issued annually, on average, in the years from 2000 through 2008 (if the spike of 1,496 permits in 2007 is excluded, then the annual average is 814). The average number of permits per year for single-family and two-family units was 668. The annual average for multi-family units was 311. The permit spike in 2007 was mainly in the multi-family category, with 846 permits issued that year (the largest yearly multi-family increase since 1983). If this unusual year is excluded, then the multi-family permit average drops to 217 per year during the 2000-08 period.

The City's Survey of Housing 2009 pointed out that future multi-family development could be depressed by the lower market absorption that has followed the apartment construction boom of recent years. Additionally, construction of more assisted living and senior housing units in Amarillo has also contributed to reduced apartment occupancy.

KEY PLANNING THEMES

At the time this Comprehensive Plan was being prepared, the nation was emerging from the worst economic recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. A key factor in this severe downturn was unwise mortgage lending

and borrowing in the residential sector, as well as an unsustainable “bubble” in housing prices in many U.S. markets. Fortunately, Amarillo came through this slump in much better shape than many cities around the country in terms of the relative slowdown in home value appreciation, home sales, and residential construction locally.

The City’s Survey of Housing 2009 report points out that Amarillo’s housing market should continue to be spurred by a strong local economy that holds down unemployment and boosts local incomes:

When mortgage rates are low and individuals feel secure in their employment and income levels, buying a house becomes a very attractive purchasing opportunity. While Amarillo still creates these favorable conditions, much of the nation does not.

The continuing challenge for Amarillo is to enhance neighborhood quality and sustainability in its lowest-income areas. On the north and east sides, this is made even more complicated by the absence of the Neighborhood Unit Concept in some areas as implemented so well elsewhere in the City. As a result, maintaining neighborhood stability has been difficult for many years in locations where clusters of housing are isolated by, or even interspersed with commercial and industrial uses (and railroad corridors), as well as vacant properties. As was stated so well in the 1980s Comprehensive Plan:

The dispersion of residential uses in the northern part of the City impedes residential cohesion. This in turn prevents any physical neighborhood pattern from developing. There is a direct correlation between scattered, disorganized neighborhood areas and the concentrations of poor and deteriorating housing. The most serious housing problems in Amarillo are concentrated in residential areas interspersed with nonresidential uses and containing a large amount of undeveloped land.

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HOUSING MARKET STRENGTH

Despite the drop off since 2006, two national real estate forecasters rank Amarillo in the top five hottest U.S. housing markets. On October 27th, 2008, on NBC’s “Today” show, Barbara Corcoran, a New York real estate mogul, listed Amarillo as the second best place for real estate investors to “make money.”

Additionally, Veros Real Estate Solutions also predicted Amarillo to be the fourth strongest housing market in the nation for the 12-month period between September 2008 and September 2009.

Survey of Housing 2009
City of Amarillo

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Based on the concerns and hopes expressed by residents, public and private leaders, and key community stakeholders and investors, the following themes emerged as priorities for this Housing & Neighborhoods element of the Plan:

1. Variety and Balance
2. Quality and Sustainability
3. Neighborhood Integrity

Variety and Balance

The local housing market is one of the most important pluses for ongoing economic development efforts in Amarillo given the variety and options it offers to prospective buyers and renters at various price points. Additionally, given the diversity and age distribution of the City's population, it is essential

to have a balanced housing stock that supports a "life-cycle housing" philosophy. This involves the notion that a wide range of housing types, styles, and price ranges should be available so that residents can readily make lifestyle transitions within their own community as they age (e.g., from "starter" housing, perhaps into a larger dwelling to accommodate a family, then perhaps into an "empty nester" situation, and finally into a down-sized space and/or "assisted living" or full-time care facility as health

conditions dictate). Furthermore, senior housing options are especially important in most all U.S. communities today as the nation is still at the front end of the Baby Boomer retirement wave of the next several decades.

Discussions with representatives of the Amarillo Association of Realtors (AAR) yielded the following observations:

- ★ Townhomes and garden homes are a more important segment of the local housing market compared to 10 years ago, and even for young singles and not just "empty nesters" and retirees looking to downsize their home and yard space.
- ★ Despite some talk of recent overbuilding in the apartment sector, more new multi-family housing could still be on the way as long as: (1) financing of home purchases remains difficult; (2) Amarillo—



along with the rest of Texas—continues to be on the receiving end of an economic migration wave from elsewhere in the nation; (3) growing medical employment continues to draw more singles into the market; and (4) upscale apartment projects are able to charge relatively high rents while providing more amenities.

- ★ While Amarillo is not an obvious retirement destination for people outside the area, it is drawing seniors moving into the bigger city from small Panhandle communities and rural areas, as well as the tri-state area. Many are looking to downsize, be closer to medical services, and be near family.
- ★ Interest in downtown living is on the rise in Amarillo, although it may still be an idea ahead of its time for many people. In reality, it will likely be the upper end of the housing market that can afford to live in lofts, townhomes, brownstones, condominiums, or other housing types that might prove economically feasible downtown. Those looking for a more “green” lifestyle, with more walking and biking and less auto dependence, are also drawn to downtown areas. The AAR representatives predicted that other Center City revitalization efforts (e.g., hotels, arts and culture, grocery store) must work for downtown residential to be successful.

As illustrated by the data in this chapter, Amarillo is, in general, a highly affordable housing market for many residents. However, some individuals and families with less disposable income still find it difficult to secure decent housing at a mortgage or rent level that does not command an unreasonable portion of their monthly budget. As a result, housing assistance programs through the City and other government and non-profit entities must continue to make a difference for these persons. According to the City’s Survey of Housing 2009 report, 41% of all homes purchased locally during 2007 were financed through Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Veterans Administration (VA), or Farm Service Agency (FSA) or Rural Housing Services (RHS) loans. As stated in the report, “The high percentage of loans financed through government programs demonstrates this large gap in consumer affordability and the continued trend towards homebuyer assistance.”

AAR representatives cited the Tradewinds area as having perhaps the most affordable new single-family home construction in Amarillo. But earlier prices just below the \$100,000 mark have been on the rise as demand

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**BOOSTING DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL**

“A successful downtown is necessary for a successful city. We feel like if housing comes, everything else will follow.”

William Ware*

Vice President, Amarillo National Bank

“This is an incredible step forward in our downtown redevelopment. It provides a very important tool, particularly in this challenging economy and with a relatively unproven market for these types of downtown projects here.”

Melissa Daily*

Executive Director, Downtown Amarillo Inc.

* As quoted in media coverage by the *Amarillo Independent* (April 20, 2010).

increased, including from people who work nearby and recognized the convenience of this location. Additionally, rising development costs in Amarillo are putting upward pressure on lot and home prices, especially in northwest Amarillo given the terrain factor there. But increased labor and material costs during construction are a reality in all parts of the community.

Downtown Amarillo Inc. was in the process of studying downtown residential opportunities and considerations at the time of this comprehensive planning effort. Clarifying potential housing types and costs were among the study objectives. In Spring 2010, it was also announced that all seven local banks had agreed to participate in a lending consortium to establish a \$5.6 million revolving loan fund to support downtown redevelopment, with particular emphasis on residential real estate projects. The banks are partnering with Downtown Amarillo Inc. and Center City Inc. in this unique effort designed to promote infill development and rehabilitation of existing structures within the downtown Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone. It is significant that the initiative backers identify mixed-use and housing projects as priorities “because revitalization needs housing.” Assisted projects will have to be consistent with the Downtown Strategic Action Plan and new urban design standards for downtown. Qualified projects will be expected to have a primary loan source

already, with the revolving fund intended to provide secondary “bridge” financing at the front and/or back end of a project to boost their viability.

