



# Implementation Strategy

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## Introduction

This section clarifies and establishes parameters and priorities for the implementation of City Plan. The Implementation Strategy section includes recommendations for an approach to coordinating and aligning planning in Amarillo; a suggested approach for identifying and prioritizing public projects; guidance for updating the Plan; and a roadmap for tracking progress moving forward.

## Implementation Priorities

City Plan identifies five priorities on which to focus implementation efforts for the first five years: zoning code updates to align with the Complete Neighborhoods Scenario, incentives and tools for the redevelopment of older neighborhoods, infrastructure assessment and prioritization, neighborhood planning, and improving safety and connectivity for pedestrians. A list of action items is included below to track progress. At the five-year update of City Plan, it is expected that these items at a minimum will be completed, and a new list of priorities can be developed from the goals and recommendations to guide the next five years.

Short-Term Priority 1 & Action Items	Applicable Goals	Applicable Guiding Principles
<p><b>Update Zoning Code &amp; Development Policy Manual to align with City Plan Complete Neighborhoods Scenario.</b></p>	<p>N&amp;D1; N&amp;D2; N&amp;D3; CC1; CC2; CC3; M3; M5; P&amp;C2; P&amp;C3</p>	<p>1, 2, 4</p>
<p>1. As an administrative update to the City’s Zoning Code, adopt formatting from the 2022 draft revision without changes to development standards; this will establish a clean and clear baseline from which to address future substantive amendments.</p>		
<p>2. As part of an annual Future Land Use Map review process, conduct a review with landowners and developers on their plans related to housing and major infrastructure needs.</p>		
<p>3. Work with the community to implement Zoning Code revisions to enable more flexibility in constructing and leasing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).</p>		
<p>4. Work with the community on zoning code changes including setbacks and uses that will allow the appropriate missing middle housing options in Neighborhood Place Types.</p>		
<p>5. Work with commercial developers to adjust site development standards where more intense uses occur adjacent to residential areas including parking, building heights, landscaping, screening and sidewalk connectivity.</p>		
<p>6. Modify the Subdivision Ordinance to expedite the approval process and add parkland dedication requirements.</p>		
<p>7. Update the City’s Airport Overlay Ordinance to clarify regulations required for development related to wildlife hazards, noise and height</p>		
<p>8. Develop template for an Agreement for Public Facilities that contains developer responsibilities for the provision of developed parkland and CoA responsibilities for ongoing maintenance.</p>		
<p>9. Update the Schedule of Uses to incorporate mixed-use zoning districts.</p>		



Short-Term Priority 2 & Action Items	Applicable Goals	Applicable Guiding Principles
<p><b>Support and expand available tools to encourage reinvestment in older neighborhoods.</b></p>	<p>N&amp;D1; N&amp;D2; N&amp;D3; N&amp;D4; N&amp;D5; N&amp;D6; CC1; CC2; CC4; M1; M2; M3; M4; M5; P&amp;C4; P&amp;C5; P&amp;C6</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 5, 6</p>
<p>1. Continue to support existing special funding districts (TIRZs, PIDs, NEZ) and explore opportunities for BIDs.</p>		
<p>2. Promote the revitalization of historic commercial corridors and “main streets” through the Neighborhood Stabilization Strategy.</p>		
<p>3. Advertise and expand existing façade improvement and home repair programs, particularly for historic preservation and neighborhood stabilization.</p>		
<p>4. Create a program to help restore and replace iconic signage (including large sculptural signage and neon signage) along Route 66.</p>		
<p>5. Create voluntary design guidelines and pattern books to encourage historically appropriate rehabilitation and new construction for historic commercial corridors</p>		
<p>6. Work with Community Development through the Consolidated Plan to understand affordable housing funds available and community needs.</p>		
<p>7. Conduct an external assessment of housing needs and policy, developing a coordinated action plan to create a more balanced affordable and attainable housing eco-system in Amarillo.</p>		
<p>8. Strategically develop updated incentive programs that deliver quality affordable and attainable housing through private sector partnerships.</p>		

Short-Term Priority 3 & Action Items	Applicable Goals	Applicable Guiding Principles
<p><b>Create a comprehensive infrastructure improvement prioritization schedule and implementation strategy (or several, each addressing a specific type of infrastructure) to align funding allocation, such as CIP, TIP, and annual budgets.</b></p>	<p>N&amp;D3; N&amp;D6; CC1; M1; M2; M3; M4; M6; P&amp;C1; P&amp;C3</p>	<p>5, 6</p>
<p>1. Coordinate annually with Utilities and CIP on the Areas of Targeted Growth and Change.</p>		
<p>2. Complete a cost of service assessment for undeveloped land to inform infill policies.</p>		
<p>3. Prioritize infrastructure projects for federal grant funding that are consistent with Complete Neighborhoods Scenario.</p>		
<p>4. Align Level 2 plans (see page 114 for context) with City Plan for water, wastewater, streets and drainage.</p>		



Short-Term Priority 4 & Action Items	Applicable Goals	Applicable Guiding Principles
<p><b>Update existing Neighborhood Plans and establish a system for creating new Neighborhood Plan Areas.</b></p>	<p>All goals, especially CC2; CC4; M3; P&amp;C1; P&amp;C3; P&amp;C4</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>1. Continue to support and fund the Neighborhood Planning Initiative in partnership with Potter County.</p>		
<p>2. Establish baseline metrics to guide selection of future neighborhood plan areas and progress for existing plan areas.</p>		
<p>3. Align existing neighborhood plans with the Complete Neighborhoods Scenario and Neighborhood Stabilization Strategy.</p>		
<p>4. Incorporate infrastructure assessments into existing and future plans.</p>		

Short-Term Priority 5 & Action Items	Applicable Goals	Applicable Guiding Principles
<p><b>Improve the safety and quality of Amarillo’s pedestrian infrastructure, focusing on desired activity nodes including commercial and mixed use areas, parks, and schools.</b></p>	<p>N&amp;D1; CC1; CC2; CC4; M5; P&amp;C6</p>	<p>1, 5</p>
<p>1. Adopt Complete Streets, Vision Zero and Safe Streets and Roads for All policies.</p>		
<p>2. Complete pedestrian-friendly intersection improvements for ten priority locations.</p>		
<p>3. Develop a safety action plan with a list of prioritized capital projects.</p>		
<p>4. Adopt a thoroughfare plan that aligns with City Plan’s Complete Neighborhoods Scenario.</p>		
<p>5. Develop a sidewalk gap analysis for neighborhood plan areas and create an ongoing program to fund connectivity improvements.</p>		
<p>6. Modify street reconstruction standards to require increased pedestrian infrastructure and amenities along arterials.</p>		
<p>7. Develop options for citizen-driven traffic calming programs.</p>		