Quality and Sustainability

Providing quality housing and neighborhoods is fundamental in creating a desirable place to live. Neighborhoods are the foundation of any community as they are places where residents live, recreate, interact, and call home. When well-designed and protected, they are a source of community pride. When poorly designed, marketed with few amenities, or allowed to decline over time, they detract from the appeal of the entire community. The condition, availability, and choice of housing are important to the integrity of neighborhoods and to the quality of life of residents. Sustainable, diverse, attractive, and vibrant neighborhoods enhance economic development, improve livability, and maintain property values and the City’s tax base.

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This is where this Housing & Neighborhoods section of the Comprehensive Plan links back to all others in terms of physical factors like neighborhood design and character, buffering of residential areas from incompatible uses and development intensities, traffic calming, convenient and safe circulation options for pedestrians and bicyclists, and overall community aesthetics. Additionally, because Amarillo does not have code provisions for parkland dedication at the time of subdivision platting and development, it is up to the City to anticipate emerging needs for public land acquisition and park development in close proximity to new neighborhoods and population concentrations.

Several of Amarillo's newest residential developments have also raised the bar on amenities and incorporation of open spaces and landscaping. For example, local media coverage of the pending "upscale" Redstone project in southwest Amarillo noted that its developers conducted focus groups with builders, prospective homebuyers, and others, and also surveyed about 10,000 Amarillo residents, to help them fine-tune their development master plan. As a result, the development, to the south of Loop 335/Hollywood Road between Coulter Street and Soncy Road, will feature a mix of single-family homes (on 10,000 and 20,000 square foot lots) plus garden and townhomes; space for retail and office uses; tree-lined streets; water features; both nature and play parks; trails "designed to encourage walking and biking and connect to commercial areas"; and a site for a future Canyon ISD school.² In some cases this level of design quality is made more feasible by the use of Public Improvement Districts (PIDs). The districts provide the developer a mechanism for recouping certain infrastructure and amenity costs through property assessments absorbed by the new homeowners.



Some older established neighborhoods in central Amarillo offer the very features that many communities and real estate investors across the nation are trying to re-create through new "traditional neighborhood developments." This includes smaller units close to the street and sidewalk, grid street layouts and shorter blocks that encourage walking and biking, plenty of green area and mature trees, nearby schools and parks, convenient access to neighborhood retail and services (and to downtown in some cases), and a neighborly atmosphere. Maintenance and enhancement of such areas is essential to preserve the historic fabric of the community and a significant stock of affordable housing.

² "New subdivision gets thumbs-up," Karen Smith Welch, *Amarillo Globe-News*, June 16, 2009.

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Attentiveness to neighborhood conditions by individual homeowners is essential to maintain residential stability over time. However, as some neighborhoods age, private covenants eventually lapse, and rental properties emerge, careful enforcement of City building and property maintenance

standards can make all the difference in preventing a gradual erosion in conditions that may accelerate into blight if left unchecked. Rental properties, especially those with distant/absentee ownership, usually warrant ongoing scrutiny regarding code compliance.

Neighborhood Integrity

In addition to ensuring the design and development of sustainable new neighborhoods, Amarillo should also work to safeguard the long-term integrity of its older housing areas. Established neighborhoods often lack the size, design, and amenities of new housing development. However, many communities are beginning to understand that, in return, older neighborhoods offer intangibles such as history, culture, proximity, and a stronger sense of community. In Amarillo, some older areas have been well maintained while others require infill development, infrastructure improvements, and further revitalization efforts.



Amenities at The Colonies (above) and Greenways (below).



The condition of structures and the maintenance of properties contribute to the health and welfare of residents, as well as the appearance of neighborhoods and the larger community. Housing that appears to need upkeep can create the impression of a community in a state of decline. Freshly painted and well-maintained homes are indicative of a positive community with a promising future. Frequent turnover of residents and the loss of “pride of ownership” are often reflected in how residences are maintained. In areas where smaller, lower-value dwellings have transitioned to rental properties, absentee ownership and/or negligent landlords can also undermine efforts to maintain the quality and stability of a neighborhood. The cumulative effect of inadequate maintenance can undermine whole blocks—or entire multi-family complexes. Effective code enforcement is needed to ensure that basic standards are upheld, which stabilizes individual properties and safeguards

the entire vicinity. But code enforcement and nuisance abatement only go so far, requiring the City to intervene to ensure the eventual removal of blighting influences that are beyond restoration.

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QUALITY NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN

Contemporary subdivision design too often overlooks the time-honored elements of what makes a neighborhood appealing and sustainable for the long term. Typical features of a quality neighborhood design include:

- ★ Some focal point, whether a park or central green, school, community center, place of worship, or small-scale commercial activity, that enlivens the neighborhood and provides a gathering place.
- ★ Equal importance of pedestrian and vehicular circulation. Street design accommodates, but also calms, necessary automobile traffic. Sidewalks along or away from streets, and/or a network of off-street trails, provide for pedestrian and bicycle circulation (especially for school children) and promote interconnectivity of adjacent neighborhoods.
- ★ A variety of dwelling types to address a range of needs among potential residents (based on age, income level, household size, etc.).
- ★ Access to schools, recreation and daily conveniences within relatively close proximity to the neighborhood, if not within or at its edges (such as along bordering major streets).
- ★ An effective street layout that provides multiple paths to external destinations (and critical access for emergency vehicles) while also discouraging non-local or cut-through traffic.
- ★ Appealing streetscapes, whether achieved through street trees or other design elements, which “soften” an otherwise urban atmosphere and draw residents to enjoy common areas of their neighborhood. Landscape designs consistent with local climate and vegetation.
- ★ Compatibility of fringe or adjacent uses, or measures to buffer the neighborhood from incompatible development.
- ★ Evident definition of the neighborhood “unit” through recognizable identity and edges, without going so far (through walls and other physical barriers) as to establish “fortress” neighborhoods.
- ★ Set-aside of conservation areas, greenbelts or other open space as an amenity, to encourage leisure and healthful living, and to contribute to neighborhood buffering and definition.
- ★ Use of local streets for parking to reduce the lot area that must be devoted to driveways and garages, and for the traffic calming benefits of on-street parking.
- ★ Respect for historic sites and structures, and incorporation of such assets into neighborhood design.

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All of this points to a continuing, essential role for City government, along with other partners, to support and revitalize local neighborhoods. The City's Planning Department already has an ongoing role in ensuring development compatibility and quality in and around residential areas. Many other aspects of neighborhood integrity and revitalization are an ongoing focus of the various funding programs and capital initiatives overseen by the City's Community Development Division and coordinated through a multi-year, HUD-approved Consolidated Plan and associated Annual Action Plan. Without this type of proactive assistance and neighborhood empowerment, in conjunction with self-help and volunteerism, troubled areas can be at risk of falling into permanent disrepair and disinvestment.



The only multi-family building permits issued citywide during 2008 were for construction of the new Cypress Creek Apartments on Jason Avenue, a 160-unit development in north Amarillo, and the adjacent Mariposa Apartments, which offers 92 units designed for residents 55 years and older. This subsidized new housing is an essential injection of new residential activity in an older area of the community.

ACTION STRATEGIES

This section provides potential action strategies for responding to the key planning themes related to housing and neighborhoods in Amarillo that were outlined earlier in this chapter:

1. Variety and Balance
2. Quality and Sustainability
3. Neighborhood Integrity

Table 6.1, Housing and Neighborhood Actions, summarizes the action possibilities that were considered by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and which were classified as Basic actions that are relatively straightforward to implement, Intermediate actions that could be more challenging and require more advance work, and Advanced actions that would represent “stretch” objectives for the City because they are new (or a break from past practice), potentially controversial, or otherwise more difficult to accomplish due to cost or other considerations. They also fall into five categories which represent the main ways that comprehensive plans are implemented (as elaborated upon in Chapter 7-Implementation):

- ★ Capital investments
- ★ Programs/initiatives
- ★ Regulations and standards
- ★ Partnerships/coordination
- ★ Ongoing study/planning (especially as required to qualify for external funding opportunities)

These options are elaborated on in the remainder of this chapter.

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TABLE 6.1
Housing and Neighborhood Actions

Basic Actions

Action	Action Type
1. Coordinated strategies	All Types
2. Code enforcement strategy	Program / Initiative
3. Economic development link	Ongoing Study / Planning
4. Census 2010 results	Ongoing Study / Planning

Intermediate Actions

Action	Action Type
5. Preserve small-lot/footprint homes	Program / Initiative
6. Downtown residential	Program / Initiative
7. Neighborhood identity	Capital Investment
8. Redevelopment incentives	Program / Initiative
9. Neighborhood outreach and coordination	Partnerships / Coordination

Advanced Actions

Action	Action Type
10. Accessory dwelling units	Regulation / Standards
11. Multiple housing types for density bonus	Regulation / Standards
12. Density bonus for "affordable" units	Regulation / Standards

- 1. Coordinated Strategies.** Pursue action items in other sections of this Comprehensive Plan that would support housing variety/affordability and quality neighborhoods, including:

- ★ **Chapter 2-Land Use & Community Character:** Neighborhood Unit Concept, character emphasis (and lot coverage standards), flexible residential districts, non-residential compatibility provisions near residential uses, Neighborhood Conservation zoning, Traditional Neighborhood Development provisions, regulatory relief for redevelopment, flexible bufferyards, anti-monotony provisions, public facility design in residential areas.

- ★ **Chapter 3-Growth Management & Capacity:** Zoning for rural character, “country living” options within City, natural resource conservation, lot size averaging, cluster and conservation development provisions, coordinated planning and public investments, traffic impact analysis, dark sky protection, green building practices, Public Improvement Districts (PIDs), development agreements.
- ★ **Chapter 4-Mobility:** Non-vehicular circulation and safety, context-sensitive roadway design, traffic impact analysis, “Complete Streets” approach, bicycle/pedestrian circulation within neighborhoods, trail alternative to sidewalks, screening without eliminating local circulation, traffic calming through original development design, school area safety.
- ★ **Chapter 5-Parks & Recreation:** Parkland dedication, new park development, park/playground upgrades and facility renovations (including pools, spraygrounds, picnic shelters, restrooms), trail improvements, security lighting, road and parking improvements.

Also, other action items already cited in Chapter 2-Land Use & Community Character, under the theme of Neighborhood and Commercial Revitalization in Older Areas of Amarillo, involving ongoing implementation of the City’s five-year HUD Consolidated Plan and annual Action Plans for community development and housing-related initiatives; continued use of special district mechanisms authorized through the Texas Local Government Code; and ongoing coordination with area foundations and the non-profit sector to address social services, educational attainment and skills training, and other fundamental factors in neighborhood and community revitalization beyond the physical factors that are the focus of this Comprehensive Plan.

2. **Code Enforcement Strategy.** Employ a pro-active code enforcement strategy that first offers helpful assistance to property owners in complying with municipal codes rather than a punitive approach, so that enforcement resources may be targeted to the worst areas and offenders. This can also involve cross-training of enforcement personnel in conflict management and resolution.
3. **Economic Development Link.** Coordinate with the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation, the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, the Amarillo Association of Realtors, and others who monitor and/or can

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provide insights about housing-related inquiries and concerns of major employers, small businesses, and economic development prospects exploring opportunities in Amarillo and the Panhandle region. Of particular interest should be the socioeconomic profile and potential home purchasing power (or rental needs) of workers in the area's identified target industries. As another example, the City of Temple in Central Texas included in its public/private economic development strategy plan (20/20 Alliance Strategic Plan) specific targets for annual single-family housing starts in a variety of price ranges (including a certain number of "upper-end" multi-family units each year) to support business recruitment and retention efforts.

4. **Census 2010 Results.** Upon the release of Census 2010 data in 2011-12, complete a thorough review (and GIS mapping) of the newest detailed data down to the block level for an array of housing characteristics, as well as various other socioeconomic and housing market indicators.
5. **Preserve Small-Lot/Footprint Homes.** Inventory existing small homes within the community (i.e., units of less than 1,200 square feet), and clusters of such dwellings, and target them for preservation and rehabilitation, as needed, to maintain this essential component of the local housing stock. Also consider targeted assistance for homeowners planning additions and/or other improvements to older, relatively small dwellings that will enhance their marketability and continued value over time.
6. **Downtown Residential.** Pursue the strategies related to promotion of new residential and mixed-use activity in downtown as contained in the Downtown Amarillo Strategic Action Plan of 2008, and as extended and clarified through the downtown housing study conducted during 2010. This included recommendations for the east side Warehouse District (lofts, live/work units); the central Business and Financial Sector (vertical mixed use with upper-floor residential, building rehab/conversions); South Gateway Zone (residential infill, mixed use); Southwest Zone (continued senior housing focus and expansion, mixed use); and Northwest Zone (mixed use, "urban lifestyle" housing). The City's Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone could be a potential source for funding physical improvements geared specifically toward encouraging residential investment. The new bank lending consortium and revolving

fund established for the TIRZ area is another essential tool to support revitalization efforts.

When people live in a relatively urban environment, they bring new foot traffic to the area (especially on evenings and weekends); additional retail, service and entertainment demands which can spur the immediate market; and expectations for a safe and hospitable environment in which to live, recreate, and host guests and visitors. So amenities and security are both necessary to create a favorable environment for more extensive residential living in and around the City's historic core.

7. **Neighborhood Identity.** Promote neighborhood identity and pride through special street signage and/or potential installation of small monument signs and landscaping at entries to older neighborhoods that never had these identity features.
8. **Redevelopment Incentives.** Encourage residential redevelopment in targeted areas through a tax abatement or deferral program (or other incentive mechanism) that rewards infill activity and housing rehabilitation in older neighborhoods. Such a program could target lots where substandard structures were recently removed so that these lots are put back onto the market and tax rolls as promptly as possible. Other inducements can include fast-track permitting, fee waivers, and infrastructure cost-sharing for builders and organizations that complete infill construction on vacant lots.
9. **Neighborhood Outreach and Coordination.** Pursue multiple ways to maintain communication links to neighborhood leaders and representatives, such as through less formal neighborhood associations and/or councils where organized homeowners associations have lapsed over time (and require a certain level of voting and/or owner participation to be considered active). Such forums can prove valuable for inviting "grass roots" input into (and notice of) capital improvement priorities, park and public facility upgrades, street and infrastructure projects, pending zoning cases, crime prevention activities, code compliance initiatives, etc. Establishing a community-wide association or network of neighborhood councils can also lead to annual gatherings and/or other periodic meetings and seminars on issues of interest to all neighborhoods.