# Planning Approach

The following provides further articulation of an approach and hierarchy for aligning and guiding planning efforts in Amarillo. Upon adoption, City Plan is the new overarching policy document that directs the City’s long-range development efforts and the other types of plans critical to realizing the community’s vision and goals. The intent of this more clearly defined hierarchy is to ensure that planning at all levels in Amarillo is completed in an efficient and effective manner with meaningful participation and buy-in from individual residents, neighborhoods, property owners, business owners, partner agencies, major institutions and other key stakeholders. The four planning levels are summarized and described below:

Level	Plan Type	Example Plans
1	Comprehensive	<i>City Plan</i>
2	Citywide Strategic, System, and Functional or Action	<i>Parks &amp; Recreation Master Plan; Stormwater Master Plan; Arts &amp; Beautification Plan</i>
3	Neighborhood and District	<i>Downtown Master Plan; North Heights Neighborhood Plan; Barrio Neighborhood Plan; San Jacinto Neighborhood Plan; Eastridge Neighborhood Plan</i>
4	Specific	<i>Corridor Study or Plan; Site Master Plan; Campus Master Plan; Neighborhood Center Plan</i>

**Level 1** – The Comprehensive Plan is developed in collaboration with community members, departments across the City, elected and appointed officials, partner agencies, and other community and regional partners to provide the highest policy level guidance for future development and redevelopment, infrastructure improvements and other public investments, transportation and land use connections, and a host of factors contributing to quality of life, affordability, equity and sustainability.

**Level 2** – Citywide and Countywide Strategic, System and Functional/Action Plans direct specialized components of city planning and implementation, such as transportation, economic development, parks and recreation, housing, natural resources and sustainability. City-wide plans that address a specific system or topic must align with and support the vision, goals, policies, and place guidance in City Plan.

Citywide plans typically come in two varieties, although variations exist and sometimes the two primary types of plans are combined. Strategic Plans build on the higher-level policy guidance and direction set in the Level 1 Comprehensive Plan and set more specific goals, objectives, policy direction and performance measures/ metrics for a specific topic with consideration for the entire City.

System and Functional/Action Plans are guided by the Comprehensive Plan and applicable Strategic Plans and identify and prioritize a particular type of community investment or service. These plans involve analysis and typically the definition, mapping and listing of specific projects. Most System and Functional/Action Plans also include phasing and funding strategies.

As Strategic, System and Functional/Action Plans are updated in the coming years, there are several ways they can incorporate direction provided by City Plan, including:

- Aligning with and prioritizing the Plan’s vision, guiding principles, goals, and policies
- Utilizing updated projections for population, housing units, and employment
- Basing new and updated infrastructure investments on the Complete Neighborhoods Scenario
- Developing tailored standards and guidelines for various areas of the community utilizing Place Types to inform organization and content
- Evaluating and prioritizing specific projects and programs using the Plan’s objectives and metrics

In addition, Strategic, System and Functional/Action Plans should evaluate, coordinate and incorporate specific direction for systems and topics provided by adopted Area Plans (see below).

**Level 3** – Neighborhood and District Plans provide detailed strategies and recommendations regarding land use, neighborhood character, other aspects of built form, transportation, infrastructure, parks, recreation, open space, and facilities for sub-geographies of the City. The purpose of Neighborhood and District Plans is to engage and unite neighborhoods to plan their own communities within a framework that efficiently and effectively uses the resources available to ensure the entire City has neighborhood level input and guidance for more specific localized recommendations.

**Level 4** – Specific Plans address smaller scale, targeted geographies and are focused on implementation. They should be guided by higher order plans (Levels 1, 2 and 3 above), but generally focus on further conceptualizing, planning and sometimes designing a specific small geography. Thus, the System and Functional/Action Plans and Area Plans typically provide the relevant guidance and direction for a single large property, a grouping of properties, or a place. Prioritization of Specific Plan efforts should be informed by City Plan’s Complete Neighborhoods Scenario and associated Place Types framework.

### Leveraging & Aligning Systematic & Functional Plans

One of the most important outcomes for the City Plan process will be the alignment of the City’s Level 2 plans with the community’s vision for growth. This will result in a coordinated strategy for infrastructure better supporting private investment in the areas where it is planned and desired.

Alignment of these plans requires coordination among the Public Works, Parks, Utilities, and Capital Projects and Development Engineering departments. The following table illustrates the recommended steps towards achieving alignment. The goal is to accomplish this by the 5-year update of City Plan in 2029.

Department	Plan/Initiative	Time-frame
Utilities	Asset Management Plan	Year 1
All	Annexation Analysis - cost benefit/ cost implication of development	Year 1
Utilities	Targeted Infrastructure Analysis for Neighborhood Plan Areas	Year 2
Utilities	Cost of Service Assesment for Undeveloped Land	Year 2
Utilities	Water Master Plan Update	Year 1-2
Utilities	Sewer Master Plan Update	Year 2-3
Parks	Parks Master Plan Update	Year 2-3
CP&DE	Community Investment Program Annual (CIP)	Annually
CP&DE	Partnership for Development Progress/ Infrastructure Funding	Year 4

### Leveraging & Aligning Neighborhood Plans

Amarillo has four adopted Neighborhood Plans (Level 3). These include the Barrio, Eastridge, North Heights, and San Jacinto Neighborhoods – illustrated in the map to the right. With the adoption of City Plan, these Neighborhood Plans should be updated to align with City Plan’s Complete Neighborhoods Scenario. These Neighborhood Plan updates – as well as any new Neighborhood Plan areas – should also be leveraged to provide more nuanced policy direction at a focused, localized level.

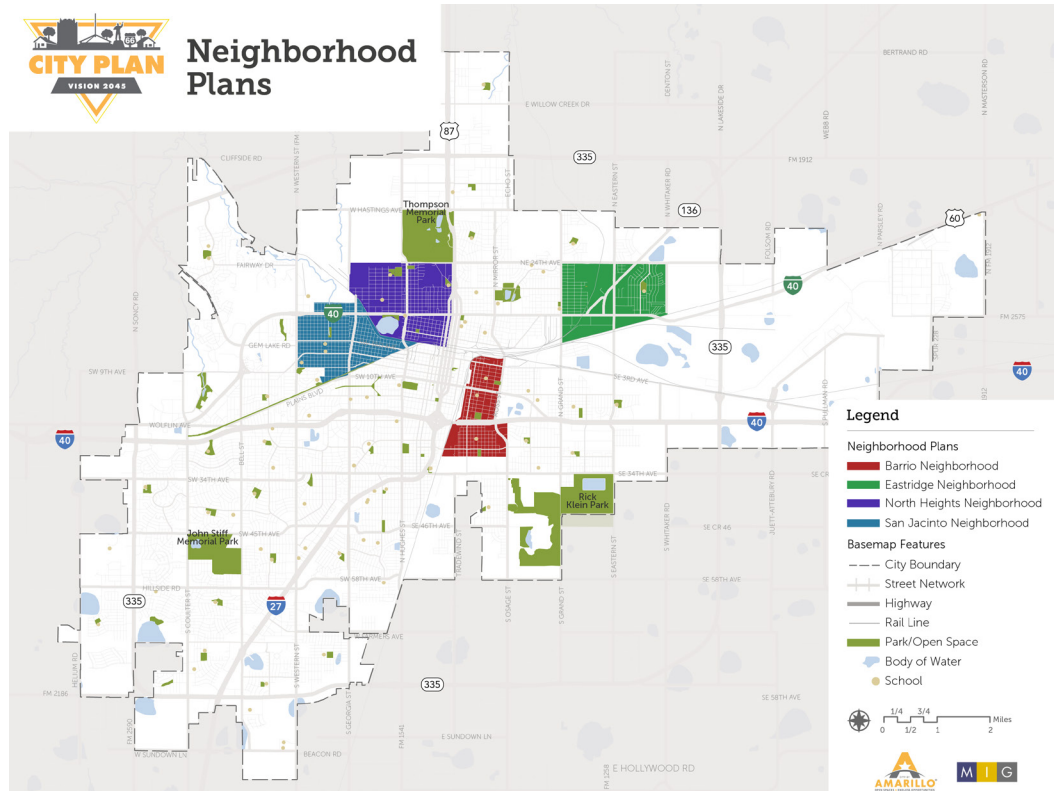
Neighborhood Plans should protect and enhance Amarillo’s neighborhoods by clarifying and uplifting unique character and identity and pinpointing actionable strategies for achieving desired outcomes. Neighborhood



Plans provide a platform for locally specific analysis and meaningful conversation between neighbors that isn't possible at the comprehensive, city-wide level.

Going forward, all Neighborhood Plans should include the following components:


1. Community engagement strategy and report of methods and findings
2. Existing conditions assessment
  - a. History
  - b. Zoning and current land use
  - c. Demographics
  - d. Businesses and jobs (as applicable)
  - e. Community character and cultural resources
  - f. Housing
  - g. Transportation and infrastructure capacity
3. Interpretation and relevance of City Plan Guiding Principles and Goals specific to the neighborhood
4. Neighborhood vision and goals (building from City Plan)
5. Analysis and refinement of City Plan Complete Neighborhoods Scenario and Place Types for the neighborhood
6. Implementation
  - a. Complete Neighborhoods Scenario relationship to Zoning Code & Development Standards
  - b. Transformative projects



- c. Infrastructure and priorities for CIP
- d. Capacity, partnerships, and funding
- e. Implementation matrix, including short-term priorities

Updates to the existing Neighborhood Plans will be a critical tool for implementing the Neighborhood Stabilization Strategy as these areas cover much of the land use incompatibilities we see leading to neighborhood decline and disinvestment. Thus, Neighborhood Plan updates should be prioritize before the pursuit of any new Neighborhood Plan area.

The area surrounding Rick Husband International Airport in East Amarillo is a high priority location to establish new Neighborhood Area Planning boundaries and proceed with a new planning process for that area. Ultimately, it would be beneficial to have adopted Neighborhood Plans for every area within Amarillo.



When determining Neighborhood Plan area boundaries, the following factors should be weighed and considered:

- Acreage similar to existing Neighborhood Plan areas
- Population similar to existing Neighborhood Plan areas
- Natural dividers such as changes in land use, character, or major roadways

When it comes to prioritizing the development of future Neighborhood Plans, the following factors should be weighed and considered:

- Trends of recent change (e.g. population, demographics, jobs or industries, development, vacancies, etc.)
- Historic trends of inequity (e.g. demographics, infrastructure or amenity investments, environmental justice, access to amenities such as schools, parks, grocery, etc.)
- Vulnerability to displacement (e.g. population living in poverty or housing cost burdened, eviction cases)
- Proposed developments and market conditions
- Proportion of land identified as targeted areas for growth and change (e.g. vacant land, Place Type change, Neighborhood Stabilization properties)
- Community eagerness and champion resident(s) ready to roll up their sleeves
- Strategic groupings of 2-4 Neighborhood Plan areas with similar characteristics, geographic adjacencies or other reasons for conducting the planning process in parallel

## City Plan Amendments & Updates

*City Plan Vision 2045* is meant to be a living document that is responsive to changing conditions over time. Plan amendments and periodic updates will be necessary to keep the Plan relevant as priorities shift, actions are completed, and new issues and opportunities emerge.

City Plan will reintroduce a Future Land Use Map Amendment process. The intent is to maintain the integrity of the Complete Neighborhoods Scenario, while also allowing for the desired flexibility for future growth patterns that may be impacted by unforeseen circumstances such as market conditions.

### Minor Amendments

Minor amendments are encouraged as part of an annual review process by the Planning Department and may be proposed for routine text or graphics changes that do not affect plan goals or policies. Minor amendments are authorized to be approved by the Planning Director who must find that the change is justified because:

- There is a clerical error existing in the text;
- There is evidence that an error exists in the mapped location of a geographical feature, including without limitation, topography, slopes, hydrographic features, wetland delineations, and floodplains;
- The name of a jurisdiction, agency, department, or district by the City, governing board or other governing authority, or other entities is altered; or
- Baseline data or statistical information included in the Plan is out of date and new information is available.