Examples of neighborhood-oriented events sponsored by larger cities and counties include:

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- ★ The 15th annual Symposium for Neighborhoods (themed “Creating Community”) in Charlotte, North Carolina (details at City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County Government website: www.charmeck.org).
- ★ The annual Neighborhood Conference (focused on community-wide networking and neighborhood leadership training) in Denver, Colorado (details at the City website: www.denvergov.org/mayor).
- ★ The 2010 Citizens Budget Conference in Seattle, Washington, sponsored by the City’s Department of Neighborhoods and the City Neighborhood Council, among others (details at the City website: www.seattle.gov/financedepartment).
- ★ The 25th anniversary CityLinks2010 Neighborhood Conference (themed “Rebuilding Our Community – You Count!”) in Dayton, Ohio (details at the upDayton website: updayton.com).
- ★ Periodic Neighborhood Seminar Suppers (in a recent example to provide block captain and neighborhood watch training through the Police Department) hosted by the Neighborhood Services Division in College Station, Texas (details at City website: www.cstx.gov).
- ★ The 7th annual Neighborhoods Conference 2010 in Hillsborough County, Florida (details at Hillsborough County Office of Neighborhood Relations website: www.hillsboroughcounty.org/onr/).
- ★ The 2010 Restore Omaha Conference (focused on historic preservation/restoration) in Omaha, Nebraska (details at the Restore Omaha website: restoreomaha.org).
- ★ The annual Neighborhood Conference in Riverside, California (details at the City website: www.riversideca.gov/neighborhoods).

- 10. Accessory Dwelling Units.** Address accessory dwelling units more explicitly within the City’s zoning ordinance, along with appropriate provisions governing their use and compatibility. They are common and popular in some communities to accommodate elderly parents or relatives (“granny flats”), young adult family members wanting to live independently but close by, or local college students in need of basic, low-cost housing. It also provides another affordable living option within neighborhoods—and a rental income opportunity for homeowners.

The zoning ordinance currently provides only for “Servant’s or Caretaker’s Quarters” within the category of Accessory & Incidental Uses (in the use table in Section 4-10-82). Then, the provisions for this particular use specify that such quarters may only be used as living quarters by “persons employed on the premises or their immediate family” (Section 4-10-83(a)(16)). A “secondary housing unit” expressly cannot be “for rent or use as a separate housing unit” by anyone else, including persons related to the primary homeowner. The language in this section also indicates that a secondary housing unit must be a detached structure from the main residential structure. Elsewhere, provisions related to “Residential Accessory Buildings” state that such an accessory building is considered part of the main residential building when one or more walls are shared with the main structure or when the buildings are attached by a common roof (Section 4-10-83(a)(12a)). But even in these physical arrangements, an accessory dwelling unit (beyond servant/caretaker use) is not permitted since the typical uses cited are all non-residential: “private garage, tool house, greenhouse, home workshop, children’s playhouse, storehouse or garden shelter.”

The zoning ordinance should provide a legal avenue for accessory dwelling units. This can involve creation of a separate or semi-private living area within an existing dwelling, or the establishment of a garage apartment or separate living area in another accessory building on a lot as already addressed by the ordinance. Accessory units can be regulated in a variety of ways to address bulk, setback, and lot coverage issues; residential density; and parking, safety, and other potential concerns. Some ordinances aim to limit the leasing of such units through provisions disallowing separate utilities and utility billing, separate trash collection, or the establishment of a separate house number and mailing address on a lot.

11. **Multiple Housing Types for Density Bonus.** In connection with the action item in Chapter 3-Growth Management & Capacity related to cluster and conservation development approaches, consider requiring inclusion of multiple housing types in developments that exceed a certain density threshold. For example, as a potential condition for awarding a density bonus to such developments that will preserve a greater amount of permanent open space in return for smaller lot sizes, another housing type besides single-family detached dwellings (e.g., zero lot line patio homes, townhomes, etc.) could be required when lot sizes are reduced beyond a certain point. By incorporating such provisions into the City’s

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development regulations, this mixed-housing outcome can be achieved directly without needing a Planned Development application and process—or by carving up a single project site into multiple zoning districts to accommodate different housing types and densities.

12. **Density Bonuses for “Affordable” Units.** Consider the use of density bonuses, through the City’s zoning ordinance, to reward projects that provide for a certain number or percentage of reduced-price units that are more affordable than current market-rate units. This helps to offset the financial impact to the developer while meeting affordable housing needs in the community. A development would be allowed a certain amount of additional residential density over and above the maximum limit allowed by existing zoning. In return, the designated units may be restricted to occupancy by certain target groups (e.g., seniors, disabled, veterans, persons/families meeting certain income criteria) and/or the units must remain affordable over time and multiple re-sales of the property. The zoning ordinance can also establish certain criteria to govern when a density bonus is appropriate with regard to compatibility, adequate site area, adequate parking, etc., and to ensure consistent design and finishes for the designated units.



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IMPLEMENTATION

With the completion of a new Comprehensive Plan, the City of Amarillo has direction and priorities for the ongoing development, redevelopment, and enhancement of the community over the next 20 years. However, now comes the most challenging and important step in the planning process—implementing the plan by turning the community’s aspirations into reality. This will take the efforts and commitment of the City’s elected and appointed officials, staff, residents, business owners, institutions, other levels of government, and other organizations and individuals who will serve as champions of the plan and its particular direction and strategies. It will also require the City to make sound decisions, set priorities, and secure necessary resources to implement the action strategies set forth in this plan.

The Comprehensive Plan should be a “living document,” that is, a document that is frequently referred to for guidance in community decision-making. Equally important are formal procedures for the ongoing monitoring and reporting of successes achieved, difficulties encountered, new opportunities and challenges that have emerged, and any other change in circumstances which may require rethinking of plan priorities.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION METHODS

Simply setting out an implementation framework in this chapter is not enough to ensure that the action items of this plan will be carried out and the community’s long-term goals ultimately achieved. The policies and action priorities in this plan should be consulted frequently and should be widely used by decision-makers as a basis for judgments regarding:

- ★ The timing and availability of infrastructure improvements.
- ★ Proposed development and redevelopment applications.

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- ★ City-initiated and landowner-requested annexations.
- ★ Zone change requests and other zoning-related actions.
- ★ Expansion of public facilities, services and programs.
- ★ Annual capital budgeting.
- ★ Potential re-writes and amendments to the City's development ordinances and related code elements.
- ★ Intergovernmental (including inter-City and City/County) coordination and agreements.
- ★ Operations, capital improvements, and programming related to individual City departments.

There are five general methods for plan implementation:

- (1) Capital improvements programming;
- (2) Special projects, programs and initiatives;
- (3) Land development regulations and engineering standards;
- (4) Coordination and partnerships; and
- (5) Ongoing study and planning.

Capital Improvements Programming

A capital improvements program, or "CIP," is a multi-year plan (typically five years) that identifies budgeted capital projects, including street infrastructure; water, wastewater and drainage facilities; parks, trails and recreation facility construction and upgrades; construction of public buildings; and purchase of major equipment. Identifying and budgeting for major capital improvements will be essential to implementing this plan. Decisions regarding the prioritization of proposed capital improvements should take into account the policy and management directives of this plan.

Special Projects, Programs and Initiatives

Special projects and initiatives is another broad category of implementation measures. These may include initiating or adjusting City programs; expanding citizen participation programs; providing training; and other types of special projects.

Development Regulations and Standards

Land development regulations and engineering standards are fundamental for plan implementation. It is plain—but often underappreciated—that private investment decisions account for the vast majority of any City’s physical form. Consequently, zoning and subdivision regulations and associated development criteria and technical engineering standards are the basic keys to ensuring that the form, character and quality of development reflect the City’s planning objectives. These ordinances should reflect the community’s desire for quality development outcomes while recognizing economic factors. They should not delay or interfere unnecessarily with appropriate new development or redevelopment that is consistent with plan principles and policies.

Coordination and Partnerships

Some community initiatives identified in the Comprehensive Plan cannot be accomplished by City government on its own. They may require direct coordination, intergovernmental agreements, or funding support from other public entities or levels of government. Additionally, the unique role of potential private and non-profit partners to advance the community’s action agenda should not be underestimated. This may occur through cooperative efforts, volunteer activities and in-kind services (which can count toward the local match requirements for various grant opportunities), and public/private financing of community improvements.