### Major Amendments: Five-Year Updates

The Comprehensive Plan should be evaluated for major amendments at least every five years to ensure the Plan remains current and meets the community's needs. Major amendments may be triggered by the need to:

- Update key data points and re-evaluate trends related to demographics, housing, economic development, growth and development activity, and other important factors;
- Affirm the Plan's vision, goals, and policies in total or regarding a particular topic or issue; and/or
- Re-evaluate implementation strategies contained in the Plan

A major update to the Plan should include opportunities for involvement by the public, City staff, elected officials, and other relevant or affected stakeholders.



## Complete Neighborhoods Scenario Land Use Map Amendment Process

Amendments to the Future Land Use Map, also referred to in the Plan as the Complete Neighborhoods Scenario Map, are expected to primarily occur as part of the development process for the following applications:

- Annexations
- Preliminary Plans
- Rezonings

Developer-initiated map amendments will be considered and acted on as they arise with these applications. A Future Land Use Map Amendment application will be required as a separate submittal with annexations and preliminary plans. It will be incorporated into the existing rezoning application and review process.

Changes to the Future Land Use Map that are not developer-initiated should be considered through a comprehensive Annual Map Amendment Review. These changes shall be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission for recommendation to City Council for approval.

The map amendment review for both developer-initiated and the Annual Map Amendment Review shall be guided by the following criteria to avoid site-specific plan changes that may negatively impact adjacent areas and uses or detract from the overall character of the area:

- Consistency with the goals and policies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan, as well as the intent and policies of any applicable small area plans, or other City plans.
- Expanding opportunities for a greater diversity of housing options and/ or economic opportunities for Amarillo residents.
- Compatibility with the surrounding area in terms of land use density and intensity, and the overall mix of land uses.
- Impact on infrastructure provision including water, wastewater, drainage, and the transportation network.
- Impact on the City's ability to provide, fund and maintain services.

### KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS SCENARIO MAP

In addition to the Map Amendment Process criteria above, the following factors should be considered when a Future Land Use Map adjustment is proposed:

**Timing:** The amendment is necessary immediately as with a particular rezoning request or it can wait to be comprehensively reviewed through the Annual Map Amendment Review.

**Scope:** The proposed map change is limited to one or few parcels or affects a large area.

**Change in Conditions:** Specific conditions have changed sufficiently to render the current map designation(s) inappropriate or out-of-date. This may include significant changes to population characteristics, area character and building form, property conditions, infrastructure or public services, or market factors initiating a need for more land in a particular Place Type.

**Adequate Information:** City staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and/or City Council have appropriate information to move ahead with a decision. Relevant information may include a utility capacity analysis, potential traffic impacts, other public service implications, and community concerns and input.

**Community Input:** Opportunities for community input have been provided and concerns raised by residents, property owners, business owners, or other community members have been addressed.

- Impact on environmentally sensitive and natural areas.
- Whether the proposed amendment contributes to the overall direction and character of the community and the surrounding neighborhood or area as described in the Plan.

# Alternatives to Parkland Dedication Requirements

## COMMENTARY

The draft Parks and Cultural Resources Element of the updated Comprehensive Plan recommends that, “Developers shall provide a minimum of 2.2 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents for neighborhood and community parks or pay fees in-lieu.” This section explores possible strategies for the City to explore to supplement this recommendation, based on a review of requirements in other rapidly growing communities. The Amarillo Parks and Recreation Master Plan identifies four categories of parks: regional parks, community parks, neighborhood parks, and other parks. Open space and recreational facilities are included as a subset of these park categories.

Traditional parkland dedication requirements aim to provide residents with sufficient access to recreational space by requiring developers to either dedicate land for park use and/or pay a fee in-lieu of dedication that can then be used by the municipality to construct parks. As communities grow, parkland dedication requirements help prevent the existing park system from becoming overburdened with the addition of new residents. However, continuing to build new parks and expand the system while also ensuring that parks and recreation facilities in older parts of the community are well maintained is a challenge that many communities struggle to balance.

The City is responsible for an extensive parks system with costs far outpacing the budget of The Parks and Recreation Department. While the City of Amarillo has performed well with the amount of parkland allocated throughout the City, maintenance and asset management of public parks was rated as ‘poor/failing’ according to the 2021 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Many communities have adopted—or are exploring—new ways to satisfy park and common open space requirements while ensuring residents still have access to quality, outdoor spaces, and recreation. This section outlines a series of options that the City of Amarillo could consider to help augment current parkland dedication goals, based on a review of requirements in other fast-growing communities in Texas and other parts of the country. These options are intended to:

- Reduce the strain put on the City’s limited financial and staffing capabilities.
- Mitigate future impacts of land becoming scarcer as the population of Amarillo grows.
- Broaden the type of areas that can count toward private common open space to provide greater flexibility for developers to meet land dedication requirements.
- Increase access to high-quality, recreational spaces in underserved areas of Amarillo.
- Tailor parkland dedication and improvements to the recreational needs of residents based locational context and specific neighborhood characteristics, as informed by the Complete Neighborhoods Scenario Map.

## Option 1: Public Park Improvement in lieu of Park Development Fees

Park improvements are highly valued by the community as described throughout the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Additionally, there is a strong desire by residents to see more investment in existing parkland. Increased investment in parks throughout Amarillo was supported by 69% of survey respondents and the top two investment priorities were identified as 1) maintain or replace older park amenities and 2) Expand or improve athletic facilities.

To help address park and recreation needs in established areas of Amarillo and build community support for infill and redevelopment, this option would require a developer to construct improvements to existing parks or recreation facilities in the immediate area of the proposed development in lieu of constructing a new park. This option would only apply in locations where unimproved parkland is not available. Improvements



## COMMENTARY

The 2023 Texas State Legislature passed new regulations on how cities may collect parkland dedication (PLD) fees. While House Bill (HB) 1526 does not apply to Amarillo as it stands, the City Attorney would need to review and weigh in on any of the proposed options to ensure they are consistent with state law.

## COMMENTARY

While the City would have the option of using fees-in-lieu collected for the types of park improvements outlined here, this option seeks to create a more direct link between infill and redevelopment and the need for neighborhood improvements that serve both existing and new residents. A mechanism for calibrating the value of the “improvement” with the proposed development would be needed.

Additionally, public park improvement in lieu of park development fees would help implement goals within the City Plan’s housing and neighborhood stabilization goals. For example, this option would help implement N&D Goal 3: *Revitalize and encourage infill housing in existing neighborhoods*; specifically its third recommendation:

*Support and expand programs that encourage reinvestment in existing homes and neighborhoods, foster the stabilization of transitional neighborhoods, and support home ownership.*

would be tied to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan priorities for that location, as defined in in Table 15: Phased Priority Actions, the needs assessment in Table C-1: Neighborhood-Serving Park Residential Area Gap, and Table C-2: Other Recreation or Greenspace in Gap Areas, or identified in collaboration with the affected neighborhood.

## Community Involvement in Identifying Needed Park Improvements

In conjunction with Option 1, the City should establish a process for community involvement associated with proposed infill development or redevelopment. A similar strategy is already identified within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which states “Expand efforts to engage community members in the design of new and existing (renovated) parks. Use a mix of online outreach, focus groups with stakeholders, and events at or near the site to garner feedback from the community” (Appendix D, pg. 5). This strategy could be tailored to require a developer to consult with the surrounding community prior to introducing

## COMMENTARY

This option would help address the following goals and objectives in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

*Goal 2: Create Context-Sensitive Parks*

*Objective 2.4: Adopt acquisition, design, and development guidelines to guide park renovation and new park development. Coordinate these guidelines with parkland dedication and fee-in-lieu requirements.*

*Goal 3: Ensure Equitable Park Access*

*Objective 3.1: Adopt park standards and guidelines that ensure the balanced and equitable distribution of parks and facilities.*

*Objective 3.4: Provide parks to serve new residential development.*

Creating an option for community involvement in identifying needed park improvements would also help implement other recommendations under City Plan’s N&D Goal 3: *Revitalize and encourage infill housing in existing neighborhoods*; specifically its sixth recommendation:

*Support the creation and efforts of community development organizations that can lead focused reinvestment efforts in neighborhoods through use of tools and powers not available to the City.*

improvements, which can also be helpful for garnering neighborhood support for the proposed development. Providing avenues for community engagement would be especially important in neighborhoods where the City is targeting redevelopment efforts. The goals and strategies of any applicable neighborhood plan should also be incorporated in the decision-making process. Ultimately, proposed improvements should be approved by the Director of Parks and Recreation.

## Option 2: Expanding the Definition of Parkland and Allowing Credit for Private Common Open Space Set-Asides

Expanding the definition of parkland dedication requirements to include private common open space and allowing credit for common open space set-asides is a strategy that many fast-growing communities are considering to help address some of the maintenance and parkland distribution challenges that Amarillo is facing. Defining and allowing open space set-asides to count toward the parkland dedication requirement provides two specific advantages: 1) It is a more flexible approach that allows the types of park facilities that are provided to be tailored to surrounding development context and the needs of the immediate community; and 2) Where appropriate, it can be used to relieve the City of the responsibility of maintaining certain facilities. In contrast to public parks that are intended to be accessible to the public, open space set-asides are intended for the use of a development's residents.

Facility types should be tailored to the locational characteristics of the proposed development, Parks and Recreation Master Plan priorities for the area, and the recreational need of residents. The table beginning on page 123 provides examples of alternative facilities that can help satisfy common open space requirements in different areas of Amarillo, based on Place Type. For example, mixed-use areas like those within the Neighborhood – High and Neighborhood Mixed-Use Place Types may not be near large open spaces, public parks, or greenbelts, or have land available for new parks, so thinking creatively and expanding the type of facility that can count as an open space set-aside is needed.

## COMMENTARY

Apopka, Florida and Clark County, Nevada both recently adopted common open space requirements as part of their land use regulations. Similar strategies are also being considered by New Braunfels, Texas, and Addison, Texas as part of major development code updates.

## Transfer of Ownership, Management, and Maintenance of Private Common Open Space Set Asides

The ownership, management, and maintenance of private common open space within subdivision communities should be transferred to private entities who would be responsible for the costs associated with maintaining these spaces. Possible options include:

**Homeowner's Associations:** Because most subdivision neighborhoods are subject to the enforcement of covenants by Homeowner's Associations, transferring ownership of common open space set asides in-, adjacent to-, or in close proximity to these neighborhoods to the HOA, (if they are willing to accept responsibility) is an option when a new development is dedicating land for common open space. The HOA would be responsible for managing and maintaining the land for its intended open space purposes. This option would also apply to indoor facilities, such as community rooms.

**Civic or Environmental Organizations:** Another option would be conveying open space areas to a third-party beneficiary such as an environmental or civic organization that is capable of, and willing to accept responsibility for managing and maintaining the land for open space purposes.

**Establishment of easements:** Lastly, easements on parts of individually owned lots that include common open space areas can require that areas prohibit any inconsistent future development and be managed consistently with the land's intended open space purposes.



## Park Dedication Distance Considerations

Amarillo should strive to meet the industry standard set by the NRPA and TPL. If a proposed residential development (single family or multi-family) is not within a half-mile distance of an existing park, then the developer should be required to build a new park instead of exercising the fee-in-lieu option. This should be prioritized in “high need” areas where residents have a greater need for parks within walking distance as identified in the Park Access and Gaps analysis of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The size of the park and the park classification will depend on the proposed development’s size as described in the ‘Level of Service Guidelines’ within Appendix E Recommended Park Dedication Requirements of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. While the ‘Level of Service Guidelines’ indicate size requirements for different classifications of parks (e.g. Small Neighborhood Parks in new developments should be approx. 2-3 acres in size), more targeted guidance by the Parks and Recreation staff should be considered for determining what type of park developers should be required to construct. Additionally, the City could allow developers to construct a portion of the required acreage for different classifications of parks and permit any combination of the alternative facilities in the following table to count toward the remaining required acreage. Master Plan identifies priority actions for both ‘Scaled-Back Neighborhood Parks’ and ‘New Parks’ — distance guidelines should be tailored to these priority actions.

### COMMENTARY

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan mentions a similar approach of private ownership and maintenance for parkland dedication requirements. Appendix E Recommended Park Dedication Requirements states:

*At the applicant’s request, the City may approve compliance through other alternatives as noted in the City’s Dedication Ordinance. For example, improved acreage for **Neighborhood Parks may remain in private ownership**, by the property owner’s grant of an easement ensuring ongoing maintenance and continued public access to the land for the park purposes.*

### COMMENTARY

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes the following park service distance guidelines for new parks:

- *Small Neighborhood Parks should be located not further than one (1) mile from any single-family lot. The City shall strive to provide small neighborhood parks within one-half (1/2) mile from multi-family units on the proposed subdivision plat, as measured along public road or pedestrian ways.*
- *Large Neighborhood Parks should be located not further than two (2) miles from any lot on the proposed subdivision plat, as measured along public road or pedestrian ways.*
- *Community Parks (either multi-purpose or special use) should be located not further than four (4) miles from any lot on the proposed subdivision plat, as measured along public roads.*

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan notes that only 46% of Amarillo residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park. Providing all residents with a park within a 10-minute walk - approximately one half of a mile - is the industry standard championed by The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL). The Master Plan notes that Amarillo’s 2012 adopted standard to provide parks within a 20-minute walk - approximately one mile - is partly why the City falls short on meeting the NRPA and TPL standard.