Specific Plans and Studies

There are a number of areas where additional planning work is recommended, at a “finer grain” level of detail than is appropriate in a comprehensive plan. As such, some parts of this plan will be implemented only after some additional planning or special study.

PLAN ADMINISTRATION

During the development of the plan, representatives of government, business, neighborhoods, civic groups, and others came together to inform the planning process. These community leaders, and new ones to emerge over the horizon of this plan, must maintain their commitment to the ongoing implementation of the plan’s policies—and to the periodic updating of the plan to adapt to changing conditions or unforeseen events.

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Education

Comprehensive plans are relatively general in nature, but they are still complex policy documents that account for interrelationships among various policy choices. As such, educating decision-makers and administrators about plan implementation is an important first step after plan adoption. As the principal groups that will implement the plan, the City Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, and City department heads should all be “on the same page” with regard to priorities, responsibilities and interpretations.

Consequently, an education initiative should be undertaken immediately after plan adoption, which should include:

- ★ A discussion of the individual roles and responsibilities of the City Commission (and other advisory bodies), and individual staff members.
- ★ A thorough overview of the entire Comprehensive Plan, with emphasis on the parts of the plan that relate to each individual group.
- ★ Implementation tasking and priority setting, which should lead to each group establishing a one-year and three-year implementation agenda.
- ★ Facilitation of a mock meeting in which the use of the plan and its policies and recommendations is illustrated.
- ★ An in-depth question-and-answer session, with support from planning personnel, the City Attorney, the City Engineer, and other key staff.

Definition of Roles

As the community’s elected officials, the City Commission should assume the lead role in implementation of this plan. The key responsibilities of the City Commission are to decide and establish priorities, set timeframes by which each action will be initiated and completed, and determine the budget to be made available for implementation efforts. In conjunction with the City Manager, City Commission should also ensure effective coordination among the various groups that are responsible for carrying out the plan’s recommendations.

The City Commission should take the lead in the following general areas:

- ★ Acting as a “champion” of the plan.
- ★ Adopting and amending the plan, after recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- ★ Adopting new or amended land development regulations to implement the plan, after recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- ★ Approving interlocal agreements that implement the plan.
- ★ Establishing the overall action priorities and timeframes by which each action item of the plan will be initiated and completed.
- ★ Considering and approving the funding commitments that will be required.
- ★ Offering final approval of projects and activities and the associated costs during the budget process, keeping in mind the need for consistency with the plan and its policies.
- ★ Providing policy direction to the Planning and Zoning Commission, other appointed City boards and commissions, and City staff.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should take the lead in the following general areas:

- ★ Hosting the education initiative described above.
- ★ Periodically obtaining public input to keep the plan up to date, using a variety of community outreach and citizen and stakeholder involvement methods.
- ★ Ensuring that recommendations forwarded to the City Commission are reflective of plan principles and action recommendations. This relates particularly to decisions involving development review and approval, zone change requests, and ordinance amendments.
- ★ After holding one or more public hearings to discuss new or evolving community issues and needs, making recommendations to the City Commission regarding plan updates and plan amendments.

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City Staff should take the lead in the following general areas:

- ★ Managing day-to-day implementation of the plan, including coordination through an interdepartmental plan implementation committee.
- ★ Supporting and carrying out capital improvement planning efforts.
- ★ Managing the drafting of new or amended land development regulations, working with the appropriate Boards and Commissions.
- ★ Conducting studies and developing additional plans (including management of consultant efforts, as necessary).
- ★ Reviewing applications for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan as required by the City's land development regulations.
- ★ Negotiating the specifics of interlocal agreements.
- ★ Administering collaborative programs and ensuring open channels of communication with various private, public and non-profit implementation partners.
- ★ Providing briefings on plan implementation progress and activities to the Planning and Zoning Commission no less than annually.
- ★ Maintaining an inventory of potential plan amendments, as suggested by City staff and others, for consideration during annual and periodic plan review and update processes.

ACTION AGENDA

A community's vision for its future, as expressed through its comprehensive plan, is attained, over time, through a variety of specific actions. This section highlights key action items from the various plan elements which should receive priority attention in the first several years of plan implementation. Further considerations for pursuing these initiatives are spelled out in **Table 7.1, Implementation Strategy for Near Term Action Priorities**, which appears at the end of this chapter. Important elements of this table include:

- ★ **Further Prioritization.** The action items are further categorized as Priority 1, 2, or 3. This could relate to Years 1-3 following plan adoption, or it could just be a further indication of relative priority and readiness to take on a particular task over an initial implementation period not necessarily tied to calendar years.

For example, efforts on a Priority 1 item might begin in Year 1 but take several years to complete fully, while some advance work on a Priority 2 item might be possible toward the end of Year 1.

- ★ **Action Type.** This relates back to the five types of implementation methods highlighted earlier in this chapter.
- ★ **Next Steps.** This involves the essential task of breaking down larger efforts into “first and next steps” to lay the groundwork for measurable action and build momentum toward desired outcomes. This often involves further clarification of objectives and a realistic assessment of resources and capabilities to move an initiative forward.
- ★ **Implementation and Coordination Roles.** In addition to identifying which City department(s) or function(s) would likely lead a task, this portion of Table 7.1 also highlights a variety of local and regional agencies and entities that might have a role to play in certain initiatives. This could involve potential cost-sharing, technical assistance, direct cooperation (potentially through an interlocal agreement), or simply providing input and feedback on a matter in which they have some mutual interest. In particular, whenever potential regulatory actions or new or revised development standards are to be considered, participation of the development community is essential to ensure adequate “give and take” and consensus building. Some of the entities currently listed in Table 7.1 might not factor as much into the identified near-term action items, but they could in future years as other Comprehensive Plan action recommendations move to the forefront. Likewise, others will likely need to be added to later iterations of this table depending on the task at hand.
- ★ **Funding Sources.** This final set of columns in Table 7.1 indicates the typical ways to finance plan implementation efforts. An obvious source is through the City’s own annual operating budget, as well as multi-year capital budgeting, which is not only for physical construction projects but also for funding significant studies and plans (e.g., Transit Plan) that are intended to lay the groundwork for phased capital investments and construction over a period of years. An “Other Governments” column is included along with a “Grants” column because grants are often applied for and awarded through a competitive process, but a county or another government agency might choose to commit funds directly to an initiative along with the

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City. On the other hand, “grants” can also come from foundations and other non-government sources. Finally, the “Private/Other” column is meant to underscore the potential for public/private initiatives, as well as corporate outreach and volunteerism, faith-based efforts, and other community and volunteer contributions (e.g., churches, Scouts, civic and service groups, etc.).

This table should be consulted in conjunction with the City’s annual budget process, during CIP preparation, and in support of departmental work planning. Then, the City staff member designated as the Comprehensive Plan Administrator should initiate a first-year work program in conjunction with City management, other departments, and other public and private implementation partners.

The near-term action priorities should be revisited by City officials and staff annually to recognize accomplishments, highlight areas where further attention and effort are needed, and determine whether some items have moved up or down on the priority list given changing circumstances and emerging needs. It should be kept in mind that early implementation of certain items, while perhaps not the uppermost priorities, may be expedited by the availability of related grant opportunities, by a state or federal mandate, or by the eagerness of one or more partners to pursue an initiative with the City. On the other hand, some high-priority items may prove difficult to tackle in the near term due to budget constraints, the lack of an obvious lead entity or individual to carry the initiative forward, or by the community’s readiness to take on a potentially controversial new program.