## Alternative Facilities for Parkland Dedication

Facility Type	Description	Place Type *	Design & Maintenance Requirements	New Development/ Redevelopment **
<b>More Desirable Areas</b>				
<b>Parks &amp; Recreation Facilities</b>	Facilities and areas used for active recreation such as tennis courts, pools, playgrounds, basketball courts, sports complexes, clubhouses, public running tracks,, picnic areas, pocket parks, and Parks and Recreation facilities.	NL, <sup>1</sup> NM, NH, IN	Residents of the proposed development should have direct access to the facility through either a public walkway or road. Features, such as picnic areas, may be restricted for use only to residents of the development.	This option would be most suitable in areas of <b>new development</b> that may be in proximity to areas that support active recreation. If these facilities are introduced in areas of redevelopment, they may be helpful reinvestment strategies for the stabilization of transitional neighborhoods. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Trails &amp; Greenways</b>	Multi-modal trails (soft and hard surface) and greenways. Trails and greenways can enhance connectivity between neighborhoods, which can improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, shorten lengths of trips, and encourage non-motorized transportation. <sup>3</sup>	NL, MN, NH, CMU	To the extent possible, access to trails and greenways should be public.	This option would be most appropriate in areas of <b>new development</b> that may be in proximity to suitable areas for trail and greenway construction. According to the Parks and Rec. Master Plan, there is one existing off-street trail in Amarillo, which appears to be disconnected from adjacent residential areas. The lack of trails and greenways represents a prime opportunity to encourage developers to deliver this highly desired amenity. <sup>4</sup>

\*Only Place Types with residential uses were considered for alternative facilities for parkland dedication because of the City's goal to prevent new residential uses within industrial areas.

\*\*New development includes 'greenfield' development on undeveloped land at the edge of the community. Redevelopment includes infill development on vacant lots in established areas of the community or the redevelopment of underutilized or vacant buildings in established areas of the community.

<sup>1</sup> The specific location of a development will ultimately guide which facility type is most appropriate. For example, a low-density subdivision closer to the city center may be able to consider facilities found in higher-density areas like courtyards, squares, and plazas.

<sup>2</sup> Further clarification is needed to effectively integrate neighborhood stabilization recommendations into the most appropriate alternative facilities for parkland dedication.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the demand for trails is high and has grown substantially since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given over thirty percent of Amarillo residents consider building more trails and paths as a top funding priority, this amenity should be prioritized in appropriate proposed developments.

<sup>4</sup> The value of trails and greenways for neighborhood connectivity and accessibility can be seen in The Greenways subdivision. Trails transform what would otherwise be dead-end cul-de-sacs into nodes of connectivity, linking residents to the parkway and the entire neighborhood. Compared to other alternative facilities, trails and greenways would have the greatest impact in implementing the mobility goals outlined in the City Plan.



## Alternative Facilities for Parkland Dedication

Facility Type	Description	Place Type *	Design & Maintenance Requirements	New Development/ Redevelopment **
<b>Squares, Forecourts, and Plazas</b>	Courtyards, public squares, roof decks and outdoor dining areas within or in close proximity to the development that provide active or passive recreational opportunities.	NM, NH, NMU, CMU, IN	Standards can ensure facilities provide sufficient recreational opportunity. For example, Amarillo could mandate facilities must meet a certain size, e.g., facilities should be at least 200 square feet, but no more than one acre, in area.	This option would be most suitable in areas of <b>redevelopment</b> that may be within or in proximity to denser residential areas. The Master Plan found that denser residential areas are less likely to have private outdoor space and more need for a neighborhood park. Expanding the type of facilities in these areas can help increase access to recreational space.
<b>Indoor Community Rooms and Gathering Spaces</b>	Indoor community rooms or other gathering spaces within proposed developments.	NM, NH, NMU	Facilities may be required to contain certain elements to be considered appropriate recreational space (e.g., tables, games).	This may be appropriate in both <b>new development</b> and <b>redevelopment</b> given the facility is within the proposed development.
<b>Garden Facilities</b>	Neighborhood community gardens or other forms of urban agriculture, such as rooftop gardens, formal plantings or gardens, and gazebos, that provide passive recreational opportunities.	NL, NM, NH, NMU	Size requirements similar to squares, forecourts, and plazas, should be considered for community gardens and formal plantings to help ensure they provide sufficient recreational opportunities.	Community gardens and formal plantings are likely to be most appropriate in areas of <b>redevelopment</b> . These amenities may be helpful reinvestment strategies for the stabilization of transitional neighborhoods.

## Les Desirable Areas

<b>Natural Resource and Hazard Area</b>	Natural water features like lakes, playas, ponds, rivers, streams, drainageways, riparian buffers, and flood hazard areas.	NL, NM, NH, NMU, CMU, RMU, CP, IN	Standards should apply to make these features appropriate open space alternatives. This can include requiring that areas provide access and amenities like pedestrian elements, such as walking paths and benches.	Appropriate in both <b>new development</b> and <b>redevelopment</b> .
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## Alternative Facilities for Parkland Dedication

Facility Type	Description	Place Type *	Design & Maintenance Requirements	New Development/ Redevelopment **
<b>Management Areas Treated as Site Amenities</b>	Land area occupied by stormwater management devices including retention and detention ponds and other bioretention devices, and drainage easements when treated as an open space site amenity.	NL, NM, NH, NMU, CMU, RMU, CP, IN	To qualify, facilities should support passive recreation uses by providing access and amenities like pedestrian elements, such as walking paths and benches. Stormwater management devices without landscaping and amenities, or that are surrounded by fencing, may be eligible for a lower percent credit in satisfying parkland requirements. <sup>5</sup>	Appropriate in both <b>new development</b> and <b>redevelopment</b> .
<b>Required Buffer and Landscape Areas</b>	All areas occupied by required buffers and landscaping, such as landscaped areas, perimeter buffers, vegetative screens, riparian buffers beside interior parking lot landscaping, and planting strips between the sidewalk and street.	NL, NM, NH, NMU, CMU, RMU, CP, IN	This alternative facility should be considered <b>lowest priority/ desirability</b> because of their limited ability to support recreational opportunities.	Appropriate in both <b>new development</b> and <b>redevelopment</b> .