Progress on the Priority 1 items, in particular, should be the focus of the first annual review and report a year after Comprehensive Plan adoption, as described later in this chapter. Then, similar to multi-year capital improvements programming, the entire action agenda list in Table 7.1—and all other action items dispersed throughout the plan chapters—should be revisited annually to decide if any additional items are ready to move into the next near-term action timeframe, and whether as Priority 1, 2 or 3 items.

PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS

The Amarillo Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a flexible document allowing for adjustment to changing conditions over time. Shifts in political,

economic, physical, technological, and social conditions, and other unforeseen circumstances, may influence and change the priorities and fiscal outlook of the community.

As the City evolves, new issues will emerge while others will no longer be as relevant. Some action statements will be found impractical or outdated while other plausible solutions will arise. To ensure that it continues to reflect the overall goals of the community and remains relevant and resourceful over time, the plan must be revisited on a regular basis to confirm that the plan elements are still on point and the associated planning themes and action statements are still appropriate.

Two types of revisions to the Comprehensive Plan may occur: (1) minor amendments, and (2) major updates. Minor plan amendments may be proposed at any time such as specific adjustments to the future land use plan related to particular land development applications or public improvement projects. Minor amendments can be addressed by the City in short order or, if not pressing, be documented and compiled for more holistic evaluation through an annual plan review process. For example, this is how and when the results of another specialized plan or study can be incorporated into relevant sections of the Comprehensive Plan. More significant plan modifications and updates should occur every five years at most. Major updates will involve reviewing the base conditions and anticipated growth trends; re-evaluating the guiding principles and recommendations in the plan—and formulating new ones as necessary; and adding, revising or removing action statements in the plan based on implementation progress.

Annual Progress Report

The Planning and Zoning Commission, with the assistance of staff, should prepare an annual progress report for presentation to the Mayor and City Commission. This ensures that the plan is consistently reviewed and that any needed modifications or clarifications are identified for the annual minor plan amendment process. Ongoing monitoring of consistency between the plan and the City's implementing ordinances and regulations should be an essential part of this effort.

The Annual Progress Report should include and highlight:

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- ★ Significant actions and accomplishments during the past year, including the status of implementation for each programmed task in the Comprehensive Plan.
- ★ Obstacles or problems in the implementation of the plan, including those encountered in administering the land use and transportation aspects, as well as any other elements of the plan.
- ★ Proposed amendments that have come forward during the course of the year, which may include revisions to the individual plan maps or other recommendations or text changes.
- ★ Recommendations for needed actions, programs and procedures to be developed and implemented in the coming year, including recommendation of projects to be included in the City's CIP, other programs/projects to be funded, and priority coordination needs with public and private implementation partners.

Annual Amendment Process

Most substantive amendments to the Comprehensive Plan should be considered and acted on annually, allowing for proposed changes to be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect may be understood (although some interim amendments during the year may be straightforward as the City's future land use plan is refined in conjunction with specific land development approvals). When considering a plan amendment, the City should ensure the proposed amendment is consistent with the principles and policies set forth in the plan regarding character protection, development compatibility, infrastructure availability, conservation of environmentally sensitive areas, and other community priorities. Careful consideration should also be given to guard against site-specific plan changes that could negatively impact adjacent areas and uses or detract from the overall character of the area. Factors that should be considered in deciding on a proposed plan amendment include:

- ★ Consistency with the principles and policies set forth in the plan.
- ★ Adherence with the Future Land Use & Character map.
- ★ Compatibility with the surrounding area.
- ★ Impacts on infrastructure provision including water, wastewater, drainage, and the transportation network.

- ★ Impact on the City's ability to provide, fund and maintain services.
- ★ Impact on environmentally sensitive and natural areas.
- ★ Whether the proposed amendment contributes to the overall direction and character of the community as captured in the plan (plus ongoing public input).

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Criteria for Proposed Amendments to Future Land Use & Character Map

In addition to the overall plan monitoring and amendment procedures and timing outlined in this chapter, a further and specific issue involves consideration of proposed amendments to the adopted Future Land Use & Character map. A first consideration is whether a map amendment is necessary immediately, such as in conjunction with a particular rezoning request, or if the map proposal can wait so it can be examined more comprehensively through the annual Comprehensive Plan review and amendment process?

The list of items under Annual Amendment Process provides initial criteria for considering any type of Comprehensive Plan amendment, whether to the plan text or a particular map. The items below should also be reviewed and addressed when a Future Land Use & Character map adjustment is proposed:

- ★ **Scope of Amendment:** Is the proposed map change limited to one or a few parcels, or would it affect a much larger area?
- ★ **Change in Circumstances:** What specific conditions (e.g., population size and/or characteristics, area character and building form, property/structure conditions, infrastructure or public services, market factors including need for more land in a particular designation, etc.) have changed sufficiently to render the current map designation(s) inappropriate or out-of-date?
- ★ **Consistency with Other Plans:** In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, is the proposed map change consistent with the intent and policy direction of any applicable small area plans, utility or drainage plans, or other City plans?
- ★ **Adequate Information:** Do City staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and/or City Commission have enough and appropriate information to move ahead with a decision (e.g., utility capacity, potential traffic impacts, other public service implications, resident/stakeholder concerns and input)?
- ★ **Stakeholder Input:** What points, concerns, and insights have been raised by area residents, property owners, business owners, or others?

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Five-Year Update – Evaluation and Appraisal Report

An evaluation and appraisal report should be prepared every five years. City staff should initiate this report with input from various City departments, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and other boards and commissions. The report process involves evaluating the existing plan and assessing how successful it has been in achieving the community's goals. The purpose of the report is to identify the successes and shortcomings of the plan, look at what has changed over the last five years, and make recommendations on how the plan should be modified in light of those changes.

The report should review baseline conditions and assumptions about trends and growth indicators. It should also evaluate implementation potential and/or obstacles related to any unmet action recommendations. The evaluation report and process should result in an amended Comprehensive Plan, including identification of new or revised information that may lead to updated planning themes and/or action recommendations.

More specifically, the report should identify and evaluate the following:

- (1) Summary of major actions and interim plan amendments undertaken over the last five years.
- (2) Major issues in the community and how these issues have changed over time.
- (3) Changes in the assumptions, trends and base studies data, including the following:
 - The rate at which growth and development is occurring relative to the projections put forward in the plan.
 - Shifts in demographics and other growth trends.
 - City-wide attitudes and whether apparent shifts, if significant, necessitate amendments to the stated priorities or strategies of the plan.
 - Other changes in political, social, economic, technological or environmental conditions that indicate a need for plan amendments.

(4) Ability of the plan to continue to support progress toward achieving the community's goals. The following should be evaluated and revised as needed:

- Individual statements or sections of the plan must be reviewed and rewritten, as necessary, to ensure that the plan provides sufficient information and direction to achieve the intended outcome.
- Conflicts between planning principles and action items that have been discovered in the implementation and administration of the plan must be pointed out and resolved.
- The action agenda must be reviewed and major accomplishments highlighted. Those not completed by the specified timeframe should be re-evaluated to ensure their continued relevance and/or to revise them appropriately.
- As conditions change, the timeframes for implementing the individual actions of the plan should be re-evaluated where necessary. Some actions may emerge as a higher priority given new or changed circumstances while others may become less important to achieving the goals and development objectives of the community.
- Based upon organizational, programmatic and procedural factors, as well as the status of previously assigned tasks, the implementation task assignments must be reviewed and altered, as needed, to ensure timely accomplishment of the plan's recommended actions.
- Changes in laws, procedures, and missions may impact the ability of the community to achieve its goals. The plan review must assess these changes and their impacts on the success of implementation, leading to any suggested revisions in strategies or priorities.