### Option 3: Parkland Dedications for Commercial Development

Parkland dedications are traditionally implemented for development that includes residential units only. However, cities with strong economic growth are also starting to consider parkland dedication requirements for commercial uses, since employees and businesses also benefit from quality public parkland spaces and contribute to increasing needs and impact on level of service.

As an emerging concept, additional research, community outreach, and due diligence will be necessary to ensure that the pursuit of any such strategy is fair and legal. Per National legal precedent and Texas state law, development impact requirements must prove a rational and proportional nexus between the dedication requirement imposed and the expected impact of the development. While this standard applies to all types of development impact requirements, the calculation

<sup>5</sup>As part of their Unified Development Code update, New Braunfels, TX is considering design standards for stormwater management areas to include elements like paths and benches in order for them to qualify for 100 percent credit toward common open space requirements.





## CASE STUDY: INTRODUCING FLEXIBILITY TO TRADITIONAL COMMON OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS

APOKA, FL

Apopka, Florida’s Land Development Code features the modifications to standard common open space dedication requirements outlined in Option 2. The City provides a menu of facility types that may be counted toward minimum open space dedication requirements by land use classification. These include:

- Natural Features
- Active Recreational Areas
- Passive Recreation (Including Plantings and Gardens)
- Squares, Forecourts, and Plazas
- Required Landscape Areas and Agricultural Buffer
- Stormwater Management Areas Treated as Site Amenities
- Public Access Easements with Paths or Trails

Apopka’s development code also includes design standards for open space set-aside areas that specify requirements for location, configuration, orientation of adjacent buildings, and prioritization of open space set-aside features. Second, Apopka specifies that the ownership, management, and maintenance of open space set-asides should be through one or more of the following:

- Conveyance to a property owners’ or homeowners’ association.
- Conveyance to a third-party beneficiary such as a civic or environmental organization.
- Establishment of easements on those parts of individually owned lots including open space set-aside areas that require the areas to be managed consistent with the land’s intended open space purposes.

A similar transfer of ownership, management, and maintenance of open space set-asides to private entities is also being done in McKinney, Texas.

## CASE STUDY: INTRODUCING COMMERCIAL PARKLAND DEDICATION

AUSTIN, TX

In 2022, the City of Austin adopted new parkland dedication requirements for commercial development. The new requirement was based on a robust nexus study, and included:

- impact calculations defined by expected “functional population” = (proposed sqft/employee density for use class) x (occupancy of use class) x (operation hours of use class) x (commuter workforce rate)

- fee in lieu and park development fee options

However, in 2023 the State issued HB1526 that banned parkland dedication requirements for commercial land uses in large cities over 800,000 residents. While this law would not apply to Amarillo, it is possible that the state could choose to extend the law to smaller cities. This new legislation was grounded in concerns that dedication impact requirements may contribute to increased development costs, and thus consumer costs.

and documentation processes are not as established for commercial uses as they are for residential, thus necessitating more careful consideration and study.

The City should pursue changes to parkland dedication requirements for residential uses before exploring the possibility of applying parkland dedication requirements

to commercial development. The potential strategies presented in Options 2 & 3 may also be considered for commercial development parkland dedication.

## Connection to Zoning Code & Development Standards

City Plan’s Complete Neighborhood Scenario provides clear policy direction for future land use and development outcomes. The City’s development and design regulations – found within Title IV of the Code of Ordinances – are the primary tools available for implementing and achieving those outcomes, namely the Zoning Code. These existing regulations and standards already support City Plan’s policies in many ways. However, the addition of new Zoning Districts and minor updates to existing Districts or standards will be necessary to fully align the suite of development options provided within the Zoning Code with the intent of City Plan’s Place Types. Through meaningful public engagement, it will be the City’s responsibility to make these adjustments to the Code. The table provided on the following page illustrates which of the City’s current Zoning Districts can be applied to City Plan’s Place Types and identifies gaps where new Districts or overlay regulations should be created. The City should conduct a more detailed and comprehensive assessment of the Zoning Code to identify any specific conflicts as well as gaps or revisions necessary to bring the existing Zone Districts and City Plan into alignment.

While the City will initiate Zoning Code revisions to ensure alignment with City Plan, the City will not implement top-down changes to the specific zoning designation of individual parcels in Amarillo (i.e. the Zoning Map). Expressed through previous planning efforts, and reiterated through the City Plan process, many property owners and residents in Amarillo value having maximum choice and control when it comes to development potential and zoning changes. Thus, it will be the sole responsibility of individual property owners to voluntarily seek rezoning. City staff, the Planning & Zoning Commission, and the Zoning Board of Adjustment will be responsible for ensuring that any zoning change requests comply with the intent and recommendations of City Plan.

Neighborhood Planning – as described in the first section of this chapter – will serve as a key mechanism and opportunity for residents and property owners to collectively assess the current conditions and future desires for their specific neighborhood. While Neighborhood Plans will not require or dictate zoning changes, these focused planning efforts may help to

clarify or reimagine each neighborhood’s identity and inspire property owners to collectively seek rezoning for both individual and community benefit.

Place Type	Zoning Districts
Neighborhood Low (NL)	A, R-1, R-2, R-3, MH
Neighborhood Medium (NM)	R-3, MH, MD, MF-1
Neighborhood High (NH)	MF-2
Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU)	MD, MF-1, O-1, NS, new district or overlay required
Community Mixed Use (CMU)	MD, MF-1, O-1, O-2, NS, new district or overlay required
Regional Mixed Use (RMU)	MF-2, O-2, GR, CB, HC, new district or overlay required
Commercial (CM)	O-1, O-2, GR, CB, LC, HC
Campus (CP)	O-2, GR, CB, LC, HC, new district or overlay required
Innovation (IN)	MF-2, O-2, GR, CB, LC, HC, I-1, new district or overlay required
Manufacturing & Logistics (ML)	I-1, I-2
Parks & Open Space (POS)	new district or overlay required to preserve parks and open spaces
Reserve (R)	any district but mostly A; new POS district could also be applied

(A more detailed assessment regarding zone district alignment with Place Types is provided in the Appendices).