Ongoing Community Outreach and Engagement

All review and update processes related to the Comprehensive Plan should emphasize and incorporate ongoing public input. The annual and continual plan evaluation and reporting process should also incorporate specific performance measures and quantitative indicators that can be compiled and

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communicated both internally and to elected officials and citizens in a “report card” fashion. Examples might include:

- ★ Acres of new development (plus number of residential units and square footage of commercial and other non-residential space) approved and constructed in conformance with this plan and related City codes.
- ★ Various measures of service capacity (gallons, acre-feet, etc.) added to the City’s major utility systems as indicated in this plan and associated utility master plans—and the millions of dollars allocated to fund the necessary capital projects.
- ★ Acres of parkland and miles of trail developed or improved in accordance with this plan and related parks, recreation and greenways plans.
- ★ Indicators of City efforts to ensure neighborhood integrity as emphasized in this plan (e.g., code enforcement activity, results of neighborhood-focused policing, number of zone change and/or variance requests denied that were found to be contrary to neighborhood interests, etc.).
- ★ Miles of new bike routes and transit routes added to the City’s transportation system to provide alternative mobility options as recommended in this plan.
- ★ New and expanded businesses and associated tax revenue gains through the economic development initiatives and priorities cited in this and related plans.
- ★ Indicators of the benefits of redeveloped sites and structures (appraised value, increased property and/or sales tax revenue, new residential units and retail and office spaces in urban mixed-use settings, etc.) as envisioned through this plan.
- ★ The estimated dollar value of operating cost savings from reduced energy and water use, heating/cooling, etc., from green building practices and related conservation efforts in new and existing City facilities, as suggested in this plan.
- ★ The numbers of residents and other stakeholders engaged through City-sponsored education and outreach events related to

Comprehensive Plan implementation and periodic review and updating, as outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER



7

ADOPTED 10-12-10

AMARILLO
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN

TABLE 7.1, Implementation Strategy for Near Term Action Priorities

Item	ACTION	Priority			Action Type	NEXT STEPS	CITY OF AMARILLO	Implementation & Coordination Roles													Funding Sources									
		1	2	3				Amarillo EDC	Chamber of Commerce	Amarillo College	ISDs	Potter County	Randall County	P-RAD	PRPC	AMPO	Downtown Amarillo, Inc.	Center City	AFAA	CRMWA	Private/Other	City Budget	CIP Budget	Other Govts	Grants	Private/Other				
1	Street-Drainage Utility mechanism and fee	X			Capital Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate programs in other cities. Use inter-departmental team to draft utility proposal for City. Commission consideration. Project potential fee revenue scenarios. 	City Manager, Public Works, Engineering, Finance, Legal																			✓	✓			
2	Initial ordinance amendments	X			Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine first priority items to address (e.g., character factors such as site coverage, flexibility and incentives). Conduct early workshops with development community. Draft potential amendments for Planning & Zoning Commission review and recommendation to City Commission. 	Planning, Legal, Public Works, Engineering, Traffic Engineering	●																		✓				
3	Parkland dedication / fee-in-lieu ordinance	X			Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore similar ordinances in other Texas cities. Draft proposed ordinance and park zone map for official and public review. Project potential fee revenue. 	Parks and Recreation, Planning, Legal, Finance				●															✓				
4	Targeted pedestrian / bicycle safety improvements	X			Capital Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize critical locations for safety upgrades. Coordinate with planned street and utility improvements. Coordinate with other entities for state highways, county roads, etc. Seek community input through small area plan projects. Explore external funding and partnership possibilities. 	Traffic Engineering, Public Works, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, Transit, Planning				●	●	●	●			●	●	●							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Transit Summit and study		X		Program / Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Steering Committee to plan Summit and recruit sponsors. Determine study scope. Prepare for consultant selection process. 	City Manager, Transit, Traffic Engineering, Community Development, Planning	●		●	●	●	●			●	●									✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Downtown Plan implementation		X		Program / Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow through on newest studies (land use, facilities, parking). Coordinate with CIP, streetscape, and other projects. 	City Manager, Planning, Civic Center, Traffic Engineering, Public Works	●	●			●					●	●	●							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

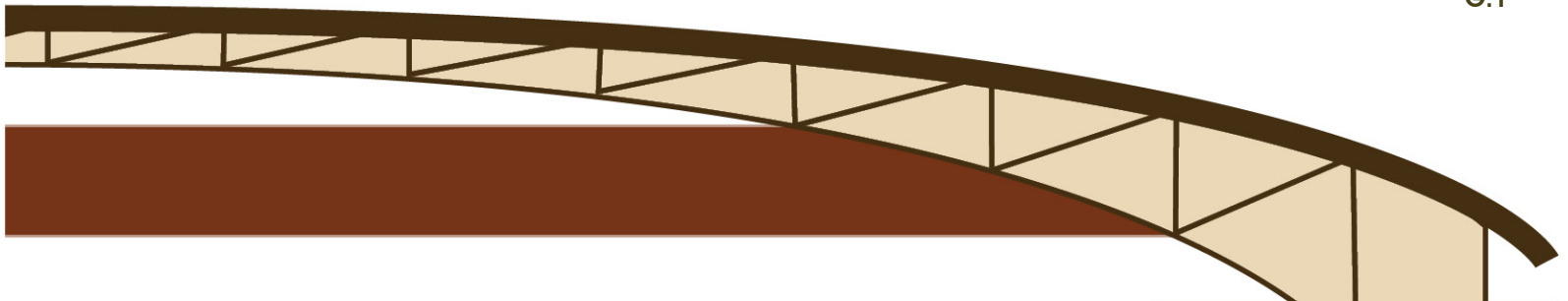
TABLE 7.1, Implementation Strategy for Near Term Action Priorities (continued)

Item	ACTION	Priority			Action Type	NEXT STEPS	CITY OF AMARILLO	Implementation & Coordination Roles														Private/Other	Funding Sources						
		1	2	3				Amarillo EDC	Chamber of Commerce	Amarillo College	ISDs	Potter County	Randall County	P-RAD	PRPC	AMPO	Downtown Amarillo, Inc.	Center City	AFAA	CRMWA	City Budget		CIP Budget	Other Govts	Grants	Private/Other			
7	Special area plans (first round)		X		Program / Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and prioritize neighborhoods, districts and corridors for such plans. Identify potential partners that might co-sponsor and assist with particular area plans. Assign necessary staff to focus on special area planning, plus inter-departmental roles. Prepare project plans and outreach strategy. 	Planning, Community Development	●	●	●	●					●	●	●	●					Residents, businesses, property owners, development community	✓			✓	✓
8	Annexation planning			X	Ongoing Study / Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify priority annexation areas and rationale. Identify "exempt" areas eligible for near-term action. Identify areas subject to three-year annexation plan. Determine areas appropriate for non-annexation agreements. Assess service needs and fiscal outlook by area. 	City Manager, Planning, Public Works, Engineering, Traffic Engineering, Legal, Parks and Recreation, Police, Fire, Finance				●	●	●	●	●	●		●					Property owners, other service providers	✓	✓				
9	City gateway enhancements			X	Capital Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify priority locations. Determine partnership opportunities. Host design workshop to prioritize desired features. 	Engineering, Planning, Parks and Recreation		●		●	●				●				●				TxDOT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Umbrella arts organization			X	Program / Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate organization models in other Texas cities. Host coordination event to assess options. Pursue early successes (e.g., grants, joint marketing). 	Planning	●	●	●	●							●	●	●				Foundations and non-profits				✓	✓
11	Multi-purpose esplanade pilot projects			X	Capital Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential pilot locations. Explore design approach in other Texas cities. Recruit partners for median enhancements, maintenance. 	Traffic Engineering, Planning, Parks and Recreation		●							●								TxDOT	✓	✓		✓	✓

AFAA Amarillo Fine Arts Association
 AMPO Amarillo Metropolitan Planning Organization
 CRMWA Canadian River Municipal Water Authority
 CIP Capital Improvements Program
 ISDs Independent School Districts

P-RAD Potter-Randall Appraisal District
 PRPC Panhandle Regional Planning Commission
 TxDOT Texas Department of Transportation





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Cluster Development.....	G.2
Context-Sensitive Design (CSD).....	G.2
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Access Management

A set of policies and standards intended to improve vehicle and pedestrian circulation and safety. Regulations may include: (a) restrictions on the type, number, location, spacing and design of access points (e.g., cross streets,



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driveways) to public roadways; and (b) the use of physical controls, such as raised medians, channelization, signals and signage.

Bufferyard

A unit of land, between adjacent land uses or along a street or alley, devoted to plantings, berms, walls, and/or fences for screening and buffering purposes and to help mitigate incompatibilities between differing land uses and development intensities.

Cluster Development

Concentration of development on a portion of a site, typically to reduce the amount of land disturbance and/or avoid areas with floodplain, steep slopes, rougher terrain, or other constraints or natural features (and which can add value if preserved and incorporated as a development focal point or amenity). In some cases the clustering provides a built-in buffer around the site perimeter which helps the development to blend in with a rural or low-intensity setting while still enabling development and providing for area housing needs.

Context-Sensitive Design (CSD)

An interdisciplinary and creative approach to roadway design that aims to balance traffic movement needs with other community considerations, such as safety, bicycle and pedestrian circulation, environmental protection, and aesthetics. The CSD approach is characterized by early and ongoing stakeholder involvement, consideration of all modes of travel (i.e., potential road users), and the use of flexible standards and development practices to tailor a project to its particular setting.

Curvilinear Streets

Some degree of curvature in street layouts and design as opposed to very straight streets in a “gridiron” street pattern. Street curvature helps to slow traffic in neighborhoods and can also discourage non-local and “cut-through” traffic where a curvilinear street system provides few direct routes through neighborhoods.

Front-Loading Garage

Where a garage faces toward the street, often as part of the front façade of the structure, as opposed to garages which are located behind the building or oriented sideways so they are less visible from the street.

Grade Separation

The physical separation of two different travel paths (e.g., two intersecting roadways) or travel modes (e.g., automobiles from rail, or bikes/pedestrians from automobiles), typically by constructing an underpass or overpass.

Green Building

Architectural and site design practices which aim to reduce the environmental impact – as well as the ultimate costs – of both construction and ongoing operation and maintenance of new buildings and development sites. The National Association of Home Builders sponsors a National Green Building Program, and the U.S. Green Building Council created and oversees the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) certification system which recognizes meritorious projects.

Greenfield

A site never previously developed, usually in an area where land development activity is just emerging. Sometimes used in contrast to “brownfields” – previously developed sites, often in older, central city areas, where soil and/or water contamination from historical land use and industrial activity poses a barrier to redevelopment and new uses.

Impervious Surface

Pavement and other non-porous surfaces (building roofs, patios and decks, concrete pads, etc.) where storm water mostly runs off compared to natural and vegetated areas where more of the rainfall is absorbed into the ground or is retained locally versus running off to a creek or other drainageway.

Infill Development

Development of remaining vacant or under-utilized sites in areas that are otherwise mostly developed and already have public streets and infrastructure in place. This can also involve redevelopment of previously built sites for a different or more intensive use, which can sometimes raise compatibility concerns relative to the existing development pattern and style.

Infrastructure Oversizing

Construction of roads, water and sewer lines, storm water conveyances, and other infrastructure at a size and capacity to meet future projected needs versus just the needs of current development(s). This often involves cost-sharing or reimbursement arrangements with a current developer who

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can efficiently construct the oversized improvements in conjunction with his project.

Institutional Use

Typically a non-profit or quasi-public activity that draws many visitors (and sometimes a large workforce or volunteer base of its own), such as hospitals and medical centers, schools and colleges, large religious campuses, museums and other cultural facilities, a government office complex, etc.

Live/Work Unit

A structure or building space with a unified design to enable one or more occupants to both work and live there, sometimes with the work area (office, retail, shop/studio) on a separate floor from the residence portion.

Low Impact Development

An approach to development planning and infrastructure design which aims to minimize environmental impacts and the disruption of natural processes. LID focuses especially on pre-development drainage patterns and water quality and the sensitive design of storm water retention and conveyance mechanisms as part of land development.

Neighborhood-Scale Commercial Use

A retail store or service establishment intended to serve a relatively small market area in close proximity. As a result, they need less floor area and number of employees than larger-scale establishments which aim to attract customers from a much broader area and, therefore, require larger sites that can accommodate larger buildings and parking areas, and which are usually highly visible and accessible along major streets.

Passive Recreation

Low-intensity recreational activities that often involve basic enjoyment of nature (such as hiking, bird-watching and picnicking) and, therefore, do not require significant parkland "development" as is necessary for active recreational activities such as field and court sports, playgrounds, swimming, etc.

Site Coverage

The amount of a site or property, often expressed in percentage terms, that is occupied ("covered") by buildings, driveways and parking areas, and

other development-related improvements relative to areas that are left undisturbed or devoted to landscaping and other “non-built” uses and open space.

Streetscape

The visual appearance and appeal of a street or roadway corridor based on a combination of factors within the public right-of-way and on abutting private properties including: paving materials, use of medians/esplanades, landscaping and lighting in both public and private areas, location and appearance of utility poles and overhead wires, location and design of buildings, screening of parking and loading/service areas, design of traffic signals and signs, extent and design of private signs, placement and design of transit stops, design and screening of drainage infrastructure, etc.

Structured Parking

A parking garage, parking deck, or under-building or underground parking area designed for the parking or storage of motor vehicles. The structure may be open or enclosed.

Swale

A natural depression or wide shallow ditch used to convey and/or store storm water. As opposed to concrete drainageways and other “hard” infrastructure, swales are typically grassy or vegetated which provides for some natural ground absorption and filtering of pollutants from storm runoff.

Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND)

A design approach that aims to incorporate characteristics of more compact and walkable neighborhoods, such as: grid street system (often with alleys), shorter block lengths (and smaller lot sizes in some cases, or a mix of lot and house sizes), buildings oriented toward the street, front porches on houses, side versus front driveways or rear alley access, recessed or rear garages, village squares and greens, and often with compatible mixing of retail, office and/or civic uses.

Traffic Calming

Street design approaches, physical retrofitting measures, and/or regulations intended to reduce the impacts of motor vehicles in neighborhoods, school zones, retail districts, downtown areas, etc. by lowering vehicle speeds, discouraging through traffic, and causing motorists to be more attentive to pedestrians, cyclists and children at play in and near streets.

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**Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA)**

A study of how a land use or development will affect traffic in the surrounding area and how such impacts might be mitigated, as necessary, through on- and/or off-site measures. These documents are typically prepared by a licensed professional traffic engineer or civil engineer in connection with a specified proposed land use (including public uses), subdivision, or zone change application.

Vertical Mixed Use

Mixing of uses among the floors of a multi-story building, such as upper-story residential units above ground-floor retail or office space, or incorporation of retail space into the street level of a multi-level parking garage.

Zero Lot Line Development

Placement of a building on a lot in such a manner that one or more of the building's sidewalls rests directly on a lot line (and all associated fire code requirements for such placement are met, involving either the design of common walls or minimum spacing between structures). This approach allows site design flexibility while increasing the quantity of usable open space on the lot. This is a common practice in smaller lot, patio home developments. Additionally, in a downtown setting, "zero lot line" zoning may require zero or minimal building setback from front, side, and/or rear lot lines to maintain an urban architectural environment.