## Regulatory Tools and Incentives

The following strategies are recommended to improve alignment between City Plan and the City’s Zoning Code and Development Standards. Strategies may be mixed and matched based on need and available resources. More detailed recommendations provided in support of specific goals throughout City Plan should be referenced as strategies are implemented.



## Reorganize and Reformat Existing Code and Development Policy Manual

Amarillo’s Zoning Code is antiquated and difficult to navigate. When the City initiated a comprehensive overhaul of its Zoning Ordinance and development regulations in 2019, one of the key objectives of the process was to make the Zoning Code more user-friendly. The draft Zoning Code that was brought forward for public review in 2022 represented a substantial effort on the part of the City to establish a modern set of regulations that could be easily understood by staff, elected and appointed officials, the development community, and lay people. A substantial amount of time and resources were invested in this effort.

While the draft Zoning Code was ultimately not adopted in 2022 due to a lack of public support for some of the substantive changes that were proposed, a substantial portion of the draft Zoning Code is comprised of existing regulations. As a first step following the adoption of City Plan, the City should initiate a process to revisit the draft Zoning Code with the intent of removing controversial recommendations and simply adopting a clean, modern, and user-friendly version of what’s on the books today. The successful completion of this process would make the development process more efficient and predictable and lay the groundwork for the future adoption of voluntary measures outlined in this section.

## Consider Targeted Code Amendments to Support Neighborhood Stabilization

Encouraging the stabilization of older, single-family neighborhoods in Amarillo that are currently zoned commercial or industrial uses is a key focus of City Plan’s Land Use Framework. In particular, properties zoned Heavy Commercial, Light Industrial-1, and Heavy Industrial-2 are non-conforming and at risk of encroachment. The City is committed to working with neighborhood residents, as well as business and property owners, to document priorities at the neighborhood level and to help develop and implement neighborhood plans. Opportunities to support the implementation of neighborhood priorities within the Zoning Code may include, but are not limited to:

- The adoption of use-specific standards to promote compatible infill development in mixed neighborhoods, or to limit the introduction of new (heavier) uses that may have a negative impact on existing residents.


- Rezoning portions of neighborhoods that are targeted for stabilization, predominantly residential in use and character (despite being zoned commercial or industrial), and where a majority of property owners support a transition from commercial or industrial zoning to residential zoning.
- Establishing residential adjacency standards to address concerns regarding uses, noise, parking, lighting, height and massing transitions (shading), hours of operation, and the siting of trash and HVAC systems where more intense uses are proposed in or adjacent to neighborhoods that are targeted for stabilization.
- Establishing a neighborhood stabilization overlay (template) that addresses common compatibility considerations, but that can be customized through the neighborhood planning process.

Pursuit of any of the options above would be voluntary and would require a collaborative process. The process would be triggered through the adoption of a neighborhood plan (or a neighborhood-initiated request for areas that already have a neighborhood plan in place, and would require support from a majority of the property owners in the area.

## Adopt Floating Mixed-Use Zone Districts

Adopting floating or “unmapped” districts is one strategy that communities use to support the implementation of adopted plans and policies in situations where a gap in the existing lineup of districts exists, and where proactive rezonings are not feasible. Several new zone districts were proposed as part of the 2022 draft Zoning Code to fill gaps in Amarillo’s current Zoning Code, and some of these gaps remain based on the Complete Neighborhoods Scenario outlined in Chapter 3, specifically related to mixed-use development in targeted areas, such as along commercial corridors and main streets in Neighborhood Stabilization areas.

Recommendations throughout City Plan encourage compact, walkable, mixed-use development. While a mix of uses is allowed in the current Zoning Code as part of the General Retail (GR), Neighborhood Service (NS) districts, development standards for current districts generally reinforce a more auto-oriented pattern of development.



The City should consider adopting one or more floating mixed-use zone districts that provide opportunities for an integrated mix of uses, while also accommodating variations in the desired scale, mix, and intensity of uses in different parts of the City, and flexibility in development standards. Specific incentives should be identified based on discussions with the development community regarding barriers to the types of development the community desires.

In this instance, the City could offer applicants or property owners the option of rezoning to a floating zone district through a streamlined approval process in exchange for more flexible and permissive development standards, or establish incentives that could be applied using existing zone districts. If the City chooses to develop floating zone districts, proposed updates to existing districts brought forward as part of the 2022 draft Zoning Code (e.g., Neighborhood Service (NS) district) could be used as a starting point for discussion.

### **Establish Regulatory Incentives to Encourage Desired Development Patterns**

Many of the corridors and main streets targeted for reinvestment in Amarillo have physical characteristics that may affect the financial viability of desired development patterns. For example, shallow lot depths, small lot sizes, access limitations, and non-conforming buildings or uses—may make it challenging to satisfy existing development standards in the Zoning Code. Communities seeking to encourage infill and redevelopment in targeted areas often choose to develop incentives in the form of alternative development standards to help address the most significant barriers to reinvestment. Potential incentives could include: reduced parking requirements/shared parking allowances for developments that are readily accessible on foot or bike and/or are served by transit, reduced landscaping and screening requirements (e.g., allow use a low ornamental fence to screen surface parking along a constrained corridor instead of wide landscape buffer), and density bonuses for the construction of affordable or workforce housing.<sup>6</sup>

Such incentives could be offered to projects that involve targeted infill development, larger scale redevelopment (e.g., the redevelopment of vacant or obsolete shopping centers); and/or the adaptive reuse of historic buildings that contribute to the character and legacy of the Amarillo

community. To have a meaningful impact, the use of incentives should be limited to high priority areas, such as in the downtown area, and along commercial corridors and main streets in Neighborhood Stabilization areas.

## **Intergovernmental Coordination**

City Plan was developed with input from various stakeholders, organizations, and agencies that play a role in the day-to-day operations and future planning and policy direction for the community. These partners will also play an important role in the implementation of City Plan. It will be important to continue collaboration across these departments and agencies to ensure City Plan alignment and to maximize resource-sharing, efficiency, and capacity. The following entities will be particularly important for continued partnership and coordination:

- Internal City of Amarillo Departments, Boards & Commissions
- Amarillo School Districts
- Potter and Randall Counties
- Amarillo Metropolitan Planning Organization
- TxDOT
- ACT
- Partnership for Development Progress
- Neighborhood Associations

<sup>6</sup> see glossary for definitions of affordable and workforce housing



